Contrastive Textual Analysis of Selected Online Mainstream and Alternative Philippine Editorial Newspaper Headlines

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Abstract - Newspaper editorials constitute a part of media discourse, which is an extremely important field of research in intercultural rhetoric analysis and EFL (English as a foreign language)/ESL (English as a second language) studies. Specifically, certain features of editorial headlines and also their important role in monitoring and directing readers' attention have made the interface between the linguistic analysis of newspaper editorial headlines and teaching of EFL as a relevant issue in language teaching. Through conducting a contrastive textual analysis of selected headlines, culled from the electronic versions of editorials of mainstream newspaper, Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI), and those of alternative online newspaper, Rappler, the present study aimed at exploring the kind of textual and rhetorical strategies the two newspapers used for propagating their preferred ideologies. The results of the study indicated certain qualitative and quantitative similarities and differences between the mainstream and non-mainstream editorial headlines. In terms of verbal/ nonverbal distinction, Rappler's editorial writers preferred to write full sentences headlines, while those of PDI are inclined to write the headlines in punchy and short phrases. Moreover, the analysis revealed that the two papers to some extent were identical in using existential presupposition and lexical presupposition for persuasion purposes. Lastly, in terms of rhetorical devices employed, metonymy was found to be used in the two papers equally. However, in terms of other rhetorical devices, editorial writers in PDI use literary devices such as rhetorical questions and testimonials which made the headlines look persuasive. Meanwhile, writers in Rappler preferred another set of devices such as quoting out of context, parallelism, and neologism.

Keywords – contrastive textual analysis, editorial headlines, rhetorical devices, presupposition

INTRODUCTION

As a kind of discourse genre, newspaper editorials are of special importance in EFL and ESL studies and contrastive rhetoric. Editorials are written to deliberately influence the social cognition of their readers by making use of different persuasion and argumentation strategies and devices. Newspaper opinion texts reflect national styles regarding modes of persuasion more than any other type of writing [4]. Being argumentative and persuasive in nature, editorials reflect the writing preferences of their background cultural context and language which can be regarded as rich sources of writing conventions. Newspaper editorials as a kind of opinion texts [11] are different from

the other types of news discourse, in that they are supposed to present evaluations and comments about the news events already reported in the newspapers.

In particular, headlines in editorials which serve as opening section to relevant main text, perform multiple functions. Editorial headlines can be categorized as the "summary" of the news reports [10]. On the other hand, it can also be argued that editorial headlines are part of news rhetoric whose function is to attract the reader [2]. Likewise, editorial headlines can also serve to attract the attention of the reader and to provoke the reader to read the whole article [7].

Moreover, an editorial headline determines how many people will read the piece, particularly in this era of social media [6]. Also, a headline changes the way people read an article and the way they remember it. By drawing attention to certain details or facts, an editorial headline can affect what existing knowledge is activated in the reader's head. By its choice of phrasing, a headline can influence mindset as readers read so that they later recall details that coincide with what they were expecting.

Thus, due to the unique features of editorial headlines such as encapsulating the content of the editorials, arousing the readers' curiosity [8], and also their important role in monitoring readers' attention, perception, and reading process [10], the present study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the structural types of headlines present in Philippine mainstream and alternative online newspaper editorials?

2. What are the presupposition triggers present in the headlines of Philippine mainstream and alternative online newspaper editorials?

3. What are the rhetorical devices used in the editorial headlines of Philippine mainstream and alternative online newspapers?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study aimed to provide systematic contrastive textual analysis of mainstream and alternative editorial headlines (Philippine Daily Inquirer and Rappler) to investigate the kind of rhetorical strategies the two newspapers use for propagating their preferred ideologies. It is also hoped that such knowledge would assist language teachers to effectively use newspapers as a teaching device in their ESL classrooms.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This study used the descriptive type of research. To perform this inquiry, Philippine Daily Inquirer (PDI) and Rappler were chosen as two samples of online newspapers, with PDI representing a mainstream online newspaper and Rappler representing a non-mainstream/alternative online newspaper. Twenty editorial headlines from each newspaper were the corpus used for the analysis. The editorials were published from September – November, 2016 and were taken from their websites at www.rappler.com and www.inquirer.net.

The present study conducted three levels of method of analysis to answer the three research questions. First, linguistic features of the data gathered were analyzed using [9] structural classification of headlines: 1. VERBAL CLAUSES, 1.1. finite clause and 1.2. nonfinite clause; 2. NONVERBAL, 2.1. pre-modified, 2.2. post-modified, 2.3. pre- and post-modified, and 2.4. nonmodified. Next, linguistic analysis of the presupposition in the selected editorials was done using the categories described by [12]. Based on the theory of presupposition where the categories were derived, the researcher set coding parameters which served as the basis to classify the presupposition triggers found in the editorial headlines. Lastly, textual analysis of the selected editorials has been carried out in terms of rhetorical devices used in the headlines. The types of these devices were not decided in advance as the qualitative categories cannot be predetermined since it will be derived inductively from the data analyzed [5]. Thus, the rhetorical devices were identified during the data analysis.

Data were then tallied and tabulated in frequencies and from the tabulated frequencies, percentage was obtained. The identified percentages were used to determine the types of headline, presupposition triggers, and rhetorical devices used in mainstream and alternative/non-mainstream newspaper editorial headlines.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Classification of the Philippine Daily Inquirer and Rappler online editorial headlines

	Verbal								Nonverbal			
	Finite		Nonfinite		Pre-modified		Post-modified		Pre- and Post- modified		Nonmodified	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
PDI	3	15	4	20	10	50	2	10	0	0	1	5
Rappler	3	15	6	30	8	40	2	10	1	5	0	0

The analysis of the headlines in the selected editorials of the two newspapers revealed certain differences between the two sets of headlines. In terms of verbal/nonverbal distinction, the proportion of verbal headlines in the PDI (35%) was moderately lower than that in Rappler (45%). It might indicate that Rappler writers inclined to form the headlines in full sentences, while those in PDI preferred short and punchy phrases. Moreover, in terms of the length of the headlines, verbal and nonverbal headlines in the PDI were written using short phrases whereas Rappler headlines were in the form of comparatively long phrases and sentences. PDI headlines has a total of 65 words, while Rappler headlines has 106 words. Calculated in terms of the average number of words per headlines, the figures obtained were 3.0 and 5.3 words for the PDI and the Rappler, respectively. In other words, based on this textual analysis, the PDI headlines were found to be short and punchy while those of Rappler were found to be mostly composed of full or lengthy sentences which made them less striking than the headlines in the PDI.

In general, the analysis of the headlines in the two papers revealed that the newspaper headlines not only introduced the topic of the editorials but also presented the subjective attitude of the writers (newspapers) toward the topic aiming at influencing and shaping the readers' understanding of the editorial text. This subjective presentation of the news events and the news actors were carried out by using certain textual and persuasive strategies.

Table 2. Types of presupposition trigger in the Philippine Daily Inquirer and Rappler editorial headlines

Newpaper	Presupposition Trigger						
	Existential	Factive	Non-factive	Lexical	Structural	Counterfactual	TOTAL
PDI	7	0	0	11	2	0	20
Rappler	17	1	0	5	0	0	22
TOTAL	24	1	0	16	2	0	42

Results of this study found out that PDI and Rappler editorial headlines show minimal difference in the use of presupposition triggers. Surprisingly, they share the same properties with slight variations in their frequency. Existential trigger, as the table reveals, is the most frequently used presupposition, both in mainstream and alternative newspaper. Moreover, it should be noted that PDI writers are more predisposed to use lexical presupposition triggers while Rappler writers are inclined to employ existential presupposition triggers. In addition, there are two PDI headlines with structural presupposition triggers, but none in Rappler, while there is one factive presupposition trigger in Rappler, but there is none in PDI. Finally, there is also an observable absence of non-factive and counterfactual presupposition triggers in both newspaper headlines.

It appears that the use of existential presupposition as the most frequently used category in both mainstream and alternative Philippine online newspaper indicates a constant

feature of editorial headline discourse as a genre. The simple constructions through the use of definite noun phrases, allows existential presupposition to commit to the existence of mentioned entities. Likewise, the use of existential presupposition seems appropriate since it aims to expose the existence of event or subject. The unique features of headlines such as encapsulating the content of the editorials and arousing the reader's curiosity (Reah, 2002) allow existential trigger to be the easiest tool at writer's disposal to give information readily credited for by the readers.

The following extracts from PDI and Rappler illustrate this:

PDI online headlines with existential presupposition: (1) Off-track foreign policy, (2) Happy slaughter, and (3) A bad script

In PDI headline (1), the word *off-track* act as a trigger, which presupposes that foreign policy exists. The trigger off-track is a definite description categorized as existential. It points out the existence of foreign policy by describing it. PDI headline (2) and headline (3), on the other hand, are similar in headline (1) since both are introduced by descriptive words *happy* and *bad* as existential triggers. Both descriptive words presuppose that slaughter and script exist. In headline 2 – happy slaughter, further presupposes the sarcasm/irony of the statement attached to the headline which pertains to the increasing number of extrajudicial killings in the country, while headline 3 – a bad script, presupposes false story to cover real events and such story or script (like what movie scripts are products of imagination) is so unbelievable or too ordinary or usual that it is considered bad.

Rappler online headlines with existential presupposition: (4) The mouse that roared, (5) The silent Church, and (6) Murder is murder

The following presupposition triggers *that roared* (4), *silent* (5), and *murder* (6) gave rise to presupposed meanings that the entities mentioned in the headlines are true. These

triggers presuppose that the *mouse, church* and *murder* exist.

Moreover, PDI and Rappler editorial writers' predisposition to use lexical, structural and factive presupposition triggers allows them to provide additional information and at the same time to make the headlines as short as possible. Also, through the use of lexical presupposition triggers, editorial writers can activate readers' prior knowledge of the news issue to the extent that readers can be motivated to get into the details of the stories.

The following are examples of lexical presuppositions found in PDI and Rappler editorial headlines:

PDI headline (7) Out of the ignorance trap

Rappler headline (8) Wake up, my people! Wake up!

PDI headline (7) uses the presupposition triggers *out* and *ignorance* which lead to its presupposed meaning that there is trap. The word *out* is classified as lexical presupposition trigger while *ignorance* is descriptive, thus existential. Lexical trigger 'out' is an aspectual/change of state predicate which presupposes someone/something was trapped in ignorance before. Likewise, in Rappler headline (8), the lexical presupposition trigger *wake up!* is an implicative verb suggesting that the people are sleeping (figuratively). The writer tries to provoke the readers by using the trigger in a hope that the reader will take certain action or will change his current stand or resolve.

Lastly, the lack of use of non-factive and counterfactual presupposition triggers might suggest the editorial writers' intention to prevent a sense of uncertainty towards the presuppositions. Editorial writers intend to offer solid claims that are not open to challenge which

of course, indicative of the presence of certain ideological messages in the editorial texts.

Table 3. Comparison of rhetorical devices identified in Philippine Daily Inquirer and Rappler editorial headlines

| NEWSPAPER | Rhetorical Device | | | | | | | | | | | |
	Quoting out of context	Metonymy	Parallelism	Alliteration	Antithesis	Irony	Rhetorical question	Symbolism	Testimonial	Pun	Consonance	Neologism
PDI	0	3	0	3	1	2	1	2	1	2	0	0
Rappler	1	5	5	1	3	2	0	2	0	0	2	1
TOTAL	1	8	5	4	4	4	1	4	1	2	2	1

The analysis of the headlines revealed that editorial writers, in an effort to persuade their readers, try to use different rhetorical strategies. Table 3 represents the types of the rhetorical devices used in the selected headlines of the two papers. As the table indicates, *Metonymy, Alliteration, Irony, Symbolism* and *Pun* are the favored devices used in the headlines of PDI. Editorial writers in Rappler, however, favored *Metonymy, Parallelism, Antithesis, Irony, Symbolism* and *Consonance*, while the less frequent devices in both newspapers include *Quoting out of Context, Rhetorical Question, Testimonial* and *Neologism*. It is equally important to note as well that in terms of the total number of rhetorical devices used in the two newspaper headlines, PDI has 15 rhetorical devices whereas, Rappler headlines made use of 22 rhetorical devices.

The results indicate that metonymy was found to be used in the two papers equally. PDI and Rappler metonymically used the names of the countries, for example, to refer to the institutions or political/social statuses of the countries. Some of these examples are given below:

PDI headlines with metonymy
(9) Inconvenient questions
(10) The Ramos factor
(11) A bad script

Rappler headlines with metonymy
(11) Reexamining the Philippines' place in the world
(12) Duterte's China card
(13) Thank you, Millenials

In the case of PDI headlines, headline (9) metonymic use of 'questions' refers to the communication status of Duterte's administration. In the context of the article, inconvenient questions arise due to missteps of the President's communications team, which had more than one spokesperson offering divergent statements on the coverage of the 'state of lawlessness' declared by the President. Meanwhile, headline (10) uses 'Ramos' as a metonymy referring to political influence. The writer implies that former President Fidel Ramos being among the influential who helped convince President Duterte to run for the presidency, holds political influence over the

current administration. Lastly, the use of the word 'script' to example (11) represents the inconsistent facts which are likened to a cliché-studded play. The use of metonymy presents the editorial writer's intention to exhibit deeper or hidden meanings and thus drawing readers' attention. In this sense, the use of metonymy by PDI editorial writers helps achieve conciseness and adds poetic color to words to make them come to life.

Meanwhile, the use of metonymy by Rappler editorial writers tended to keep and background the main news actors and events such as the China government (12) and Millenials (13). In other words, Rappler writers used the metonymic concept of names of countries or institutions to refer to either responsible institutions, status or generation (social, economic, political) of the countries, institutions or participants. The intention of metonymic device is to exhibit deeper or hidden meanings and thus drawing readers' attention.

However, the two newspapers were found to be rather different in terms of using other rhetorical devices. The editorial writers in PDI did use literary devices such as rhetorical questions and testimonials which made the headlines look persuasive and catchy, while the writers in Rappler preferred another set of devices such as parallelism, antithesis and neologism to not only reflect the editorial writer's skill in the creative use of language, but also to make an association between two concepts. In addition, the use of parallel structures, like repeating the initial word to the succeeding phrase creates a rhythmic effect and put emphasis on the word reiterated for better retention. The use of parallel structures by Rappler editorial writers allows them to maintain consistency within the text and create a balanced flow of ideas. Likewise, parallelism functioned as a tool for persuasion because of the repetition it uses.

Hence, using different sets of rhetorical devices in the two newspapers might be attributed to the particular culture the writers in the newspapers belong to. However, the analysis revealed that the two papers to some extent were identical in using symbolism and irony. The analysis in general revealed that the editorial writers in both newspapers aimed at not only informing the readers of the topic of the editorial, but also expressing the preferred ideology of the papers which was accomplished through using certain persuasive and rhetorical devices.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In the light of the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn: first, the structural types of headlines present in Philippine mainstream and non-mainstream online editorials are verbal and nonverbal types of headlines, with most of the nonverbal headlines either pre-modified or post-modified or non-modified. There is no nonverbal editorial headline with pre- and post- modification in Philippine mainstream and non-mainstream online editorial headlines. Second, the presupposition triggers present in the headlines of Philippine mainstream and non-mainstream online editorials are existential, lexical, structural and factive, while non-factive and counterfactual presupposition triggers are not used. Finally, the rhetorical devices used in the editorial's headlines of Philippine mainstream and non-mainstream online newspapers include Metonymy, Parallelism, Alliteration, Irony, Antithesis, Symbolism, Pun, Quoting out of Context, Consonance, Rhetorical Question, Testimonial and Neologism.

It is then recommended that knowledge on common discourse conventions in the editorial headlines of Philippine mainstream and non-mainstream online newspapers would enhance the use of this media discourse as a teaching device in the classroom.

Moreover, analysis of presupposition triggers employed and its manner to generate meanings would help language teachers lead their students toward a more critical scrutiny of the media discourse in general and editorial headlines in particular. This kind of analysis will also serve as a tool for consciousness raising among students as well as teachers in such a way that the use of presupposed information should not be treated as less significant when writing or reading editorial headlines, unless the writer has some kind of ideological motives for doing so. The very fact that presupposed information is treated as relatively less important can itself be highly relevant and tempt an uncritical reader to accept presupposed information on the assumption that everyone else does [1]. Similarly, a deeper awareness of how headlines are used to manipulate the reader's understanding will enable students to examine newspaper headlines in view of its pragmatic and semantic meanings.

Lastly, as illustrated earlier, the headline perplexity is increased through using different literary devices. Pedagogically, these literary devices can be singled out and analyzed in such a way "to enable the student to crack the code and turn a liability into asset, a stumbling block into a stepping stone" (White, 2011, p. 95).

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