

## *Tanulmány*

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### **The Construction of Arguments in English and Arabic: A Comparison of the Linguistic Strategies Employed in Editorials**

#### **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to investigate the linguistic argumentative strategies that English and Arabic tend to employ in newspaper editorials. The study examines the linguistic strategies employed within the structure of through-argumentative and counter-argumentative English and Arabic texts. The linguistic features (Biber 1988) analyzed in the study are: concessive adverbials, modality, conditional clauses, lexical repetition, intensifiers, rhetorical questions, and suasive verbs. The study finds that there is a significant difference between English and Arabic argumentative texts in the tendency to employ the linguistic features mentioned above.

*Keywords:* discourse analysis, genre analysis, argumentative texts

#### **1 Introduction**

The aim of this study is to investigate the argumentative strategies that are employed in English and Arabic newspaper editorials. This study also aims to explore which argumentative strategies English and Arabic prefer to employ in editorials. In other words, it investigates at text level the use of ‘through- argumentation’ and ‘counter-argumentation’ in English and Arabic as the structure of argumentation in editorials (1989a). More specifically, the study sets out to examine the linguistic strategies employed within the structure of the English and Arabic argumentative texts; whether within the structure of through- argumentation or counter-argumentation.

In this study, the term ‘argumentation’ is used to refer to the text type under which editorials are classified (Biber 1988, Hatim 1989a). In the context of this study, argumentation is the form of discourse that attempts to persuade and influence readers through the use of a connected series of conceptual relations, violation, value, significance and opposition in order to establish opposition or claim (Toulmin 1958, Beaugrande & Dressler 1981, Andrews 1989, Teefelen 1991, Rottenberg 2000, Baciu 2010, McGee, 2014 ).

Argumentation, as a text type, has been acknowledged and defined by such famous English and Arab rhetoricians and logicians as Toulmin (1958) and Ibn Qudama in the fourteenth century. Argumentative texts are of two types: through- argumentative and counter-argumen-

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tative. The structure of through- argumentation texts follows the organizational plan of thesis-cited to be argued, extensive substantiation and conclusion. Within through-argumentative texts, there is no reference to any opposite viewpoint (Hatim 1989a, 1989b, 1991, 1997, Hatim & Mason 1991). Counter-argumentation structure, on the other hand, follows the organizational plan of thesis-cited to be opposed, opposition or rebuttal of the thesis cited, substantiation of the rebuttal and conclusion (Hatim 1989a, 1989b, Jabr 2001). Hatim (1989a, 1989b, 1991, 1997), based on his own research into the argumentative text type in English and Arabic, claims that there is a noticeable tendency in English towards counter-argumentation but through-argumentation is still evident. On the other hand, modern standard Arabic, he claims, ‘favors through-argumentation’ and when this occurs explicit concessive devices such as although, while, despite are employed (Hatim, 1989a, 1989b, 1991, 1997). However, no empirical research has been carried out to substantiate this claim.

This study examined only one argumentative text type that is: editorials. In addition, it carries a thorough investigation of argumentative strategies employed in editorials, for it not only analyzes the structure of editorials, but also examines the linguistic strategies (i.e. syntax and lexis) employed in English and Arabic argumentative texts.

## **2 Argumentation as text type**

Over the years, classifications of text types have been put forward on a different basis. Werlich (1976) classifies five idealized text types or modes based on cognitive and rhetorical properties. The text types which he identifies, are description, narration, exposition, argumentation and instruction. These text types were adapted by Biber (1989) but were based on linguistic criteria. Biber (1988, 1989) captures the prominent linguistic differences among texts in English. He classifies eight text types according to the linguistic features employed in them. More specifically, Biber (1988, 1989) classifies texts according to the sets of syntactic and lexical features that frequently co-occur in them. He also adds that editorials, the data used in this research study, have a primary argumentative and persuasive purpose and style. In his empirical study, Biber (1988) goes on to illustrate the linguistic features that characterize each text type. In particular, he explains that argumentative texts, which are of interest here, tend to frequently employ modals of prediction, necessity and possibility, conditional clauses and suasive verbs. According to him, these linguistic features have a persuasive impact on the reader.

Hatim and Mason (1990) also adapt the text types identified by Werlich (1976) and argue that common textual classifications as such fail to capture the social function of form and content. Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) identify the classification of text type along functional lines. They define three text types: descriptive, narrative and argumentative. Beaugrande and Dressler (1981: 184) define argumentative texts as follows:

Those utilized to promote the acceptance or evaluation of certain beliefs or ideas as true vs. false, or positive vs. negative. Conceptual relations such as reason, significance, violation, value, and opposition should be frequent. The surface texts will often show cohesive devices for emphasis and insistence, e.g. recurrence, parallelism, and paraphrase.

In this study, we have adapted Hatim's approach (1991) to text type theory and specifically the two variants of argumentation (through-argumentation and counter-argumentation) and their structures. In general and according to many authors (Toulmin 1958, Werlich 1976, Beaugrande & Dressler 1981), an argumentative text is defined as a form of discourse that attempts to persuade readers to accept a claim, whether that acceptance is based on logical or emotional appeals, or both.

The argument itself, Toulmin (1958) explains, must be set out and presented in 'a sequence of steps' that are based on certain procedural rules.

In addition, this structure which in brief falls into three categories: claim, support and warrant, correspond to Hatim's (1989a, 1991) argument structure. In this study, as will be shown, the argument structure presented by Hatim and Mason (1990 and in Hatim, 1991) is adapted in the investigation and analysis of the data.

More specifically, Hatim (1991) perceives Argumentative texts as texts that evaluate through persuasion and he divides them into two subtypes:

a) Through-argumentation is initiated by a statement of a point of view, that is to be argued through the text. In through-argumentative texts there is no explicit reference to any opposite viewpoint. Hatim (1991) represents the format or structure of through-argumentation as follows:

#### THROUGH-ARGUMENTATION

↓Thesis to be argued through  
 ↓Substantiation  
 ↓Conclusion

(Adapted from Hatim, 1991, 1997, Hatim & Mason, 1990)

b) Counter-argumentation: is initiated by a thesis which cites the position of an opponent followed by an opposition, substantiation and finally a conclusion. Hatim (1991) represents the format of counter-argumentative texts as follows:

#### COUNTER-ARGUMENTATION

↓Thesis cited to be opposed  
 ↓Opposition  
 ↓Substantiation  
 ↓Conclusion

(Adapted from Hatim, 1991, 1997, Hatim & Mason, 1990)

Furthermore, Hatim (1991, 1997: 193) distinguishes between two subtypes within counter-argumentation: first, the balance argument where an author or writer has the option of signalling the contrastive shift between what may be viewed as a claim and a counter-claim either explicitly or implicitly. Second, the lopsided argument in which the counter-claim is anticipated by introducing an explicit concessive (e.g. although).

### 3 Argumentative texts across cultures

Languages differ in their orientation to the reader and in the manner in which ideas are presented and organized and vary in the social functions they serve. More specifically, written texts have different conventions across cultures. Based on Connor (1996), we can recognize a wide variety of conventional styles. The conventions of discourse within each culture provide a framework in which ideas are arranged.

These conventions may express cultural preferences in organization of thought; attitudes towards what kinds of things make a set of ideas more credible.

Accordingly, through-argumentation and counter-argumentation can be referred to as types of reasoning that are culturally oriented.

Hatim (1990, 1997) and Hatim & Mason (1997) illustrate that comparative research in argumentation from a cross-cultural perspective is still at a 'relatively embryonic stage. Hatim (1989a, 1991, 1997: 140), based on his personal experience and research in the field of argumentative texts, detected a noticeable tendency in English towards counter-argumentation (specifically towards the implicit and explicit balance type). In Arabic, Hatim (1997: 140), detected a preference towards employing through-argumentation in texts. He also sets out to confirm that through-argumentation is found in English and counter-argumentation in Arabic, but they are 'out ranked by the other forms' (Hatim 1991, 1997, Hatim & Mason 1997: 133).

Furthermore and as we mentioned earlier, ancient Arab rhetoricians such as Ibn Qudama of the fourteenth century discussed the form of counter-argumentation and recommended it to students of rhetoric. Although Koch (1983: 47) supports the notion that culture dominates rhetoric conventions, she claims that Arabic argumentation when contrasted with western modes of argument, which are based on a syllogistic model of proof and made linguistically cohesive through the subordination and hypotaxis, is found to be essentially paratactic, abductive and analogical. She (1983: 47) goes on to conclude that Arabic argumentation achieves persuasion by making its argumentative claims linguistically present by repeating and paraphrasing them.

In addition, Koch (1983) suggests that this mode of argumentation is definitely due to the centrality of the *Lughah* (Arabic language). More specifically, El-shiyab (1990) illustrates that editorials, as a form of argumentative texts, favour the cohesive type of lexical repetition not only for the purpose of cohesion but for persuasive functions, as well. In his study, El-shiyab (1990) sets out to conclude that English opts for economy in the use of cohesive devices as such, while Arabic largely coheres through the redundant effect created by the high frequency of cohesive devices. In other words, each language has a unique set of rhetorical conventions.

Thus, the tendency to prefer an argumentative style or format over another does not mean that the language lacks that style but means that, for certain reasons, language users (i.e. writers) tend to favor a certain style. Researchers such as Hatim (1989a, 1991) see such preferences to be bound to solidarity, politeness, face saving and pragmatic phenomena.

### 4 Data and Methodology

The data used in this study are twenty editorial texts published in daily official newspapers. The editorials discuss different issues concerning the Middle East such and other global political issues.

The ten Arabic newspaper editorial texts discussed in the study were randomly chosen from different Arabic newspapers such as ‘*Al-Ahram*’, ‘*Alrai*’, ‘*Aldustur*’ and ‘*Alarab Alyawm*’. The ten English editorial texts were taken from different different English newspapers such as ‘*Sydney Morning Herald*’, ‘*Boston Globe*’, ‘*New York Times*’ and ‘*The Australian*’. In general, a newspaper editorial is defined as a newspaper article that expresses the opinion of the editor or publisher of the newspaper on some topical issues. We decided to use editorials as a text form in this research project so that the results and findings of this study would be attributed to language differences and not to the text forms or genres differences.

Secondly, editorials are considered opinionated genres intended to persuade the reader, i.e. ‘they are argumentative, in that they consider several different possibilities but seek to convince the reader of the advisability or likelihood of one of them’ (Biber 1988: 148). Therefore, newspaper editorials are a rich source of argumentative linguistic features, which in return will help in identifying the different strategies that are employed in English and Arabic-argumentative texts.

## 5 Data analysis and results

### 5.1 Data analysis

The data analysis is comprised of two stages. The first stage of analysis was concerned with the text’s argument structure, that is, the textual organization of argument in the editorial text. At this stage of analysis, each editorial text was analyzed according to Hatim’s (1989a, 1991, and 1997) format of argument structure, in which the organizational structure of argument in through-argumentative texts takes the form of thesis to be argued through, extensive substantiation and conclusion, or the organizational structure of argument in counter-argumentative texts takes the shape of thesis cited to be opposed, opposition, substantiation opposition and conclusion.

We would like to point out that the subtypes of counter-argumentation are not accounted for in this study because the aim here was to examine the extent to which English and Arabic employ these two general types of argumentative structure.

The results have been represented in the form of tables. In particular, the results of the analysis of each editorial will be illustrated through a table (see appendix 1).

The second stage of analysis will be investigating the linguistic strategies employed in each editorial. These linguistic strategies to be examined are syntactic and lexical. According to Biber (1988: 150), there are linguistic features which are highly persuasive and highly employed in editorials. The linguistic features, which according to Biber (1988) characterize argumentative texts, that are investigated and analyzed in the Data are the following:

#### A) Modals

- (1) Necessity modals, and they are directly persuasive such as: must and should in English. Similarly, expressing necessity in Arabic is mainly conveyed by the Arabic lexical verbs *yatawajabu* and *yājibu*
- (2) Predictive modals, are ‘used to refer to the future, to consider events that will or will not occur’ such as: will, would, will not etc in English and the addition of the initial morpheme *Sa* and *sawfa* in Arabic (Biber 1988: 150).
- (3) Possibility modals such as can, may, might and could.

- B) Suasive verbs that mark the writer's attempt to persuade the reader that certain events are desirable or probable (McDonald 1989). Verbs such as agree, arrange, ask, beg, command, decide, insist and propose etc.
- C) Conditional clauses, that specify 'the conditions that are required in order for certain events to occur' (Biber 1988: 111).
- D) Repetition and intensifiers.
- E) Concessive adverbials
- (F) Rhetorical questions

The frequency of occurrence of each linguistic feature in the English and Arabic argumentative editorial texts will be represented in the form of tables. The findings will then indicate the extent to which English and Arabic tend to prefer the employment of these linguistic features in argumentative editorial texts.

## 5.2 Results

### 5.2.1 Organization of arguments

The Arabic and English argumentative editorial texts were analyzed by applying Hatims' (1991 and 1997) approach to textual analysis of argument structure (see appendix 1). The results of this structural analysis are displayed in the following representative tables:

Arabic editorial texts:

<b>Text 1 'The American administration and its trials to escape the Iraqi dilemma'</b>	
<b>Thesis to be argued</b>	The US and Britain are facing a critical dilemma in Iraq.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	Their failure to establish stability and security in Iraq.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	The cost of the huge expenses which reach approximately a billion dollars weekly.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	For the Us to withdraw troops from the region would affect the power of its presence in other regions.
<b>Substantiation 4</b>	The withdrawal of troops will have impact on Bush in re-elections.
<b>Conclusion</b>	The USA should confess its failure in establishing stability and security in Iraq.

<b>Text 2 'The Unpredictable world finance'</b>	
<b>Thesis to be argued</b>	World finance is becoming more unpredictable.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	America's finance has been recovering for two years.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	Figures show that the Japanese finance is declining further to recession.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	The German finance is also heading towards recession.
<b>Substantiation 4</b>	The Euro is still high in comparison with the US dollar.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Where the world finance is heading to is hard to predict.

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<b>Text 3 'Before the road map demolishes'</b>	
<b>Thesis to be argued</b>	The Israeli- Palestinian road map to peace can be saved.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	Israeli role in ironing out difference with Palestinian government.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	Change in Israeli security policy in the west bank.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	The Palestinian government's role in establishing security for Israel.
<b>Substantiation 4</b>	International intervention in commencing Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.
<b>Conclusion</b>	There is still a chance to save the roadmap to peace.

<b>Text 4 'How to fix it'</b>	
<b>Thesis to be argued</b>	Ending this war in Gaza begins with recognizing Hamas as a legitimate political actor
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	This was a major concession by Hamas, in opening Gaza to joint control under a technocratic government that did not include any Hamas members.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	there must be at least a partial lifting of the 7-year-old sanctions and blockade that isolate the 1.8 million people in Gaza.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	There must also be an opportunity for the teachers, police, and welfare and health workers on the Hamas payroll to be paid.
<b>Substantiation 4</b>	Hamas is not just a military but also a political force
<b>Conclusion</b>	Leaders in Israel, Palestine, and the world's major powers should believe that policy changes are within reach

English editorial texts:

<b>Text 1 'The future of the senate'</b>	
<b>Thesis to be opposed</b>	The Senate is an unchanging instrument of democracy
<b>Opposition</b>	The Senate reform debate is at risk of being derailed before it gets out of first gear
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	This debate is heading for the same brick wall that halted the republican push
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	No government since 1981 has controlled the Senate.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	The senate began as a states house but quickly assumed partisanship.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Politics is about self interest and the first challenge is to nurture debate.

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<b>Text 2 ‘Think globally, act locally’</b>	
<b>Thesis to be opposed</b>	Sydney has benefited considerably from its integration into the global economy.
<b>Opposition</b>	From the impassioned globalization debate emerge many contradictory truths.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	Other regions are moving in the opposite direction; getting worse.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	Sydney regions that the least integrated e.g. Campbeltown are facing worse community services.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	Similar economic and social fragmentation are experienced in western cities e.g. Paris
<b>Conclusion</b>	Remember that the lower wage earners are an integral part of any advanced economy.

<b>Text 3 ‘Law of double jeopardy on trail at last’</b>	
<b>Thesis to be opposed</b>	DNA testing should be used to convict the guilty.
<b>Opposition</b>	Results of DNA testing could be inconclusive.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	The case of Raymond John Carroll who was twice convicted of the murder of Toddler Kennedy.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	Double jeopardy in the Carroll case, has worked against the delivery of justice.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	The defence of double jeopardy raises the specter of public disquiet and outrage.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Law-makers may discover that the patience of victims and their families, on double jeopardy, does not match their own.

<b>Text 4 ‘America must act on Syria’</b>	
<b>Thesis to be opposed</b>	Anxieties of many opponents on the left by saying: “We don’t have the money to take on everybody’s war”.
<b>Opposition</b>	The onus is now on Congress to respond in the face of Syria’s Aug. 21 chemical weapons attack on a Damascus.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	An egregious act of mass murder has occurred. More than 1,400 have died
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	In 2007, Israel launched a surgical strike that destroyed a secret Syrian nuclear complex under construction.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	Iran would certainly feel emboldened to proceed with nuclear weapons development, correctly reasoning that U.S. threats are meaningless.
<b>Conclusion</b>	A rejection of this resolution would be catastrophic, not just for him but for the institution of the presidency and the credibility of the United States.



As can be seen in the above representative tables, the organization of argument structure in Arabic texts indicates that the ten editorials opt for the construction of through-argumentation. The structures of each of the Arabic texts follow the pattern of ‘thesis cited to be argued through – substantiations – conclusion’. In each text, the thesis sets the scene for the entire argument (e.g. ‘the US and Britain are facing a critical dilemma in Iraq’ in text 1). Then substantial evidence or proof is given to support the thesis (e.g. the sequence of substantiation 1, 2, 3 and 4 in text 1).

On the one hand, the final part of the Arabic editorial text offers the author’s evaluation of the whole situation (e.g. The USA should confess its failure in establishing stability and security in Iraq’). On the other hand, the tables that represent the construction of argument in the ten English editorials opt to follow the construction of the sub types of counter-argumentation (balance and lopsided). For example, in text 2 the author states the thesis he is about to oppose ‘Globalisation has benefited Sydney economically’. Then the statement of opposition is set out ‘From the impassioned globalisation debate emerge many contradictory truths’. Evidence to back up the opposing claim is provided through the sequence of substantiation 1, 2 and 3. Finally, evaluation of the claim and counter-claim is offered by the author ‘...the integral parts of an advanced economy.’

### 5.2.2 *Linguistic features*

At this level of analysis, the frequent co-occurrence of some linguistic features that characterize argumentative texts is represented in the form of tables.

The objective of this analysis is to determine which argumentative strategies English and Arabic prefer to employ in editorials. Furthermore, the analysis detects the linguistic strategies that recur more frequently in each language. As mentioned earlier, the linguistic features that are investigated are: concessive adverbials, modality, conditional clauses, lexical repetition, intensifiers, rhetorical questions and suasive verbs. The frequent occurrence of these linguistic features is calculated in texts varying in length of over 500 words. In order to achieve a meaningful comparison between texts of ranging length we processed the raw results in terms of a standard frequency of occurrence of linguistic features per 1000 words.

The results of the frequent occurrence of these features in the Arabic editorials are as follows:

**TABLE 5.1: occurrence of linguistic features in Arabic**

Linguistic feature	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4	Text 5	Text 6	Text 7	Text 8	Text 9	Text 10	Mean
Concessive Adverbials	0	2	4	1	3	0	4	3	2	2	2.1
Necessity Modals	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0.3
Predictive Modals	8	4	4	6	4	5	6	8	9	9	6.3
Possibility Modals	28	12	16	20	21	19	23	21	18	17	19.5
Conditional clauses	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0.2
Lexical repetition	24	20	20	19	18	21	22	15	24	21	20.4
Intensifiers	8	4	8	7	6	8	2	8	9	8	6.8
Rhetorical Questions	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0.1
Suasive verbs	24	12	12	21	18	11	10	12	18	21	15.9

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It is obvious from the above table that Arabic opts for lexical repetition, demonstrating that it is the highest ranking strategy employed in the Arabic editorials. Features such as possibility modals and suasive verbs also indicate a relatively high frequency of occurrence. However, features such as concessive adverbials, predictive modality and rhetorical questions demonstrated an infrequent occurrence across the Arabic editorials. Table 1 reveals a zero mean reading in the case of necessity modals, rhetorical questions and conditional clauses. Clearly, the table above demonstrates that there is variability in the frequency use between features in Arabic. For example, where the occurrence of lexical verbs that convey necessity was not evident in the ten Arabic editorials, there was evidence of frequent reoccurrence in the use of possibility modals.

The following table represents the frequent occurrence of linguistic features among the English editorial texts:

**TABLE 5.2: Occurrence of linguistic features in English**

Linguistic feature	Text 1	Text 2	Text 3	Text 4	Text 5	Text 6	Text 7	Text 8	Text 9	Text 10	Mean
Concessive Adverbials	2	2	8	4	5	7	8	2	6	3	4.7
Necessity Modals	4	4	8	5	5	3	6	3	4	9	5.1
Predictive Modals	8	4	6	8	3	6	6	7	5	9	6.2
Possibility Modals	6	2	14	7	5	11	8	2	10	11	7.6
Conditional clauses	4	0	2	4	1	1	3	1	3	3	2.2
Lexical repetition	8	2	8	6	4	5	6	4	7	8	5.8
Intensifiers	12	2	12	11	7	8	8	9	4	12	8.5
Rhetorical Questions	2	0	0	1	1	1	2	0	1	0	0.8
Suasive verbs	8	4	4	11	4	3	3	2	7	7	5.3

The results show that there is an extensive use of concessive adverbials in English. On the other hand, the frequency of use of rhetorical questions in English was found to be low, with the occurrence of two in only one text. However, the results indicate that there is relative consistency in the occurrence of features among the ten English editorials. Further examples will be illustrated shortly in the discussion.

The table below represents the comparison between the mean scores of linguistic feature occurrence in the English and Arabic texts.

**TABLE 5.3: Comparison table of the Occurrence of features in English and Arabic**

Linguistic feature	Arabic	English
Concessive Adverbials	2.1	4.7
Necessity Modals	0.3	5.1
Predictive Modals	6.3	6.2
Possibility Modals	19.5	7.6
Conditional clauses	0.2	2.2
Lexical repetition	20.4	5.8
Intensifiers	6.8	8.5
Rhetorical Questions	0.1	0.8
Suasive verbs	15.9	5.3

## 6 Discussion

The analysis of argument organization in the twenty Arabic and English editorials shows that the ten Arabic editorials opt for the construction of through-argumentation. On the other hand, the results indicate that the ten English editorials tend to follow the construction of the subtypes of counter-argumentation (balance and lopsided). In the view of what these different preferences show regarding the argument structure in Arabic and English editorial texts, one should bear in mind that the selection of an argument structure is far from being random.

Argument structure, as Nariyama (2001: 127) argues, is determined by recognized discourse properties of arguments as topic and readership. Even though the manifestation of preferred argument structure and what governs that preference may differ from Arabic to English, the existence of the two argument constructions (i.e. through-argumentation and counter-argumentation) seems to be relatively stable across the two languages.

Further, English and Arabic are dissimilar for reasons other than those of their different linguistic patterns such as writing conventions and styles of constructing thoughts.

We will now expand on the results and findings of the second stage of analysis (represented in tables 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3). Textual analysis that investigates the co-occurring linguistic features of different text types has been the focus of discourse research for the past two decades such as that of Biber (1989 and 1992). Moreover, the textual linguistic features examined and analysed in this study are considered to be notably central in the structuring of discourse (Biber 1989).

The comparison between the occurrence of linguistic argumentative features across English and Arabic editorials is illustrated in figure 6.1:

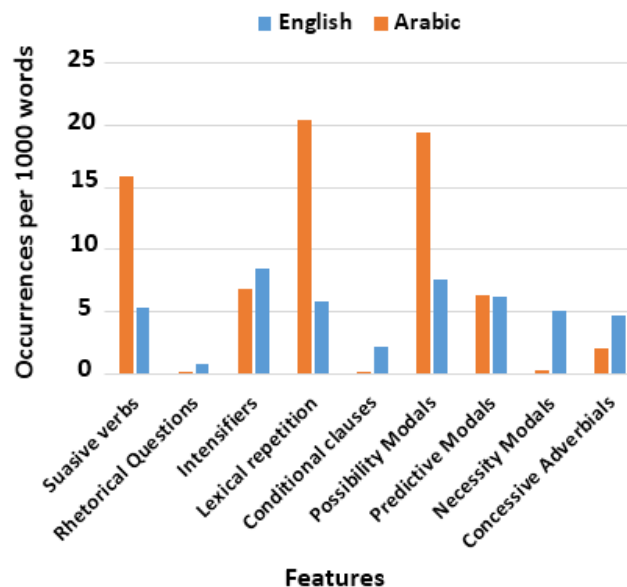


Figure 1: The occurrence of linguistic features in English and Arabic editorial texts

Figure 6.1 demonstrates that there is a significant difference in the employment tendency of some linguistic features. Obviously, English and Arabic texts favour the employment of certain features over others.

The linguistic features, when compared, tend to vary in the degree of frequent occurrence not only between the languages but also within a language itself. We will now expand on these differences:

### 6.1 *Concessive adverbials*

Table 5.3 illustrates the significant difference between English and Arabic in their employment of concessive adverbial. English texts showed frequent use of ‘although and though’. In comparison with English, Arabic texts demonstrated a slight use of concessive adverbials. Though, the most frequent concessive expressions employed in Arabic were ‘*a larchm min*’ and ‘*birghm min*’, the highest rank of occurrence for these two expressions was twice in the Arabic text (see appendix). Based on the results, one can assume that Arabic favours implicit concessions, whereas English appears to prefer the use of explicit lexical concession.

### 6.2 *Modality*

Modals, similarly to the other linguistic feature in this study, can mark the writer’s persuasion. Their meanings have to do with the writer’s attitude towards the issue being discussed in the context of such things as obligation, possibility and prediction (Biber 1988).

#### *Necessity modals*

The results in figure 6.1 are striking. As we can see, Arabic texts seem less likely to employ any necessity expressions (e.g. the verbs *yajib* or *yatawajab*).

It seems that the authors of these texts favour the frequent use of evaluative markers. In general, there was an extensive use of evaluative markers such as ‘*inna, innama, laqad*, etc.’. These markers are considered, by some Arabic researchers (Fakhri 1993: 147 and Obeidat 1998), as sentence modifiers and their function is to emphasize the content of the whole sentence they introduce. Researchers, such as Fakhri (1993), interpret the frequent use of ‘*inna*’ in texts as a stylistic common feature of Arabic writing. One of the frequent occurrences of this marker can be found in text 1 as in the following example:

...*inna alhz̄b aldimuqraty qad bda’ bistithma:r alha:la al ‘ra:qya...*

...*The Democratic party has begun taking advantage of the Iraqi situation...*

Nevertheless, English editorials (table 5.2) showed a consistent frequent use of necessity modals such as *must* and *should*. The frequency of their employment reached up to four occurrences per text.

#### *Predictive modals*

Predictive modals, upon examining table 5.3, appear to be employed in Arabic (*sawfa*) and English (will and would) with nearly the same frequency of occurrence. However, insignificant difference was found in the employment of the two features of predicative modals.

Predicative modals seem to be salient linguistic feature of editorials in both languages (Fakhri 1993).

#### *Possibility modals*

It is quite noticeable from figure 6.1 that there is a significant difference between English and Arabic in the frequent employment of possibility modals. This could be due to what Hatim (1997) claims to be a face-saving device by which the writer tries to avoid imposing his or her opposition. It seems though that the writers tend to use possibility modals to mark assessment of likelihood in their argument. It could be argued that use of modal expressions such as *may* and *could* in English and It appears possible that the use of modal expressions such as *may* and *could* and ‘*mi:nna almumkini*’ in Arabic is strategic, in that such devices are effective when writers do not want to force their opinion explicitly.

### **6.3 Conditional clauses**

Although conditional clauses are considered as features used to consider different perspectives of the issues discussed in editorial texts (Biber 1988 and 1989), the English editorial texts show a relatively low frequency in the occurrence of conditional clauses.

In Arabic, the results show, however, no occurrence of any conditional type construction (e.g. *ida (if)* and *ida lam (if not)* construction) in any of the three selected editorial texts. It is safe to say that Arabic seems to favour evaluating the issue or situation as an attempt for persuasion.

### **6.4 Lexical Repetition**

Table 5.3 and figure 6.1 indicate that there is a clear difference between English and Arabic in the tendency to employ lexical repetition as an argumentative strategy. Lexical repetition is said to be ‘not a result of non- linguistic patterns or randomness’ (Menacere 1992: 32) as has unjustifiably been claimed by linguists. It can be inferred from the results that Arabic tends to favour repetition of what is considered to be implicit in English. Menacere (1992: 36) emphasizes that lexical repetition should not be signalled out from the textual analysis or considered in isolation, but should rather be seen as forms which combine together to fulfill the persuasive function in the process of communication.

Building on table 5.2, English lexical repetition is, however, employed with an average occurrence ranging from two occurrences to eight per text. Al-Jabr (1985: 195) attributes the repetition of lexis in texts to the tenor of the text. Therefore, the function of the text, being persuasive in this study, determines the degree of the use of linguistic devices.

This study seeks to establish that lexical repetition is not uncommon in Arabic and that this recurrence is not only restricted to lexis and that complete phrases and clauses are likely to recur, too. For example, the following phrase recurred in the Arabic text 3:

‘*laqad bata wadihan...*’ translation: (it has been made clearly that...)

### 6.5 Intensifiers

In general, intensifiers tend to place emphasis on the subject matter under discussion (e.g. by using *certainly*, and equivalent devices in Arabic such as ‘*bitaki:d*’ meaning ‘*certainly*’). The results show (see figure 6.1 above) that English editorials tend to employ intensifiers more than Arabic editorials. Arabic texts show frequency in the use of intensifiers with an average of 6.8 while English scored an average of 8.5.

### 6.6 Rhetorical questions

Rhetorical questions are usually defined as statements regarding one’s opinion rather than genuine requests for information. The results shown in figure 6.1 and table 5.3 seem striking; Arabic hardly employed any rhetorical question in any of the ten texts, whereas English shows a small usage (i.e. an average of 0.8) in only one of the texts. For example, ‘...is the senate in need of reform?’ as in text 1.

### 6.7 Suasive verbs

Figure 6.1 indicates that the Arabic texts show a high frequency in the use of suasive verbs with an average mean of 15.9 which approximately triples the average score in English texts (table 5.3). Examples of suasive verbs that occurred in the English texts are *agree*, *ask*, *suggest*, *insist*, *urge*, *propose*, etc. In the Arabic texts, verbs such as ‘*yahthu*’ (urges) and ‘*aqtarihu*’ (suggests) were noted. The significant difference in the employment of suasive verbs could be due to the fact that the frequent use of suasive verbs indicates the writer’s attempt to grip the reader’s attention in order to achieve a more ‘empathic effect’ Jabr (1985).

## 7 Conclusion

The argumentative strategies employed in English and Arabic editorials may differ not only in the textual structure of argumentation but also in the linguistic strategies employed. The differences between English and Arabic in the tendencies to employ argumentative strategies in editorials are interesting, in that researchers indicated that both through-argumentation and counter-argumentation do exist in both languages. Thus, by analyzing the findings one might be able to detect the reasons why English and Arabic opt for different argumentative strategies in editorials. However, in order to generalize such a conclusion to all argumentative texts, more argumentative text forms (debates, political speeches etc.) need to be investigated. Moreover, probably more argumentative linguistic features should be looked into.

This study reinforces the point that Arabic writers have historically had the option to develop counter-arguments yet they prefer to develop through-arguments. As Sa’adeddin (1989) points out, the textual features we might find through the analysis of one text represent only one rhetorical option, which is typically preferred because these features indicate solidarity and shared cultural beliefs within each language.

In conclusion, more empirical and comparative research is required in the field of argumentative texts, and particularly in the area the tendencies to favour certain strategies among others. This study restricted its discussion to some of the linguistic features that

characterize argumentation. It is equally important to consider other features in a more expanded study. For example, the English editorial texts tended to employ direct quotations from others to support their argument, whereas Arabic texts showed no tendency toward such a strategy.

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## Appendix 1

### Results of the analysis of Argument structure in Arabic Editorials:

<b>Text 1 ‘The American administration and its trials to escape the Iraqi dilemma’</b>	
<b>Thesis to be argued</b>	The US and Britain are facing a critical dilemma in Iraq.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	Failure to establish stability and security in Iraq.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	The cost of the huge expenses which reach approximately a billion dollars weekly.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	For the US to withdraw troops from the region would affect the power of its presence in other regions.
<b>Substantiation 4</b>	The withdrawal of troops will have impact on Bush in re- elections.
<b>Conclusion</b>	The USA should confess its failure in establishing stability and security in Iraq.

<b>Text 2 ‘The Unpredictable world finance’</b>	
<b>Thesis to be argued</b>	The world finance is becoming more unpredictable.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	America’s finance is recovering since two years.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	Figures show that the Japanese finance is heading further to recession.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	The German finance is also heading towards recession.
<b>Substantiation 4</b>	Euro is still high in comparison with the US dollar.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Where the world finance is heading to is hard to predict.

<b>Text 3 ‘Before the road map demolishes’</b>	
<b>Thesis to be argued</b>	The Israeli- Palestinian road map to peace can be saved.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	Israeli role in ironing out difference with Palestinian government.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	Change in Israeli security policy in the west bank.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	The Palestinian government's role in establishing security for Israel.
<b>Substantiation 4</b>	International intervention in commencing Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.
<b>Conclusion</b>	There is still a chance to save the road map to peace.

<b>Text 4 ‘How to fix it’</b>	
<b>Thesis to be argued</b>	Ending this war in Gaza begins with recognizing Hamas as a legitimate political actor
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	This was a major concession by Hamas, in opening Gaza to joint control under a technocratic government that did not include any Hamas members.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	there must be at least a partial lifting of the 7-year-old sanctions and blockade that isolate the 1.8 million people in Gaza.

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<b>Substantiation 3</b>	There must also be an opportunity for the teachers, police, and welfare and health workers on the Hamas payroll to be paid.
<b>Substantiation 4</b>	Hamas is not just a military but also a political force
<b>Conclusion</b>	Leaders in Israel, Palestine, and the world's major powers should believe that policy changes are within reach.

<b>Text 5 'Two-State Solution on the Line'</b>	
<b>Thesis to be argued</b>	that the status quo in the Middle East is not a safe choice for Israelis or Palestinians.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	According to recent events it is highly unlikely that bilateral talks between Israel and the Palestinians can restart
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	The rate of settlement growth in East Jerusalem and the West Bank is staggering.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	In going to the General Assembly, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is not carrying out a provocative act.
<b>Conclusion</b>	The fatigue we found among Israelis and Palestinians compels a bold act of international leadership.

<b>Text 6 'Egypt: death and the military state'</b>	
<b>Thesis to be argued</b>	Muslim Brotherhood members sentenced to death will shiver through those who cheered on the revolution.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	529 supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood to death for their alleged role in the killing of a policeman.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	There are now so many political prisoners in Egypt that its jails are close to bursting
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	Parts of the judiciary are fully signed up to the army-led campaign of political repression.
<b>Conclusion</b>	This military policy will only help push the country deeper into crisis.

<b>Text 7 'ISIS is bigger than the Kuwaiti army'</b>	
<b>Thesis to be argued</b>	We must be aware of just how significant the CIA's estimates of the number of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) fighters is.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	Governments across the world have also confirmed that many of their Muslim citizens have joined up.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	The CIA's estimate of ISIS's fighting strength is most likely based on information from the ground, aerial surveillance, interrogating prisoners.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	The Free Syrian Army seems even smaller when compared to ISIS.
<b>Conclusion</b>	It is twice the size of the Kuwaiti military.

<b>Text 8 ‘Putin, Russia and the Western Dilemma’</b>	
<b>Thesis to be argued</b>	The Russian leader, nurturing dreams of empire, can be cast as the quintessential anti-West icon of our times.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	A closer look at the current Putin-bashing campaign, however, reveals surprising weaknesses in the narrative built around his person.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	Not only does Putin not look like the oriental potentate he is portrayed as, but he might well remind people of the late Hollywood actor Dan Duryea.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	In no way does Putin resemble the typical Soviet leader, say Leonid Brezhnev, let alone Josef Stalin
<b>Substantiation 4</b>	Russia has played a role in all major events affecting the European continent.
<b>Substantiation 5</b>	During the Cold War, anti-Communism often morphed into anti-Russian sentiment.
<b>Conclusion</b>	The real challenge that Europe faces is how to develop a new relationship with Russia, one that takes into account its peculiarities along with its affinities with the European civilization.

<b>Text 9 ‘Middle East getting ready to face Climate change and the Carbon Market’</b>	
<b>Thesis to be argued</b>	The middle east is one of the most venerable regions to climate change and action to face it is on the way.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	Implementing the Kyoto Protocol on climate change.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	Plans have been unleashed to invest worth Billions of dollars in research on using Green Energy.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	Gas emissions per individual in the UAE have reached double of that in the US (approx. 55 tons per individual)
<b>Substantiation 4</b>	Many clean energy projects in the middle east, such as the Shaheen project in Qatar.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Many environmental and developmental safe projects are running or are on the way to face climate change.

<b>Text 10 ‘Curse following officials in the International Monetary Fund’</b>	
<b>Thesis to be argued</b>	As if a curse hangs over officials in IMF due to global financial and economical crises.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	The authorities also searched Christine Lagarde’s Paris home as part of a formal investigation.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	The “Tapie affair” dragged Nicholas Sarkozy and claims that he sponsored his campaign.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	Former IMF chief Dominique Strauss Kahn was accused of sexual assault.

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<b>Substantiation 4</b>	Former IMF managing director Rodrigo de Rato resigned for personal reasons.
<b>Conclusion</b>	The truce from the curse has been broken with latest court trial.

### Results of the analysis of Argument structure in English Editorials:

<b>Text 1 ‘The future of the senate’</b>	
<b>Thesis to be opposed</b>	The Senate is an unchanging instrument of democracy
<b>Opposition</b>	The Senate reform debate is at risk of being derailed before it gets out of first gear
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	This debate is heading for the same brick wall that halted the republican push
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	No government since 1981 controlled the Senate.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	The senate began as a states house but quickly assumed partisanship.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Politics is about self interest and the first challenge is to nurture debate.

<b>Text 2 ‘Think globally, act locally’</b>	
<b>Thesis to be opposed</b>	Sydney has benefited considerably from its integration into the global economy.
<b>Opposition</b>	From the impassioned globalisation debate emerge many contradictory truths.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	Other regions are moving in the opposite direction; getting worse.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	Sydney regions that the least integrated e.g. Campbeltown are facing worse community services.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	Similar economic and social fragmentation are experienced in western cities e.g. Paris
<b>Conclusion</b>	Remember that the lower wage earners are an integral part of any advanced economy.

<b>Text 3 ‘Law of double jeopardy on trail at last’</b>	
<b>Thesis to be opposed</b>	DNA testing should be used to convict the guilty.
<b>Opposition</b>	Results of DNA testing could be inconclusive.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	The case of Raymond John Carroll who was twice convicted of the murder of Toddler Kennedy.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	Double jeopardy in the Carroll case, has worked against the delivery of justice.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	The defence of double jeopardy raises the specter of public disquiet and outrage.

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<b>Conclusion</b>	Law-makers may discover that the patience of victims and their families, on double jeopardy, does not match their own.
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<b>Text 4 ‘America must act on Syria’</b>	
<b>Thesis to be opposed</b>	Anxieties of many opponents on the left by saying: “We don’ t have the money to take on everybody’ s war.
<b>Opposition</b>	The onus is now on Congress to respond in the face of Syria’s Aug. 21 chemical weapons attack on a Damascus.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	An egregious act of mass murder has occurred. More than 1,400 have died
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	In 2007, Israel launched a surgical strike that destroyed a secret Syrian nuclear complex under construction.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	Iran would certainly feel emboldened to proceed with nuclear weapons development, correctly reasoning that U.S. threats are meaningless.
<b>Conclusion</b>	A rejection of this resolution would be catastrophic, not just for him but for the institution of the presidency and the credibility of the United States.

<b>Text 5 ‘Egypt: a revolution on the brink of self- destruction’</b>	
<b>Thesis to be opposed</b>	The talk among Egyptians is of a ‘second revolution’ to finish the business of the first.
<b>Opposition</b>	the country could lose all it has gained
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	Outbreaks of deadly violence have already been reported. Religious leaders have warned of “civil war”.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi warned of a “dark tunnel” ahead, and urged the rival factions to seek consensus.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Egypt, literally, cannot afford to fight. The Arab world awaits its choice.

<b>Text 6 ‘Two-State Solution on the Line’</b>	
<b>Thesis to be opposed</b>	The decision of the Supreme Court raising the cap on political campaign ads on TV and radio has been hailed as a triumph for the freedom of speech.
<b>Opposition</b>	That is an illusion. It upholds the freedom of speech of only one group, the politicians, and undermines democracy for everyone else.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	The Constitution speaks of equal access to opportunities for public service, and yet the Court will offer our democracy for sale to the highest bidder.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	Money’s true mischief in politics is that it alienates the citizen from the democratic process.

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<b>Conclusion</b>	Where enough money calls the tune, the general public will not be heard... And a cynical public can lose interest in political participation altogether
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#### **Text 7 ‘A War of Sectarians, Not a Sectarian War’**

<b>Thesis to be opposed</b>	The current crisis in Iraq is routinely described by international media as a “sectarian” war. The assumption is that Iraq is being torn apart because its various component parts.
<b>Opposition</b>	The current crisis could best be described as a war of the sectarians, rather than a sectarian war.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	The mass of Iraq’s Sunnis and Shi’ites are not involved in this conflict except as victims.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	Islamic languages, notably Arabic, lack a secular political vocabulary.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	They fight for political objectives disguised as religious aims.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Iraq can and must weather its latest storm.

#### **Text 8 ‘If United Kingdom is to remain united, it must evolve’**

<b>Thesis to be opposed</b>	Kurdish refugees who fled Syria on the weekend wait should stay in camp in southeastern Turkey.
<b>Opposition</b>	As a potential safe haven for Syrian refugees, Canada has yet to open its door more than a crack.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	The refugees, fleeing at the rate of 100,000 a month, have strained neighboring countries’ resources.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	Canadian community and refugee organizations are urging a program to resettle 10,000 Syrians in this country.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	For Canada at least, this is a shameful climb down from the era 35 years ago when we took in 60,000 Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian refugees.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Syrians have been terrorized by the Assad regime and the jihadists fighting it. Instead of screening them to death, we should hold out a hand of hope.

#### **Text 9 ‘Better News on Insurance Premiums’**

<b>Thesis to be opposed</b>	The rate of growth on premiums for employer-based health coverage in the first five months of this year was one of the lowest in 16 years.
<b>Opposition</b>	Despite longstanding concerns that employer-sponsored coverage might become too costly to sustain, that market seems to have stabilized for now.

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<b>Substantiation 1</b>	More than 2,000 small and large employers conducted by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Health Research and Educational Trust.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, federal tax credit subsidies — available for people earning up to 400 percent of the federal poverty level (\$95,400 for a family of four)
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	For individuals, multistate averages won't mean much as there can be a large disparity from one city to another.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Federal tax credit subsidies are helping to make these policies affordable and cushioning the impact of premium increases in some cities.

<b>Text 10 'A climate for change: The country's sinking debate over global warming'</b>	
<b>Thesis to be opposed</b>	Strong underlying political currents help to explain Washington's failure. Voters generally don't put climate change high on their priority lists, and there is evidence that some Americans' belief in the science varies with the weather.
<b>Opposition</b>	The presidential candidates of both major parties favored strong national climate strategies. Regardless of who won that election, serious action seemed inevitable.
<b>Substantiation 1</b>	As the U.S. debate has deteriorated, scientists' warnings have become more dire.
<b>Substantiation 2</b>	Islamic languages, notably Arabic, lack a secular political vocabulary.
<b>Substantiation 3</b>	As Congress dithered, Mr. Obama filled the policy void with executive actions designed to cut greenhouse emissions under authorities Congress entrusted to the Environmental Protection Agency decades ago in the Clean Air Act.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Action of some kind, at some point, is inevitable.