Topical Structure Analysis of Filipino and Chinese Journal Abstracts

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Abstract
This study examined the topical structure of Filipino and Chinese journal abstracts on bilingual education. Specifically, it looked into the physical and topical characteristics of abstracts written by Filipino and Chinese researchers in the field of language. On the physical features, it examined the number of words, clauses, and sentences in a paragraph; number of words and number of clauses in a sentence; and number of words in a clause. In terms of topical features, it analyzed the difference in the internal coherence between Filipino and Chinese-written abstracts in English in terms of parallel progression, extended parallel progression, and sequential progression. The results of the study reveal differences between the two cultures in terms of journal abstracts writing. While Chinese and Filipino abstract writers seem to share similar writing styles, Filipino writers tend to use more wordy clauses and write longer sentences. There were also more progressions found in the Filipino abstracts as compared to the Chinese abstracts.

Keywords: Topical Structure, Contrastive Rhetoric, Filipino and Chinese Journal abstracts

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Introduction

In Kaplan's (1966) study on the structure of formal essays, he stated that the thinking and writing styles of people are influenced and determined by their culture. He described speakers of different languages as having different thought patterns and that these affect the way they organize their thoughts and put them into writing. He further illustrated this in his model of Contrastive Rhetoric where he identified five models for organizing a paper and structuring an argument of speakers of different languages. Kaplan (1966) portrayed English native speakers to be direct and to the point in their argumentative writing as if it were a straight line. Meanwhile, his depiction of other cultures' writing approach was that of different shapes such as in the case of oriental writing which he illustrated as cyclic, indirect and non-assertive in nature.

Kaplan's (1966) model has been the subject of criticism because of its apparent leaning toward cultural misrepresentation and its failure to reflect diversity not only in language but also in culture. Kaplan (1966) pointed out, however, that these models are merely a generic typology of cultural writing patterns and not intended to advocate one cultural style over another nor promote that one is superior in comparison with other culture's academic writing style.

Despite the debates, Simpson (2000) in her comparison of English and Spanish academic writing, seemed to support Kaplan's theory that culture influences rhetorical patterns. She reported that English writers tend to have more repetition of keywords and phrases while Spanish writers link ideas together in a paragraph. A similar comparative study was conducted by Dumanig et. al (2009) focusing on the physical and topical structures of editorials written in English by American and Filipino writers. Aside from the structures, they likewise looked at the coherence and thematic progression patterns evident in the writing system of the two cultures. The results revealed that while there was minimal difference in the writings, Filipino writers tend to be verbose with their use of more words in clauses and longer sentences. In terms of topical progressions, however, both American and Filipino editorial writers in their study showed to have achieved internal coherence in writing (p.63).

Topical Structure Analysis

In order to inspect the relationships between sentences and to describe its coherence, Lautamatti (1987) developed the theory of Topical Structure Analysis (TSA). According to Flores and Yin (2015), TSA offers a way to describe coherence of texts based on the sequencing of topics per sentence within a paragraph. They further stated that coherence is based on how topics are developed within a paragraph. In TSA, Lautamatti (1987) identified three features of a written text and these are: 1) Identification of sentence topics; 2) Determining sentence progression; and 3) Charting the progress of sentence topics. Lautamatti (1987) described progressions or sequence of topics per sentence as cohesive ties and may be classified into three types: parallel progression, sequential progression, and extended parallel progression. Each one is briefly described below:

1. Parallel Progression (The topics are semantically co-inferential)
2. Extended Parallel Progression (A parallel progression is temporarily interrupted by a sequential progression)
3. Sequential Progression (The topics are always different and derived from comment of the previous sentence)

The application of TSA has been the basis of many studies and researches in different areas of academic writing. Flores & Yin (2015) shared that studies with TSA application have gathered empirical evidence that validate the relationship between topical development and coherence. They averred that TSA has been helpful in identifying good and weak written texts. One significant study that attempted to do an analysis of the physical and topical structure of paragraphs gathered from manpower agency websites from three countries in Southeast Asia – the Philippines, Indonesia, and Jakarta was the one of Quinto (2015). The results revealed slight but statistically insignificant differences between and among the sets. Upon further analysis conducted through TSA, it was found out that there is a stronger demand for internal coherence in Philippine manpower discourse (MD) as compared with Indonesian and Malaysia manpower discourses. Quinto (2015) likewise shared that topical progressions in all paragraphs were evident in the Philippine manpower discourses, a characteristic that was not shared by its counterparts (p.91).

Other researches on contrastive rhetoric include investigations on L2 professional writing (Thatcher, 2000; Pariña, 2010), business and technical writing (Woolever, 2001), workplace discourse (Dautermann, 1993; Kleimann, 1993), research articles (Morales, 2001), among others (Quinto, 2015). As stated, the past decades have seen the spread of CR in different fields and while there is a wealth of information on these varied investigations, there remains limited literature on journal abstracts specifically focusing on topical structure analysis. Thus, this paper aims to fill that limited gap.

This study examines the topical structure of Philippine and Chinese journal abstracts which focus on the topic - bilingual education. Specifically, it looks at the physical and topical characteristics of abstracts written by Filipino and Chinese researchers in the field of language. On the physical features, it examines the number of words, clauses, and sentences in a paragraph; number of words and number of clauses in a sentence; and number of words in a clause. In terms of topical features, it analyzes the difference in the internal coherence between Filipino and Chinese-written abstracts in English in terms of parallel progression, extended parallel progression, and sequential progression. The results of the study will hopefully reveal differences in rhetorical characteristics between two cultures in terms of journal abstract writings, eventually substantiating earlier hypothesis on culture having an influence on writing.

Journal Abstracts

A journal abstract is a part of a research or study that is published in conference proceedings. Aside from being the part that readers look at first before reading a journal article, it is also the first that readers see when they search through electronic databases. Journal abstracts help to identify an investigation's objectives, methodology, findings, and conclusions. It also enables the readers to identify the

basic contents of the report as well as its relevance (Moten, 2009) as cited in (Fartousi and Dumanig, 2012). Aside from conforming to a formal structure, most academic journals require that abstracts have limits on word count and they are usually from 200 to 250 words.

To validate the hypothesis that culture influences writing and rhetorical patterns differ among cultures, this study analyzed the differences between Chinese and Filipino journal abstracts in English. Specifically, this study sought to answer the following questions:

1.   How do Chinese journal abstracts differ from the Filipino journal abstracts in terms of: Number of words per paragraph? Number of sentences per paragraph? Number of words per sentence? Number of clauses? Number of clauses per sentence? Number of clauses per paragraph? Number of words per clause?
2.   Is there a difference in the internal coherence between the Chinese and Filipino journal abstracts in English in terms of: Parallel progression? Extended parallel progression? Sequential progression?

Methodology

Selection of Corpus
This study used a total of twenty-six (26) randomly selected abstracts on bilingual education journal articles, 13 of which were written by Chinese and another 13 by Filipino writers and published in the online database, Jstor. The abstracts were analyzed in terms of their physical structure and their topical structure which include three progressions: Parallel progression, Extended Parallel progression, and Sequential progression.

Data Analysis Method
A.   Physical Analysis – Analyzing the physical structure of all data was done manually and partly checked electronically. The researcher manually counted the number of words, sentences, and clauses per sentence in all the abstracts that were used for the study. To validate the correctness of word count, the Microsoft Office program MS Word was used. The journal articles from which all the abstracts were collected were written by Chinese and Filipino writers on a specific topic - Bilingual education.

B.   Topical Structure Analysis – In analyzing the topical structure of the abstracts, the researcher adapted the Topical Structure Analysis (TSA) of Lautamatti (1987). This analysis was used to determine the internal structure of the paragraph, focusing on identifying the topical subject and the three types of thematic progression for each of the sentences in the abstracts. Specifically, the following steps were conducted in identifying the topical structure of the abstracts:

1. Sentences were numbered.
2. Topic (word or phrase) in each sentence was highlighted.
3. A diagram of the topic sentences was constructed.
4. Coherence of ideas was checked.
For the purpose of this study, only the topical subjects of independent clauses were identified.

Research Design

This study is both quantitative and qualitative in nature to demonstrate some of the differences between the Chinese and Filipino abstract writings in English. The quantitative part of the study deals with the general data of the corpus and frequency of occurrence of themes while the qualitative part addresses the explanation of the thematic progression pattern and the coherence of the texts.

Research Instruments

As stated earlier, in order to arrive at a valid result, the study's corpus was randomly selected from an online database, JStor. A total of twenty six (26) journal articles on the topic: Bilingual Education from two cultures – Chinese and Filipino with 13 abstracts in each group. The researcher mainly identified the similarities and differences of the Filipino and Chinese abstracts using Lautamatti's (1987) topical structure analysis. In analyzing the data, two methods were used in the study: the physical analysis and the topical structure analysis. For textual analysis, the data was coded and tabulated.

Results and Discussions

A.   The Physical Analysis - The physical analysis of the paragraphs shows some predictable physical differences as revealed in Table 1.
B.

Table 1: General Data of Abstracts Written in English

	Chinese Abstracts	Filipino Abstracts
Total number of words	1,792	2,407
Average number of words per paragraph	137.85	185.15
Total number of sentences	55	91
Average number of sentences per paragraph	4.23	7
Average words per sentence	25.72	26.93

The general data gathered from the study's abstracts written in English can be seen in Table 1. The information shows a comparison between Chinese and Filipino abstracts in their physical structures specifically in terms of the total number of words, average number of words per paragraph, total number of sentences, average number of sentences per paragraph and average words per sentence.

As shown in the table, the Chinese abstracts are about 75% lesser than the Filipino abstracts in terms of total number of words. On the average, there are 25.72 words per sentence in the Chinese abstracts whereas for Filipino abstracts, the average number of words per sentence totals to 26.93. In terms of the total number of sentences, the Filipino abstracts were 36 sentences higher at 91 versus the Chinese's 55 sentences. The Filipino abstracts are almost 3 sentences more than its counterpart with an average of 7 sentences while it is 4.23 for the Chinese abstracts. The difference

between the abstract writings in English of Chinese and Filipinos as revealed in the results seems to indicate that Chinese write fewer sentences per paragraph as well as use slightly fewer words per sentence as compared to Filipino English writers. In all aspects, the Filipino abstracts used in the study reveal greater scores versus its Chinese counterparts.

Table 2: Clause Data from Abstracts Written in English

	Chinese Abstracts	Filipino Abstracts
Total number of clauses	111	142
Average number of clauses per paragraph	8.54	13.12
Average number of clauses per sentence	1.42	1.89
Average words per clause	13.45	13.12

Another area that the researcher looked at is the clause data of the English abstracts written by Chinese and Filipino writers. Presented in Table 2 are the clause data which include the total number of clauses, average clauses per paragraph, average clauses per sentence and the average words per clause. As can be seen, the Filipino abstracts outweighed the Chinese abstracts in terms of total number of clauses as well as in the average number of clauses per paragraph. However, there does not seem to be much difference in the average number of clauses per sentence for both Chinese and Filipino English abstracts as the latter is only higher by 0.47. In the case of average words per clause, the Chinese abstracts scored 0.33 higher than Filipino English abstracts. This difference may be an indication that Chinese English writers of abstracts use slightly more words or longer clauses than its counterpart.

C.   Topical Structure Analysis

Table 3: Summary of Topical Development of Filipino-Written Journal Abstracts

Abstract No.	Clause	Independent Topic	New Sequential Progression	Parallel Parallel	Extended Progression
1	10	4	3	2	3
2	9	5	1	3	4
3	6	6	0	0	6
4	15	7	5	1	7
5	11	5	4	1	5
6	13	5	6	1	5
7	16	4	4	3	5
8	17	4	10	2	5
9	19	12	5	0	15
10	11	3	8	0	2
11	14	4	6	3	3
12	13	6	5	0	5
13	8	3	4	2	4
Total	162	68	61	18	69

Table 3 presents the summary of topical development of the Filipino-written journal abstracts. The data included are the number of abstracts used, the number of independent clauses in every abstract and the number of new topics that occurred in every paragraph. It also presents the numbers of parallel progression, extended parallel progression and sequential parallel progression in every paragraph. The topical development in the Chinese abstracts contains 162 independent clauses, 68 new topics, 61 parallel progressions, 81 extended parallel progressions and 69 sequential progressions.

On the other hand, Table 4 shows the summary of topical development of Chinese-written abstracts. A total of 130 independent clauses were traced. New topics totaled 65 while the parallel, extended parallel and sequential progressions were 37, 13, and 60, respectively. Aside from providing a summary, the data gathered may be a basis for determining a significant difference between the English abstract writings of the Chinese and Filipino writers.

Table 4: Summary of Topical Development of Chinese-Written Journal Abstracts

Abstract No.	Independent Clause	New Topic	Parallel Sequential Progression	Parallel	Extended Progression
1	9	4	4	0	5
2	9	4	3	1	3
3	13	9	2	1	8
4	9	4	1	1	4
5	10	7	2	0	7
6	9	5	0	3	5
7	8	4	2	1	4
8	11	4	4	1	3
9	6	4	1	1	3
10	7	4	2	1	4
11	18	5	11	2	4
12	5	5	0	0	5
13	16	6	5	1	5
Total	130	65	37	13	60

Topical Structure Analysis

Table 5: Comparative Summary of Totals for Topical Structure Analysis

	Chinese Abstracts	Percent %	Filipino Abstracts	Percent %
Clauses	130		162	
Topics	65	50.0	68	41.98
Parallel Progression	37	28.46	61	37.65
Extended Parallel Progression	13	10.0	18	11.11
Sequential Progression	60	46.15	69	42.59
Total Progression	110	84.62	149	91.98

Table 5 shows a comparative summary of totals for topical structure analysis. As gathered from the data, the clauses found in the Chinese abstracts total 130 or 32 less than the ones (162) found from the Filipino abstracts.

Based on the data indicated on Table 5, the clauses found in the Filipino abstracts were 32 more than the Chinese abstracts. While the topics introduced for the Filipino abstracts were slightly higher at 68, the Chinese abstracts scored higher in terms of percentage. As for the progressions, the Filipino abstracts were significantly higher in all the three types. In terms of the number of new topics in every abstract, it was 50% for the Chinese abstracts while it was 8.02% less for the Filipino abstracts. However, comparing the performance of both Chinese and Filipino writers in terms of repetition of keywords and phrases, the data show a huge difference. In the parallel progression of Chinese and Filipino abstracts, there is a difference of 24 with the latter scoring higher than the former. In this case, the occurrence of parallel progression is more frequent than the sequential and extended parallel progressions. This result would seem to indicate that much of the thematic development was done through repetition of key words and phrases in consecutive sentences. The rheme was also taken as the theme of the topic of the succeeding sentences. Again, while there was minimal difference in both types of abstracts in terms of extended parallel progression, the Filipino abstracts still scored higher by 1.1%. As for sequential progression, there is a difference of 9 with the Filipino abstracts still scoring higher over the Chinese abstracts. In terms of percentage, however, the Chinese abstracts scored 3.56% higher. As can be seen in the above results, there were more progressions found in the Filipino abstracts as compared to the Chinese abstracts.

Although both considered oriental, as far as Kaplan's (1966) classification in his models of contrastive rhetoric is concerned, the study's findings seem to indicate a difference in the rhetorical patterns and writing styles between Chinese and Filipino writers of English as far as journal abstracts are concerned. This phenomenon could be attributed to English being one of the Philippines' two official languages. A contributing factor may also be the variety of English used in the country which is

closely related to the American English (Dumanig, et. al., 2009), a characteristic not shared by Chinese writers of English (p.71).

Conclusion and Recommendations

The result of the study explains how Chinese and Filipino writers construct journal abstracts. Based on the study's corpus, there are noted differences between the two cultures especially in terms of topical progressions. But while there were noted similarities in their writing styles possibly in compliance to a formal structure as expected of journal abstracts, the Filipino abstracts were evidently lengthier as it showed use of more words per paragraph, more clauses and sentences. Still, both Chinese and Filipino writers of English for journal abstracts, as seen in the results, tend to be verbose in their writing styles. Although both scored differently in all types of progressions, the study nevertheless proves that there is internal coherence in writing for both Chinese and Filipino writers.

As can be gleaned from the results, it is evident that sequential progression was the most preferred progression in the abstracts. This was closely followed by parallel progressions while extended parallel progression was the least used in the abstracts. The occurrence of high use of repetitive key terms and phrases in the Chinese and Filipino journal abstracts may be an indication that the writers from the two cultures choose to string their ideas together, a finding that seem to concur with Simpson's previous research comparing native English and Spanish professional writers and finding out that both utilized parallel progressions more in writing journal articles.

In summary, it may be worth-noting that writing patterns seem to be cultural-bound. The difference in the topical progressions patterns between Chinese and Filipino writers in writing English journal abstracts may be highly influenced by their cultural patterns of thought, as earlier suggested by Kaplan (1966). Nonetheless, being oriental writers, both Chinese and Filipinos tend to be indirect and cyclic in nature and this was evident in their verbose style of writing the journal abstracts. It must be noted though that the findings of this study are not conclusive as well as encompassing of the progression types, hence, may not be true for all Chinese and Filipino writers of English in journal abstracts.

For future researchers who would like to replicate this study to further prove its findings, it is suggested that more corpus is used in conducting a topical structure analysis of journal abstracts of Chinese and Filipino writers of English. Future studies on this may likewise be extended to other cultures in order to explore other relationships.

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