An Investigation of Discourse Related to Gaza Strip in pro-Palestine and pro-Israel Media

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Abstract
One of the main functions of language is to allow its users to represent reality and information. We could argue that representation of reality might be influenced and, on some occasions, manipulated reversely by the personal interests and perspectives of interpreters involved and there will always be competition among groups over what is to be taken as the correct, appropriate, or preferred representation. Drawing on the two groups of news reports from the two leading Iranian and American newspapers which have been reported to have different views towards the Gaza crisis, this study aims at investigating the discourse related to Gaza Strip in pro-Israel and pro-Palestine media. The data were analysed following Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The results of Independent Samples t-test did not show significant differences in the frequency and use of the six process types. However, each group of news reports represented the crisis differently and assigned different roles to the parties involved in the crisis. One possible explanation is that these ways of representation of the issues in the Gaza Strip on the parts of the news reporters could be influenced by their ideologies and the dominant views of the sociopolitical context in which the discourse has been produced. The present study is another testimony that brings to light the importance of the notion of context in composition courses.

Key Words: represent reality; news reports; the Gaza crisis; sociopolitical context

I. Introduction

The functions of language are manifolds. Different taxonomies of functions of language have been proposed (e.g., Halliday, 1975; Wilkins, 1976; Atkinson, Kelby, Roca, 1982; Halliday, 1994). What is a recurrent function, interalia, in all these taxonomies is the ideational or "representational" (Halliday, 1975, p. 11) function of language. That is to say, language is employed to represent one's ideologies, personal beliefs, and stance towards a particular issue. Wenden (2005) defines representation as "the language used in a text or talk to assign meaning to groups and their social practices, to events, and to social and ecological conditions and objects" (p. 95)."Ideologies are used to frame, legitimate, or validate opinions and actions in the domain to which they are applicable. Thus, indirectly, they control how people plan and understand their social practices, including their use of language" (Wenden 2005, p.93)van Dijk (2001b) points out that in case of politicians, there are at least two ideologies: first there are professional

ideologies that underlie their functioning as politicians. And second, the socio-political ideologies they adhere to, e.g., as members of political parties or social groups. It seems now axiomatic to say that these ideologically biased mental and context models of the events (see van Dijk, 2001b for a full treatment)could govern the political discourse not only at the level of content but also at the various levels of form and interaction as the results of the present study indicated. Political discourse has been recognized by the theoretical writings of philosophers, e.g. Plato and Aristotle (cf. Chilton and Schaeffner, 2002), communication scholars (e.g. Shapiro, 1988; Gorsevski, 2004), cognitive linguists (e.g. Chilton and Lakoff, 1999; Lakoff, 2004) and discourse analysts (e.g. Fairclough, 1989; Haidar and Rodriguez, 1999; Musolff, 1999; Muntigl, 2002; Wodak, 2001; 2002). Politicians' use of language to represent and reveal their inner and outer experiences towards a particular issue is sometimes manipulated and bended by the society's dominant perspectives about what is the correct, appropriate, or preferred representation(Holquist, 1983; Fairclough, 1992; Wodak, 2001, cited in Wenden, 2005).Panhlevannezhad and Estabatani (2008) argue that two significant points should be put into consideration when analysing a political text:

1. How does language reflect the perspectives of people who have particular political position?

2. Do politicians employ specific language in different situations in order to persuade their audiences of their standpoints?

Leitner (1997) describes media discourse as forms, structures and uses of language and other semiotic codes that are specific to the media. He further adds that media discourse, instead of being media–specific, shows the dominant view of a society, the outlook of the powerful. The undeniable power of the media has inspired many critical studies in many disciplines (e.g., Bayram, 2010;Behnam& Moghtadi,2008;Behnam &Moshtaghi Zenouz,2008;Collet, 2009;Erjavec and Volčič, 2007;Ghazanfari &Rahimnejad, 2009;McKenzie, 2001; Mohammadnia, 2009;van Dijk, 2001b;Yaghoubi, 2007;).Schiffrin, et. al, (2001) propose three main approaches to the study of media discourse characterized as follows:

(i) discourse analytic (addresses discourse-level matters related to larger stretches of talk and text beyond the word or sentence level, including questions of participant, topic, function, and discourse structure, as well as a range of topics that includes news interviews, quotation and reported speech, register issues, politeness, positioning and framing, and so forth.),

(ii) sociolinguistic (involves variation and style in the media or a similar close analysis of language, one of the first examples of which is Labov's (1970) study,) and;

(iii) "nonlinguistic (involves work in political science, media studies, or communication studies paradigms and, to some degree, in cultural studies (Schiffrin, et. al, 2001).

The present project exclusively puts its focus of the study within the frameworks discussed in (i) and (iii). It takes a discourse analytic approach in that it addresses discourse-level matters related to larger stretches of discourse and text beyond the word or sentence level. It also takes a nonlinguistic approach in that it involves work in political science and media studies. One area in which data for media discourse is collected and then analysed is critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a type of "discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted,

reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (van Dajk, 2001a, p. 362). Bhatia (2006) argues that media and politics are particular subjects of CDA because of their manifestly pivotal role as discourse-bearing institutions. Thus along with Bhatia's (2006) argument, we could claim that media use can tell us a great deal about social meanings and stereotypes projected through language and communication, as well as reflect and influence the formation and expression of culture, politics and social life. Given the power of the written and spoken discourse, critical discourse analysis can be used for describing, interpreting, analyzing, and critiquing social life reflected in text. It aims to systematically explore relationships between discursive practices, texts, and events and wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes. Fairclough (1989) points out that "critical" is used in the particular sense aiming to reveal connections, which may be hidden, from people.

Israel and Palestine's involvement in the Gaza crisis has loomed large and been long debated among politicians, journalists, newspaper reporters, correspondents, T V and radio pundits across the world since the conflict between Palestinian and Israel has begun. These developments have, in turn, led to the formation of armed resistance groups against Israel, for instance, Hamas (Milton-Edwards & Farrell 2010). These pundits do not agree on the accountability (Buttny, 1993) of who has started the conflict first. Sambaraju and Kirkwood (2010) argue that members across a variety of contexts treat themselves and others as accountable for a variety of actions and that this accountability is managed in a variety of ways. It, therefore, seems quite axiomatic to witness politicians to take sides with either of these two opposing groups. These trends of partiality have cleared the way to the creation and existence of different standpoints among those working in the realm of mass media. Scholars, historians and journalists still continue to argue over issues of Israeli occupation of Palestine, violence from within Palestine and Israel's aggression against Palestine. These actions have attracted attention and sparked curiosity from academics especially critical discourse analysts to analyse discourse created from different and opposing standpoints on the part of political analysts. In particular, the Gaza crisis between Israel and Hamas in Gaza Strip, which spanned a period from the 27th of December 2008 to the 22nd of January 2009 (Gaza crisis: key maps and timeline 2009) and has taken a heavy toll killing hundreds of people and continued economic blockade of Gaza Strip, has become the main focus of critical discourse analysts over the past years. This simply means that those who are in positions of power choose to maintain their monopolistic stance on by using language to represent their attitudes, and beliefs (hence the function of language as clause as representation in Halliday's (1994) systemic functional linguistics model) and on some occasions by imposing their inner and personal viewpoints on others. With this in mind the purpose of the present project is to investigate how two newspapers which have different attitudes and standpoints towards the same particular issue namely issues related to Gaza Strip represent themselves. For this purpose, we drew on a series of reports from the two newspapers: Kayhan International published in Iran and New York Times published in America. Daily published, these two newspapers are proved to be taking opposing standpoints towards the issue of Gaza Strip conflict and reveal the role that each side of the conflict might have in the initiation and maintenance of it. Two or three news reports from each are set as the corpus of the present study and analysed drawing on the Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Linguistics to see how

the two opposing newspapers represent their attitudes, beliefs in relation to the involvement of the two involved groups (i. e., Israel troops or Palestinian groups) in the Gaza Strip crisis. The findings of the present project could reveal the impact that social factors may have on the way people especially politicians use language to represent their attitudes and beliefs in relation to a particular issue. The implication is that language use does not take place in vacuum. Rather, it is to a great extent is highly influenced by the ambience and context within which it is produced.
Given this, the purpose of the present study is to investigate discourse related to Gaza strip in pro-Palestine and pro-Israel Media. To do this, we draw on a sample of news reports with pro-Palestineand pro-Israelactivists in two newspapers one published in Iran namely Kayhan International and the other published in America, namely New York Times. More particularly, we focus on the explicit linguistic resources which these news reporters draw on to show their either support or opposition towards the Gaza crisis.

Research Question:

How is discourse related to the Gaza Strip crisis represented by reporters in Kayhan International (pro-Palestine news agency) and New York Times (Pro-Israel news agency)?

II.Analytic Framework

As mentioned earlier, this project seeks to investigate the frequency of linguistic resources that both pro-Israel and pro-Palestine news reporters draw on to represent their stance towards the Gaza crisis. To do this, I draw on Halliday's systemic-functional linguistics. Therefore, within that framework, I have intended to indicate how the real intentions, attitudes and viewpoints of the authors of the political reports are represented (hence the ideational function of language). Halliday (1994) introduced systemic functional linguistics as a functional grammar since the conceptual framework on which it is based is a functional rather than a formal one. This simply means that everything whether written or spoken is interpreted in reference to its contexts of use.Each of different strands of meanings - *clause as a message, clause as an exchange*, *and clause as a representation*- constitutes three distinct kinds of meaning embodied in the structure of a clause and co-occur in consonant with other functions from the same strand of meaning. In this study we will focus our attention on the third aspect of the meaning of the clause, its meaning as representation. In simple terms, this is that aspect of meaning when people talk about what a word or a sentence actually means or what Halliday (1994) calls "meaning in the sense of content" (p. 106). With regard to this aspect of meaning, language allows its speakers to represent patterns of experience or enables them to "to build a mental picture of reality, to make sense of what goes on around them and inside them" (Halliday, ibid). Halliday (1994) believes that our impression of experience consists of 'goings-on'- happening, doing, sensing, meaning, being, and becoming. In addition to being a means of giving information and establishing a channel of intercommunication between people, the clause acts as a "mode of reflection, imposing order on the endless variation and flow of events" (p. 117). The grammatical system by means of which this is accomplished is called *transitivity* (Halliday, 1994). This

system construes the world of experience into manageable set of *process types*. A process consists of three components (Halliday, 1994):

      (i) the process itself
      (ii) participants in the process;
      (iii) circumstances associated in the process

The grammatical categories served to distinguish between these two modes of experience (outer and inner), in Halliday's terms, are called *material* and *mental processes*. There is a third component which allows us to relate one fragment of experience to another termed as *relational processes*. On the borderline between material and mental are *behavioural processes* which "represent outer manifestations of inner workings, the acting out of processes consciousness and physiological states" (p. 107). The participant who is behaving is called BEHAVER. The *verbal processes* whose main functions are to establish the "symbolic relationships constructed in human consciousness and enacted in the form of language, like saying and meaning" (ibid) are on the borderline between material and relational processes and the one who does this process is called SAYER. And finally, the *existential processes* which are on the borderline between relational and material processes are concerned with existence or are simply recognised to 'be' or to happen and the object or event which is being said to exist is EXISTENT.

Table 1 summarises the type of processes together with their general category meaning and their principal participant functions associated with each other.

Table 1Process types, their meaning and key participants (Halliday, 1994, p. 143)

Process Type	Category meaning	Participant
material:	'doing'	Actor, Goal
Action	'doing'	
Event	'happening'	
	'behaving'	Behaver
behavioural		
mental:	'sensing'	Senser, Phenomenon
perception	'sensing'	
affection	'feeling'	
cognition	'thinking'	
verbal	'saying'	Sayer, Target
relational		
attribution	'being'	
identification	'attributing'	Carrier, Attribute
	'identifying'	Identified (Token), Identifier (Value) (129)
existential		Existent
	'existing'	

III. Methodology

      The corpus was built from the two groups of news reports from the two daily published Iranian and American newspapers namely Kayhan International and New York Times, respectively. The New York Times is a major American daily newspaper published in New York

City.The New York Times began publishing on September 18, 1851 as the New York Daily Times. It is still published today. Kayhan International was founded in February 1943 Published in Iran as well as in London, the newspaper had a circulation greater than one-million prior to the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The discourse of each newspaper was then critically analyzed according the Hallidayan SFL model of English grammar. The rationale behind the preference and analysis of the news reports over other subcomponents of mass media is the three criteria invoked by Nwogu (1997) namely, *representivity, reputation, and accessibility*. In terms of representivity, the news reports published in these newspapers are fairly representative of the genre (political discourse) in content in relation to the Gaza crisis. But with regard to reputation, attempts were made to ensure that the selected newspapers were popular. Accessibility is the ease with which the articles in the corpus can be obtained.

The whole corpora were read carefully. Then the type and frequency of process types, key participants were counted in context to make sure that all instances were context-sensitive. Then the percentages were calculated to make corpus comparability possible.

IV. Results and discussion

3.1 Overall distribution of all six processes in percentages across the two newspapers analysed

In order to investigate whether the two groups of the newspapers differed in the use and frequency of all the six processes, we calculated the distribution of percentages of all six processes in the two newspapers. As indicated in Table 2, the processes themselves constituted 31.20% and 24.72% of the whole corpus in New York Times and Kayhan International respectively. Despite the difference in the percentages, both newspapers exhibited similar patterns in the frequency of all six processes since the result of the Independent Samples T-Test did not show a significant difference between G1 and G2 (p-value > 0.05).This simply means that the two groups of newspapers showed convergence and drew on approximately identical instances of the processes identified by Halliday (1994) in the English clauses. This convergent use of the processes by the two groups of news reports is one again, represented in Figure 1.

The results obtained implies that representing ideologies (as forms of social cognition) and patterns of experience entails using process types which in Halliday's terms (1994, p. 106) enable all language users to "to build a mental picture of reality, to make sense of what goes on around them and inside them". Although there might exist disparities in the frequencies of each type of the processes (as indicated in Table 3 and 4), revealing one's ideologically based beliefs exhibited in discourse requires utilizing all types of processes.

3.2 Distribution of all the six processes across the two groups of the newspapers
In general terms, both groups of newspapers contained instances of all six basic processes except one process (namely the behavioural one) which is lacking in Kayhan International newspaper. As indicated in Figure 2 and 3, the three processes namely material, verbal and mental processes were the most frequent processes in each of the two newspaper reports analysed. This did not confirm Halliday's (1994) postulation that material, relational and mental

processes are the main processes in the English clauses in that they are the "cornerstones of the grammar in its guise as a theory of experience and present three distinct kinds of configuration, and account for the majority of all clauses in a text" (p.138). This simply means that representing ideologies and patterns of experience (which consist of happening, doing, sensing) is *mainly* carried out through the use of the three types of processes observed in the study. Despite the fact that the present study revealed counterevidence against Hallidayan perspective regarding the three principal processes in the English clauses, this is in line with Yaghoubi's study (2007) which revealed that the two groups of news reports were mostly frequented by the three processes material, verbal, mental. One possible explanation accounting for this observation could be that specific discourse genres or domains, such as those of politics, which might have specific ways of formulating ideology, might require employing specific process types with varying frequencies. This, in fact, invokes van Dijk's (2001b) question: is the expression of ideology in various forms of political discourse very different from the expression of ideology in educational, academic, corporate or legal discourse, for instance?

With regard to the *material* type of process which is the grammatical category served to realise outer modes of experience (actions and events), the Kayhan International news reporters employed more instances of this type of process but not to the extent that they could differ significantly from their American counterparts. The reporters in Kayhan International used the material process mainly to show the Israeli regime as the doer or the 'Actor" of the actions against the Palestinian troops or the initiators of the crisis in the Gaza Strip. One possible explanation is that since the Iranian newspapers (and one could argue the whole dominant Iranian context) are against the Israeli regime and its operations in the Gaza Strip, it seems quite plausible to witness the Kayhan International news reporters to use language to reflect their opposition towards Israeli military troops by attributing to them the role of 'Actors' as the following example for the corpus shows:

The military	frequently	bombs	the Gaza Strip,	saying	the actions…
Actor	Cir: Manner	Pro: material	Goal	Pro: verbal	Goal

As shown in the example above, the military regime of Israel is assigned the role of 'Actor', (*the italic*) the case which was repeatedly observed in the news reported by the Kayhan International reporters. In contrast, in the news reported by the New York Times reporters, the Palestinian groups or whatever groups affiliated to them are assigned the role of 'Actor' performing military actions against the Israeli troops in the Gaza Strip as the following extract from the corpus illustrates:

Other militant Palestinian factions	had frequently fired	rockets	into southern Israel.
Actor	Pro: material	Goal	Beneficiary

All this means that the social contexts (e.g., typical context features which may in turn show up at all levels of discourse, e.g. in intonation, sentence syntax, lexical selection, topicalization or implicitness, among many other properties of talk) within which the texts (here, news reports) are produced influence the use of language (hence the main tenet of SFL: the analysis of texts in relationship to the social context in which it occurs). This confirmed Leitner's (1997) arguments asserting that media discourse shows the dominant view of a society, the outlook of the powerful.

As regards the verbal processes whose main functions are to establish the "symbolic relationships constructed in human consciousness and enacted in the form of language, like saying and meaning" (Halliday, 1994, p. 107) were the second frequent processes in each group of the news reports analysed. Unlike the material processes, this type of process was more frequently employed by the New York Times reporters. Despite Halliday's argument that the 'Sayer' of a verbal process is not necessarily a human participant, the Sayer of the verbal processes, here, are always the human possibly asserting the point that quoting an argument on the part of the human would provide an admissible evidence for a claim.

In relation to mental processes, the two groups of news reporters displayed different patterns in that the New York Times reporters inserted far more instances of this type of process in their news reports. This is in line with Yaghoubi's study (2007) which showed that the News Week reporters drew on far more instances of mental processes compared with their Iranian counterparts in Kayhan International. Although more studies are needed to consolidate the results of these studies, the fewer uses of this type of process on the part of Iranian news reporters could be accounted for by the way certain culture-specific patterns seem to leave their imprints upon the texts created within different linguistic and cultural contexts. This means that these preferences and ideologies might be linked to the locality of cognitive paradigms characteristic of culture-specific discoursal patterns. This takes side with van Dijk's (2001b)postulation that ideologies and their structures may also be seen as the cognitive core of the identity of a group and its members

Like mental processes, the reporters in New York Times were found to employ far more instances of relational processes and existential processes in their news reports. The results go with that of Yaghoubi (2007) which reported that the News Week reporters were inclined to use more examples of these types of processes in their news reports.

Finally, with regard to behavioural processes an interesting result was found in that no instances of these types of processes were observed in the news reports in Kayhan International. The absence of these types of processes which have characteristics in common with mental processes in the news reports in Kayhan International could be another evidence for the argument that preferences might be linked to the locality of cognitive paradigms characteristic of culture-specific discoursal patterns.

3.3. Distribution of key participants in each group of the newspapers

Key participants in each process type are shown in Table 3. As indicated, in order for each process to be accomplished, one or in some cases more than one participant is needed. That is to say, based on the type of process, speakers/writers choose their key participants to represent what they desire to. By the same token in our corpus, the news reporters in the two groups of newspapers analysed are no exceptions in that based on the type of processes in mind, they drew on appropriate key participants to accomplish the process itself. As indicated in Table 3, the key participants in New York Times constituted 41.41% of the whole reports in New York Times and 52.52% in Kayhan International.

Since the material processes were the most frequent process types of all processes in both newspapers, it is safe to expect that their key participants namely, 'Actor' and 'Goal' be the most frequent ones in the two groups of newspapers. As the analysis shows above, in Kayhan International news reports the reporters mostly assign the role of 'Actor' either explicitly to the military regime of Israel or groups affiliated to the regime and the role of 'Goal' either explicitly to the Palestinian groups or to the affiliated groups. In contrast, in the news reported by the New York Times reporters, the Palestinian groups or whatever groups related to them are assigned the role of 'Actor' performing military actions against the Israeli troops in the Gaza Strip. These ways of representing outer and inner experiences, two modes of experiences in Halliday's (1994) terms, could be accounted for by the two different social and political contexts (Iranian and American) out of which the news reports have been produced. That is to say, since Iran and the United States of America have opposing views towards Israel and Palestine, this has obviously influenced the way the reporters reported their news by using variant frequencies of process types and assigning key participants to the party supported by their countries. This is consonant with Panhlevannezhad and Estabatani's arguments (2008) that politicians with particular political positions employ specific language in different situations (which, in turn, reflects their perspectives) in order to persuade their audiences of their standpoints. Thus along with Shapiro (1988), Fairclough (1989) Hodge and Kress (1993), Wodak (2002) and Karlsberg (2005), we could argue that representation of reality might be influenced and, on some occasions, manipulated reversely by the personal interests and perspectives of interpreters involved and there will always be competition among groups over what is to be taken as the correct, appropriate, or preferred representation (Holquist, 1983; Fairclough, 1992; Wodak, 2001, cited in Wenden, 2005) as our results indicated here. This also takes side with van Dijk's (2001b)position that ideologies and the social representations organized by them control the social practices of actors as group members.

V. Conclusion

As discussed, the two groups of news reporters displayed different patterns in that the New York Times reporters inserted varying frequencies of these types of processes in their news reports compared with their Iranian counterparts. This suggests that English language provides its users with different ways of representation their inner and outer experiences which, needless to say, are controlled by social ambiences in which the texts are produced. With regard to the key

participants, although 'Actor' and 'Goal' were the most frequent ones each group of the newspapers, they used them to refer to totally different and opposing parties involved in the Gaza crisis. In Kayhan International news reports, the reporters mostly assign the role of 'Actor' either explicitly to the military regime of Israel or the groups affiliated to the regime and the role of 'Goal' either explicitly to the Palestinian groups or to the affiliated groups. In contrast, in the news reported by the New York Times reporters, the Palestinian groups or whatever groups related to them are assigned the role of 'Actor' performing military actions against the Israeli troops in the Gaza Strip. This might be considered another evidence supporting Wenden's argument (2005, p. 89) that discourse "can be the focus of struggle, i.e. a struggle for the power of representation" or find support for van Dijk's assertion (1998, p. 362) that social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context".Thus, the results of the present study could provide pedagogical implications for novice ESL/EFL writers in that the concept of context and its related issues should be highlighted. That is to say, since the act of writing is "like all human communication, a fundamentally social activity" (Kroll, 1984, p. 179), social elements should be placed importance in the process of text production in composition courses. Thus, ESL/EFL composition teachers can provide enough explicit instruction with their novice writers about linguistic resources writers (especially news writers) draw on to represent themselves in their writings. Some of those explicit linguistic resources are the ones (process types and key participants) examined in this study.

As a limitation of the study, it is to be noted that if we included some other discourse domains, we would come up with an extended generalization about how discourse producers writers in different discourse domains represent their inner and outer experiences. Since it was not possible for us to collect texts from other discourse domains, we limited the field of study to only news reports.

Diachronic examination and analysis of news reports from the two news agencies could be considered one new line of research that the present study brought to attention. That is, news reports from long publication periods could be selected and analysed for the process types and key participants. This trend which has relatively neglected in the literature should show that whether the use and frequency of these elements differ over the course of the time. This line of research could provide much clearer picture about the patterns of use of these elements across longer periods of times.

Acknowledgements

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Table 2The Independent Samples T-Test to Compare Distribution of all six Processes in Two Groups of News Reports (*Italic*=statistically significant difference)

Newspapers	Percentages of all Processes	Sig (p-value)
1	31.207289	1/2= 0.749
2	24.729242	

Note: 1: New York Times 2: Kayhan International

Table 3 Percentages of all key Participants in the Two Newspapers Analysed

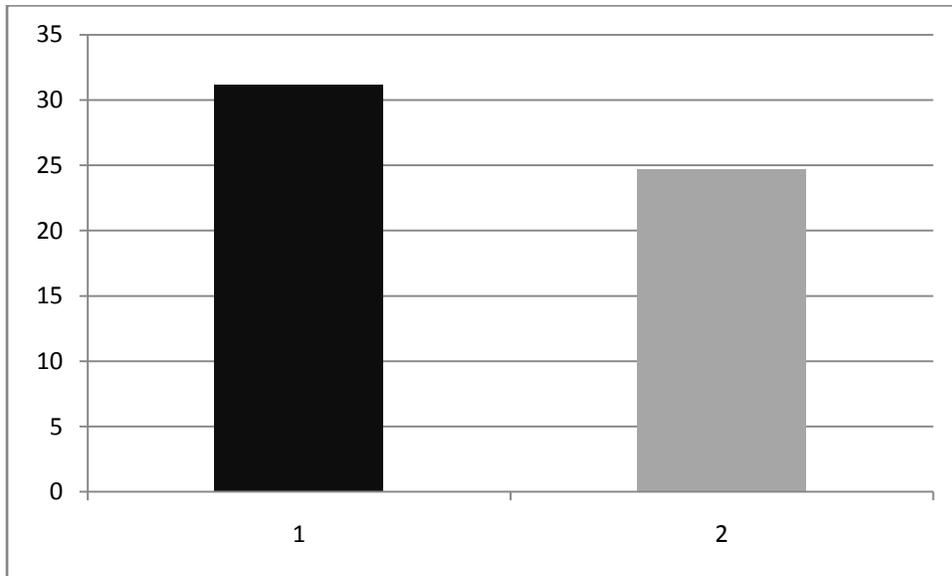|	New York Times	Kayhan International
All Participants	41.41	52.52

Figure 1 Distribution of Percentages of all Six Processes in the Two Newspapers Analysed
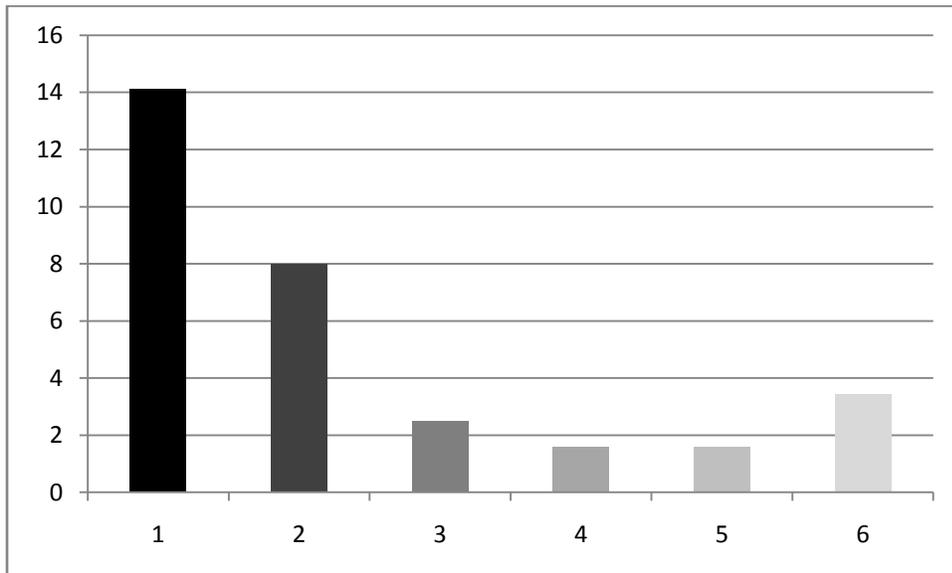*Notes*: **1**: New York Times **2**: Kayhan International

Figure 2 Distributions of the Process Percentages in the New York Times
Notes: **1**: material pro **2**: verbal pro **3**: relational pro **4**: existential pro **5**: behavioural pro **6**: mental pro
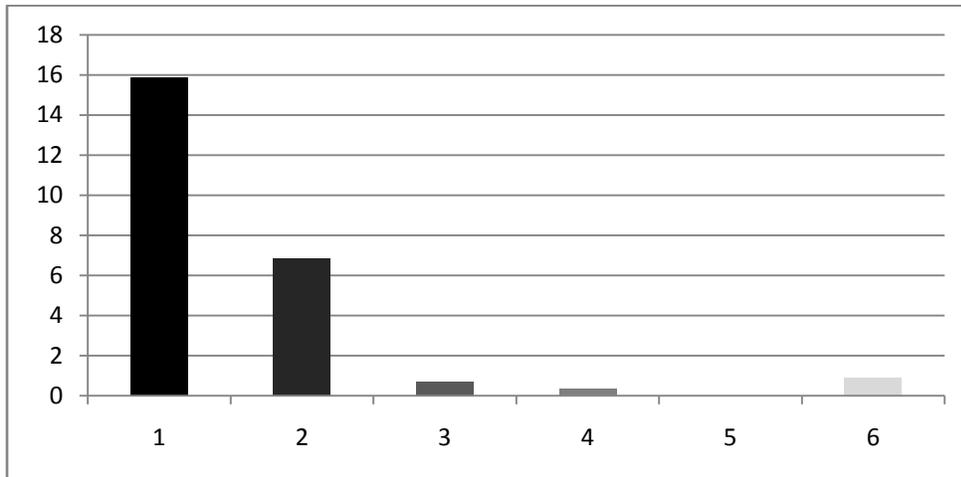
Figure 3 Distribution of the Process Percentages in the Kayhan International
Notes: **1**: material pro **2**: verbal pro **3**: relational pro **4**: existential pro **5**: behavioural pro **6**: mental pro