

## **Schematic Structural Analysis of Newspaper Editorials: A Comparative Study of the New York Times and the New Straits Times**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study compares the rhetorical characteristics of editorials of two different newspapers: The New York Times (NYT) and the New Straits Times (NST) in terms of the functions and occurrences of their rhetorical moves and steps. To realise the objectives, 240 selected editorials (NYT: n=120; NST: n=120) were subjected to content analysis. The analysis was conducted based on a composite framework of Bhatia's (1993), Gunesekar's (1989), Ansary and Babaii's (2005), and So's (2005) models. The analysis showed a typical rhetorical structure for editorials that includes obligatory and optional moves and steps. Variations in the use of the moves and their steps were also observed in both newspapers. Additionally, based on the functions of the moves, it was found that NYT and NST editorials have differing writing stances. To conclude, findings of this study may heighten the awareness of ESP learners on the importance of using appropriate rhetorical moves in achieving a persuasive stance in the writing of editorials. Furthermore, the results of the study may also be an invaluable resource for ESP instructors to tap into for their teaching of successful editorial writing.

*Keywords:* Genre analysis, rhetorical structure, newspaper editorial, contrastive analysis

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The communicative expectation of a discourse community has been a catalyst for the establishment of distinct rhetorical structures in varied discourses. Therefore, an effective means to help writers cope with the challenges of writing might be to sensitise them to the communicative

purpose of a text type and how a particular genre is constructed. A text type, as defined by Swales (1990, p. 58), refers to a set of “communicative events” with shared communicative purposes, as well as “form, style, content, structure and intended audience.” Editorials, therefore, like the texts of any other genre, have their unique rhetorical structures. Through these rhetorical structures, editorials, which are considered as part of the prestigious journalistic genre, position their arguments by displaying competently the newspaper’s political and ideological beliefs (Maddalena & Belmonte, 2011). Van Dijk (1992) claimed that editorials have a powerful role in the public domain, particularly in sequencing their arguments in response to conflicting viewpoints.

Despite their powerful position in the news media, the investigation of newspaper editorials, particularly their rhetorical structures and role in conveying communicative purposes, have not been fully explored in applied linguistics studies. To date, only a few linguists, such as Ansary and Babaii (2005), Bhatia (1993), Bolivar (1994), Bonyadi (2010) and Van Dijk (1993), have conducted studies on the rhetorical structure of editorials, but their focus was mainly on the macro structures (move levels) of the editorials. Bhatia (1993) proposed a model for the editorial’s structure, which involves moves such as Presenting the case, Discussing the alternatives, Reaching a verdict and Recommending action. In the same vein, Van Dijk (1993) and Katajamaki and Koskelain

(2006) also offered a similar framework of rhetorical moves for investigating editorials of English, Swedish and Finnish business newspapers. They found that the editorials had three distinct moves: introductory, intermediate and closing moves. In contrast, Bolivar (1994), by analysing *The Guardian*, discovered that English editorials had three moves: Situation, Development and Recommendation. However, under each move, there were three steps, which he termed as a triad. This triad consists of Lead, Follow and Valuate. Although it can be seen that Bolivar (1994) did try to provide a more in-depth analysis, the framework could not be adopted in the current study as it was seen to be limiting for the data of this study which had indicated more complex rhetorical moves. Finally, Ansary and Babaii’s (2005) analysis of the rhetorical structures of *Washington Times* editorials found the following moves: Run-on Headline, Addressing an Issue, Argumentation and Articulating a Position. Although the moves were clearly defined, they did not clarify how they had used linguistic and contextual elements to establish the structures of the editorials. In short, while all these studies are revealing enough for highlighting the significant features of the editorial genre, some of the categories provided in these models are seen to be too general to provide an in-depth understanding of the rhetorical moves of editorial writings.

From the above discussion, it may be concluded that studies on rhetorical moves of editorials have so far concentrated on the move levels, and they have been

based mostly on English and European newspapers. Studies on editorials of Malaysian newspapers are quite scarce. Only a few researchers like Azlan et al. (2012), Idris (2012) and Stef and Yuen (2014) have investigated Malaysian newspapers. However, their studies concentrated mainly on the ideologies and writing styles of Malaysian news reports. So far, only Fartusi (2012) has investigated the rhetorical moves in the editorials of Malaysian newspapers. Therefore, this paper attempts to scrutinise the generic structure and its function in the editorials of both the NST and NYT by uncovering not only the frequency of use of the rhetorical moves (macro level), but also the steps (micro level) under each move and the functions they play in the editorials.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology of the present study employed a mixed-method approach in which the quantitative analysis sought to investigate the percentage of occurrences of the moves and steps in the sampled editorials. According to Kanoksilapatham (2005), moves which have above 60% occurrences are considered obligatory, while those which have less than 60% of occurrences are considered optional. Apart from the move analysis, a content analysis was carried out to determine the functions of the rhetorical moves and steps employed in the editorials of the NST and NYT.

### *Samples*

To achieve the objectives of the study, a compilation of 240 editorials; 120 from The

New York Times and 120 from New Straits Times were culled from the newspapers' websites, [www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com) and [www.nst.com.my](http://www.nst.com.my), respectively. These two newspapers were selected because they are influential English newspapers in their own societies. The samples were randomly collected from a period of 12 months (January to December of 2013) in order to have a corpus of texts written about various social issues. Although editorials cover a myriad of issues from politics and economics to social issues, only editorials on social issues were selected for analysis.

### *Analytical Framework of Rhetorical Moves and Steps: Pilot Study*

To determine a reliable framework of analysis that is suited to the data of the study, a pilot study was conducted on 60 editorials. The findings showed that generally both editorials, NYT and NST had a total of four moves and 12 steps (see Table 1). As different writers have provided different labels to the moves, this study adopted a synthesised model as the basis on which moves that were not found in the editorials of the current study were deleted (e.g. Lead, Follow and Discussing alternatives), while new moves or steps which were not found in earlier frameworks, but found in the current study, were added. For example, Elaborating issue and Comparing and contrasting were added to Move 2 while Expressing opinion, Expressing expectation and Expressing prediction were added to Move 4. Furthermore, as the terminology of a move may vary from

study to study, this paper chose to adopt a terminology that would convey a clearer communicative intent of the moves. For instance, Addressing an issue was chosen over the term Situation, and instead of argument or analysis, Justifying or refuting events was selected. In order for this effort to be done in a reliable manner, a qualified rater who possessed a PhD and who was an experienced language instructor with more than 30 years of teaching experience in the field of English was engaged to check the analysis of the pilot study. Where there was any discrepancy in the analysis, a consensus was reached between the rater and the researchers. Below is the composite framework of the moves and steps of editorials.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *The General Rhetorical Organisation of NYT and NST Newspaper Editorials*

Overall, the data demonstrated that editorials from both the NYT and NST exhibited the same number of moves and steps. In total, there were four moves and 12 steps (see Table 2).

The moves were **Headline (M1)**, **Presenting the case (M2)**, **Justifying or refuting the events (M3)**, and **Articulating the position (M4)**. Since they occurred in 100% of the sampled articles, they were concluded to be obligatory moves in the editorial structure of both types of editorials. This finding affirms Ansary and Babaii's view (2005) that the editorial genre is unified, or in Bhatia's (1999, p. 22) words, editorials have a "generic integrity."

Although the frequency of use of the macro structure of the American and Malaysian editorials is similar, at the step level, some evidence of disparity in their frequency of occurrence is apparent. The findings are in line with Bhatia's (1993) argument that cultural conventions do not have a significant effect on the structure of a genre at the move level, but they do influence the strategies (steps) taken within a move.

### *Frequencies and Functions of Moves and Steps*

In this section, a comparison of the frequencies and functions of each individual move and their accompanying steps in the editorials of the NST and NYT are discussed in detail.

**Move 1: Headline.** Headlines, which occur in 100% of the editorials in the NYT and NST, is considered an obligatory move for both newspapers. The headline determines the focus of the editorial. This is in line with Ansary and Babaii's (2005) and Gunesekar's (1989) findings in which they found "Headline" as an obligatory element in the structure of editorials. The findings of this study revealed that editors in both the NYT and NST preferred to write the headlines mostly in punchy and short phrases. However, the headlines in the NYT were mostly longer and informative (see example 1, below), while the NST preferred the attention-getting function (see example 2, below). The function of the headlines that the NST displayed reflected Ifantidou's (2009) notion that newspaper

TABLE 1  
Composite Framework of Moves and Steps of Editorials

MOVES AND STEPS	FUNCTION
M1: <i>Headline (H)</i>	Establishes a theme around which the editorial is centered
M2: <i>Presenting the case (PC)</i>	Expresses the existent issue that must be debated
S1: <i>Addressing an issue/problem (AI)</i>	States the issue or problem
S2: <i>Elaborating an issue (EI)</i>	Provides supplementary information about the issue
S3: <i>Providing background information (BI)</i>	Gives background on the issue
S4: <i>Presenting standpoint (SP)</i>	Presents the writer's claim and point of view about the presented issue
M3: <i>Justifying or refuting events (J/RE)</i>	Uses language to justify or refute an event or standpoint, with the aim of securing agreement
S1: <i>Explaining (E)</i>	Explains the issue in detail, its causes and effects and makes analysis
S2: <i>Contextualising argumentation (CA)</i>	Provides evidence for argument by use of examples, attribution or reference
S3: <i>Comparing and contrasting (C)</i>	Compares the issue in one context with the other or one person with the other
M4: <i>Articulating a position (AP)</i>	Describes the angle from which the editorial looks at the issue
S1: <i>Expressing opinion (EO)</i>	Presents the newspaper's feeling or belief about the situation, person or events
S2: <i>Evaluation (EV)</i>	Evaluates the situation or the stated solutions and indicates approval or disapproval of something or someone
S3: <i>Raising suggestions (RS)</i>	Recommends some actions to deal with issue
S4: <i>Expressing prediction (EP)</i>	Shows the newspaper's point of view about the possible outcomes of the issue in future

TABLE 2  
Frequency of Moves and Steps in NYT and NST Editorials

Moves & Steps	NYT%	NST%	Moves & Steps	NYT%	NST%
Move 1	100%	100%	Move 3 Step 2	72.5%	42.5%
Move 2	100%	100%	Move 3 Step 3	5%	23.33%
Move 2 Step 1	100%	100%	Move 4	100%	100%
Move 2 Step 2	60%	69.16%	Move 4 Step 1	65%	65%
Move 2 Step 3	25%	19.16%	Move 4 Step 2	63.33%	50.83%
Move 2 Step 4	80%	50%	Move 4 Step 3	71.66%	54.16%
Move 3	100%	100%	Move 4 Step 4	10.83%	9.16%
Move 3 Step 1	91.66%	86.66%	Move 4 Step 5	50%	29.16%

headlines function as an “attention-getting rather than information-providing device” as headlines normally do not accurately represent the articles they introduce (p. 97). The main function of the headline is to attract the attention of the readers so that they will read the content of the editorials. However, the finding that the headlines in the editorials of the NYT are more informative further confirms the findings of Chana and Tangkiengsirisin (2012), whose study on the comparison of editorials among American, Iranian and Thai newspapers also yielded similar results.

1. Attacks on Muslims in Myanmar (NYT, May 30, 2013)
2. Worsening their Misery (NST, May 23, 2013)

This disparity (informative vs. attention-grabber headline) could possibly be due to the fact that American editorials have readers from around the world, and the topics of the editorials cover events that happened in various countries. Therefore, issues need to be elaborated in a manner that clarifies a particular news story so that readers will not have difficulty understanding the topics of the editorials. Conversely, NST editorials have to use a more creative means to grab the attention of their readers as their readership are mostly within Malaysia, and the readers may already be familiar with the issue discussed (Chana & Tangkiengsirisin, 2012).

**Move 2: Presenting the case.** Presenting the case is also an obligatory move (100%) in the editorials of both the NYT and NST.

This move expresses the existent issue or problem about which the newspaper has decided to convey its position. It familiarises the reader with the details of the issue so as to prepare the readers to accept the arguments of the editorials. Editors accomplish this move by providing support with facts and background information in order to make the arguments plausible and reasonable. This communicative purpose is accomplished through the use of different steps, which are explained in the following sections.

**Move 2 Step 1: Addressing an issue/problem.** Addressing an issue is the most dominant obligatory step of Move 2 (see Table 2) as it is present in 100% of the articles from both the NYT and NST. This step states the problem that is of interest to the newspaper. Addressing an issue presents the case raised in the editorials very briefly and makes the readers aware of what this article is going to discuss. This step indicates that there is a social issue that needs to be addressed and discussed in detail in order to empower the authorities or society to deal with the issue. Examples from the NYT and NST addressing issues are shown below. The step Addressing issues is given in context and it is highlighted in bold (see examples below).

1. **Nearly a million low-wage workers in 10 states will get a modest raise this year.** In Rhode Island, a new law has raised the state’s minimum wage by 35 cents an hour, to \$7.75, which will work out to an average annual raise of

\$510 for 11,000 Rhode Islanders. (NYT, Jan 04, 2013)

2. **Contextually written of thirsty sailors lost at sea, the words would become relevant if the forecasted Selangor water woes come to pass in a few years' time. As it is, many Selangor residents have been hit by water shortages.**

According to them, neither the sun nor rain is to blame. Rather, the problem is perennial and perceived as being caused by population pressure. (NST, Feb 02, 2013)

#### **Move 2 Step 2: Elaborating an issue.**

Elaborating an issue is the second step in Move 2, and although its frequency is much lower than the first step in Move 2, its frequency of 60% and 69.19% in the NYT and NST, respectively, indicated that it is still an obligatory step in editorial writing. Move 2 Step 2 provides detailed information about the issue in order for the reader to have the required knowledge about the event. This is done by using facts, figures and examples. Elaborating enriches the editorials with adequate information, and this is an effective means for newspaper editorials to be recognised as an informed and well-placed authority to discuss issues at hand. In comparing the use of this step between the NST and NYT editorials, it was shown that NST editorials had a higher frequency. Employing more elaboration indicates that NST editorials attempt to be more informative. This informative strategy seems less threatening than stating one's

position explicitly as is reflected in the editorials of NYT. The finding is congruent with the results of Bonyadi (2010), which showed that the introduction in the NYT editorials was more evaluative than factual as compared with the Tehran Times. The examples below show how editors of the NYT and NST employ facts and figures to elaborate issues.

1. Some 650,000 Syrians are now registered as refugees by the United Nations or awaiting registration, an increase of almost 100,000 in the past month alone. That includes about 155,000 in Turkey, 148,000 in Lebanon, 142,000 in Jordan, 73,000 in Iraq and 14,000 in Egypt. Thousands more are not registered. (NYT, Jan 20, 2013)
2. Whereas the policy initially intended to facilitate those earning RM3,000 per month and below for homes costing between RM100,000 and RM300,000, the new guidelines have raised the ceiling to include individuals earning RM5,000 and homes priced RM400,000. (NST, Jan 05, 2013)

**Move 2 Step 4: Providing background information.** In contrast to Addressing and Elaborating an issue, Providing background information is an optional step as it occurred in 25% and 19.16% of editorials from the sampled NYT and NST articles, respectively. This step in Move 2 mostly provides information about the related matters of the issue such as a specific place, or situation

fact about people or events. Both Ansary and Babaii (2005) and Fartusi (2012) also found Providing background information as an optional structural element in newspaper editorials.

The difference in the frequency of use of Providing background information by the NYT (25%) and NST (19.16%) could be attributed to the type of audience that the newspapers serve. The NYT is a newspaper with international readership. Interacting with a wide readership, the editors would have the responsibility to ensure that global readers clearly understand the context of the issue. This notion was noted by Chana and Tangkiengsirisin (2012), who stated that international newspapers provide news to a wider variety of audience who perhaps do not follow a localised news situation as often as readers of local newspapers. Thus, providing background information is necessary for NYT editorials so that the relevant context is provided for the readers. For this reason, background events could be found more frequently in NYT editorials than in the NST. The examples below illustrate Providing background information in both the NYT and NST, respectively.

1. Stationing police in schools, while common today, was virtually unknown during the 1970s. Things began to change with the surge of juvenile crime during the '80s, followed by an overreaction among school officials. Then came the 1999 Columbine High School shooting outside Denver, which prompted a surge in financing for

specialized police. In the mid-1970s, police patrolled about 1 percent of schools. (NYT, April 18, 2013)

2. It all began in 1983 at the behest of then Prime Minister Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad. In partnership with major Japanese car manufacturer Mitsubishi, the first Proton Saga rolled off the production line in 1985. Marking Malaysia's venture into heavy industry, Perusahaan Otomobil Nasional, Proton, developed the national automobile manufacturing industry to what it is today. (NST, Aug 19, 2013)

#### **Move 2 Step 5: Presenting standpoint.**

This step presents the writer's claim with respect to the issue raised. This finding is in line with Bonyadi's (2010) study, which indicated that the first move, Introduction, which is similar to Move 2, Presenting the case, in this study, not only provides a summary of the news events, but also involves evaluative stance.

The findings shown in Table 2 reveal that Move 2 Step 5 is an obligatory step in the NYT (80%), but is an optional one in the NST (50%). The findings reveal that, unlike its American counterpart, which follows an argumentative style, Malaysian newspapers prefer a more explanatory stance. This dissimilarity between American and Malaysian editorials regarding evaluating or presenting standpoints corresponds with the findings of Bonyadi (2010). The study

reported that the Introduction section in the Tehran Times editorials, a non-native editorial, was less evaluative than that of The New York Times. The fact that Malaysian editors tend to take a neutral stance showed that they are more sensitive towards the impact of their writing on their readers. In contrast, this authoritative and bold position of the NYT in expressing its stance from the opening paragraph of an editorial could be due to its journalistic belief of reporting without fear or favour (see [www.nytimes.com/1996/08/19/opinion/without-fear-or-favor.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1996/08/19/opinion/without-fear-or-favor.html)). Examples of Presenting standpoint are shown below.

1. The bipartisan immigration bill that passed the Senate Judiciary Committee on Tuesday **has many serious hurdles ahead. It is the most serious and worthy attempt to fix immigration in a generation, but it cannot help reflecting the poisoned politics of today, with its heavy tilt toward needless border enforcement and a deficiency in equal rights.** (NYT, May 21, 2013)
2. The Election Commission (EC) promises the country a “best ever” general election (GE). Set for May 5, 2013, with April 20 nomination day, this will offer candidates the longest campaign period in recent elections. **As the EC chairman makes clear there is nothing the EC can do if political parties are bent on creating chaos.** (NST, April 12, 2013)

### **Move 3: Justifying or refuting events.**

This move is a progression from Move 2 to Move 4, and, therefore, tends to be argumentative. It uses language to justify or refute an event or standpoint, with the aim of securing readers’ endorsement. It involves presentation of arguments with respect to the standpoint presented in Move 2 Step 5. It uses contextualisation and backing up of claims through the use of facts and figures to support the argument. The function and frequency of these steps are described in the following sections.

**Move 3 Step 1: Explaining.** Explaining is an obligatory step that follows Addressing an issue (M2S1), and it has the highest frequency among the various steps listed in the framework (see Table 2). They accounted for 91.6% and 86.6%, respectively in the NYT and NST articles. This step explains the issue in detail and the events. It attempts to present and elaborate different aspects of the stated issue and expresses differing viewpoints with specifics of the event (see example 1, below). It explains the advantages and disadvantages of some actions taken, and employing such a writing strategy assists the editor to support his or her point of view. This strategy can help strengthen the conditions for acceptance or rejection of a particular action by the readers (see example 2, below).

1. Putrajaya was planned and laid out to enhance government efficiency and productivity, with government quarters arranged in the middle ring of the city so that government workers would be able to get to

work easily within 15 minutes. The quarters are provided for the duration a civil servant serves in the area. Once that person retires or is posted elsewhere, the quarters then goes (sic) to an incoming civil servant. (NST, April 16, 2013)

2. Students who exercise have lower body fat, greater muscular strength, and better cardiovascular and mental health. Children who are more active are better able to focus their attention, are quicker to perform simple tasks, and have better working memories and problem solving skills than less-active children. They also perform better on standardized academic tests. Academic performance is influenced by factors like parental involvement and socioeconomic status. (NYT, May 24, 2013)

**Move 3 Step 2: Contextualising argumentation.** Facts and evidence play a pivotal role in supporting expressed opinions in argumentative discourse in order to make them plausible and acceptable. To realise this objective, newspaper editorials in both the NYT and NST use Move 3 Step 2, Contextualising argumentation. Interestingly, this step is obligatory in the NYT with a percentage of 74.5%, while it is only an optional step in the NST with only 42.5%. As stated above, evidence is considered as a basis for arguments and it helps to increase the editorial persuasive stance. Both Van Dijk (1993) and Katajamaki

and Koskelain (2006) have identified evidence in their data. One plausible reason as to why the NYT has a higher frequency of occurrence of this step could be that being an outstanding international newspaper which serves a worldwide readership, the NYT has a great influence on the masses and the elite. So, to achieve this goal successfully, it provides readers with adequate evidence. Examples of such evidence are shown below.

1. **A study of 66 patients by a team at Ryerson University in Toronto found that the cognitive therapy for insomnia, a brief and less intense form of talk therapy than many psychiatric patients are accustomed to, worked surprisingly well. Some 87 percent of the patients whose insomnia was resolved in four treatment sessions also had their depression symptoms disappear, almost twice the rate of those whose insomnia was not cured.** (NYT, Nov 23, 2013)
2. **Malaysia, according to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, is desirous of fostering a win-win relationship with Singapore.** (NST, Feb 20, 2013)

**Move 3 Step 3: Comparing and contrasting.** The data revealed that Move 3 Step 3 was an optional step in both the NYT and NST. The frequency of occurrence in the NYT samples was marginal (5%) when compared with the NST (23.2%). The

function of Move 3 Step 3 is to compare and contrast between different situations and contexts of the addressed issue. Different from the findings of this study, Gunesekar (1989) found comparison as one of the dominant linguistic elements in the editorials of newspapers in Singapore, India and Sri Lanka.

The disparity in use of this step in the NYT and NST newspapers could be attributed to the political and economic positions of The United States and Malaysia in the world. It seems likely that being the newspaper of a super power, NYT attempts to convey its authority by not comparing the USA with other countries. On the other hand, the NST, as the official newspaper of the government, frequently compares Malaysia with other countries and attempts to showcase Malaysia as having social, economic and political standing that is better than other Asian or even American and European countries (see examples, below).

1. **There are considerably fewer homeless people on New York's streets than there were a decade ago.** But there are more than 52,000 people in homeless shelters, including about 22,000 children—both record highs. One of the tragedies behind those impersonal numbers was the focus of a five-part series, titled “Invisible Child”. (NYT, Dec 13, 2013)
2. **Unlike China, for example, Malaysia does not impose restrictions on search engines such as Google and others.**

The sense that the technology is useful and yet dangerous is not the informing philosophy here. Rather, there is a need to educate the public that as in every other area of life, ethics apply. (NST, June14, 2013)

#### **Move 4: Articulating a position.**

This move determines the editor's position towards the issue discussed in previous moves. It specifies the angle from which the writer considers the case and attempts to sway the public to his or her point of view. The various steps under this move are discussed at length below.

##### **Move 4 Step 1: Expressing opinion.**

This step involves the presentation of the editor's feelings or beliefs about the issue discussed. The editor, by stating his or her opinion, attempts to convince the reader to see consequences of an event the same way as the writer. However, this step does not assess the value of any action or situation, but merely presents the opinion of the editorial (see examples below). As is shown in Table 2, the frequency of use of Expressing opinion is 65% of the editorials in the two sets of newspaper samples. Among the steps under Move 4, this step has the highest frequency of occurrence in the NST. However, for the NYT, it is the second highest after Raising suggestions. This is not surprising because an editorial is a newspaper column designed specifically for editors to express their thoughts on the issue of the day. At 65%, the step is obligatory, and, therefore, it is reflective of the main function of an editorial.

1. **It is obvious that gun violence is a public health threat.** A letter this month to Vice President Joseph Biden Jr.'s gun violence commission from more than 100 researchers in public health and related fields pointed out that mortality rates from almost every major cause of death have declined drastically over the past half century. (NYT, Jan 26, 2013)
2. Analysts do not expect the convention to be broken at the next elections but believe this is something the electorate should start considering. **And, indeed, for a multicultural nation, as Indonesia is, it is certainly important for politics to be representative and inclusive.** (NST, Jan 17, 2013)

**Move 4 Step 2: Evaluation.** Evaluation is an obligatory step of Move 4 for the NYT as it is employed in 63.33% of the data, while it is optional for the NST (50.83%). The results revealed that editorials, in order to have a considerable influence on their readers, tend to have a more decisive and critical view towards issues raised. This comes in the form of judgments or evaluation of the issue. In other words, it evaluates the situation and indicates approval or disapproval of the issue in a more conclusive and decisive style of writing. The same rhetorical element has been found in Bhatia's (1993) and So's (2005) studies. Because of its global

standing, the NYT editors are able to express their evaluation more explicitly. However, the NST, being part of the government's machinery, has the lowest frequency when it comes to passing judgments, especially towards the government.

1. President Obama will have to persuade Congressional leaders and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of Israel that it is necessary and possible to reach a credible deal with Iran. **Sanctions were never supposed to be an end in themselves but a tool to facilitate a deal, and Mr. Obama has done a good job of ratcheting up the pressure.** (NYT, June 17, 2013)
2. **On these grounds Xenophon is, by our legal definition at least, an undesirable.** For, under section 8(3) of the Immigration Act 1955/1963 it says that any person who is a member of or affiliated with any organization entertaining or teaching disbelief in or opposition to established government as falling under a prohibited class category. **He is obviously not Malaysia friendly given his attempt to damage Malaysia's palm oil industry and his willingness to be party to the opposition's attempt to undermine a democratically established government.** (NST, Feb 18, 2013)

**Move 4 Step 3: Raising suggestions.**

Move 4 Step 3, Raising suggestions, is one of the most explicit strategies in influencing readers as it directly addresses them and proposes that the readers take certain action to resolve the addressed issue (see examples below). Hulteng (1973) also believes in the persuasiveness of directives as they enable writers to engage readers in a direct manner.

As illustrated in Table 2, 71.66% of Move 4 Step 3 was found in the NYT corpus, and, therefore, it is an obligatory step for the American newspaper, while the NST had only 54.16%. As a result, this step is an optional strategy for the Malaysian counterpart. This finding corresponds with Bonyadi's (2010) study, which showed that Directives is the dominant rhetorical strategy in the NYT when compared with the Tehran Times as an Asian newspaper. In fact, this finding is in line with earlier findings of this study, which revealed yet again the authorial stance of NYT as compared with the NST.

1. This issue is not going away. The true supporters of background checks have promised another vote in the months to come. **Those who really want to keep guns out of the wrong hands will have to stand up and prove it.** (NYT, May 24, 2013)
2. Reports have it that the Genting tragedy bus driver was angry with another road user. If true, this is absolutely unacceptable, **which places another neglected proposal on the A-list of must do: a system to ensure that drivers are in good**

**health and mentally suited to face the challenges of his route that must be put in place immediately.**

(NST, Aug 26, 2013)

**Move 4 Step 4: Expressing prediction.**

This step acts as a kind of forecast about possible consequences of any actions taken. Moreover, it sometimes expresses the newspaper's concerns or positive attitude towards actions that are going to be taken. Although the occurrence of Move 4 Step 5 is different in the NYT and NST, which is 50% and 29.16%, respectively, expressing prediction is similarly optional to both the American and Malaysian newspapers. However, the percentage of occurrence was much higher in the NYT than in the NST. The discrepancy in the results yet again confirmed previous findings about the authoritative stance of the NYT. It seems that the editors of the NYT are not afraid of predicting negative consequences of a particular action related to an issue. In contrast, the NST tends to avoid such comments so as to avoid creating concerns and tension in society, thereby assisting the government to stabilise the sociopolitical situation of the country.

1. The Fair Share Housing Center, noted that the proposal would free hostile municipalities to build "very few homes, or no homes at all." **This would turn back to (sic) the clock to a time when communities could openly discriminate against poor and working-class residents.** (NYT, Jan 28, 2013)

2. The gang rape should be of particular concern because it could signal the possible presence of a sports rape culture documented in other countries like the United States and Australia, in which gang rape is considered a bonding activity between team members. **If security is not taken seriously, the safety of participants and the interest of sports will be let down.** (NST, July 09, 2013)

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, the overall rhetorical structure of editorials in NYT and NST are complex. Although at the macro level they are similar in terms of their frequency of use, at the micro level, disparity in the frequency of use is observed. The fact that they have a typical macro-structure further affirmed Bhatia's (1993, p. 68) view that the editorial is a "universally conventionalized" genre. Additionally, through the analysis of their functions, it could be deduced that the NST tended to adopt a more informative stance, while the NYT was more authoritative and persuasive through their frequent use of evaluative rhetorical moves. However, in terms of the steps used, there were disparities in their use. This could be due to contextual factors or the social issues addressed. In a way, using the authoritative stance seems to indicate the social status of the NYT as a paper that enjoys absolute freedom to express its opinion on the topics of discussion. This liberty allows the editors to employ appropriate rhetorical moves and

steps to successfully engage the readers and "build bridges" between their points of view and their readers (Bartholomae, 1986).

In contrast, the NST tended to take less risks and had a more tentative stance with less usage of evaluation, presenting standpoint and directives. This style of writing could be related to the different types of audience that the NST addresses in Malaysia. As Malaysia has multiple ethnicities and religions, the editors have a social role to play in nation building. Therefore, they are more inclined to take a stance that would not cause any conflict in the society. Such sensitivity in journalistic reporting is affirmed by Pennock (2000), who stated that within the news media, the type of audience determines how its different sub-genres should be structured and its language should be selected. This could be the main reason why NST rarely criticises the government and usually attempts to justify the issues that the government is responsible for. Furthermore, government intervention could be another reason for the NST to take a less authoritative stance in its editorials. According to Manan (2001), government interventions come in the form of sending cautions or withdrawal of license warnings. According to the Malaysia Annual Report (Reporters without Borders, 2007), there is a regular check by the government on sensitive racial issues reported in the media, and this puts pressure on the media, which leads them to self-censor or withhold from voicing controversial issues. In a nutshell, analysing the rhetorical moves and steps together with their functions in

the NYT and NST editorials has provided an insight not only into the editors' stance towards the topic of discussion, but has also revealed the extent to which the editorials of the two newspapers have a universal rhetorical structure.

Additionally, the composite framework which was specifically drawn up for the study was capable of teasing out the various moves and steps in the NYT and NST editorials. As stated earlier, there are four macro moves and 12 steps. Although the comprehensive framework, which was data driven, seems suited for the analysis of the data of this study, it needs further confirmation by future researchers. As can be seen in the review of various models of rhetorical moves in the literature (see Bonyadi, 2010; Gunesekara, 1989; Van Dijk, 1993), the classification of moves and steps has never been watertight. Depending on the types of text under study, the best framework would normally be the one which is built from the data of the study.

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