

The notions of objectivity and journalistic voice in Arabic language hard news reporting

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ABSTRACT

A couple of widely-observed and much-discussed related notions within news journalism are ‘objectivity’ and ‘journalistic voice’. They have been the focus of several linguistic and discourse analysis studies on English and across various languages and cultures. However, to date, they have not been thoroughly explored in Arabic news journalism. Therefore, this study attempts to close this gap by linguistically examining Arabic hard news reporting in relation to the key register features associated with these twin aspects. In particular, it is concerned with investigating patterns in the use of attitudinal language and attribution in such a journalistic tradition. To achieve this aim, it put together a corpus of thirty Arabic hard news reports collected from two prominent media organizations in the Middle Eastern region: Aljazeera and Alarabiya. It also drew on the insights offered by the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)-based news journalism scholarship: specifically, the literature outlined in the Appraisal theory. The analysis carried out indicate that some Arabic hard news reports bear a similarity to English ones with respect to use of attitudinal meanings and modes of attribution. They operate in reporter voice, containing instances of inscribed authorial Appreciation and neutral and non-neutral reporting verbs.

Keywords: Appraisal, Arabic hard news reporting, journalistic voice, media discourse analysis, objectivity

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INTRODUCTION

The media is the main social means of mass communication, serving members of society through providing local and international news, educational and cultural information, entertainment, and so on. It is a powerful tool in addressing individuals and entities as well as in conveying social, political and economic issues to authorities and officials. It is one of the pillars of cultural growth, having the potential to both express a plurality of views and promote transparency in society.

Unsurprisingly, then, many linguists and discourse analysts have paid close attention to news media texts in order to examine their social functionality, communicative potential, and genre and register features. Thus, several studies have been conducted on English language news journalism (see, for example, Bell, 1991; Fairclough, 1995; Fowler, 1991; Iedema et al., 1994; Nádraská, 2017; van Dijk, 1988; White, 1998; Wodak, 1989), as well as on journalism of other languages and cultures such as Thai (Knox and Patpong, 2008); Japanese (Shibata, 2021; Washitake, 2017); Chinese, Indonesian and French (Thomson et al., 2008); Vietnamese (Vo, 2011); Persian (Makki, 2016; Makki and White, 2018); and Spanish (Lukin, 2008).

Several studies have also been carried out with a focus on news journalism in Arabic. Nevertheless, some of those studies did not explore linguistic aspects but only addressed issues around culture and translation (for instance, Abdul-Mageed and Herring, 2008; Duffy, 2013; Ethelb, 2019; Fahmy and AlEmad, 2011; Hijjo and Kadhim, 2017). In contrast, some others were linguistic-based studies which attended to various genre and register properties of Arabic news media texts (for example, Alshehri, 2024; Al-Jayrudy, 2011; Potter, 2016). However, they were concerned with macro-level aspects. That is to say, the study conducted by Alshehri (2024) only looked at the textual/structural features of Arabic accident news stories, whereas those undertaken by Al-Jayrudy (2011) and Potter (2016) explored the effectiveness of Theme and Rheme analysis in determining ideological

representations in Arabic news reports. The current study is directed at investigating an important micro-level register and stylistic property in Arabic news media texts: what is termed the ‘evaluative key’. According to journalism discourse analysis developed within Systemic Functional Linguistics (hereafter SFL), this refers to the nature of evaluative interpretations provided by the journalist writers directly rather than those made by external sources within attributed material (see, for example, Iedema et al., 1994; Martin & White, 2005).

Following the SFL literature cited above, the present study focuses on the notion of ‘journalistic voice’, which is associated with what is so-called ‘media objectivity’ – i.e., the view that journalists, in their news articles, report ‘just the facts’ and avoid presenting their viewpoints. To be more precise, it is a taxonomic system for classifying journalistic texts according to the deployment of evaluative language. This categorization relies on work located within the ‘Appraisal’ framework or theory (Martin, 2000; White, 2002). This work has been put forward by scholars interested in devising an analytical model to address how language can be used to construe attitude and allow speakers/writers to evaluatively position themselves against other speakers’/writers’ points of view (Iedema et al., 1994; Martin & White, 2005). The SFL-based journalistic literature also observed that ‘attribution’ – i.e., reports made by external sources – is another pillar that can be used to examine objectivity in hard news reporting (White, 1998, 2012).

The present study is of significance for audiences concerned with Arabic language journalism – such as those involved in either professional journalism education or vocationally-oriented journalism courses – in offering them a detailed account of (1) how ‘voices’ in such a journalistic tradition can be varied according to the use of evaluative language; (2) how viewpoints of external sources can be presented differently via deployment of attribution; (3) how journalists can manage attitudinal meanings through conveying ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ assessments; and (4) how they produce news reports which are appropriately ‘objective’ in style. It, thus, seeks to address the following questions: (1) What are the attitudinal meanings in Arabic hard news reports? (2) What are the modes of attribution in Arabic hard news reports? (3) What are the types of journalistic voices in Arabic hard news reports?

Hard news reporting texts are construed here as those stories, covering serious topics, which are divided by White (1997, 1998) into ‘Event Stories’ and ‘Issues Report.’

The event stories purport to describe socially disruptive events at first hand, to present a largely unqualified, unmodulated account of what happened, as if the reporter had been present at the time. They act primarily to present unmediated descriptions of ‘real world’ happenings. In contrast, the issues reports present statements about a supposed ‘reality’ rather than that ‘reality’ in its own right and hence represent the social-order disruption not as a ‘phenomenon’ but as ‘metaphenomenon’ (White 1997: 106).

The Event Stories are closely associated with natural disasters, civil unrest, accidents, crimes and warfare, while Issues Reports are concerned with politics and related fields (White, 1997, 1998).

This study takes into account the situation in Arabic news journalism and explores how the concept of objectivity is construed and practiced in such a journalistic culture: specifically, in its hard news reporting texts. It also offers several case studies of analyses of Arabic language hard news reports and compares them with what the SFL-based journalism literature found in English language hard news reports as regards types of ‘voices’ or ‘styles’. To do so, I determine below how these two notions – of media objectivity and journalistic voice – can be attended to linguistically according to the SFL scholarly literature on hard news reporting, and what attitudinal evaluations and modes of attribution can be observed in Arabic journalistic tradition.

The two notions of objectivity and journalistic voice have recurred with considerable regularity within news training scholarly literature, and, thus, have been the focus of many media discourse analysis studies. As previously outlined, they have been linguistically dealt with by drawing on the Appraisal framework devised within SFL. Accordingly, the insights provided below are key to the present study.

Within Appraisal framework, three broad types of evaluative meaning-making are observed: (1) meanings where the speaker/writer conveys positive or negative assessments – termed ‘Attitude’; (2)

meanings where the speaker/writer takes a stance in relation to previous utterances given on a topic – termed ‘Engagement’; and (3) meanings where the speaker/writer upscales or downscales attitudinal assessment – termed ‘Graduation’ (Martin & White, 2005).

The sub-systems of Attitude and Engagement are of immediate relevance to the present study since, as will be outlined below, the three broad voices or styles in journalistic discourse and types of attribution, i.e., reporting verbs, have been proposed based on the patterns of use of attitudinal meanings and resources of Engagement respectively (see, for instance, Iedema et al., 1994; Martin & White, 2005; White, 2000, 2012). These sub-systems will be briefly introduced below.

Attitudinal meanings are divided into (1) meanings conveying positive or negative emotional reactions of human individuals – termed ‘Affect’; (2) meanings conveying positive or negative assessments of human behavior and character – termed ‘Judgment’; and (3) meanings conveying positive or negative assessments of entities, situations and processes – termed ‘Appreciation’ (Martin & White, 2005).

Engagement is concerned with “the linguistic resources by which speakers/writers adopt a stance towards the value positions being referenced by the text and with respect to those they address” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 92). Through such resources, speakers/writers can adjust or negotiate dialogistic positioning of their utterances. In order to identify those linguistic options, Martin and White (2005) propose that utterances are divided into: ‘monogloss’ (utterances that do not recognize other dialogistic voices – single voice) and ‘heterogloss’ (utterances that recognize other dialogistic voices – a multiplicity of voices). Heteroglossic resources are then divided into two groups based on their intersubjective functionality: ‘dialogistic contraction’ and ‘dialogistic expansion’. As Martin and White (2005, p. 102) write:

The distinction turns on the degree to which an utterance, by dint of one or more of these locutions, actively makes allowances for dialogically alternative positions and voices (dialogic expansion), or alternatively, acts to challenge, fend off or restrict the scope of such (dialogic contraction).

The sub-system of dialogistic expansion is of utmost importance to the current study, and thus it will be briefly outlined below.

According to Martin and White (2005), dialogistically expansive resources refer to those meanings by which propositions are grounded in the subjectivity of some speakers/writers. Within this sub-system, there are two mechanisms: ‘Entertain’ and ‘Attribute’. Entertain values are those associated with instances of ‘Modality’ (e.g. may, perhaps, might), ‘Evidentiality’ (e.g. appears, seems) and ‘Mental Processes’ (e.g. think, believe). Attribute values are those associated with reporting verbs – the concern in this study.

As previously discussed, the first focus of this study is on the use of attitudinal meanings in Arabic hard news reporting texts. According to Iedema et al. (1994), hard news reporting texts can be construed as objective through the incidence and coincidence of particular evaluative meanings. That is, there are three settings of journalistic voices, which mainly differ with respect to the deployment of inscribed/explicit authorial attitudinal meanings. These voices – also termed ‘keys’ – are: ‘reporter voice’; ‘correspondent voice’; and ‘commentator voice’, which include various patterns in the use of explicit, authorial Attitude (Martin & White, 2005). Precisely, ‘reporter voice’ is shown to be used by ‘general’ journalists to report hard news – i.e., events such as disasters, crimes, accidents, protests and warfare; ‘correspondent voice’ is shown to be used by ‘specialists’, i.e., ‘correspondents’, in the context of some forms of political news reporting; and ‘commentator voice’ is shown to be used with the writing of argumentative and subjective texts, such as editorials, opinion pieces and commentaries (Martin & White, 2005; White & Thomson, 2008).

With respect to deployment of attitudinal language in reporter voice texts, the journalists substantially curtail authorial explicitly positive or negative instances of Judgment, whereas they explicitly assert various types of positive or negative instances of Judgment in correspondent voice and commentator voice texts (Martin & White, 2005). The system of journalistic voices is offered in **Figure 1** below.

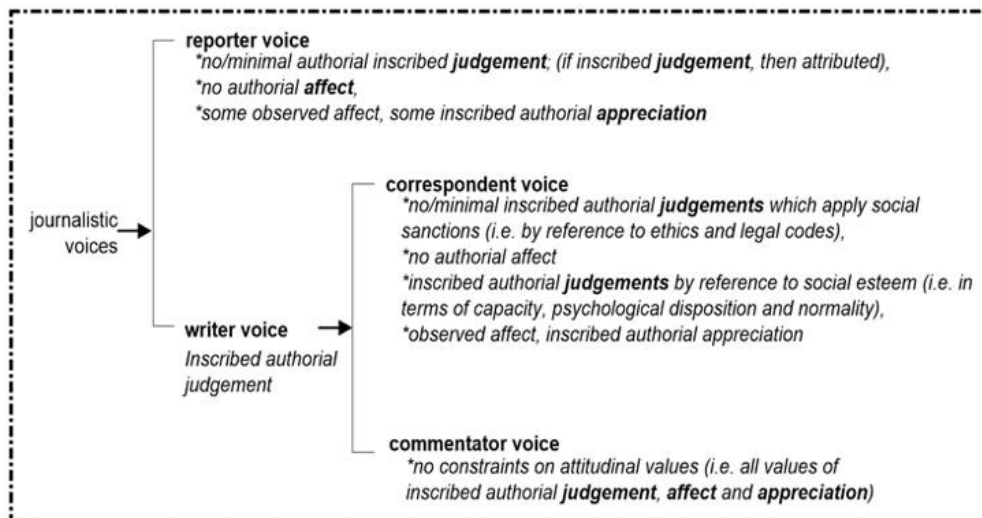


Figure 1. Journalistic Voices (Martin & White, 2005, p. 178)

Martin and White (2005, p. 183) also observe that reporter voice backgrounds the author's attitudinal role through maintaining "a regime of strategic impersonalization." Similarly, White and Thomson (2008, p. 19) note that it is "a device by which it becomes possible for an author to advance a particular value position while at the same time backgrounding his/her attitudinal involvement, at least to the extent that explicit authorial judgments are avoided." Accordingly, it is of significance to make reference to what is termed in the Appraisal framework 'invoked' (implicit) Attitude (also termed attitudinal token), which indicates that 'factual' material can be used to indirectly activate positive or negative attitudinal meanings. According to the SFL-based journalism literature, attitudinal invocation in hard news reporting exists in material asserted by the journalist as well as in observations attributed to quoted sources (White, 2006; White & Thomson, 2008).

As already outlined, the second focus of this study is on the notion of attribution in Arabic hard news reports. Such a notion is of significance for journalists since their texts typically feature a mixture of observations asserted by themselves and material attributed to quoted sources. It is important to authors producing journalistic texts operating in reporter voice because it shows how they can background their subjective role through avoiding being responsible for contentious assessments but offering them as factual observations. It also allows writers to remain 'neutral' with quoted/reported observations and viewpoints, to 'endorse' them or to 'distance' themselves from them by means of various attribute values, i.e., reporting verbs.

The SFL-based literature on journalistic voice proposes that there are three modes of attribution observed in news reporting: (1) 'Acknowledgement': using 'neutral' formulations such as *to say, to report, according to*; (2) 'Endorsement': using 'positive' formulations which function to 'support', or agree with, the attributed material such as *to prove, to reveal*; and (3) 'Distance': using 'negative' formulations which serve to 'distance' the journalist from the attributed material, or allow him/her to disagree with it, such as *to claim, to allege* (Martin & White, 2005; White, 1998, 2012).

The current study deployed a linguistic analysis informed by SFL theory in order to investigate the register properties pertaining to objectivity and journalistic voice within Arabic hard news reporting texts. Thus, some SFL-based journalism discourse analysis studies are reviewed below.

Thomson et al. (2008) carried out a study which was concerned with a comparison of hard news reporting in different languages and cultures. It specifically explored textual organization and journalistic style of hard news reporting discourses across English, Japanese, Chinese, Indonesian and French. It also investigated the notion of 'media objectivity' in these journalistic traditions from a linguistic perspective. Thomson et al. (2008) reported that the 'nucleus-satellite' structure developed within SFL and the 'inverted pyramid' structure were found to be in operation across these languages. However, they recommended that more research is necessary to examine if these models are as predominant in the hard news reporting of these journalistic cultures as they are in English. They also found that the notion of authorial 'neutrality' operated in the hard news reporting of these languages, "but only when it is understood to be a strategic constraining of a certain subset of attitudinal language" (Thomson et al., 2008, p. 212). They also noticed

that these various journalistic traditions involved hard news reporting texts operating in reporter voice similar to that observed in English language journalism (Thomson et al., 2008).

Another study was conducted by Vo (2011) to draw a comparison between English and Vietnamese business news reports with respect to structure, style and ideology. The study's data comprised a corpus of fifty English and Vietnamese business news reports (twenty-five each). The study deployed analytical tools developed from within SFL to examine the textual organization and journalistic voice, as well as from within Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate the representation of key social groups in these journalistic traditions. Vo (2011) noted that the English and Vietnamese business news journalistic texts were arranged around the 'lead-dominated nucleus+satellites orbital structure', which is developed by SFL scholars. He also found that these business texts were 'objective' in style, operating with the same reporter voice. With respect to ideology embedded in these business news media texts, he observed that such texts were significantly different in representing the key social groups such as 'governments', 'central banks' and 'people'.

Makki (2016) also undertook a study which inspected the linguistic and stylistic features and the communicative functionality of print news journalism in Iran. More precisely, it was directed at providing an account of generic structure, reporting style and news values observed in two Persian daily newspapers: Kayhan and Etemaad. The data of this study consisted of news reports concerned with crimes, natural disasters, accidents and politics. Makki (2016) found that the key factors of 'newsworthiness' observed in these Iranian newspapers were the involvement of 'a high-dignitary government authority or a celebrity or the high negative impact of an event on a large number of people in the society.' He also noted that a significant number of news reports in his dataset contained chronologically-organized accounts of incidents, while some others were arranged around the headline-lead dominated orbital model. He also noticed that some of these news stories used a reporter voice style which closely resembled that observed in English language journalism, whereas some other journalistic texts operated with a more 'objective' style than that of reporter voice.

Shibata (2021) also carried out a study that was concerned with examining the grammatical forms of reported speech in Japanese news journalism. He explored reporting verbs and evaluative language, specifically looking at how reported speech could be used to realize persuasive functions in Japanese. He gathered and analyzed seventy-four online news editorials. Shibata (2021) found that in order to present the reported proposition in Japanese as factual or contentious, a negative or positive evaluative stance on the external voice had to be involved. That is, only evaluative reporting verbs were used to clearly show the authorial attitude towards the external voice. No reporting verbs were also observed to construe the external voice as factual. This finding was dissimilar to that found in the literature of English news journalism.

Finally, Alshehri (2024) conducted a study which explored the genre-related features of hard news reporting texts in Arabic journalism. He specifically inspected Arabic accident reports in terms of textual organization. He collected twenty accident news stories and subjected them to a detailed linguistic analysis with respect to textual deconstruction, timeline, radical editability and lexical chaining. Alshehri (2024) reported that the Arabic accident news journalistic texts conformed to the structural properties of English hard news reports. They were arranged based on the lead-dominated orbital model devised within SFL, involving a textual nucleus followed by a series of satellites. They also jumped back and forward in time, operating with an 'interrupted,' non-chronological order organization.

METHOD

This study is concerned with Arabic language hard news reporting in terms of exploring the linguistic features associated with objectivity, as well as the verbal style pertaining to the use of attitudinal language and attribution. Accordingly, the sections below outline the linguistic analysis conducted to achieve such an aim.

A corpus of thirty Arabic language hard news reporting texts was put together in order to inspect register features of objectivity and journalistic voice. It involved both what White (1997, 1998) terms Event Stories – i.e., accidents, warfare, natural disasters, crimes and civil unrest – and Issues Reports – i.e., political journalistic texts. Precisely, five hard news reports on each journalistic domain, totalling thirty texts in all, were assembled from two prominent and widely read news organizations in the Middle East: Aljazeera and Alarabiya.

As previously discussed, the current study drew on the insights offered by the news journalism scholarship developed within SFL. This literature suggested some lines of analysis with a view to

addressing issues around the notions of objectivity and journalistic voice in news writing. These, which are outlined below, are deployment of attitudinal language and types of attribution.

Firstly, the thirty Arabic hard news reports were annotated to discover instances of inscribed authorial Judgment, Affect or Appreciation, as opposed to those instances offered by quoted sources. This was to determine the typical attitudinal meanings of the reporter voice evaluative stance as observed by the SFL-based journalistic analysis literature. Martin and White (2005, p. 178), explained these patterns of meanings as follows:

no (extremely low probability of) explicit authorial assessments of Judgment (positive/negative assessments of human behavior and character); no authorial Affect (expressions of emotional response/reaction by the author); some authorial inscribed (explicit) Appreciation (positive/negative assessments of entities, situations or processes); observed Affect (the author makes assertions as to the emotional responses of third parties).

Secondly, the thirty Arabic language hard news reporting texts were annotated to determine instances of invoked authorial Attitude. These attitudinal meanings are also seen as compatible with strategic impersonalization of reporter voice in the sense that the journalist just offers a ‘factual’ assertion (Martin & White, 2005; White, 2004, 2006).

The Arabic hard news reporting texts were examined so as to identify types of formulations used to attribute material from external sources. As outlined above, these are resources that ‘acknowledge’, ‘distance’ and ‘endorse’ – i.e., ‘neutral’, ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ reporting verbs respectively.

The purpose of this analysis was also to compare the use of such register properties in Arabic hard news reporting with that observed within the typical English hard news reporting outlined in the SFL-based scholarly literature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

As previously discussed, the current study explores register-related properties associated with objectivity and journalistic voice in Arabic news journalism. To do so, it draws on the Appraisal framework developed by SFL scholars (see, for example, Iedema et al., 1994; Martin & White, 2005). Analyses carried out in this study attend to the use of inscribed and invoked authorial Attitude, and modes of attribution in Arabic language hard news reporting. Findings on these aspects will be reported in turn below.

Use of Inscribed and Invoked Authorial Attitudinal Meanings

Analyses conducted suggest that out of the thirty Arabic journalistic texts assembled for this study, sixteen texts (53%) did not contain any instances of inscribed authorial Judgment, Affect or Appreciation. In contrast, the other fourteen texts (47%) only included instances of inscribed authorial Appreciation at rates of between 0 and 3 per text. The analyses also indicate that no instances of observed Affect and invoked authorial attitudinal meanings were found in the Arabic news reporting texts under consideration. These findings are presented in **Figures 2** and **3** below.

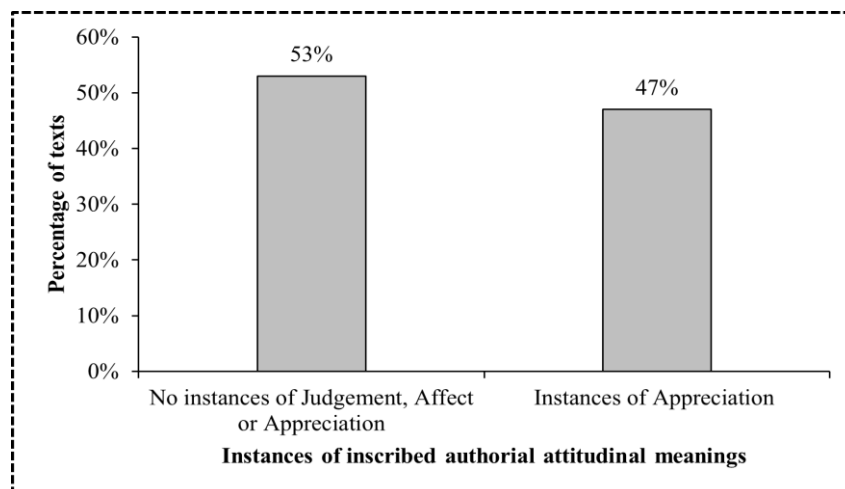


Figure 2. Use of Inscribed Authorial Attitudinal Meanings in the Corpus

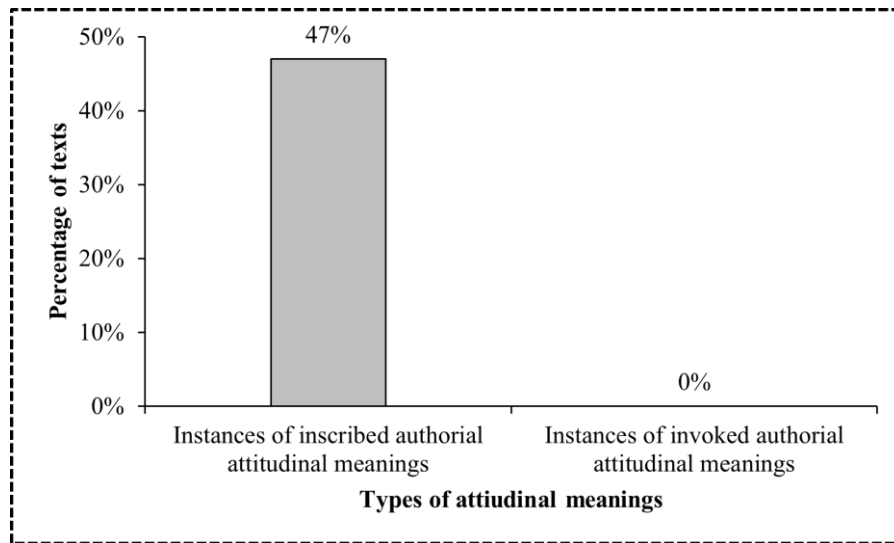


Figure 3. Use of Inscribed and Invoked Authorial Attitudinal Meanings in the Corpus

Two Arabic language news reporting texts from the study's corpus are analysed in **Tables 1 and 2** below to demonstrate this use of authorial attitude.

Table 1. Analysis of Authorial Attitudinal Meanings in An Arabic News Report

<p>Alarabiya, 28/3/2023</p> <p>تعرضت حافلة نقل ركاب تقل سعوديين ومقيمين من جنسيات مختلفة خلال رحلتهم لأداء العمرة، اليوم الاثنين، إلى حادث مروري في عقبة شعار بعسير جنوب غرب المملكة.</p> <p>A bus carrying Saudis and residents of different nationalities was involved in a traffic accident, today, Monday, during their journey to perform Umrah, at Aqabat Shaar in Asir, southwest of the Kingdom.</p> <p>ونجح عن الحادث مصرع 20 شخصا وإصابة 29 آخرين، وأغلقت الجهات الأمنية العقبة لتسهيل مرور فرق الدفاع المدني والهلال الأحمر لموقع الحادث المروع، فيما نقلت الجثامين والمصابون إلى المستشفيات، ولا تزال الجهات المختصة تحقق في أسباب وقوع الحادث.</p> <p>20 people were killed and 29 others were injured as a result of the accident. The security authorities closed the Aqabat to facilitate the passage of the Civil Defense and Red Crescent teams to the site of the terrible accident. The dead and the injured were transferred to hospitals, and the competent authorities are still investigating the causes of the accident.</p> <p>كما أكدت مصادر، احتمالية ارتفاع حالات الوفيات من جراء حادث باص 'عقبة شعار' المنكوب، الذي وقع عصر اليوم، فيما نقلت جميع الوفيات إلى ثلاجة مستشفى محابل عسير، فيما بلغت الإصابات قرابة 29 إصابة، نُقلت إلى كل من مستشفى عسير المركزي ومستشفى محابل ومستشفى أبيها الخاص.</p> <p>Sources also confirmed the possibility of an increase in casualties due to the catastrophic 'Aqabat Shaar' bus accident, which occurred this afternoon. All the dead were transferred to the mortuary of Muhail Asir Hospital, while the injured, who amounted to 29, were transferred to Asir Central Hospital, Muhail Asir Hospital and Abha Private Hospital.</p> <p>من جانبه، قام محافظ محابل محمد بن فلاح القرقاح، بتوجيه ومتابعة من الأمير تركي بن طلال أمير منطقة عسير، يرافقه مدير شرطة محابل العميد مبارك البشري، بزيارة المصابين للاطمئنان عليهم، وموجهًا بتكثيف الرعاية الصحية للمصابين.</p> <p>Muhail Asir Governor, Muhammad bin Falah Al-Qarqah, under the direction and follow-up of Asir Region Governor, Prince Turki bin Talal, accompanied by Muhail Asir Police Director, Brigadier General Mubarak Al-Bishri, visited the injured to check on them, and directed to intensify their healthcare.</p> <p>وانتقل بعدها لثلاجة المستشفى، والتقى فريق الطب الشرعي الذي يبذل جهودًا كبيرة لاستكمال التعرف على الجثث، وأخذ عينات من الحمض النووي دي ان اي بمشاركة من الأدلة الجنائية، خصوصًا أن أغلب الجثث متفحمة.</p> <p>He then moved to the hospital's mortuary, and met the forensic team that is making great efforts to complete identification of the bodies, and take DNA samples with the participation of forensic evidence, given that most of the bodies are charred.</p>
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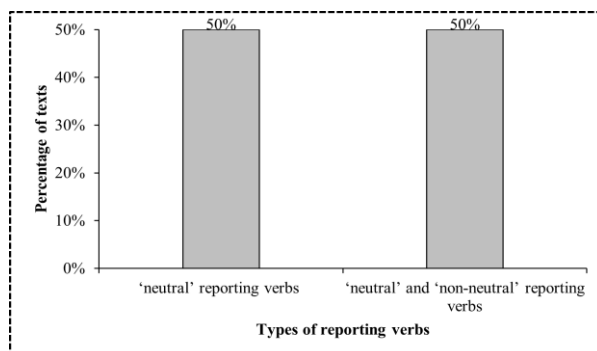
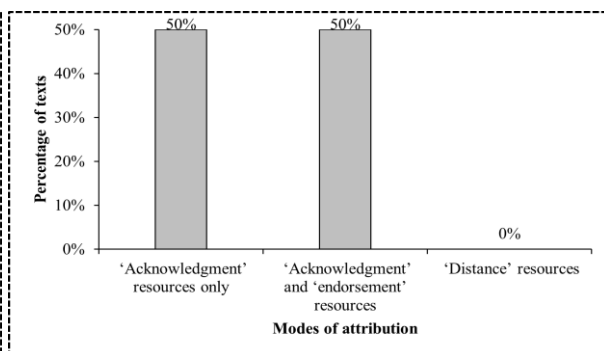
Table 2. Analysis of Authorial Attitudinal Meanings in An Arabic News Report

<p>Aljazeera, 3/7/2001</p> <p>اعتقلت الشرطة في كوريا الجنوبية عصابة مكونة من خمسة أفراد بتهمة التورط في تهريب أكثر من 100 شخص من الصين بشكل سري. ويتزايد عدد الصينيين من أصل كوري الذين يحاولون الوصول إلى كوريا الجنوبية بحثًا عن معيشة أفضل.</p> <p>Police in South Korea have arrested a gang of five who have been accused of being involved in smuggling more than 100 people out of China undercover. An increasing number of Korean-Chinese people are trying to reach South Korea in search of a better life.</p> <p>وقالت الشرطة إن عصابة من المهربين قامت بتهريب 107 صينيين من أصول كورية جنوبية إلى الساحل الغربي من البلاد الأسبوع الماضي. واتهمت الشرطة العصابة بالقيام بتوزيع هؤلاء الصينيين على أنحاء متفرقة من كوريا الجنوبية على أمل الحصول على المال كعمال غير شرعيين. ورفضت الشرطة إعطاء تفاصيل عن أعضاء العصابة، لكنها قالت إن رئيسها لم يتم إلقاء القبض عليه بعد.</p> <p>Police said that a gang of smugglers smuggled 107 Korean-Chinese to the west coast of the country last week. The police accused the gang of distributing these Chinese to separate parts of South Korea in the hope of obtaining money as illegal workers. Police refused to give details of the gang's members, but said its boss had not yet been arrested.</p> <p>ومن ناحية أخرى قالت أنباء صحفية محلية في كوريا الجنوبية إنه أُلقي القبض على كوري شمالي في إحدى الشقق التي كان يحتجز فيها بسبب عدم تمكنه من دفع أجرة تهريبه. وقالت الشرطة إن الرجل ترك زوجته واثنين من أولاده في كوريا الشمالية.</p> <p>On the other hand, local press in South Korea said that a North Korean was arrested in one of the apartments where he was being held because he was unable to pay the smuggling fee. Police said the man left his wife and two children in North Korea.</p> <p>وزاد في السنوات الأخيرة عدد الكوريين الشماليين الذين يقومون بالهرب إلى الصين أولاً ثم الانتقال منها إلى كوريا الجنوبية. ويعيش في الصين نحو مليون من الذين ينحدرون من أصول كورية يمثلون ذرية أولئك المهاجرين الذين استقروا فيها أثناء فترة الاحتلال الياباني لشبه الجزيرة الكورية منذ عام 1910 وحتى عام 1945.</p> <p>In recent years, the number of North Koreans fleeing to China and then moving to South Korea has increased. About a million people of Korean descent live in China. They are descendants of those immigrants who settled there during the Japanese occupation of the Korean peninsula from 1910 to 1945.</p>
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As noted above, the Arabic hard news report offered in **Table 1** does not involve any instances of inscribed authorial Judgment or Affect, but includes three instances of explicit authorial Appreciation which have been indicated in light blue. By contrast, there are no instances of inscribed authorial attitudinal meanings to be observed in the Arabic news report presented in **Table 2**.

Use of Modes of Attribution

Analyses reveal that out of the thirty Arabic hard news reports gathered for this study, there were fifteen texts (50%) which contained only 'neutral' reporting verbs and associated formulations – i.e., resources of 'acknowledgment' in the Appraisal framework. The other fifteen texts (50%), in contrast, included both 'neutral' and 'non-neutral' reporting verbs: in particular, resources of 'endorsement'. Analyses also show that no text was found to involve 'negative' reporting verbs, i.e., resources of 'distance'. These findings are shown in **Figures 4** and **5** below.

**Figure 4. Use of Reporting Verbs in the Corpus****Figure 5. Use of Modes of Attribution in the Corpus**

These findings are also illustrated below in **Tables 3** and **4** by offering analyses of two Arabic language news reports from the corpus.

Table 3. Analysis of Modes of Attribution in An Arabic News Report

<p>Aljazeera, 28/4/2022 يبدأ الرئيس التركي رجب طيب أردوغان اليوم الخميس زيارة رسمية إلى المملكة العربية السعودية، وذلك لتلبية دعوة من الملك السعودي سلمان بن عبد العزيز.</p> <p>Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan begins today, Thursday, an official visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, accepting the invitation of Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz.</p> <p>وقالت الرئاسة التركية في بيان إن الزيارة تستغرق يومين، وإن أردوغان سيناقش خلالها جوانب العلاقات الثنائية بين أنقرة والرياض وبحث وإمكانات تطوير التعاون بين البلدين.</p> <p>The Turkish presidency said in a statement that the visit will last for two days, during which Erdogan will discuss aspects of bilateral relations between Ankara and Riyadh and possibilities of increasing cooperation between the two countries.</p> <p>وأضاف البيان أن الرئيس أردوغان سيتبادل مع الملك السعودي وجهات النظر حول شؤون دولية وإقليمية.</p> <p>The statement added that President Erdogan will exchange views with the Saudi king about international and regional affairs.</p> <p>وقال مكتب الرئيس التركي رجب طيب أردوغان إن الرئيس سيتوجه إلى المملكة العربية السعودية في زيارة تستغرق يومين، وذلك في تنويع لجهود أنقرة المستمرة منذ شهر لإصلاح العلاقات مع الرياض.</p> <p>The office of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that the president will head off to Saudi Arabia for a two-day visit, in a culmination of Ankara's months-long efforts to mend relations with Riyadh.</p>
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What stands out in **Table 3** above is that the Arabic news reporting text features four instances of neutral reporting verbs only (indicated in green). By contrast, the one presented in **Table 4** has both neutral and non-neutral modes of attribution, which are marked in green and red respectively. More precisely, it involves six instances of neutral reporting verbs and associated formulations – i.e., resources of acknowledgment at a proportion of 60% – versus four instances of non-neutral reporting verbs – i.e., resources of endorsement at a proportion of 40%.

Table 4. Analysis of Modes of Attribution in An Arabic News Report

<p>Alarabiya, 13/11/2022 في جريمة مروعة، أقدم شاب يمني على تعذيب زوجته البالغة من العمر 17 عاماً، والحامل في شهرها الثالث بالضرب والحرق والصعق الكهربائي، حتى لقيت حتفها.</p> <p>In a horrific crime, a Yemeni young man tortured his 17-year-old wife – who was three months pregnant – by beating, burning and electrocuting until she died.</p> <p>وفي تفاصيل الجريمة، كشفت مصادر محلية، عن ارتكاب شاب جريمة بحق زوجته، بعد أشهر من زواجهما في محافظة ذمار، والانتقال إلى العيش في مأرب.</p> <p>In details of the crime, local sources revealed that a young man committed a crime against his wife, months after getting married in Dhamar Governorate and moving to live in Marib.</p> <p>وقالت المصادر إن الفتاة رحاب أحمد خادم البالغة من العمر (17 عاماً)، تزوجت ابن خالتها عبدالرحمن نصر محمد عبده (27 عاماً)، قبل ستة أشهر وانتقلت للعيش معه من ذمار إلى مأرب، قبل أن يبدأ بممارسة التعذيب الجسدي العنيف بحقها حتى توفيت نتيجة ذلك، الأربعاء الماضي.</p> <p>The sources said that the 17-year-old girl, Rehab Ahmed Khadim, married her cousin, Abdulrahman Nasr Muhammad Abdo (27 years old), six months ago and moved from Dhamar to Marib to live with him. He then began practicing violent physical torture against her until she died last Wednesday.</p> <p>وأوضحت المصادر أن الزوج بدأ في تعذيب زوجته 'بالحرق والضرب والصعق الكهربائي' منذ الشهر الثالث للزواج، حتى وفاتها، نتيجة نزيف داخلي بالرأس حسب تقرير الطب الشرعي.</p> <p>The sources demonstrated that the husband began torturing his wife by 'burning, beating and electrocuting' from the third month of marriage until her death due to internal head bleeding, according to the forensic report.</p> <p>وأضافت أن الزوج منع زوجته من التواصل بأسرتها أو امتلاك أي وسيلة اتصال، أو الخروج من المنزل طوال نصف عام من الزواج، حتى توفيت وهي حامل.</p> <p>The sources added that the husband prevented his wife from communicating with her family, having any means of communication, or leaving home for half a year of marriage, until she died while she was pregnant.</p> <p>وفي وقت لاحق، أعلنت شرطة محافظة مأرب، عن تمكن الأجهزة الأمنية بالمحافظة من ضبط المتهم بتعذيب زوجته حتى فارقت الحياة، مع جنينها.</p> <p>Later, the Marib governorate police announced that the security services had managed to arrest the accused of torturing his wife until death along with her fetus.</p> <p>وقالت الشرطة في بيان لها، إنها تمكنت من إلقاء القبض على المتهم بقتل زوجته تحت التعذيب.</p> <p>The police said in a statement that they managed to arrest the accused of torture killing of his wife.</p> <p>وأضافت الشرطة، أن المتهم اعتدى على زوجته بالضرب المبرح في جميع جسمها والرأس والوجه، ما أدى إلى وفاتها.</p> <p>The police added that the accused assaulted his wife by severely beating her all over her body, head and face, rendering her dead.</p> <p>وأشار البيان إلى أن ارتكاب المتهم للجريمة يأتي بسبب خلافات أسرية، دون ذكر تفاصيل أكثر.</p> <p>The statement pointed out that the accused committed the crime due to family conflicts, without giving more details.</p> <p>وأكدت الشرطة أن الأجهزة الأمنية ضبطت المتهم وأودعت جثة الضحية في ثلاجة المستشفى حتى استكمال ملف القضية.</p> <p>The police confirmed that the security services arrested the accused and deposited the victim's body in the hospital mortuary until completing the case file.</p>

Discussion

This paper is concerned with an exploration of the notions of objectivity and journalistic voice in Arabic language journalism. It specifically scrutinizes the use of attitudinal meanings and forms of attribution in Arabic hard news reports. Analyses demonstrate that some of the Arabic news reporting texts collected for this paper emulate the reporter voice style observed in the SFL-based literature on English language journalism (Iedema et al., 1994; Martin & White, 2005; White, 1998, 2012). That is to say, such texts did not include any instances of explicit authorial Judgment or Affect, but instances of inscribed authorial Appreciation which positively or negatively assess entities, situations and processes, e.g. *terrible accident* (الحادث المروع). They also featured both neutral and non-neutral forms of attribution: in particular resources of acknowledgment, e.g. *said* (قال), *added* (أضاف) and resources of endorsement, e.g. *revealed* (كشف), *demonstrated* (أوضح). No resources of distance were found in such texts. Accordingly, it can be said that these texts were written in an objective style where inscribed authorial attitudinal meanings were narrowly curtailed (Martin & White, 2005; White, 2012). It can also be said that the writers of these texts were neutral, just reporting news. They did not explicitly assert positive or negative assessments of human behavior and character, nor did they use negative formulations to distance themselves from the attributed material or to show disagreement with it.

Analyses also show that some of the Arabic news reports gathered for this study are more attitudinally constrained than the reporter voice texts outlined above. That is, they did not involve any instances of explicit authorial Judgment, Affect or Appreciation. In these texts, the journalists just reported the viewpoints of the quoted sources without providing their interpretation. Therefore, it can be said that such texts operated in a highly impersonalized or objective voice since there was no inscribed attitudinal assessment on the part of the authors. This stylistic arrangement does not conform to that found in English news reporting texts within the SFL-based journalism literature (Iedema et al., 1994; Martin & White, 2005; White, 1998, 2012). However, it is in line with the style observed in some Persian hard news reports which do not involve any instances of inscribed authorial attitude (Makki, 2016; Makki and White, 2018). As proposed by Makki and White (2018), this evaluative style can be labelled “amanuensis voice” in which the journalist author only writes down what other people say or copies what they have written.

Analyses also reveal that such texts did not contain any instances of non-neutral forms of attribution. That is, the authors thoroughly background their subjective role, accomplishing attribution only by neutral reporting verbs and associated formulations. Thus, the quoting practices in these Arabic texts are dissimilar to those observed in English hard news reports as outlined within the SFL-based journalism discourse analysis, where neutral and non-neutral forms of attribution are deployed (Martin & White, 2005; White, 2012).

Overall, the above observations suggest that Arabic hard news reports are different from English ones with respect to the notions of objectivity and journalistic voice. They operate in a more strategically impersonalized verbal style, having no instances of inscribed and invoked authorial attitudinal evaluation. They are also written in a more neutral voice, lacking any instances of distance to attribute external sources.

CONCLUSION

Today, the media is in a state of flux since a range of journalistic traditions, other than English, have been influenced by some globalizing forces such as the development of the internet, the wide use of mobile technologies and the expansion of English as the world’s dominant language. Accordingly, it seems essential for each journalistic language and culture to be explored in terms of social functionality, communicative workings, and textual and register properties. Within journalism discourse analysis, news reporting in English language has been carefully scrutinized from a linguistic perspective, and consequently several effective analytical frameworks have been proposed in this regard. It is, therefore, important to make use of such approaches to examine news reporting across multiple languages.

This paper has offered a detailed account of the main features of language and style associated with the notions of objectivity and journalistic voice in Arabic news journalism, with reference to hard news reporting texts assembled from Aljazeera and Alarabiya. It employed the Appraisal framework developed within SFL: in particular, the sub-system of Attitude as well as the concept of attribution. It also drew on SFL-based discourse analysis studies conducted within English news journalism.

Analysis undertaken in this study revealed that not all the collected Arabic journalistic texts bear a resemblance to the English language news reports observed in the SFL-based journalistic literature with respect to notions of objectivity and journalistic voice. That is, some Arabic texts closely resemble the English ones in using a very similar reporter voice style, while some others are stylistically different being in a highly impersonalized or objective voice.

This paper has reported on a study which is original in investigating some key register aspects of Arabic news journalism. It has provided some useful insights into the language and style used in Arabic language hard news reporting texts. There are, of course, other register elements that have not been attended to neither in this study nor in any previous linguistic and discourse analysis studies. Thus, I hope this paper has inspired researchers interested in Arabic journalistic tradition, and has left the door wide open for them to carry out further research.

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