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## Genre analysis of media texts

Alireza Bonyadi\*

*English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Urmia Branch, Islamic Azad University, Urmia, Iran*

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### Abstract

The interface between genre analysis and the teaching of ESP courses in an EFL setting would be a relevant issue if one considers the growing number of students majoring in journalism or in English language studies. Thus, exploring the structures, strategies and social functions of newspaper editorials would be of great importance in ESP courses. Through a genre analysis of editorials culled from the editorials of The New York Times, the present study is aimed at exploring the moves employed in the editorials for certain communicative purposes. The results of the study indicated that newspaper editorials make use of certain moves that are usually textually realized through certain linguistic forms. The study has suggested some pedagogical implications for the EFL/ESP teachers.

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*Keywords:* ESP; media discourse; journalism; genre studies; English language teaching

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### 1. Introduction

Genre analysis as a sub-discipline in applied linguistics emerged in 1980s and blossomed in the 1990s. A genre is a highly structured and conventionalized discourse which occurs among the members of a community. For Swales [1], genre constitutes “a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre”. For Bhatia, genre analysis “refers to the study of naturally occurring written discourse focusing, in particular, on analysis beyond the sentence level.” [2]

In an effort to elaborate on the possible overlap of the two terms of discourse analysis discussed above, and the genre analysis, Dudley-Evans and St. John [3] argue that:

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\* Corresponding author. Tel.: 00989143457055; fax: 00983373143.

E-mail address: [bonyad80@hotmail.com](mailto:bonyad80@hotmail.com)

Any study of language or, more specifically, text at a level above that of sentence is a discourse study. This may involve the study of cohesive links between sentences, of paragraphs, or the structure of the whole text. The results of this type of analysis make statements about how texts -any text-work. This is applied discourse analysis. Where, however, the focus of text analysis is on the regularities of structures that distinguish one type of text from another, this is genre analysis and the results focus on the differences between text types, or genres.

What is of great importance in genre analysis is the identification of the communicative purpose or purposes of the texts or genres under investigation and the use of language in institutionalized settings controlled by communicative conventions existing in and created by a group of participants in a defined discourse community. Central to the analysis of a certain genre is the identification of the moves in a text based on the conventions set by the discourse community. In other words, in genre studies the researcher proceeds with identifying the moves that have been employed by the writers for organizing the information throughout the text.

To account for the main structural organization of introduction section in academic journals, Swales [1] developed a model termed as Create a Research Space (CARS) and empirically applied it in studying of the introduction section of the academic papers in various academic disciplines in English as well as other languages. The model comprised of three obligatory moves namely: establishing a territory (move 1), establishing a niche (move 2) and occupying the niche (move 3). Swales' model "can be considered one of the strongest descriptions of text structure to date" [4] as it has been applied in many other studies with great success thereafter.

As for the interface between genre analysis and English for special purposes, ESP, we have to echo Dudley-Evans' [5] remarks. He postulates that "a much more promising approach to a theory of ESP comes from the analysis of ESP texts". In fact, " studies of professional genres and professional practices are invariably seen as complementing each other, in that they not only influence each other but are often co-constructed in specific professional contexts" [6].

Undoubtedly, genre studies would be of high relevance to ESP in general and media discourse in particular as this kind of discourse is usually written for a certain communicative purpose within a discourse community. As Bhatia [7] points out, "before learners undertake any goal-driven communicative activity, they need to become aware of appropriate rhetorical procedures and conventions typically associated with the specialist discourse community they aspire to join". Thus, to present the general prototype of editorials, a sub-genre of media discourse, and its possible pedagogical implications in ESP courses, the present study has endeavored to explore the moves and conventions employed in newspaper editorials.

## **2. Methodology**

This paper has analyzed 20 editorials of criticism from The New York Times. The editorials of criticism are distinguished from the other types of the editorials in that they have a certain communicative purpose which is calling 'for changes to be made immediately' [8]. It is worth noting that unlike the other genres such as academic articles in which one can find different sections and subsections identified by definite titles and sub-titles, the identification of different schematic parts in the editorials, however, is not usually as straightforward as one might assume.

To solve the problem of identification of the schematic structures, Triad was taken as the unit of analysis in the selected editorials. A Triad according to Bolivar [9] typically is composed of three turns namely Lead (L) which has the function of introducing the topic of the Triad; Follow (F) which keeps the same topic in the Triad and evaluates the preceding piece of information and finally Valuate (V) which has the function of closing the unit.

Thus, to conduct a move analysis of the selected newspaper, the first Triad in the selected editorials was taken as The Introduction section. In the same way, the final Triad was taken as The Ending section and the in-between Triads were considered to form The Body section of the editorials.

### 3. Genre analysis of newspaper editorials

#### 3.1 The First schematic structure: introduction

The analysis of the first part of the editorials, INTRODUCTION, revealed that it basically consisted of two “moves.” The first move is referred to in this paper as the “orientation move” (OR), and the other as the “criticism” move referred here as (CR).

The Orientation move appeared in 15 of the analyzed data (75%). It usually tended to provide the required setting and initiate the topic. Its major function was to “orient” the reader much like a “peg” for attracting the readers’ attention to the subject. The “criticism” move on the other hand revealed the editorial’s criticism. It was through this move that the editorial writer revealed the criticism.

This function (OR) might be realized through different rhetorical strategies. Summarizing the previous news events, using a declarative sentences or a rhetoric question are examples of the case. Consider the following excerpt showing the orientation move taken from The New York Times editorials.

- Declarative sentence:

- 1) We could not agree more strongly with President Bush that this country must do everything it can to keep weapons of mass destruction out of terrorists’ hands. (Ref. 7. NYT)

Although all the mentioned types of the sentences had different linguistic realizations, they are all used to communicate one single function that was “orienting” the reader.

Referring to the terminology used by Bolivar [9](1994), the orientation move was realized through an initial sentence LEAD /L/ that might be followed by one or more FOLLOW /F/ sentence(s) presenting further information on the Lead. Consider, for instance, the following excerpt which realizes the (OR) move by just one Lead /L/ sentence:

Table 1 *Schematic Representation of (OR) Move with a Lead (Ref.7. NYT)*

Schematic superstructure	Moves	Turn	Sentences
INTRODUCTION	Orientation (OR)	L	1 We could not agree more strongly with President Bush that this country must do everything it can to keep weapons of mass destruction out of terrorists’ hands.

Sometimes, however, the move was realized through a Lead /L/ followed by a number of other Follow /F/ turns.

The analysis of the data also revealed that almost all the (OR) moves had been initiated by an evaluative statement rather than by a factual descriptive one. Consider the following excerpt as the examples of the case.

- 1) Ehud Olmert, Israel's *soon to be ex-prime minister*, *voiced some startling truths* this week. (Ref.1 NYT)

The italicized word and phrases have nothing to do with the factual descriptions of the events. Instead, they represented and communicated the editorial writer(s)'s attitude toward the events.

Based on the analysis, it was found that another move namely "criticism" (CR) usually followed the first move. In other words, after engaging the readers with the topic through the orientation move (OR), the editorial writers tried to assert their criticism. This move was initiated through a "Valuate" sentence /V/ which was usually a general assertion of criticism. It might be followed by one or more follow up Valuate sentences with the aim of further developing the criticism.

The move can be realized through different linguistic structures namely conditional or declarative sentences serving the same function that is "Criticism". The following excerpts is an example of the point.

- 2) If this truly reflects his thinking — and he has said it often — why does the United States government get only a "C" grade from a respected, bipartisan group of national security experts for its efforts to prevent nuclear, chemical and biological terrorism? (Ref. 7 NYT)

In terms of the number of turns, this move can be realized through one or more /V/ sentences. Table 2 illustrates the maximum turns that have been employed in one of the NYT editorials.

Table 2 Schematic Representation of (CR) Move with the Highest Number of Valuate Sentences (Ref. 12 NYT)

Schematic superstructure	Moves	Turn	Sentences
INTRODUCTION	Criticism (CR)	V	1 For all that good news, summits are usually about vague promises and good intentions, and this one was no different.
			2 The final agreement establishes no interim goals that would require prompt and meaningful investments in cleaner energy.
			3 Many scientists believe that cuts of at least 25 percent in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 are necessary to prevent emissions from reaching a point of no return.
			4 And as the South Africans dyspeptically but accurately observed, without short-term targets the long-term goal is an empty slogan.
			5 Nor should anyone put too much store in the promises from the emerging countries.

As the Table suggests, the (CR) move in this editorial were realized through five Valuate sentences. Thus, the analysis of the INTRODUCTION section of the selected editorials (N=20) of the NYT revealed some key points. First, a two-part structure was detectable in the first schematic superstructure of the editorials. The first part labeled as Orientation move (OR) – realized through a /L/ sentence that might be followed by /F/ sentences\_ had the function of orienting the reader with the topic and the second part labeled as Criticism move (CR) – realized through one or more /V/ sentences- had the function of expressing and asserting the Criticism (CR).

Second, each of these moves was realized through using different linguistic structures serving the single function of the move. In other words, the function of "Orientation" was realized through using rhetorical

strategies such as “declarative sentence”, “rhetorical question” and “summary of the event”. In the same way, the function of the second move was realized in different ways. Initiating this move by using a general declarative statement of criticism, a rhetorical question, a conditional sentence or a dummy “it” were found to be the possible realization of the move.

Third, considering the commonly believed idea that the orientation move is supposed to be more or less factual than evaluative [10], the move, however, in the analyzed editorials was found to be highly evaluative.

### 3.2 *The second schematic structure: body*

In line with selecting the term Introduction to refer to the first superstructure of the selected editorials, the present study used the term The Body to refer to the section. Generally, this second superstructure of the editorials represented the evaluation and development of the related events. The “Development” taken as the third move in editorial of criticism was realized through presenting one or more subtopics aiming at elaborating the main topic of the editorial.

The Body section of the selected editorials was found to be longer and structurally more complex than the first section, Introduction. Altogether, 76 Triads were identified in The Body section of the selected editorials.

Leads in this section were found to be declarative sentences realized through either a short evaluative sentence or structurally compound or complex statements. Excerpt no. 3 is an example of a compound sentence acting as a lead turn for a Triad.

- 3) L: The current crisis began last week when Mr. Siniora’s government — which unites large sections of the Sunni, Druse and Maronite communities — tried to shut down a telecommunications and surveillance network run by the militant group Hezbollah. (Ref. NYT 18)

Meanwhile, in the data analyzed, seven of the Leads were initiated with the first person plural pronoun ‘we’ and one of them commenced with the word “us”. The following excerpts present instances of such leads.

- 4) We certainly share his alarm and his clear frustration that the Pakistanis are doing too little to defeat the extremists or stop their attacks into Afghanistan. (Ref. NYT 4)
- 5) Let us be clear, there are no good military options. (Ref. NYT 3)

The above-mentioned excerpts indicated that some editorials in The New York Times explicitly displayed the voice of the writer or the newspaper by using the pronouns.

After presenting the sub-topics through a Lead turn and developing it through possible /F/ turn(s), the Triad was terminated by a Valuate /V/ sentence(s). As these turns “were responsible for closing the smallest unit of interaction with an opinion” [7](Bolivar, 1994 p: 291), they were found to be highly evaluative in the selected editorials.

Referring to the classification of the Valuate turns put forward by Bolivar[7], most of Valuates in the analyzed data were found to be of Concluder type. That is, in a form of informative comments or logical conclusions, they had the function of either offering new information or concluding the sub-topic based on the preceding turns in the Triad. The following excerpt exemplifies one of the concluder Valuates.

- 6) V: The result is that while the two men have been negotiating since the American-led Annapolis peace conference last fall, very little progress has been made. [Conclusion](Ref. NYT 1)

The above-mentioned excerpt, Valuate no.6, had the function of concluding the Triad. Some of the Valuate turns, on the other hand, were found to be of the Directive type. Unlike the concluder Valuates, the main function of these Directive Valuates was to indicate that an action should be taken. As suggested by Bolivar[7], these

Valuates, based on their various degree of explicitness, can be grouped into Direct or Indirect directives. The following excerpts represent Valuate turns with the function of expressing directions.

- 7) V: For that, Europe and the United States must agree quickly on a more persuasive set of punishments and incentives. [Direct] (Ref. NYT 3)

Table no. 3. illustrates the types of the Valuate turns identified in The Body section of the selected editorials.

Table 3 *Types of the Identified Valuates in the Body Section of NYT Editorials*

Valuates				Directive			
Concluder		Prophecy		Direct		Indirect	
F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)	F	(%)
78	74.28	0	0	17	16.19	10	9.52

As the Table 3 indicates most of the Triads in The Body section of the editorials closed the discourse unit with Concluder Valuates while only 27 Directive Valuates were used to terminate the Triads.

It should be added that the predominant rhetorical form of Valuate turns was declarative sentences, that is, a sentence in the form of a statement (in contrast to a command, a question).

In general, the analysis of the selected editorials in The Body section revealed that the editorial writers tended to communicate their ideas through three-part structures – LFV (Triad). The leads were declarative sentences of various lengths which presented the subtopics. In some cases, they were initiated with a third person plural pronoun which indicated the voice of the editorial writers. Most of the Leads were further developed by Follow /F/ sentences. The discourse units – Triads- were terminated mainly through Concluder or Directive Valuates.

### 3.3 *The third schematic structure: ending*

Having discussed the first and the second schematic superstructures of the editorials namely The Introduction and The Body, the present section intends to explore the third superstructure of the editorials in The New York Times. In line with the terminology used to refer to the first two sections, the term The Ending was used here to refer to the last schematic structure throughout the paper.

As mentioned before, the identification of The Ending section in the editorials was not usually as straightforward as one might assume since some writers tended to state their concluding remarks through more than one paragraph. Thus, the last Triad in the editorials was chosen as the The Ending section of the editorials. The following excerpt, for example, is the last Triad taken from one of The New York Times editorials.

- 8) L: With its rich agricultural land and abundant mineral resources, Zimbabwe should be thriving. F: Instead, Mr. Mugabe has turned it into a land of famine and desperation, with an annual inflation rate estimated to be 11 million percent. V: These man-made disasters cannot be reversed overnight and without substantial help. The United States, Europe and others should be getting ready to provide technical support and aid. But first, they must make sure that this agreement is real and not just another trick by Mr. Mugabe to stay in power. (Ref. NYT 6)

As is evident, the Triad is composed of three Turns, which aimed at terminating the topic of the editorial. The analysis of The Ending section of the selected editorials in The New York Times revealed that through this section, editorial writers aimed at ending up the editorials by drawing conclusions based on the content presented through the two preceding superstructures namely The Introduction and The Body. The Conclusion which can be termed as the last move in the editorials was developed through the components of the Triads namely Lead, Follow and Valuate.

Leads in most cases were expressed through declarative sentences which either indirectly quoting the news actors or presenting evaluative and informative comments on the news events. Excerpt no. 9 exemplifies the points.

- 9) Speaking to the United Nations this week, the secretary general, Ban Ki-moon, warned that the world is facing a “development crisis,” and he expressed his fear that wealthy nations would now fall even further behind in their commitments. (Ref. NYT.2)

The quotation and the evaluative comments appeared to set the scene for subsequent evaluation of the news events by the editorial writer. Some editorials, on the other hand, initiated The Ending section through using Directive statements, the kind of statements asking for actions to be taken. The following excerpt exemplifies the point.

- 10) Pakistan’s army, with intelligence help and carefully monitored financial support, should do most of the fighting. (Ref. NYT.8)

Table 4 tabulates the different types of leads used in The Ending section of the selected editorials.

Table 4 *Leads in the Ending Section of NYT Editorials*

Type of the Lead	Sub-category	f	%
Declarative	Indirect quotation	2	10
	Informative comment	12	60
	Directive statements	6	30

As Table 4 suggests, Declarative statement is the common form of the Leads employed in the last Triads of the editorials, while Directive statements form only 30% percent of the leads.

After elaborating on the Leads through Follow turns, the editorial writers used the Valuate turns to terminate the topic. Some writers, for example, tried to conclude the editorials by expressing their determination and prediction. Excerpts no. 11 is an example of the case.

- 11) But without such an effort, we are certain that Tehran will keep pressing ahead, while the voices in the United States and Israel arguing for military action will only get louder. (Ref. NYT 3)

Four of the selected editorials used the Valuates in this section to express their hopes on the news events. Excerpt no. 12 exemplifies the point.

- 12) We hope he returns Russia to a democratic path and ensures that he is not just a footnote to Putin’s place in history. (Ref. NYT 20)

Instead of expressing hopes, most of the editorial writers realized the conclusion move through using Valuates of informative comments. The following excerpt is a sample informative comment used in one of the selected editorials.

- 13) The Bush administration has made Mr. Putin’s job even easier, feeding nationalist resentments with its relentless drive for missile defense. (Ref. NYT 11)

As is evident in the above-mentioned excerpts, through these informative comments the editorial writers only summarized and evaluated the information already presented in The Introduction and The Body sections.

The move (Conclusion) was also realized in The Ending section of some editorials through Directive Valuates. These Valuate turns had either “the function of proposing or suggesting a ‘desirable’ course of action” [9] or expressing the “necessity” of a certain action. Excerpt no. 14, for example, represents the Directives with the function of suggesting a desirable course of action.

- 14) Congress can do its part by approving a \$7.5 billion aid package, intended to strengthen Pakistan’s democratic institutions and its counterinsurgency capabilities. (Ref. NYT 4)

Some editorials in The Ending section contained Valuate turns used for expressing necessity. The forms of modals used for expressing necessity in the editorials included must, need, should and have to. The following excerpt is an example of the turns.

- 15) Mr. Bush will need to do a lot more if he wants to help salvage the Cedar Revolution. (Ref. NYT 18)

Meanwhile, some Valuate turns in The Ending section were used to express warning and fear. Excerpt no. 16 is an example of this type.

- 16) We fear that Admiral Mullen is right: there isn’t much time left — on either side of the border. (Ref. NYT 4)

Expressing regret (excerpt no. 17) was the other strategy identified in the Valuate turns in The Ending section of the editorials.

- 17) But seven years after 9/11, we hoped that the government would earn more than a “C” on its ability to protect Americans from potentially catastrophic attacks. (Ref. NYT 7)

Generally, the strategies that NYT editorial writers employed in the Valuate turns of the last Triads can be tabulated as follows.

Table 5. *Rhetorical Strategies Employed in the Valuate Turns of NYT Editorials*

Rhetorical Strategies	f	%
Stating Directives	5	9.80
Suggestions		
Necessity	14	27.45
Stating Informative Comments	17	33.33
Stating Hopes	4	7.84
Stating Prediction	6	11.76
Stating Warning & Fear	4	7.84

Stating Regret	1	1.96
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As Table 5 indicates, the predominant rhetorical strategy employed in The Valuate turns of the selected editorials was of a Directive kind (37.25%) while Stating Regret was the least preferred strategy (1.96%).

It is worth noting that editorial writers used more than one of the mentioned strategies in final Valuate turns. In other words, the conclusion was realized through making use of different strategies. Excerpt no.18 is an example of Valuate turns of The Ending section in one of the selected editorials in which more than one strategy has been employed.

- 18) [Necessity] Any revised plan must do a lot more to avoid civilian casualties and support, rather than undermine, Pakistan's civilian leaders. [Suggestion] Congress can do its part by approving a \$7.5 billion aid package, intended to strengthen Pakistan's democratic institutions and its counterinsurgency capabilities. [Necessity] The Pentagon also needs to quickly come up with a better strategy in Afghanistan. [Comments] Commanders warn that Mr. Bush's promise to send 4,500 additional troops falls far short. [Warning and Fear] We fear that Admiral Mullen is right: there isn't much time left — on either side of the border. (Ref. NYT 4)

Meanwhile, the voice of the newspaper was much louder in The Ending section than the other sections in the editorials. This is evidenced by the frequent use of the pronoun We.

- 19) But without such an effort, we are certain that Tehran will keep pressing ahead, while the voices in the United States and Israel arguing for military action will only get louder. (Ref. NYT 3)

In brief, editorial writers in The New York Times tended to employ different rhetorical strategies in The Ending section of the editorials. These included statements of directives, informative comments, hopes, prediction, warning and fear, and regret.

#### 4. Pedagogical implications

There are “pedagogical values in sensitizing students to the rhetorical effects and, and to the rhetorical structures that tend to recur in genre-specific texts” [11]. Knowledge of the move structures of a certain genre such as newspaper editorials and function of those moves within the editorials would enhance ESL/EFL student reading and writing skills.

As Dudley-Evans [12] has put it, in an EFL and ESL setting students of journalism do not enjoy the same linguistic sophistication that native speakers do to deal with issues about the discourse community. Thus they can benefit from the knowledge on how the move structure is unfold and linguistically realized in the genre in English language.

Considering the fact that “linguistic awareness can be more effectively developed with purposeful language practice and critical analysis of a genre” [13], the findings of the present study can provide the EFL teachers and students with the required knowledge about the discourse conventions in a certain sub-genre, namely newspaper editorials, making them ready to use the newspaper editorials in the classrooms.

Specifically, newspaper editorials can be employed in teaching courses dealing with reading, academic writing and journalism. According to Bhatia [14]:

A genre-based flexible language curriculum can facilitate language learning within, across and beyond the confines of a curriculum, which will allow more freedom to the participants in the teaching and learning process. This can be effectively realized by using a daily newspaper, which is easily available

and also contains a wide variety of genres and sub-genres that can enrich the linguistics repertoire of any language learner.

Through designing interesting classroom activities based on editorials, it is possible to provide the students with the logic of the ideas and the organization and development of the arguments in the editorials. This would in turn transform the students into critical readers who are able to read between the lines of a newspaper and to critique stories for structure, content and meaning.

However, using the newspaper and its sub-genres as an input in EFL classes without initially focusing on their generic distinctive features such as communicative purpose, schematic structures and the syntactic patterns may be counterproductive. As Bhatia [14] remarked:

Genre specificity, thus, within the pages of newspaper is so significant that any attempt to use newspaper language without being aware of it can become misleading. In other words, if the learner is not made sensitive to genre distinctions, then the very strength of newspaper language can become its weakness.

Thus, the findings of the present study can at the same time equip ESP teachers and students with the required knowledge about the discourse conventions in a certain sub-genre, namely newspaper editorials. In other words, in light of the findings of the present research, the teachers may familiarize the ESP students with the move structure of the editorials. This can be done by grouping the students and providing each group with two different newspaper editorials. The groups then can be asked to go through the editorials trying to divide them into different sections. Later, they may focus on how the writers have initiated, developed and concluded the topic in the identified sections in terms of the I moves, such as Orientation, Criticism, Development and Concluding. The groups then may discuss the linguistic strategies used for realization of the moves.

Furthermore, a text-diagramming type of exercises can be used to develop the knowledge on how different moves have been realized in an editorial. The following exercise is an example of this kind that can be used in ESP courses of journalism.

**Exercise:** Referring to the first part of the following editorial, complete the following chart.

Ehud Olmert, Israel's soon to be ex-prime minister, voiced some startling truths this week. He said that in exchange for peace, Israel should withdraw from "almost all" of the West Bank and share its capital city, Jerusalem, with the Palestinians. He also said that as part of a negotiated peace deal with Syria, Israel should be ready to give up the Golan Heights. It's frustrating that Mr. Olmert, who is stepping down as prime minister after being accused of corruption, waited so long to say these things. And it is tragic that he did not do more to act on those beliefs when he had real power. (Ref. NYT No. 1)

MOVE	LINGUISTIC REALIZATION
Orientation	..... .....
Criticism	..... .....

Such a pre-knowledge of the formal schemata would facilitate the reading processes and in fact “failure to sensitize language users to the various genre distinctions might result in ineffective teaching and learning” [14].

In fact, “exploring both theoretical and practical rhetorical strategies for patterning can help our university students develop logical connections that enable them to produce the types of prose required by the academy” [15].

The findings of the editorial genre analysis would not only help the ESP teachers to shed light on this type of public discourse but would also enable students of journalism, specifically the prospective editorial writers, to produce a kind of persuasive writing that is really organized, informative and persuasive in the eyes of targeted readers.

Thus, besides broadening the scope of the field of genre analysis, the findings of the present research study indicated that editorials can be utilized in teaching reading newspaper texts and writing courses at the tertiary level. Students of ESP courses especially those of media literacy and journalism might benefit from the findings of the study as well.

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