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## Syntactic Complexity of Online Newspaper Editorials across Countries

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### Abstract

*This study attempts to reveal the syntactic complexity of online English newspaper editorials across countries. The data was taken from ten online English newspaper and was analyzed by using L2 syntactic complexity analyzer (Lu, 2010). Second Language Syntactic Complexity Analyzer (L2SCA) program displays fourteen syntactic complexity measures. Those editorials were derived from ten online newspaper in the USA, UK, Egypt, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russia and Singapore. All the editorials were written in English by the local newspaper editors, so they contain varied production units and grammatical structures from native English writers and non-native English writers. The results of the study reveal that the non-native online newspaper, The Vanguard from Nigeria, shows the most complexity of sentence structure as indicated in the length of production unit which correlate with higher levels of proficiency. Meanwhile, the native online newspaper, The New York Times from USA, displays the highest score of subordination, which indicate complexity at the beginning and intermediate levels of proficiency. Hence, in most newspapers, the purpose of editorials is to influence the opinions of readers on some controversial issues.*

**Keywords:** Online newspapers, editorials, syntactic complexity.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Rapid growth of technology has changed many aspects of social life, including how people access and share news, as Doyle (2014, p. 359) stated, “the reading patterns of people as news readers are shifting, print media is no longer as the only way to access news, people are spending their time more on online media and use their mobile devices”. Furthermore, Doyle (2014, p. 359) noted that, “the introduction of digital technologies

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and growth of internet have altered the media landscape in recent years, blurring social and geographical boundaries.” Online media is a communication technology that uses the internet or the World Wide Web to present or to exchange information (Vie, 2018). Knox (2007) explained that unlike traditional newspapers, online newspapers can be updated continuously. The text of an online newspaper is dynamic and fluid. Meanwhile, according to Smith (2005) newspapers have a tradition of seeking, gathering, processing, and producing news in a one-way daily delivery, but the internet can give users the ability to make the reporting process more transparent if site visitors can see, hear, or read the sources reporters relied on.

Knox (2007, p. 23) also described that the entry point to an online newspaper is the *home page*, which functions to orient the reader to the newspaper and to provide navigational information and links. In addition to home page, online newspapers have *section pages*, such as the ‘domestic news’ page, the ‘international news’ page, and the ‘sport news’ page. Home pages and section pages offer links to *story pages*, which are typically dominated by the text of one and only one news story, which may instantiate any of a variety of news genres, such as editorials, features, opinion articles, and many more.

An editorial has been described as “an article in a newspaper that gives the opinion of the editor or publisher on a topic or item of news” (Sinclair, 1995, as cited in Bonyadi, 2011; Indarti, 2018). Usually, it is written by an editor that represents the newspaper’s or publishing house’ point of view and policies on a current issue. Since the editorial discourse has been an interesting field to be explored, numerous studies have been conducted and contributed important findings. Bonyadi (2011) identified the linguistic manifestation of modality employed in the American newspaper, *The New York Times*, and the Persian English newspaper, *Tehran Times*, and revealed that the higher number of the predictive modal in *The New York Times* suggested the idea that identifying what would happen in the future was the main concern of the editorial writers in this newspaper, while the editorial writers in *Tehran Times* were occupied with what should be done. Meanwhile, Masroor and Ahmad (2017) investigated directives in English language newspaper editorials across cultures. Using 90 English editorials taken from two Asian newspapers (*Dawn* and *New Straits Times*) and one American newspaper (*The New York Times*), the results of the study indicate that *Dawn*’s stance was when realizing directives as direct; *The New York Times*’ stance was authoritative, whereas *The New Straits Times*’ stance was less engaging and more cautions.

Nonetheless, no study has investigated the complexity of words and sentences of editorials published in online English newspapers across countries. Previous studies on syntactic complexity mostly used students’ writing and academic writing products. Lu and Ai (2015) explored differences of syntactic complexity of 200 argumentative essays gathered from Louvain Corpus of Native English Essays (LOCNESS) and 1400 essays taken from International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE), then analyzed them by using L2 Syntactic Complexity Analyzer (Lu, 2010). The study revealed that there were significant differences emerged between the native speaker (NS) group and NNS (non-native speaker) groups in terms of 14 measures of syntactic complexity. Meanwhile, Wijayanti (2017) conducted a research about the use of syntactic complexity in reading text of English subject in the university context and found that syntactic complexity can be used as media to see the writer’s ability to produce good variation of sentence structure.

The present study aims to give new contribution to the existing research about syntactic complexity by focusing on the comparison of syntactic complexity in ten editorial articles published in the English online newspaper from various countries. Lu and Ai (2015) mentioned that the measure of syntactic complexity may be reliably used to predict the quality of L2 writing and may be affected by various factors, such as topic, genre, planning time and instructional setting. Based on the explanation given above, the objectives of the present study are to analyze and to compare the syntactic complexity of ten editorial articles of English online newspapers from various countries.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Professional Writing Genre

Indarti (2018) wrote that professional writing is a written communication used in professional areas or workplaces and purposes to persuade, to inform, to instruct, and to encourage action. Connor (1996) said that professional writing is different from academic writing, involving different purposes and audiences and takes place in business, newspaper offices, governmental agencies, and other workplaces. Connor (1996) divided the professional writings into business writing, editorials, resume, and political discourse, while Couture (1992) distinguished the professional writings into engineering, administrative and technical writings. Meanwhile Gunnarsson et al. (1997, p. 3) argued that, “professional genres are a reflection of the political ideologies and power structure within the society studied as well as of the actual knowledge level of the field and of the social patterns of the professional group studied”. Goins et al. (2016) compiled a book titled *Workplace writing: A handbook for common workplace genres and professional writing*. They presented some professional writings genres, such as memo correspondence, brief proposals and reports, web writing, press release, brochures, records and documentation, policies, procedures, instructions, job application and advancement.

Several papers on professional writing genre have been published and contributed significant findings. Jenkins and Hinds (1987) examined the form and content of business letters of request in English, French and Japanese and revealed that American business letters were reader oriented, French business letters were writer oriented, and Japanese business letters were oriented to the space between the writer and reader.

Al-Harashsheh and Obeidat (2014) wrote a paper to shed light on semantic and syntactic challenges in translating political reports from English into Arabic and vice versa using the theoretical framework on linguistic approach to translation. The result of the study revealed that translators encountered semantic and syntactic challenges when rendering political news reports into Target Language (TL). Meanwhile, Indarti (2018) investigated the patterns of rhetorical organization of opinion articles in *The Jakarta Post* and found out that most writers put the thesis statement in the introduction part either with a single sentence paragraphs or two or more multi-sentence paragraphs. Those studies showed that research on professional writing genre could give contribution to the linguistic field by to investigate textual differences and contrastive rhetoric of languages.

## 2.2. Newspaper Editorials

Richardson and Lancendorfer (2004) wrote that:

Editorials are a particularly robust site for examining press attitudes toward controversial issues. Unlike news personnel, editorial writers are not constrained by journalistic norms of objectivity and balance. The opinion page is just that – a place where editors can bluntly state exactly what they think. Smaller newspapers can produce editorials inexpensively, even, when constrained to fill the news hole with wire content. Analyzing editorials can elucidate a less constrained media discourse that includes a broader segment of society. (Richardson & Lancendorfer, 2004, p. 75).

Richardson and Lancendorfer (2004) also argued that news coverage purports to present a balanced, impartial account of the day's events, while editorial content has purposes quite distinct from news coverage. Richardson and Lancendorfer (2004) also highlighted the history of editorials from when it first emerged in the 1970s which was highly personal and laden with rhetoric, then by the mid-twentieth century, editorials evolved into a device for the newspaper as an institution to provide information and explanation to readers, until in recent decades, editorials have become more likely to take controversial stands, use argumentation, and express reactions or calls for action (Hynds, 1990). Masroor (2013) stated that an important movement in the newspaper industry is the separation of the news pages from those expressing public opinion.

Several studies analyzed newspaper editorials such as Lee and Lin (2006) that focused on two local Hong Kong newspapers facing an important and sensitive political issue, constructed two different overall storylines and used two different sets of discursive strategies in their editorials to handle political pressure, market credibility, and journalistic integrity simultaneously. The study compared the elite-oriented newspaper *Ming Pao* with the mass-oriented newspaper *Apple Daily* and yielded that *Ming Pao* constructed a storyline of the debate being a factional struggle in order to posit itself as an impartial arbitrator, while *Apple Daily* constructed a storyline of a sovereign people whose rights were encroached upon by a powerful entity. Masroor and Ahmad (2017) further analyzed directives in 90 English editorials, taken from two Asian (*Dawn* and *New Straits Times* or *NST*) and one American newspaper (*The New York Times* or *NYT*) by looking at their form, frequency and co-text. The results of the study indicated that *Dawn's* stance when realizing directives as direct; *NYT's* stance was authoritative, whereas *NST's* stance was less engaging and more cautious.

Another study by Izadi and Saghaye-Biria (2007) employed Said's concept of orientalism and van Dijk's concept of the ideological square to analyze three elite American newspapers' editorial coverage of Iran's nuclear program. A critical discourse analysis of *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal* editorials from 1984 to 2004 identified six oriental themes. This study revealed that *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post* more predominantly drew on orientals arguments than did *The New York Times*. Therefore, research on editorials cross-country

is significant because editorials are considered some of the best examples of persuasive writing in all countries; they set standards for written persuasion (Connor, 1996, p. 144).

### 2.3 Syntactic Complexity

Syntactic complexity is “the range and degree of syntactic structures that surface in language production recognized as a very important construct in second language writing teaching and research” (Ortega, 2003, as cited in Ai and Lu, 2013, p. 3). Wijayanti (2017) wrote that a good syntactic complexity can be shown by the frequent use of the correct combination between independent clauses and dependent clauses, as known as compound sentences and complex sentences. There are some devices to measure the syntactic complexity, such as *computerized profiling* (Long et al., 2008), *Coh-metrix* (Graesser et al., 2004), and *D-level Analyzer* (Lu, 2009). D-Level Analyzer or L2 Syntactic Complexity Analyzer provides fourteen measures gauge on one of the following five dimensions of syntactic complexity. The first type consists of three measures that gauge length of production at the clausal, sentential, or T-unit level, namely, mean of clause (MLC), mean length of sentence (MLS), and mean length of T-unit (MLT). The second type consists of a sentence complexity ratio (clauses per sentence or C/S). The third type comprises four ratios that reflect the amount of subordination, including a T-unit complexity ratio (clauses per T-unit, or C/T), a complex T-unit ratio (complex T-units per T-unit, or CT/T), a dependent clause ratio (dependent clauses per clause, or DC/C), and dependent clauses per T-unit (DC/T). The fourth type is made up of three ratios that measure the amount of coordination, namely, coordinate phrases per clause (CP/C), coordinate phrases per T-unit (CP/T), and a sentence coordination ratio (T-units per sentence, or T/S). The fifth and final type consists of three ratios that consider the relationship between particular syntactic structures and larger production units, i.e. complex nominals per clause (CN/C), complex nominals per T-unit (CN/T), and verb phrases per T-unit (VP/T) (Lu & Ai, 2015, p. 6). The measures, definition and dimensions of syntactic complexity can be seen below.

**Table 1.** Syntactic complexity measures (cited from Lu & Ai, 2015)

<i>Measure</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Length of production unit		
Mean length of clause	MLC	#of words/#of clauses
Mean length of sentence	MLT	#of words/#of sentences
Mean length of T-unit	MLS	#of words/#of T-units
Amount of subordination		
Clauses per T-unit	C/T	#of clauses/#of T-unit
Complex T-units per T-unit	CT/T	#of complex T-units/#of T-units
Dependent clauses per clause	DC/C	#of dependent clauses/#of clauses
Dependent clauses per T-unit	DC/T	#of dependent clauses/#of T-units
Amount of coordination		
Coordinate phrases per clause	CP/C	#of coordinate phrases/#of clauses
Coordinate phrases per T-unit	CP/T	#of coordinate phrases/#of T-units
T-units per sentence	T/S	#of T-units/#of sentences

Table 1 continued...

Degree of phrasal sophistication		
Complex nominals per clause	CN/C	#of complex nominals/#of clauses
Complex nominals per T-unit	CN/T	#of complex nominals/#of T-units
Verb phrases per T-unit	VP/T	#of verb phrases/#of T-units
Overall sentence complexity		
Clauses per sentence	C/S	#of clauses/#of sentences

Studies of syntactic complexity are mostly focused on academic writing products. For example Vyatkina (2013) conducted a longitudinal study of two beginning Germany students as a second language learner over four semesters of collegiate language study by using developmental profiling techniques applied to an annotated learner corpus. The result of the study showed that the general developmental trend is for increasing frequency and range of syntactic complexity features with learners diverging more from one another in the second half of the observation period. Ortega (2003) evaluated the cumulate evidence on the use of syntactic complexity measures as indices of college-level L2 writers' overall proficiency in the target language. By using the synthesis of twenty-five meta-studies, it was found that the relationship between L2 proficiency and L2 writing syntactic complexity varied systematically across studies depending on whether a second or a foreign language learning context was investigated and whether proficiency was defined by programmed level or by holistic rating.

Furthermore, Lowrey (2008) conducted three experiments to investigate the effects of syntactic complexity on the persuasiveness of advertising. Experiment one showed that, in a broadcast advertising context, syntactic complexity affects recall and recognition but not the persuasiveness of the advertising. Experiment two indicated that, in a print context, persuasiveness of an advertisement is affected by syntactic complexity. Meanwhile experiment three demonstrated that motivation to process information interacts with syntactic complexity to determine the persuasiveness of print advertising. The study implied that the impact of syntactic complexity on advertising effectiveness is more complicated than previously thought.

### 3. METHOD

This paper uses quantitative method because the data is numerical as Dörnyei (2007, p. 24) stated, "quantitative method involves data collection procedures that result primarily in numerical data which is then analyzed by statistical methods". The data of this study is derived from ten editorials published on April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2018 of online newspapers from across the countries, as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Online newspapers.

<i>Online Newspaper</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Links</i>
The Egypt Independent	Egypt	<a href="http://www.egyptindependent.com">www.egyptindependent.com</a>
The Guardian	UK	<a href="http://www.theguardian.com">www.theguardian.com</a>
The Jakarta Post	Indonesia	<a href="http://www.thejakartapost.com">www.thejakartapost.com</a>
The Japan Times	Japan	<a href="http://www.thejapantimes.co.jp">www.thejapantimes.co.jp</a>

Table 2 continued...

The Malaysian Times	Malaysia	<a href="http://www.themalaysiantimes.com.my">www.themalaysiantimes.com.my</a>
The Moscow Times	Russia	<a href="http://www.themoscowtimes.com">www.themoscowtimes.com</a>
The New York Times	USA	<a href="http://www.nytimes.com">www.nytimes.com</a>
The Pakistan Today	Pakistan	<a href="http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk">www.pakistantoday.com.pk</a>
The Today Online	Singapore	<a href="http://www.todayonline.com">www.todayonline.com</a>
The Vanguardngr	Nigeria	<a href="http://www.vanguardngr.com">www.vanguardngr.com</a>

There were several steps in collecting and analyzing the data. First, each editorial essay was copied-paste and saved into zip files. Each file must contain between 50 to 2000 words. The maximum files that can be processed are 30 files. The users need to upload the zip files then click the 'submit' button. The L2 Syntactic Complexity Analyzer takes a written English language sample in plain text format as input and presents the results of numbers of frequency of nine structures in the text: words (W), sentences (S), verb phrase (VP), clauses (C), T-units (T), dependent clauses (DC), complex T-unit (CT), coordinate phrases (CP), and complex nominal (CN). The results also cover syntactic complexity indices of the text: (1) length of production units, (2) amounts of coordination, (3) amounts of subordination, (4) degree of phrasal sophistication and overall sentence complexity. This paper used the free online interface that is available in the batch mode. The program reveals the results in CSV file which can be converted into spreadsheet and statistical packages for further analysis (Ai & Lu, 2013). After that, the writer analyzed the differences of syntactic complexity between editorials of online newspapers across countries.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.1 Results

After ten editorial texts were input into the L2SCA program, the analyzer counted the frequency of nine structures in the text.

Table 3. Syntactic production unit.

No	Country	W	S	VP	C	T	DC	CT	CP	CN
1.	USA	5.410	130	132	123	105	25	10	23	190
2.	UK	6.012	118	123	110	90	25	14	22	177
3.	Egypt	4.470	105	122	107	82	22	10	12	138
4.	Indonesia	4.896	97	115	105	82	23	12	25	135
5.	Japan	5.010	100	95	92	76	19	7	15	150
6.	Malaysia	4.556	89	86	85	68	18	5	18	126
7.	Nigeria	4.107	74	70	76	54	17	9	5	107
8.	Pakistan	4.247	93	122	107	80	23	10	27	145
9.	Russia	5.009	104	119	104	82	29	10	17	146
10.	Singapore	6.203	117	132	115	87	21	11	18	186

Table 3 illustrates the syntactic production units and syntactic structures. We could see that *Today Online* (Singapore) editorial online newspaper contains the most number

of words (6.203) while *The Vaguardngr* (Nigeria) editorial online newspaper contains the least number of words (4.107). Meanwhile, *The New York Times* (USA) editorial online newspaper displays the most sentences (130) and *The Vaguardngr* (Nigeria) editorial online newspaper displays the least sentences (74). In term of verb phrases that comprise both finite and non-finite verb, both *The New York Times* (USA) and *Today Online* (Singapore) have the most verb phrases (132), and *The Vaguardngr* (Nigeria) editorial online newspaper has the least verb phrases (70). *The New York Times* (USA) editorial online newspaper also displays the most number of clauses (123), T-units (105) and complex nominal (190), while *The Vaguardngr* (Nigeria) editorial online newspaper displays the least number of clauses (70), T-units (54) and complex noun (107). *The Moskow Times* (Russia) editorial online newspaper conceives the most number of dependent clauses (29). In term of complex T-unit, *The Guardian* (U.K) has the highest score of complex T-units (14) and *The Malaysian Times* (Malaysia) has the lowest score of complex T-units (5). The last is *The Pakistan Today* (Pakistan) editorial online newspaper displays the most number of coordinate phrases (27), while *The Vaguardngr* (Nigeria) editorial online newspaper displays the least number of coordinate phrases (5).

**Table 4.** The comparison of syntactic structure among countries.

	USA	UK	EGP	IND	JPN	MLY	NGR	PKS	RUS	SIN
Length of Production unit										
MLC	43.98	54.65	44.30	46.63	54.45	53.60	54.04	39.69	48.16	53.94
MLS	41.62	50.95	45.14	50.47	50.10	51.19	55.50	45.67	48.16	53.02
MLT	51.52	66.80	57.80	59.71	65.92	67.00	76.05	53.09	61.09	71.30
Amount of Subordination										
C/T	1.17	1.22	1.30	1.28	1.21	1.25	1.41	1.34	1.27	1.32
CT/T	0.95	0.16	0.12	0.15	0.09	0.07	0.17	0.13	0.12	0.13
DC/C	0.20	0.23	0.21	0.22	0.21	0.21	0.22	0.22	0.28	0.18
DC/T	0.24	0.28	0.27	0.28	0.25	0.26	0.31	0.29	0.35	0.24
Amount of Coordination										
CP/C	0.19	0.20	0.11	0.24	0.16	0.21	0.06	0.25	0.16	0.16
CP/T	0.21	0.24	0.15	0.30	0.20	0.26	0.09	0.34	0.21	0.21
T/S	0.81	0.76	0.78	0.84	0.76	0.76	0.73	0.86	0.79	0.74
Degree of phrasal Sophistication										
CN/C	1.54	1.61	1.29	1.28	1.63	1.48	1.41	1.36	1.40	1.62
CN/T	1.81	1.97	1.68	1.65	1.97	1.85	1.98	1.81	1.78	2.14
VP/T	1.26	1.37	1.49	1.40	1.25	1.26	1.30	1.53	1.45	1.52
Overall sentence Complexity										
C/S	0.95	0.93	1.02	1.08	0.92	0.96	1.03	1.15	1.00	0.98



Table 4 shows the result of analysis of syntactic complexity of editorials of online newspaper across countries. For the first type, length of production unit contains MLC, MLS and MLT score. The table shows that the highest score of MLC (Mean Length of Clause) was produced by UK (54.65), followed by Japan (54.45), Nigeria (54.04), Singapore (53.94), Malaysia (53.60), Russia (48.46), Indonesia (46.63), Egypt (44.30), USA (43.98) and the lowest score of MLC score was produced by Pakistan (39.69). This means that UK's editorial of online newspaper has the most number of clauses containing of "a subject and a finite verb" (Hunt, 1970, as cited in Ai and Lu, 2013, p. 36). Meanwhile the MLS (Mean length of sentence) shows that Nigeria produced the highest score of MLS (55.50) followed by Singapore (53.02), Malaysia (51.19), UK (50.95), Indonesia (50.47), Japan (50.10), Russia (48.16), Pakistan (45.67), Egypt (45.14), while USA produced the lowest score of MLS (41.62). It means that Singaporean editorial online newspaper has the highest number of long sentences compare to other countries. Table 4 also displays the score of MLT (Mean Length of T-Unit). The highest score of MLT was produced by Nigeria editorial online newspaper (76.05), followed by Singapore (71.30), Malaysia (67.00), UK (66.80), Japan (65.92), Russia (61.09), Indonesia (59.71), Egypt (57.80), Pakistan (61.09) and the lowest score of MLT was produced by USA editorial online newspaper (51.52). This means that USA editorial online newspaper has the lowest number of T-unit- contains of 'a main clause and any dependent clause of non-clausal structure' in the sentence (Hunt, 1970 as cited from Ai and Lu, 2013, p. 36).

The second type presents the score of subordination such as C/T, CT/T, DC/C and DC/T. From Table 4, we can see that the highest point of C/T (T-unit complexity ratio) is gained by Nigeria editorial online newspaper (1.41), Pakistan (1.34), Singapore (1.32), Egypt (1.30), Indonesia (1.28), Russia (1.27), Malaysia (1.25), UK (1.22), Japan (1.21) and the lowest point of C/T appears in USA editorial online newspaper. This means that Nigerian editorial online newspaper displayed the most number of complex clauses than other countries. In the meantime, Table 4 also shows the score of CT/T (Complex T-unit ratio). USA editorial online newspaper gets the highest score, 0.95, followed by Nigeria (0.17), UK (0.16), Indonesia (0.15), Pakistan and Singapore (0.13), Egypt and Russia (0.12), Japan (0.09), while Malaysian editorial online newspaper gets the lowest score, 0.07. It means that Malaysian editorial online newspaper display the least number of T-unit. Meanwhile, the highest DC/C score is gained by Russia (0.28), followed by U.K (0.23), Indonesia, Nigeria, Pakistan (0.22), Egypt, Japan, Malaysia (0.21), USA (0.20) and finally Singapore (0.18). This means that Singapore editorial online newspaper displays the least number of dependent clauses. The last is the score of DC/T (Dependent clauses per T-unit). The highest score of DC/T was produced by Russia editorial online newspaper (0.35), followed by Nigeria (0.31), Pakistan (0.29), Indonesia and UK (0.28), Egypt (0.27), Malaysia (0.26), Japan (0.25) and finally USA and Singapore (0.24). This means that USA and Singapore editorials online newspaper contain the least number of dependent clauses of T-unit.

The third type contains of amount if coordination CP/C, CP/T, T/S. The CP/C score can be ranked from the highest into the lowest as follow: Pakistan (0.25), Indonesia (0.24), Malaysia (0.21), UK (0.20), USA (0.19), Japan, Russia and Singapore (0.16), Egypt (0.11) and finally Nigeria (0.06). This means that Nigeria editorial online newspaper displays the least number of coordinate phrases per clause than other editorials. Meanwhile, the score

of CP/T can be ranked from the lowest to the highest score: Nigeria (0.09), Egypt (0.15), Japan (0.20), USA, Russia and Singapore (0.21), Malaysia (0.26), Indonesia (0.30) and finally Pakistan (0.34). This means that Pakistan editorial online newspaper contains the most number of coordinate phrases per T-unit of all editorial online newspaper. The last is the score of T/S (Sentence coordination ratio) as follow: Nigeria (0.73), Singapore (0.74), UK, Japan, Malaysia (0.76), Egypt (0.78), Russia (0.79), USA (0.81), Indonesia (0.84) and Pakistan (0.86). This means that Nigeria editorial online newspaper displays the least number of coordinate sentences than other editorials.

The fourth type is degree of phrasal sophistication contains of the score of CN/C, CN/T and VP/T. Table 4 shows the highest score of CN/C (Complex nominal per clause) is gained by Japan (1.63) followed by Singapore (1.62), UK (1.61), USA (1.54), Malaysia (1.48), Nigeria (1.41), Russia (1.40), Egypt (1.29) and Indonesia (1.28). This means that Japan editorial online displays the most number of complex nominal per clause of all editorial online newspapers. Meanwhile, the score of CN/T (complex nominal per T-unit) can be ranked from the lowest into the highest score as follow: Indonesia (1.65), Egypt (1.68), Russia (1.78), USA and Pakistan (1.81), Malaysia (1.85), UK and Japan (1.97), Nigeria (1.98) and Singapore (2.14). It means that Indonesia editorial online newspaper displays the most number of complex nominal per T-unit of all editorials. The last is the score of VP/T (Verb phrases per T-unit) can be ranked from the lowest into the highest score as follow: Japan (1.25), USA and Malaysia (1.26), Nigeria (1.30), UK (1.37), Indonesia (1.40), Russia (1.45), Egypt (1.49), Singapore (1.52) and Pakistan (1.53). This means that Pakistan editorial online newspaper contains the least number of verb phrases per T-unit than other editorial online newspapers.

The last type is the overall sentence complexity ratio (C/S). The score of C/S can be ranked from the lowest into the highest as follow: Japan (0.92), UK (0.93), USA (0.95), Malaysia (0.96), Singapore (0.98), Russia (1.00), Egypt (1.02), Nigeria (1.03), Indonesia (1.08) and Pakistan (1.15). This means that Japan editorial online newspaper displays the less complex sentences compare than other editorials online newspapers.

## 4.2 Discussion

The results of the study reveal the manifestation of syntactic complexity in second language writing in terms of how varied and sophisticated the production units or the grammatical structures are (Foster & Skehan, 1996; Ortega, 2003; Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998; Lu, 2010). For the first type, length of production unit consists of three measures that gauge length of production at the clausal, sentential, or T-unit. In this case, *The Vanguardngr* shows the highest point of length production unit. It means that *The Vanguardngr* editorial online newspaper contains most number of mean lengths of clauses, mean length of sentences and mean length of T-units. Hunt (1965) defined a sentence as a group of words delimited with one of the punctuation marks that signal the end of a sentence, while a clause is defined as a structure with a subject and a finite verb, and T-unit is a one main clause plus any subordinate clause or non-clausal structure that is attached to or embedded in it. Lu and Ai (2015) argued that longer production units have been found to correlate with higher levels of proficiency. It can be inferred that editorials published in *The Vanguardngr* online newspapers have high level of syntactic complexity.

The second type comprises four ratios that reflect the amount of subordination, including a clause per T-unit, complex T-unit per T-unit, dependent clause per clause, and dependent clauses per T-unit. In this case, *The New York Times* editorial online newspapers gained the highest score in term of subordination. It means that *The New York Times* contains most dependent clause and complex T-unit. Hunt (1965) explained that dependent clause is a finite adjective, adverbial, or nominal clause. Meanwhile, according to Casanave (1994) a complex T-unit is one that contains a dependent clause. According to Lu and Ai (2015) the role of subordination is subdued as phrasal-level complexification becomes the most pervasive means of syntactic complexity.

The third type is made up of three ratios that measure the amount of coordination, namely, coordinate phrases per clause, coordinate phrases per T-unit, and a sentence coordination ratio. Cooper (1976) said that only adjective, adverb, noun, and verb phrases are counted in coordinate phrase. In this case, *The Pakistan Today* editorial online newspaper shows the highest score of coordination. According to Lu and Ai (2015), coordination is considered to be the most indicative and useful indices of complexification at beginning and intermediate levels. Furthermore, the greater use of coordinate sentences is indicative of beginning or lower levels of second language proficiency (Bardovi-Harlig, 1992; Norris & Ortega, 2000; Lu and Ai, 2015). It means that the editorials published in *The Pakistan Today* are readable compare to those that published in *The New York Times* or in *The Vanguardngr*.

The last type consists of three ratios that consider the relationship between particular syntactic structures and larger production units, i.e. complex nominal per clause, complex nominal per T-unit and verb phrases per T-unit (Lu, 2010). According to Cooper (1976) complex nominal comprises (i) nouns plus adjective, possessive, prepositional phrase, relative clause, participle, or appositive, (ii) nominal clause, and (iii) gerunds and infinitives in subject position. *The Today Online* editorials contain the most score of phrasal sophistication. It means that the level proficiency of *The Today Online* editorials newspaper from Singapore is in the upper intermediate level.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study has revealed the syntactic complexity of ten online newspapers editorials across countries. Syntactic complexity is manifested in second language writing in terms of how varied and sophisticated the production units or grammatical structures are (Foster & Skehan, 1996; Ortega, 2003; Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998; Lu, 2010). In term of length production unit, *The Vanguardngr* from Nigeria editorial online newspaper got the highest score of MLC, MLS and MLT, while *The New York Times* from USA editorial online newspaper revealed the most amount of subordination (C/T, CT/T, DC/C, DC/T). On the other hand, *The Pakistan Today* from Pakistan displayed the highest amount of coordination (CP/C, CP/T, T/S) and also sentence complexity ratio, while *The Today Online* from Singapore had the most number of degree of phrasal sophistication (CN/C, CN/T, VP/T).

Surprisingly, the result of this paper contrasted with the previous studies on syntactic complexity using the academic written productions. Previous studies of syntactic

complexity using academic written production revealed that writers from L1 backgrounds may be more prone to produce longer and more complex sentences in English compared to writers from L2 background (Lu & Ai, 2015). The present study reveals that non-native online newspaper, *The Vanguard* from Nigeria shows the most complexity of sentence structure as indicated in length of production units. Lu (2010) stated that the longer production units have been found to correlate with higher levels of proficiency. Meanwhile, *The New York Times* from USA, as a native country, displays the highest score of subordination. According to Lu and Ai (2015) coordination and subordination are considered to be the most indicative of complexification at the beginning and intermediate levels of proficiency.

The study also reveals that in the professional writing genre such as editorials, the non-native English country editorials like Nigeria and Singapore indicate higher syntactic complexity than native English country editorials. Factors of this condition need to be investigated in further research. However, the current study only took editorials from an edition of each online newspaper. The results might be different if it uses larger data samples.

Research on editorials cross-culturally is significant even if English as second language (ESL) students do not become editorial writers, in most cases; they are readers of editorials (Connor, 1996). In most newspapers, the purpose of editorials is to influence the opinions of readers on some controversial issues. Non-native speakers of English seldom need to write newspaper editorials in English, which may explain the relatively small set of published work on cross-cultural differences in editorials (Connor, 1996). This could be a research gap to fill in the further study. Since online newspapers are getting more improved in the coming years, the use of newspaper language could be more developed and varied. This condition left enormous topics and field to be explored in the linguistics area.

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