



SYNTACTIC COMPLEXITY IN ENGLISH AND UZBEK NEWS REPORTS

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the syntactic complexity of news reports in English and Uzbek. By analyzing sentence length, clause structures, and the use of subordination, the study reveals significant differences and similarities between the two languages. The findings demonstrate how structural patterns contribute to the clarity, formality, and reader engagement of news texts. This comparative linguistic analysis contributes to understanding cross-linguistic stylistic tendencies in journalistic discourse.

Introduction. Language in journalistic discourse functions not only as a vehicle for transmitting information but also as a marker of stylistic, cultural, and structural norms within a given society (Bell, 1991; van Dijk, 1988). Among the various linguistic elements that contribute to the identity of journalistic texts, syntactic complexity plays a pivotal role in shaping textual clarity, cognitive load, and rhetorical tone (Biber & Gray, 2010; Norris & Ortega, 2009). News reports frequently strive for a balance between accessibility and informativeness, and syntactic choices—such as sentence length, clause structure, and subordination—are central to achieving that balance.

Previous research in English news discourse has revealed a preference for structurally complex sentences, including the use of embedded clauses, coordination, and nominalizations (Biber et al., 1999; Ravid & Berman, 2010). These structures serve to condense dense information into compact units, which aligns with the journalistic aims of objectivity, authority, and efficiency. In contrast, Uzbek news texts may reflect different stylistic and structural norms due to the agglutinative nature of the language and its discourse traditions (Johanson, 2001; Lewis, 2000). The morphological richness of Uzbek allows for the construction of semantically loaded expressions through suffixal chains, reducing the need for subordinate clause embedding that is common in English.

Despite the growing interest in cross-linguistic stylistic studies, relatively few works have systematically compared syntactic complexity between English and Turkic languages, including Uzbek. This is notable, considering the increasing global flow of information and the role of translation and bilingual journalism in intercultural communication (Connor, 2008; Uysal, 2012). The present study addresses this research gap by applying a comparative lens to syntactic complexity in English and Uzbek news reports.

The theoretical foundation of this study draws on Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), which posits that syntactic structures encode ideational and interpersonal meanings, shaped by communicative intent and social context. In addition, the notion of contrastive rhetoric (Kaplan, 1966) provides a cross-cultural perspective on syntactic preferences, suggesting that sentence construction is influenced by culturally specific cognitive styles and discourse patterns.

The central aim of this study is to analyze and compare the syntactic complexity of English and Uzbek news reports, focusing on sentence length, clause structure, and subordination. The following research questions guide the inquiry:

- What are the dominant syntactic structures used in English and Uzbek news reports?
- How does syntactic complexity vary between the two languages in terms of sentence length and clause composition?
- What implications do these syntactic patterns have for readability and stylistic tone in each language?

By addressing these questions, this study contributes to a broader understanding of syntactic variation in media discourse and enriches the field of linguistic stylistics with comparative insights from two typologically distinct languages.

Literature Review and Methodology. Syntactic complexity has long been recognized as a central feature in the study of linguistic style and discourse organization, especially in academic and journalistic texts (Biber & Gray, 2010; Norris & Ortega, 2009). In media discourse, syntactic structures do not merely serve grammatical functions but also contribute to communicative efficiency, information packaging, and stylistic tone (van Dijk, 1988; Bell, 1991). Comparative analysis of syntactic complexity across languages offers valuable insights into typological variation and culturally embedded rhetorical traditions.

In English-language journalism, syntactic complexity is frequently associated with nominalization, subordinate clauses, and embedded constructions—features that enable dense informational packaging (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999). Ravid and Berman (2010) found that such features correlate with the formal register of hard news, enhancing the impression of objectivity and professionalism. These complex structures often serve both ideational and interpersonal functions in line with Hallidayan models of discourse (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).

In contrast, Uzbek, an agglutinative Turkic language, exhibits distinct syntactic preferences. Its morphological system allows for the expression of complex ideas within single lexical items, reducing the need for elaborate subordination. As Johanson (2001) and Lewis (2000) observe, Turkic languages frequently rely on suffixal constructions and parataxis, which achieve informational depth through additive rather than embedded strategies. Despite these differences, both languages aim for clarity and cohesion, albeit through different syntactic pathways.

Few comparative studies have addressed the stylistic and structural variation between English and Central Asian languages. Kaplan's (1966) theory of contrastive rhetoric emphasizes that syntactic strategies are not merely linguistic choices but also reflect cultural thought patterns. This theory has been extended in recent studies exploring rhetorical preferences in Asian and Middle Eastern academic writing (Connor, 2008; Uysal, 2012), but Uzbek remains underrepresented in such cross-linguistic investigations.

Furthermore, traditional stylistic frameworks tend to prioritize Indo-European languages, leaving a theoretical and empirical gap in our understanding of stylistic norms in languages like Uzbek (Simpson, 2004). This study addresses that gap by integrating Uzbek into a comparative stylistic model, thereby contributing to the underexplored field of Central Asian media linguistics. It also draws from systemic functional linguistics, especially Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2014) notion that syntactic choices reflect broader social and ideological meanings in discourse.

In summary, while the syntactic complexity of English journalistic texts has been well documented, comparative analyses involving Uzbek remain limited. By analyzing authentic news reports in both languages, this study aims to enrich the understanding of cross-linguistic stylistic variation and broaden the theoretical scope of media stylistics.

This study adopts a comparative linguistic-stylistic methodology to analyze syntactic complexity in English and Uzbek news reporting. By integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches, the research investigates the structural features of sentence formation across two typologically distinct languages. The goal is to reveal how syntactic complexity is manifested in journalistic discourse and what functional roles it serves within each linguistic and cultural system.

Two comparable corpora were compiled using purposive sampling to ensure balance and relevance. The English-language corpus consists of ten news articles from widely recognized media outlets including BBC News, The Guardian, and Reuters. The Uzbek-language corpus comprises ten articles from leading national sources such as Kun.uz, Gazeta.uz, and Daryo.uz. To ensure thematic consistency, all texts were selected from the “Society” and “Politics” sections. The articles were published between 2022 and 2024, representing up-to-date language use and stylistic conventions in both languages.

All selected texts fall under the category of hard news, as this genre most consistently reflects neutral tone, factual reporting, and a formal syntactic style (Bell, 1991; van Dijk, 1988). Feature stories, editorials, and opinion pieces were excluded to avoid genre-based syntactic variation.

The English corpus consists of 5,738 words, while the Uzbek corpus contains 5,412 words.

Language	Number of articles	Word count	Sources
English	10	5,738	BBC News, The Guardian, Reuters
Uzbek	10	5,412	Kun.uz, Gazeta.uz, Daryo.uz

The analytical framework is based on established measures of syntactic complexity developed by Biber et al. (1999), Norris and Ortega (2009), and Ravid and Berman (2010). These include:

- Sentence Length: average number of words per sentence
- Clause Density: average number of clauses per sentence
- Subordination Index: proportion of subordinate clauses to total clause

Clause identification and classification followed a modified version of Halliday and Matthiessen’s (2014) Systemic Functional Grammar, which treats syntax not only as structure but as a means of realizing ideational and interpersonal meanings

Each sentence in the corpus was manually segmented into clauses and categorized as either independent or subordinate. Subordinate clauses were further classified into adverbial, complement, and relative types, following the typology proposed by Biber et al. (1999). In the case of Uzbek, the analysis also took into account unique morphological features such as suffixation and nominal chaining, which often substitute for embedded subordination (Johanson, 2001; Lewis, 2000).

While the study is grounded in a balanced corpus and theoretically robust framework, it is limited by its modest sample size and focus on online journalism. The findings may not generalize across broader media genres or dialectal varieties. Furthermore, translation influences and editorial policies may indirectly affect syntactic choices in bilingual contexts. Nonetheless, the study provides a valid foundation for identifying core syntactic tendencies and contributes novel comparative insights to the field of cross-linguistic stylistics

Results. The comparative syntactic analysis yielded substantial insights into the structural preferences and stylistic tendencies of English and Uzbek news reporting. The data shows clear variation in the depth and layering of syntactic constructions, reflecting each language's underlying grammatical system and editorial norm

The English news corpus demonstrated a greater tolerance for syntactic load, with sentences averaging 22.4 words, while the Uzbek news corpus averaged 18.9 words per sentence. This disparity is not merely a reflection of lexical choice but reveals an editorial tendency in English journalism to embed background, attribution, and nuance within single, multifunctional sentences. Uzbek journalism, by contrast, leans toward syntactic economy, favoring succinct expression that mirrors oral communicative rhythms common in Turkic linguistic traditions (Lewis, 2000; Rahmatullaev, 2021).

Further evidence of syntactic layering in English news texts comes from the higher clause density: 2.31 clauses per sentence on average, compared with 1.94 in the Uzbek texts. English journalistic writing frequently integrates subordinate structures to convey cause-effect relationships, conditions, and concessions, thereby enhancing textual cohesion. In contrast, Uzbek reporting favors parataxis—often relying on linear development and nominal constructions rather than embedding clauses within clauses (Johanson, 2001).

Perhaps the most telling indicator of syntactic complexity is the subordination index—defined here as the ratio of subordinate to total clauses. The English corpus scored 0.46, while the Uzbek corpus registered at 0.31. This difference illustrates a stylistic divergence: English reporters are more inclined to attribute motives, intentions, or context through subordinate constructions, whereas Uzbek reporters tend to isolate such information in separate clauses or sentences, often connected via conjunctions like *va*, *ammo*, or *shuningdek*.

Syntactic Feature	English news corpus	Uzbek news corpus
Average Sentence Length	22.4 words	18.9 words
Average Clause Density	2.31 clauses	1.94 clauses
Subordination Index	0.46	0.31

Beyond the numerical metrics, several qualitative patterns emerged. English news writers favor structures that delay the main clause, embedding context or qualifiers

beforehand (e.g., “Although officials denied responsibility, the investigation continued”). Such syntactic anticipation builds interpretive tension and allows for more nuanced stance-taking. This technique is rarely used in Uzbek reports, which often front-load the main message and follow with elaborative detail in subsequent independent clauses.

Moreover, Uzbek texts rely on grammatical tools such as participial adjectives, possessive compounds, and postpositional phrases to condense complex relationships without resorting to deep subordination. This strategy results in leaner sentences that remain information-rich without increasing formal clause count—demonstrating a different kind of syntactic sophistication rooted in morphological economy rather than syntactic embedding.

Taken together, these findings reveal that English news reporting favors hierarchical complexity, whereas Uzbek journalism maintains clarity and coherence through linear and morphologically dense constructions. The syntactic strategies observed are not merely linguistic but index cultural expectations of how news should flow, be framed, and be interpreted.

Discussion. The results of this comparative study underscore the nuanced interplay between syntactic complexity and journalistic style in English and Uzbek news texts. While both corpora serve the common purpose of delivering factual information, they diverge significantly in the structural strategies employed to convey that information—differences that are deeply embedded in linguistic typology, cultural norms, and editorial traditions.

The higher clause density and subordination index in English news writing reflect a strong preference for hypotactic constructions, which facilitate the layering of arguments, conditions, and background information within a single syntactic unit. Such structures enable nuanced reporting and hedging, aligning with Anglophone journalistic norms that value objectivity, attribution, and interpretive flexibility (Biber & Gray, 2016; Hyland, 2005). In contrast, the Uzbek corpus reveals a preference for paratactic and morphologically dense constructions, where meaning is compacted into nominal forms and clauses are often presented in sequence rather than hierarchy (Comrie, 1981; Turaeva, 2020).

These syntactic tendencies may be partially attributed to the typological differences between the two languages. English, as an inflectional and analytic language, relies heavily on word order and auxiliary structures to convey grammatical relationships. Uzbek, a Turkic language with agglutinative morphology, expresses complex relationships through affixation and participial forms, often reducing the need for overt subordination (Johanson & Csató, 1998). This morphological economy allows Uzbek journalists to construct sentences that are concise yet semantically rich, even if they appear syntactically simpler on the surface.

Moreover, the stylistic choices in both corpora seem to reflect deeper cultural orientations toward communication. English journalistic writing frequently prioritizes clarity through precision and subordination, which aligns with Western norms of argumentative reasoning and rhetorical depth (Connor, 1996). Uzbek news writing, on the other hand, often emphasizes clarity through linearity, aligning with oral discourse traditions where information is presented in a logical sequence that prioritizes immediacy and accessibility (Erkinov, 2018).

Finally, this research opens avenues for further inquiry into how syntactic choices in news media interact with genre conventions, political discourse, and digital media platforms. For instance, future research might explore whether the rise of online news formats—

characterized by shorter texts and multimedia integration—will lead to a convergence in syntactic practices across languages.

Conclusion. This comparative study of English and Uzbek news reports has shown that syntactic complexity varies significantly across the two languages. English texts tend to rely on subordinate clauses and embedded structures, reflecting a more interpretive and layered reporting style. In contrast, Uzbek news writing favors simpler clause structures and morphological strategies, offering concise yet meaningful delivery. These differences are shaped by linguistic typology as well as journalistic conventions within each culture. Rather than viewing one style as more complex or advanced, this study emphasizes the functional and cultural logic behind each approach.

The findings highlight the importance of syntactic awareness in translation, media literacy, and cross-cultural communication. Future research could explore how evolving news platforms influence syntactic choices across languages and media types.

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