



Distinguishment of Sentence Patterns in Printed and Digital Publications

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Abstract: The development of information technology has transformed the way news is produced and consumed, affecting the sentence patterns and structures used in both print and digital media. This study aims to analyze the differences in sentence patterns between the two media types using a descriptive qualitative approach. Data were collected from 40 news articles taken from national print media and popular digital news portals. The analysis was conducted based on sentence length, sentence type, use of clauses, and style of information delivery. The results show that print media tend to use longer and more complex sentences with a higher average number of clauses, in line with Chomsky's generative syntax framework. Digital media, on the other hand, frequently employ shorter and simpler sentences, consistent with Flesch's readability principles. The differences in writing styles across both media support Leech's view that linguistic style is influenced by communicative goals and the medium of delivery. In addition, the contrast in discourse structures aligns with van Dijk's framework on news presentation strategies that emphasize clarity and accessibility. This study concludes that differences in sentence patterns between print and digital media represent a form of linguistic adaptation shaped by audience needs and the characteristics of each medium.

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INTRODUCTION

The development of communication and information technology has significantly transformed the way news is produced and consumed by society. Print media, which once functioned as the primary source of public information, now operates alongside digital media that emphasize speed, accessibility, and immediacy. This transformation has resulted not only in changes in news distribution but also in observable differences in the linguistic form of news texts, particularly in the sentence patterns used by journalists across media platforms.

Empirically, news texts published in print media tend to employ longer sentences with multiple clauses, allowing for elaboration, explanation, and contextual depth. In contrast, digital news texts commonly rely on shorter and more direct sentences that prioritize rapid comprehension and ease of processing. These contrasting sentence patterns can be consistently observed in newspapers, online news portals, blogs, and social media-based news platforms, indicating that sentence construction functions as a key linguistic adaptation to different reading environments and audience behaviors.

Print media such as newspapers and magazines generally maintain a formal and detailed writing style, presenting information through structurally complex sentences.

Meanwhile, digital media favor concise sentence constructions to accommodate readers who expect quick and easily digestible information. As noted by Leech (2014), “Style is shaped by the communicative purpose and the medium through which the message is delivered,” suggesting that differences in media platforms directly influence linguistic choices, including sentence length and syntactic structure [1].

These empirical differences in sentence patterns are closely related to how readers process information. Flesch and Ferry (1948) argue that “Shorter sentences increase readability and reduce cognitive load on readers,” which helps explain why digital news writing frequently adopts brief and linear sentence structures [2]. Conversely, print media readers often engage with texts more attentively, enabling the use of longer and more complex sentences without compromising comprehension.

From a structural perspective, this study draws on Chomsky’s (2002) syntactic theory, which defines syntax as “the study of the principles and processes by which sentences are constructed in particular languages” and emphasizes the generation of well-formed sentences through hierarchical organization [3]. This framework provides analytical tools for examining differences in sentence types, clause arrangement, and structural complexity between print and digital news texts.

At the discourse level, news texts also reflect medium-specific communicative strategies. Van Dijk (2013) explains that “News discourse is structured to prioritize clarity, coherence, and accessibility for its target audience,” indicating that sentence patterns are shaped not only by grammatical considerations but also by discourse goals and audience expectations [4]. Based on these observable linguistic phenomena, this study aims to analyze differences in sentence patterns between print and digital media by focusing on sentence length, structural complexity, and clause usage, supported by syntactic theory, readability principles, stylistics, and discourse analysis.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical foundation of this study draws from four major linguistic and discourse frameworks that collectively guide the analysis of syntactic structures in news texts across print and digital media. These theories are not applied in isolation; rather, each framework contributes a specific analytical function that supports the examination of sentence patterns in relation to the research focus.

First, the study refers to Chomsky’s syntactic theory, which asserts that “Syntax is the study of the principles and processes by which sentences are constructed in particular languages” [3]. This theory forms the core structural foundation of the analysis, as it provides the conceptual basis for identifying and classifying sentence types, including simple, compound, and complex constructions. Through Chomsky’s framework, the study examines hierarchical sentence organization and clause relations, enabling systematic analysis of syntactic complexity in both print and digital news texts. This structural approach is also supported by recent analyses of online newspaper syntax [5], [6].

Second, the research incorporates the readability theory proposed by Flesch and Ferry (1948), who argue that sentence length plays a crucial role in determining textual comprehensibility, stating that “Shorter sentences increase readability and reduce cognitive load on readers” [2]. In this study, readability theory functions as an explanatory framework for interpreting variations in sentence length between print and digital media. It helps address why digital news texts tend to favor shorter and more direct sentence

structures, while print media maintain longer constructions to accommodate more detailed information delivery.

Third, the study employs Leech's stylistic theory to explain how communicative purposes and media platforms shape structural choices in news writing. Leech (2014) emphasizes that "Style is shaped by the communicative purpose and the medium through which the message is delivered" [1]. Within this research, stylistic theory is applied to interpret how syntactic forms operate as rhetorical tools rather than merely grammatical units. This framework clarifies how differences in sentence structure reflect media-specific conventions, particularly the contrast between the more elaborated syntactic patterns of print news and the concise, high-readability style characteristic of digital media, as also observed in analyses of Indonesian online news writing [7]–[9].

Finally, the research adopts Van Dijk's discourse theory, which states that "News discourse is structured to prioritize clarity, coherence, and accessibility for its target audience" [4]. This theory provides a macro-level interpretive framework for understanding how sentence patterns function within broader news discourse strategies. By applying Van Dijk's perspective, the study situates syntactic choices within the communicative goals of journalism, showing how sentence construction supports information hierarchy, audience orientation, and overall discourse coherence in different media contexts.

Collectively, these four theoretical frameworks form an integrated analytical model for this study. Chomsky's theory addresses how sentences are structurally constructed, Flesch's readability theory explains why sentence length varies across media, Leech's stylistic theory clarifies how syntactic choices serve communicative purposes, and Van Dijk's discourse theory contextualizes how sentence patterns function within journalistic discourse. Together, these frameworks enable a comprehensive analysis of syntactic variation in news texts, consistent with findings on sentence preferences in online news consumption [10], [11].

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach as the primary methodological orientation to analyze syntactic structures in news texts across different media platforms. The method is selected to examine how sentences are constructed, organized, and function within journalistic discourse rather than to measure statistical relationships. Since syntax primarily concerns structural patterns, hierarchical organization, and functional interpretation, a qualitative approach enables detailed observation of sentence forms, rhetorical patterns, and contextual influences that cannot be fully captured through quantitative analysis alone.

Although this study presents numerical indicators such as percentages and average sentence length in the results section, these figures are used only as descriptive tools to illustrate observable linguistic tendencies in the data. They do not serve as the basis for statistical testing, hypothesis verification, or quantitative generalization. Therefore, the study should be understood as qualitative-dominant, not as a mixed-methods or quantitative investigation. The numerical data function to support and clarify the qualitative interpretation of syntactic patterns rather than to replace it.

In accordance with Chomsky's (2002) syntactic principles, the analysis enables a detailed examination of sentence formation rules and hierarchical structures [3]. Readability aspects are considered based on Flesch and Ferry's (1948) assertion that

shorter sentences enhance understanding by reducing cognitive burden [2], which helps explain the tendency of digital media to employ more concise sentence constructions. Leech's (2014) stylistic perspective further guides the interpretation of how communicative purposes and media platforms influence syntactic choices in news writing [1]. At the discourse level, Van Dijk's framework supports the analysis of how sentence structures contribute to clarity, coherence, and accessibility within news texts [4]. Together, these theoretical principles justify the use of a descriptive qualitative approach supported by limited descriptive quantification.

The data for this study were drawn from news texts representing two distinct media categories to enable comparative analysis. National print media were selected because they generally reflect formal journalistic conventions characterized by longer and more complex sentence structures. In contrast, popular digital media were chosen for their concise, fast-paced, and highly readable writing style, which aligns with contemporary news consumption patterns. Articles from both categories cover topics in politics, economics, culture, and sports, allowing the analysis to capture a broad range of sentence types and syntactic variations.

The data collection process involved several stages to ensure methodological rigor. Purposive sampling was applied to identify articles that best represent the stylistic and structural characteristics of each media type. Texts were collected from both print and digital sources to capture authentic syntactic usage. Following data collection, sentence segmentation was conducted by separating each article into individual sentences to establish consistent analytical units. This step is essential for accurate syntactic classification and comparative analysis.

Data analysis was carried out through a multi-stage qualitative procedure grounded in the theoretical frameworks discussed earlier. First, sentence length was examined to identify general tendencies across media, with averages used descriptively to support qualitative observations [2]. Second, sentence types were classified as simple, compound, or complex based on Chomsky's generative grammar principles [3]. Third, main and subordinate clauses were analyzed to assess structural hierarchy and syntactic complexity. Fourth, Leech's stylistic theory was applied to interpret how structural choices reflect the communicative functions of each medium [1]. Finally, Van Dijk's discourse theory guided the interpretation of how sentence structures support coherence and clarity in news discourse [4]. These stages together enable a comprehensive analysis of syntactic patterns while maintaining a qualitative-dominant methodological orientation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

The findings of this study are presented based on an analysis of sentence structures in news texts from both print and digital media. The analysis covers four main components: sentence length, sentence type, clause usage, and the overall style of information delivery. From a total of 40 news articles 20 from national print media and 20 from popular digital platforms the results show clear structural differences shaped by medium characteristics and communicative demands.

A. Sentence Length

Table 1. Average Sentence Length

Media	Average per Sentence	Range
Print	22–30 words	Sentences may reach up to 45 words
Digital	10–16 words	Sentences rarely exceed 25 words

The analysis indicates that print media consistently use longer sentences compared to digital media. In print articles, the average sentence contains between 22 and 30 words, with some extending up to 45 words. By contrast, digital news articles maintain an average of 10 to 16 words per sentence, and rarely exceed 25 words. These findings strongly reinforce the readability concept proposed by Flesch (1948), who argues that shorter sentences enhance comprehension and reduce the cognitive load of readers [2]. Digital media adopt this structure as online readers typically seek rapid access to information. Meanwhile, the longer sentences found in print media allow journalists to provide elaboration, contextual depth, and narrative continuity, reflecting the demand for rapid comprehension in digital reading formats [11].

B. Sentence Types

Table 2. Distribution of Sentence Types

Sentence Type	Print Media	Digital Media
Simple	22%	25%
Compound	38%	30%
Complex	40%	15%

In examining syntactic preferences, three major sentence types simple, compound, and complex were identified. The distribution shows that print media employ 22% simple, 38% compound, and 40% complex sentences, demonstrating a tendency toward structurally layered constructions. Digital media, however, display 25% simple, 30% compound, and only 15% complex sentences. The dominant use of complex sentences in print media is consistent with Chomsky (2002) view hierarchical constructions [3], as similarly observed in comparative online editorial studies [12], [13].

C. Use of Clauses

The clause analysis further highlights the extent of structural complexity. Print media sentences contain an average of 2–3 clauses, with frequent use of subordinate clauses such as that, when, and although, indicating deeper syntactic hierarchy and expanded informational layers. Digital media sentences generally contain only 1–2 clauses and rely primarily on main clauses, using subordination only when additional context is considered essential. These findings align with Chomsky (2002) explanation that syntactic complexity can be observed from clause relationships and the depth of structural embedding within sentences [3].

D. Style of Information Delivery

Differences in sentence structure are also reflected in the overall style of information delivery. Print media deliver information gradually, using detailed exposition and longer sentences that align with more formal and academically influenced stylistic tendencies.

This pattern supports Leech's (1948) argument that writing style is shaped by communicative purpose and medium characteristics [2]. Conversely, digital media adopt a concise and direct style, resembling conversational patterns and allowing readers to quickly scan and extract key information. The structural simplicity found in digital media thus reflects the expectations and consumption habits of online audiences consistent with stylistic tendencies documented in Indonesian news writing [14]

E. News Discourse Structure

Drawing on Van Dijk's (2013) framework of news discourse, the study finds that print media rely on hierarchical structures, developing information through long paragraphs with gradual elaboration [4]. Digital media, by contrast, employ linear structures focused on the central event, presenting essential information at the outset to maintain clarity and coherence. These differences show that each medium applies distinct discourse strategies tailored to its audience's reading behavior and informational needs.

F. Summary of Findings

Overall, the results demonstrate that print media use longer and syntactically more complex sentences, while digital media rely on shorter and simpler constructions following established readability principles. Clause complexity is notably higher in print texts, and variations in writing style are strongly influenced by differences in medium and communicative intent. Furthermore, digital media employ more concise and direct discourse structures that align with the rapid consumption patterns typical of online readers.

Discussion

This section interprets the research findings by emphasizing how empirical patterns of sentence use differ between print and digital news media. Rather than reiterating theoretical concepts, the discussion focuses on how the observed data reflect distinct linguistic strategies shaped by media format, audience behavior, and technological conditions.

A. Sentence Length as a Functional Adaptation

The findings demonstrate a consistent contrast in sentence length between print and digital media. Digital news texts predominantly use shorter sentences averaging 10–16 words, while print media favor longer sentences ranging from 22–30 words [2]. This pattern indicates a functional adaptation to reading conditions. In digital contexts, where readers often skim content quickly and access news via mobile devices, shorter sentences facilitate rapid information processing and reduce cognitive effort. Sentence brevity therefore operates as a strategic response to fragmented attention and time constraints in online reading environments.

In print media, longer sentences allow journalists to integrate background information, elaboration, and explanation within a single syntactic unit. This reflects a reading context in which readers are more willing to engage with extended textual processing. The data suggest that sentence length functions as a medium-specific strategy rather than merely a stylistic preference.

B. Sentence Complexity and Structural Choices

The analysis shows that print media employ compound and complex sentences more frequently, with approximately 40% of sentences containing multiple clauses [3]. This tendency indicates a preference for structurally layered constructions that enable the

presentation of nuanced information and detailed argumentation. Such sentence patterns allow print journalists to link ideas hierarchically and present multiple propositions within a single sentence.

In contrast, digital media favor simple sentences, accounting for 55% of the data. This structural simplicity reflects an intentional reduction of clause embedding to maintain clarity and immediacy. The data indicate that digital news writing prioritizes linear sentence construction to ensure accessibility and fast comprehension, particularly in contexts where readers may not consume the entire article in sequence.

C. Stylistic Orientation and Information Delivery

Differences in sentence patterns also reveal contrasting stylistic orientations between the two media. Print media display a more elaborative and formal style, characterized by longer sentences and denser syntactic structures. This style supports in-depth reporting and analytical exposition. Digital media, by contrast, adopt a concise and direct style, relying on short sentences and straightforward constructions to deliver key information efficiently [1].

These stylistic choices reflect communicative priorities rather than differences in linguistic competence. The data show that digital media intentionally simplify syntactic form to align with browsing behavior, while print media retain complexity to support interpretive depth.

D. Discourse Organization across Media

At the discourse level, print and digital media exhibit different strategies for organizing information. Print articles tend to develop ideas progressively, distributing information across longer sentences and paragraphs. Digital news texts, however, foreground essential information early and rely on compact sentence structures to ensure that core messages remain accessible even during partial reading [4].

This contrast demonstrates that sentence construction is closely tied to discourse organization and reader engagement patterns. Digital discourse favors immediacy and clarity, whereas print discourse supports continuity and contextualization.

E. Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the findings indicate that variations in sentence length, complexity, and structure are systematic responses to media-specific conditions. Print and digital media activate different syntactic resources to fulfill their communicative goals and accommodate audience reading behaviors. These differences highlight that sentence patterns in news writing are shaped by functional demands rather than arbitrary stylistic variation.

CONCLUSION

This study analyzes differences in sentence patterns in print and digital news media based on sentence length, sentence types, clause usage, and stylistic delivery, drawing on Chomsky's syntactic theory, Flesch's readability framework, Leech's stylistics, and Van Dijk's discourse analysis. The findings indicate that medium characteristics play a significant role in shaping syntactic structures used in news reporting.

Print media tend to employ longer and more structurally complex sentences with a higher number of clauses, reflecting the use of hierarchical and recursive constructions as described in Chomsky's syntactic theory. In contrast, digital media predominantly use shorter and simpler sentences, in line with Flesch's readability principles, which emphasize clarity and reduced cognitive load. Differences in stylistic delivery further support Leech's view that linguistic style is shaped by communicative purpose and medium, while Van

Dijk's discourse framework explains how digital news prioritizes directness and accessibility.

These findings contribute to media linguistics by demonstrating that syntactic variation in news texts represents systematic linguistic adaptation rather than mere stylistic preference. In language education, the results offer insights into how sentence complexity varies across media and may inform reading and writing instruction aligned with contemporary media consumption. In digital discourse analysis, the study highlights how syntactic simplification supports efficiency and clarity in online journalism.

Future research may extend this study through cross-linguistic comparisons, analyses of specific news genres, or examinations of sentence patterns in social media-based news platforms. Such studies would further enhance understanding of how syntactic structures adapt across languages, genres, and evolving digital communication environments.

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