

## Research Article

# A Contrastive Corpus-Based Approach to the Expression of Adversarialness across English and Persian: A Case Study of Political Press Conferences

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With the point of departure in discourse analysis (DA), this corpus comparative study concentrated on sequences with adversarial questions in political press conferences to investigate the differences in the use of adversarial questioning between two contexts, namely, English and Persian political press conferences, and particularly highlight the strategies which were used by journalists in such sequences of talk journalists and politicians so as to show the importance of improving linguistic proficiency in EFL context. For this reason, this study analyzed a corpus of data from some political press conferences with American and Iranian Government which is randomly selected from appropriate websites between 2007 and 2021. The study applied Clayman, Heritage, and McDonald (2006) for quantifying adversarial questions as exhibited by the press to the questions addressed the Presidents of Iran and the United States. Questions from selected conferences were coded according to adversarialness. Frequency and chi-square tests were used for analysis. The results showed significant difference across the 2 corpora in some journalists' questions. In terms of question design, accountability questions in Iranian journalists' questions as Persian corpus indicated higher frequency. In addition, in referencing frames, higher frequency was observed in declarative questions in Persian corpus. However, English corpus displayed higher frequency in other-referencing frames. Finally, in content adversarialness, global adversarialness indicated higher frequency in Persian corpus. Consequently, the results showed that adversarial questions were used in Persian corpus more significantly than English corpus. The results of the study not only will help the students gain linguistic competence, but it will also improve their overall language proficiency.

## 1. Introduction

Swales [1] defines genre as communication event in which the members have a set of common goals. On the other hand, Paltridge [2] clarifies the difference between genre and text type. He opines that genre constructs texts on the basis of external criteria for a certain audience, in a special context, and for a specific purpose, while text types are rhetorical modes which regardless of genre are similar in terms of their internal discourse patterns. He concluded that

despite being different on text, genre and text type are complementary. Aligned with the concept of genre, additionally, Dan Martin [3] states that genre is the specific use of the language in a particular social condition such as drama genre, media genre, or advertisement genre.

Over two decades, as Swales [4] asserts, the importance of genre knowledge has largely been acknowledged because it enables language students to comprehend, recognize, and grasp intellectual, technical, and instructional discourse. An effort is made to establish an explanation for the discourse

aspects of the writer's intents and institutional norms by analyzing genres in the scope of the communicative situation [1, 5–7].

When it comes to political discourse, a sub-category of a discourse, Fairclough [8] notes that political discourses are the politicians who have traditionally shaped the results of their campaigns, which are then decided broadly and socially by public opinion. Adversarialness, which is deemed to be one of the greatest impressive components in journalistic intervention and treatment of politicians in many Western developed countries, is a pivotal time in the political news cycle [9, 10], and journalists play this challenging role in the news cycle by using a variety of questioning techniques.

According to a review of the researches, journalistic adversarialness is demonstrated not only in print media news stories [11–13], but also in face-to-face contacts between journalists and politicians [11, 14–18].

The press interview/conference is structured by a specialized turn taking system made around questions and answer sequences [11, 19, 20]. Journalists are regularly bound to the activity of questioning in the speech exchange system. While journalists should hide their own thoughts, they are not bound to agree with the interviewee's viewpoints on all issues. They should, on the other hand, be able to deal with more contentious matters and, when required, assume the position of the devil's proponent by questioning the politicians' statements or actions. Therefore, the specific footing-shift techniques can be utilized by journalists for maintaining a naturalistic posture as well as performing adversarialness, for example, distance of the interviewer from contentious matters and providing the possibility of refraining from associating himself/herself with or dissociating himself/herself from comments. However, as far as designing questions are at stake, they are never neutral but include statements about the present subjects which are frequently constructed to facilitate one type of reply over another (e.g., yes/no questions) [11, 21–23].

In Iran, as in many other countries, political interviews are a formal way of interacting with politicians, and journalists' interviews with politicians in press conferences are often interactive, informal with oral and unscripted questions. Many scholars of political communication, like Seaman and Fiedler [24], believe that studying the language used in political contexts not only helps to improve the performance of participants in this type of communication, but also allows the enthusiasts of political news to better understand the discourse exchanged. The involvement and possible consequences of these interactions predict future political processes. Among the studies in discourse analysis in the political context, it can be pointed out to those of the speeches of the presidents of Iran and the United States in different election periods from the perspective of critical discourse analysis [25–27], those of adjusted indicators in the political press conferences of the tenth president [28], and the study on Hassan Rouhani's speech in the UN General Assembly [29]. However, to the best knowledge of the researchers, no study has yet explored the type and nature of journalistic questions in the political press conferences.

According to Hallin and Mancini [30], comparative analysis of how journalists from different socio-cultural backgrounds interact with the government officials, especially in terms of designing and asking questions in the press conferences, can disclose connections between journalism culture and media systems and provide insights into the ideological and cultural assumptions underlying the particular political system. Hence, the general point of this study was to investigate the differences in the use of adversarial questioning between two contexts, English and Persian political press conferences. According to the objectives of the study, the following research questions were posed:

- (1) How are adversarial turns used in Persian and English press conferences?
- (2) What are the structures of questions in Persian and English press conferences?

## 2. Literature Review

*2.1. Corpus-Based Approach.* The corpus-based approach is characterized as a particular corpus assessment, in which the lexicographer has a particular paradigmatic term in mind and explores the corpus for examples to either reject or confirm and measure the hypothesis made by the researcher [31–33]. In actual fact, as Hyland [34] notes, through corpus approach, authentic material is extracted to espouse intuitive knowledge, to verify expectations, to pave the way for quantification of linguistic phenomena, and to find evidence for existing theories or to retrieve illustrative samples. Hence, it acts as additional supporting material [35, 36].

*2.2. Interlanguage Pragmatic (ILP) Competence.* Pragmatic competence is described as “the ability to communicate and interpret meaning in social interactions” ([37], p.1) Interlanguage pragmatic competence, as Kasper and Rose [38] note, explores how non-native speakers realize and produce speech acts in a target language, and how L2 learners progress the ability to comprehend and perform actions in a target language. It involves two key terms of “*interlanguage*” and “*pragmatics*.” The term “interlanguage,” introduced by Selinker [39], refers to a second language learner's knowledge of the target language in all the developmental stages in the process of learning. It preserves the characteristics of the two language systems and is not completely identical to the first or second language. It results in the unique linguistic system [40–42]. By referring the word “inter,” some scholars [39, 43, 44] opine that it may be thought of as a metaphorical meeting point between the first language (L1) and the target language (L2) (TL).

The second key term of ILP is “pragmatics,” which is regarded as the investigation of those components of meaning that are dependent on context and that are systematically separated away from the formation of contents or logical patterns [45, 46]. To put it in another way, pragmatic competence, according to Taghuchi [47], is “the ability to perform language functions in a context” (p. 34).

Taghuchi [37] mentions that two competences of “pragmalinguistic” and “sociopragmatic” constitute pragmatic competence. Pragmalinguistic competence is described as the understanding of the procedures for achieving speech aims as well as the linguistic elements that are employed to communicate these objectives whereas sociopragmatic competence is considered the social perception and the set of rules which underlie the language users’ interpretations and performance of communicative acts [37, 48].

The second key term of ILP is “interlanguage,” introduced by Selinker [39]. Interlanguage refers to a second language learner’s understanding of the target language at each of the developmental phases of the learning process. It preserves the characteristics of the two language systems and is not fully similar to the first or second language. It results in the unique linguistic system [40]. Some scholars [39, 43, 49] opine that interlanguage is a metaphorical midway point between the first language (L1) and the target language (TL), which is why the term “inter” is used to express this notion in the first place. Generally, it can be stated that ILP competence is the ability of L2 learners to use a second language properly in a communicative context.

*2.3. Expression of Adversarialness.* Adversarialness is related with journalists’ linguistic and discursive activity, which “involves not only what questions are raised, but also how they are requested in ways that impose varied degrees of pressure and restraint on politicians.” ([50], p. 563). Expression of adversarialness in news interviews is mainly used for the content of question which involves opinions and views in contrast with what politician desire [51, 52]. Gender, organizational standing, acquaintance with politicians, and government–media connections are all factors that have been investigated with regard to various degrees of adversarialness among journalists [53–55].

As Heritage [15] stresses, the usage of adversarial questions in press conferences calls into question the impartiality of reporters and, in addition, puts the interviewee in a difficult position to deal with. Avoiding answering questions is one of the strategies to answer those adversarial questions that are used in news interviews in order to challenge the interviewee and especially the politician. In studying the behavior and discourse between journalists and politicians in press conferences and political interviews, the effect of the behavior and speech of both groups on the other group should be examined, because the way the reporter behaves in relation to the politician affects the politician’s behavior with him. Hence, theoretical forms of journalistic adversarialness are used to study the politicians’ aggressive behavior in press conferences [56]. According to Clayman et al. [57], journalistic adversarialness is assessed, in its initial dimensions, as directness, acknowledgment, adversarialness, and accountability. The present study examines the adversarial questions of journalists in political interviews in Iran and the United States in the language of each country.

*2.4. The Related Empirical Studies.* In the literature, few researches have been conducted to securitize the use of adversarial questioning in political press conferences. We

review critically some of them to lay the groundwork for the present research.

Using a system for measuring adversarial behaviors as demonstrated by the media to the president in solo and joint press conferences during President George W. Bush’s first term, Billingsley [58] attempted to identify the degree to which the existence of a foreign dignitary alleviated the previously established adversarial relationship between the United States president and the American press. Four signs of adversarialness were identified in questions from chosen conferences held during his first term, and they were categorized according to their level of initiative, directness, assertiveness, and adversarialness. The findings of the study revealed that the president’s interaction with the press is less antagonistic at combined press conferences than in solo news conferences. This result may help to explain the rise in the number of general news conferences throughout the previous three administrations, as well as the disproportionate growth in the number of combined sessions.

Over the course of five months, Jiang [59] analyzed the pragmatic variations in the question-and-answer sequences of Chinese and American official news conferences on the North Korean nuclear problem. Reporters’ requests for information were divided into four categories: asks for specific information, asks for verification, asks for clarification, and asks for remarks. These four categories were used to classify the questions journalists asked. The study found that American journalists asked a lot more follow-up questions and clarifications than their European counterparts. These were seen as a challenge to power and deemed antagonistic. Journalists in China, on the other hand, asked many more questions. Because they were less likely to upset politicians, they were more desirable in Chinese society.

A similar study, named “Questions and responses in Chinese political press conferences,” was conducted by Xujia Du [60], who employed conversational and quantitative analysis to examine questions and responses from political press conferences in China to determine (1) how adversarialness and evasiveness were encrypted in journalists’ questions and politicians’ responses, respectively; and (2) whether there was a difference in adversarialness between journalists from different socioeconomic backgrounds. After conducting research, it was discovered that journalistic adversarialness was more prevalent among journalists from developed nations than among Chinese journalists, and that a greater level of journalistic adversarialness was associated with a higher level of evasiveness in politicians’ responses. While journalists used a variety of tactics to pose hostile questions, politicians used a variety of structural systems and approaches to lessen the evasiveness of their responses. As it is clear from the literature, there is a dearth of research on examining the difference as related to two different contexts, namely, English and Persian contexts.

In another study, Farnia and Abedian [61] investigated journalists’ adversarial questions in Iran and the United States political conferences. The results showed that American journalists significantly used preface adversarialness more than Iranians’ while the referencing and global adversarialness were significantly used by Iranian journalists.

### 3. The Present Study

The data for this study were drawn from recorded press conferences between 2007 and 2021. Both 10 English video recordings and transcripts and 10 Persian video recordings have been downloaded from relevant websites such as <http://www.youtube.com/>, <http://www.cnbc.com/>, <http://www.nytimes.com/>, <http://www.edition.cnn.com/>, <http://www.dolatabahar.com/>, <http://www.tasnimnews.com/>, <http://www.netshahr.com/>. Three Iranian presidents and American presidents took questions: Mr. Ahmadinejad, Mr. Rouhani, and Mr. Reisi, and Mr. Obama, Mr. Trump, and Mr. Biden. These conferences gathered journalists from mainstream media groups in their native languages, English and Persian. The press conferences in the question and answer section have been extended around 50 minutes or one hour.

**3.1. The Data Collection and Analysis.** In order to answer the research questions, over total, the current study would analyze the recordings of the inquiries in their original language which were English and Persian. The questions asked by reporters at press conferences have been transcribed and analyzed based on Clayman et al.'s [50] framework. In coding, the present study focused less on topics—what the questions were “about”—and more on relatively formal aspects of question design that might relevantly be applied across adversarialness.

To fulfill the objectives of the present study, the different adversarialness indicators would be ordered over three dimensions: question design, referencing frames, and content adversarialness. Additional metrics for question design, referencing frames, and content adversarialness included multiple questions, preface tilt, negative questions, accountability questions, declarative questions, self-referencing frames, other-referencing frames, preface adversarialness, and global adversarialness, which will be further subdivided into sub-categories. Each sub-category took a numerical value ranging from 0 to 3, with the highest value being 3. As a measurement of adversarialness, in light of Clayman et al. [50] (Table 1), the next part explained the coding process with cases, before demonstrating the results of comparative adversarialness between the English and Persian press conferences. A noteworthy point is that to increase reliability, the classified data were reviewed by the researchers and the reliability of the nominal variables was calculated through Cohen's Kappa test (Table 2).

**3.2. Question Design.** This strategy is divided into four indicators, namely, multiple questions, preface tilt, negative questions, and accountability questions.

- (1) Multiple questions: In this index of questioning, journalists ask several consecutive questions, even though they are only allowed to ask one question at a time. Compared to asking a single question, journalists who ask multiple questions have a more challenging idea

TABLE 1: Clayman et al.'s [50] framework.

Dimension	Criterion
Design question	Multiple question
	Preface tilt
	Negative question
	Accountability question
Referencing frame	Declarative question
	Self-referencing frame
	Other-referencing frame
Content adversarialness	Preface adversarialness
	Global adversarialness

- (2) Preface tilt: The preface tilt is the preference for the “yes” or “no” answer that lies in the opening question. Yes/no questions indicate the priority or preference of the answers according to the type of question, because they accept the conditions and assumptions that came before the question [60].
- (3) Negative questions: Negative yes/no questions such as “Isn't this ....” or “Isn't that ....” challenge and put pressure on the interviewee, and thus are a good way to elicit the expected answer. Neither the interviewers nor the interviewees consider negative questions as questions, but consider them as expressing views (often critical) and positions, and do not consider them as a request for information [15]. The difference between the preface tilt and the negative question is that in the preface tilt, the yes or no question is asked in the desired answer form, while the negative question begins with a statement and then ends with one of the negative structures above
- (4) Accountability questions: Accountability questions are challenging and inherently involve the notion that the question is unanswerable because the interviewee is assumed to have no convincing explanation for it. There are two common forms of accountability questions that usually begin with “why did you do this” and “how can you” that the form of “why did you do this” is milder than the form of “how can you” but causes doubts arise in the interviewee's abilities

**3.3. Referencing Frames.** These strategies are divided into three indicators: declarative questions, self-referencing frames, and other-referencing frames.

- (1) Declarative questions: In declarative questions, the tone of the voice usually rises at the end. Sometimes journalists' questions are expressed in the form of a statement covering the question. Declarative questions have a sharp tone because they have strong assertions that may have a detrimental effect on the respondent

TABLE 2: The revised question analysis system.

Dimension	Indicator	Sub-categories	Coding
Question design	Multiple questions	1Q	0
		2Q	1
		≥2Qs	2
	Preface tilt	No tilt	0
		Innocuous tilt	1
		Unfavorable tilt	2
	Negative questions	Not a negative Q	0
		1 negative Q	1
		Not an accountability Q	0
	Accountability questions	Milder form "Why did you..."	1
More hostile form "How could you..."		2	
Declarative questions		Not a declarative Q	0
	1 declarative Q	1	
	Ability/frames beginning with honorific "qing"	0	
Referencing frames	Self-referencing frames	Intention	1
		No reference to ability or intention	2
	Other-referencing frames	No frame	3
		Willingness	0
		Ability	1
Content adversarialness	Preface adversarial	No frame	2
		Non-adversarial preface	0
		Oppositional preface focus of Q	1
	Global adversarial	Oppositional preface presupposed	2
		Not oppositional overall	0
		Oppositional overall	1

(2) Self-referencing frames: Self-referencing frames refer to obedience and respect by referring to a journalist's ability or intention to ask a question. References to capability are expressed in terms such as "Can I/Is this possible for me" or "I am going to ask/I want to ask".

(3) Other-referencing frames: These frames include referring the reporter to the politician for willingness or ability to answer the question, often beginning with structures such as "Do you want to/did you want to?"

3.4. *Content Adversarialness*. This strategy is divided into preface adversarialness and global adversarialness.

(1) Preface adversarialness: The preface adversarialness goes back to the critical nature of the question from politicians or the government in general. This type of question, which begins with a critical preface and in a calm tone, is an introduction to the journalist's subsequent questions

(2) Global adversarialness: Global adversarialness occurs when both the preface and the question are critical and confrontational [11]. This type of question is

usually used as the subject of a confrontational/challenging question that is politically sensitive and important [60].

## 4. Results

It has been shown in this research, utilizing modified question analysis technique (Table 1), that the Persian press conferences differed more while asking government officials as compared to their counterparts from nations with an open and free media system. Since more responsibility and declaratory questions are requested in Persian, there was a substantial difference in terms of accountability and declarative questions raised in English. Even at press conferences in the United States, really aggressive questions are not commonly asked. Specifically, the findings indicated a statistically significant difference between the use of "self-referencing frames" and the use of "other-referencing frames," but the difference was not statistically significant in the use of "other-referencing frames."

In this section, the results of data analysis are performed in details based on the model presented in the methodology section. Tables 3 and 4 shows the frequency distribution of different types of questions in both Persian and English.

TABLE 3: Frequency of question type in Persian and English.

Measure	Persian		English	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Question design	46	42.81	50	55.31
Referencing frames	37	34.76	33	31.80
Content adversarialness	29	22.43	11	12.89
Total	122	100	94	100

As shown in Tables 3 and 4, the question design had the highest frequency in both Persian and English. After that, referencing frames and content adversarialness had the most frequency in both Persian and English. The results are presented below based on the type of question.

## 5. Question Design

Question design is divided into multiple questions, preface tilt, negative questions, and accountability questions. Table 5 summarizes the analysis results of this section. As shown in the table, the preface tilt has the highest frequency of question design in both English and Persian. After that, the accountability questions and multiple questions are in the next rank of frequency. Reporters from both groups used fewer negative questions than the other questions. Below, the classification of the question design is explained with examples from the study.

**5.1. Multiple Questions.** The results obtained in this study showed that the strategy of using multiple questions in Persian and English was 10 (30.52%) and 17 (42.53%), respectively. The following examples are selected from two contexts of English and Persian, respectively:

- (1) *I wanted to ask about gun violence. Today marks the one-year anniversary of the shooting in Newtown, which seemed to generate some momentum for reinstating the assault weapons ban. But there's been fresh opposition to that ban from the NRA, and even Harry Reid has said that he questions whether it could pass Congress. Given that, how hard will you push for an assault weapons ban? And if one cannot pass Congress, what other measures would need to be included in a broad package in order to curb gun violence successfully?*
- (2) *Mr. President! As you mentioned in your campaign, the priority of your program in domestic affairs is the economy. I would like to say specifically what will be the priority of the 11th government in the field of economy? Will the direct payment of subsidies continue in the current way or not? Thank you*

As can be seen from the examples, the reporters used 3 questions in the first example, and 2 questions in the second example.

**5.2. Preface Tilt.** The results of Tables 3 and 4 show that the preface tilt had the highest frequency in both contexts. Thus, the frequency of the preface tilt in the Persian and English body has been 13 and 20, respectively. Examples of English and Persian are as follows:

- (3) *Thank you, Mr. President. The Democratic race to replace you has gotten pretty heated lately, and you have Hillary Clinton saying that - or at least casting herself as the rightful heir to your legacy and the one, the candidate who will be the keeper of your legacy, while also saying the Bernie Sanders has been disloyal to you. Is she right?*
- (4) *Mr. President, immoralities took place in the last days of the election campaign that can be prosecuted. Do you follow these issues?*

As can be seen from examples 3 and 4, reporters first sketched the introduction and then used a question with a response structure of "yes" or "no".

**5.3. Negative Questions.** As shown in Tables 3 and 4, this question in Persian and English was 2 (5.62) and 3 (8.77), respectively. An example of two contexts is as follows:

- (5) *And doesn't that suggest that we are going to go until a default situation? Because no one is talking to each other about how to resolve this?*
- (6) *Given that you are a lawyer and you know the ruling on disrupting the security of the country, why don't you talk about the siege once and for all?*

**5.4. Accountability Question.** The results of analysis in Table 3 and 4 show that the frequency of use of this structure in English and Persian are 23 (66.57) and 16 (47.35), respectively. Examples of two contexts of English and Persian are as follows:

- (7) *Thank you, Mr. President. How do you respond to Republican criticism that your position is undercut by the fact that you and other members of your administration who were in the Senate at the time tried to filibuster Judge Alito in 2006?*
- (8) *Hello. Mr. Ahmadinejad! After the Supreme Leader advised you not to run in the elections, you issued a statement saying that you do not support any political party in the elections. What was the reason for your support for Mr. Baghaei? Why did you change the position?*

## 6. Referencing Frames

Table 5 shows the frequency distribution of journalists' questions in referencing frames. As shown, declarative questions and other-referencing frames were most common in Persian and English, respectively.

TABLE 4: Frequency of question design in Persian and English.

Measure	Persian		English		Chi-square	F	Sig.
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent			
Multiple questions	10	30.52	17	42.53	2.23	1	.14
Preface tilt	13	40	20	61.82	3.68	1	.5*
Negative questions	2	5.62	3	8.77	—	1	1.00
Accountability questions	23	66.57	16	47.35	2.78	1	.08

TABLE 5: The frequency distribution of referencing frames in English and Persian.

Measure	Persian		English		Chi-square	F	Sig.
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent			
Declarative question	1	2.54	0	.0	—	—	—
Self-referencing frame	8	20.77	7	20	.0	1	1.00
Other-referencing frame	22	62.82	24	90.82	8.2	1	0.00*

6.1. *Declarative Question.* As shown in Table 5, this question is not used in English and is used only once in the Persian.

- (9) *Mr. Ahmadinejad! For several years, you supported a person who was one of the main defendants in the Kahrizak case. Mr. Saeed Mortazavi was permanently barred from trial in court, but despite his accusations, you supported Mr. Mortazavi. In the case of Kahrizak, even the Supreme Leader condemned this action, but we have never seen you speak about the denial or condemnation of this event. Mr. Ahmadinejad, who considers himself the guardian of the constitution and the defender of the interests of the Iranian people, did not comment on this issue and even defended the main defendant in this case.*

6.2. *Self-Referencing Frames.* The results of the analysis show that the rate of use of this question in Persian and English was 8 (20.77%). Examples of two contexts are as follows:

- (10) *Mr. President. I wanted to ask you, first of all, whether you think that military intervention will be necessary in Libya to dislodge the Islamic State from Sirte. And as an extension of that, do you think that by the end of your presidency the Islamic State will still have geographical strongholds throughout the Middle East? And, I'm sorry, I can't resist asking a third - how was the stadium course? What did you shoot?*
- (11) *Thank you, Mr. President. You repeatedly say that you are optimistic about the future of the negotiations, but I want to leave aside the optimism for a moment and ask you if the Western countries insisted on the current trend and the circle of sanctions became tighter, what is your plan to pursue the strategy of resistance economic in the country?*

6.3. *Other-Referencing Frames.* The results of the analysis show that the use of this question in Persian and English

has been 22 and 24, respectively. Examples of two contexts are as follows:

- (12) *Thank you, Mr. President. On that intelligence report, the second part of their conclusion was that Vladimir Putin ordered it because he aspired to help you in the election. Do you accept that part of the finding? And will you undo what President Obama did to punish the Russians for this or will you keep it in place?*
- (13) *You supported Mr. Baghei, what will your reaction be if he is not confirmed?*

## 7. Content Adversarialness

Tables 6 and 7 shows the frequency distribution of content adversarialness and its classification in English and Persian. As the table shows, in this study, the global adversarialness is used more than the preface adversarialness.

7.1. *Preface Adversarialness.* As shown in Table 6, the preface adversarialness in Persian and English has been used 10 (28.57%) and 4 (9.01%) times, respectively. Examples of two contexts are as follows:

- (14) *Mr. President, I wanted to ask about gun violence. Today marks the one-year anniversary of the shooting in Newtown, which seemed to generate some momentum for reinstating the assault weapons ban. But there's been fresh opposition to that ban from the NRA, and even Harry Reid has said that he questions whether it could pass Congress. Given that, how hard will you push for an assault weapons ban? And if one cannot pass Congress, what other measures would need to be included in a broad package in order to curb gun violence successfully?*
- (15) *In the election process and after, you expressed the hope that the twelfth government will be more efficient than the eleventh government. What changes*

TABLE 6: The frequency distribution of content adversarialness in English and Persian.

Measure	Persian		English		Chi-square	F	Sig.
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent			
Global adversarialness	10	28.57	4	9.01	6.17	1	0.03*
Preface adversarialness	15	40.36	9	23.00	2.67	1	.12

TABLE 7: Independent samples T-test for adversarialness in Persian and English press conferences.

	N		Mean		T-test for equality of means		
	English	Persian	English	Persian	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Multiple	35	35	.7143	.2571	2.635	68	.010
Preface	35	35	.7143	.7714	-.474	68	.637
Negative	35	35	.1143	.0286	1.392	68	.169
Accountability	35	35	.5714	.8286	-2.410	68	.019
Declarative	35	35	.2571	.7143	-4.241	68	.000
Self-referencing	35	35	1.3429	1.8857	-3.146	68	.002
Global	35	35	.3143	.3429	-.236	68	.814

*will you make in the administration to make this important?*

7.2. *Global Adversarialness.* As shown in Table 6, the global adversarialness in Persian and English has been used 15 (40.36%) and 9 (23%) times, respectively. Examples of English and Persian are as follows:

- (16) *Thank you, Mr. President. I want to come back to the debt ceiling, because in the summer of 2011, you said that you wouldn't negotiate on the debt ceiling, and you did. Last year you said that you wouldn't extend any of the Bush tax cuts for the wealthy, and you did. So as you say now that you're not going to negotiate on the debt ceiling this year, why should House Republicans take that seriously and think that if we get to the one-minute-to-midnight scenario that you're not going to back down?*
- (17) *In the recent election promises, you made various promises to improve the situation in the country, including internships, increasing couples' mortgages to 200 million, creating 950,000 jobs, etc. How often do you report that you have fulfilled these promises?*

According to the results, in response to the first question of what kind of adversarialness questions the Iranian and American media ask the presidents, the results show that different types of adversarialness questions have been used in press-political conferences by journalists from both countries. In other words, journalists' questions use a different range of question designs, referencing frames, and content adversarialness.

In response to the second question whether there is a difference in terms of the type of question among the media or not, the results reveal that Iranian journalists have used more content adversarialness than their American counter-

parts. The results of the chi-square test show that in designing the question, American journalists significantly used the preface tilt in their questions compared to Iranian journalists. Also, Iranian journalists have used the question of more accountability than the reporters of the other group.

In the referencing frames, the results of the chi-square test imply that Iranian journalists have significantly used the question of accountability more than their American counterparts (Sig. level =0.00). Also, in terms of content adversarialness, Iranian journalists have significantly used the preface tilt more than their American counterparts (Sig. level =0.03).

Moreover, the results of independent T-test for adversarialness in Persian and English press conferences reveal that negative, accountability, declarative, and self-referencing questions are significant at 5% level.

## 8. Discussion

Press conferences play a mediating role in political action. As reported above, the study's results disclosed that English journalists asked more questions compared to Iranians. Only a little variation was seen between English and Persian when it came to the tilt of the preface. Researchers found that yes/no questions prefaced by "prefer" or "prefer not" statements put pressure on politicians to respond in a certain way. Many Iranian journalists, despite their use of harsh prefaces to discuss social and economic concerns in an unflattering light, pressed their counterparts for their views. The use of preface tilt in both English and Persian journalists lend credence to the perspectives of Clayman and Heritage [11], stating that applying the preface tilt in both cases shows that the interviewers are looking for enough space to challenge the interviewer in the next questions. Also, the study's findings are compatible with Du and Rendle-Short's [62] point of view that the purpose of the preface tilt question

is to hear the answer “yes” or to confirm the audience in answering the question. Therefore, it seems that the policy of the media in Iran and the United States is to get a positive answer to the first question and then ask the next adversarial questions in the subsequent questions.

Besides, the study’s findings may be in alignment with Clayman and Heritage [11] that the frequency of accountability questions after the preface tilt shows that the journalists in Iran tend to ask questions with content such as “Why you?” or “How can you” actually force the interviewees to respond to their problematic activities, but these kinds of questions are presented in a way that suggests that the question is unanswerable. Another possible explanation of the study’s findings, as Du and Rendle-Short [62] stress, can be partly attributed to the fact that the level of confrontation between the questions of accountability and adversarialness is very high. It seems that the news journalists in Iran have tried to challenge their presidents by asking these questions. Because the question of accountability is specific to verbal and conversational interactions in press conferences and is rarely used directly in news texts [16], the samples analyzed in this context may show somewhat difference of reporters’ questions from the president to what is written in the newspapers. Moreover, the study’s results can be explained from this perspective that the frequency of the accountability question can be traced back to the unstable economic and political conditions in Iran [61].

Negative questioning in both contexts, namely, Persian and English, had the lowest frequency among adversarialness questioning strategies. The study’s findings may be in line with Du [60]’s results that the use of negative questions is very low in developing countries. Neither the question nor the answer in the negative question has a questioning aspect and is considered expressing a comment than waiting for information [15]. In other words, Iranian and American journalists in both groups choose ways to challenge the presidents via a negative question and not just asking a face-to-face question.

In the adversarialness structure of the content, Iranian journalists have used the preface contrast in their questions more than American journalists. In other words, most of the adversarialness questions in Persian used a critical introduction with a question that leaves room for answer. The results of this study confirm what Erickson [16] reported in his research on American journalists, but unlike Du [60]’s findings on Chinese journalists, his Asian counterparts in Iran used more challenging and confrontational questions in confronting their political officials. The reason for this difference may lie in the many political struggles that Iran has been embroiled in over the past decades. Iranian presidential candidates have also entered the election with slogans to change the situation and livelihood of the people and improve the economical conditions and political relations. However, the non-fulfillment of promises will cause them to be challenged by journalists through adversarialness questions [61].

## 9. Conclusions

This comparative study analyzed the structure, form, and content of questions and answers in English and Persian

political press conferences. The analysis results show English journalists asked more questions compared to Iranians. There was no statistically significant variation in preface tilt between the English and Persian versions of the text. Prefaces to yes/no questions strived to imply a preference for a specific sort of response, which put pressure on the politician to provide that style of response. While some Iranian journalists utilized unpleasant prefaces to highlight societal concerns or unhealthful economic situations, the counterpart sought the politician’s opinion on the matter regardless of whether the prefaces were pleasant or not. Moreover, a significant difference was shown in terms of accountability and declarative questions between English and Persian political press conferences; more accountability and declarative questions are asked in Persian; even at press conferences in the United States, however, questions that are really antagonistic to the president are rare. In terms of referencing frames, the results indicated significant difference between “self-referencing frames,” whereas the difference was not remarkable in the utilization of “other-referencing frames.”

Linguistics course planning can benefit from DA, studying structures of adversarial questions in Persian and English beginning with needs analysis. The results of the study not only will help the students gain linguistic competence, but they will also improve their overall language proficiency.

The present study was limited to examine reporters’ questions from presidents. Future studies could probe questions the media’s questions, as well as answers from presidents or politicians. Also, the questions of the media can be considered in future research by considering their factional activities. In addition, future studies may investigate press conferences or individual political interviews with group press conferences attended by more than one political official.

## Data Availability

The data can be requested from the corresponding authors upon reasonable request.

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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