A Multidimensional Analysis of Linguistic Variation in Russian and British Newspaper Editorials

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Abstract

This study conducts a multidimensional analysis of Russian English to examine register variation. It explores Russian English as it appears in the editorial and opinion sections of prominent newspapers. The corpus comprises 1,250 editorials (250 from each of five newspapers), each ranging from 1,000 to 1100 words long. The corpus was carefully annotated for 67 linguistic features using the freely available Multidimensional Analysis Tagger (Nini, 2019). We employed factor analysis within Biber's (1988) multidimensional framework to identify and interpret significant patterns of linguistic co-occurrence. These dimensions help reveal stylistic and rhetorical choices in different editorial contexts. The findings contribute to understanding non-native English varieties, particularly how Russian English reflects local and global influences. This study sheds light on how English adapts and evolves in diverse linguistic and cultural settings, reinforcing its nature as a pluralistic, global language.

Keywords: Russian English, multidimensional analysis, editorial writing, factor analysis, non-native English varieties, corpus

1. Introduction

Newspaper editorials are a significant part of media discourse and at the same time, have their specific pragmatic and stylistic characteristics. As Biber and Conrad (2005) explained that registers, genres, and styles are linguistic frameworks that reflect the contextual and functional diversity of language. Through multidimensional patterns and historical perspectives that emphasize the fluidity of language across different forms of communication, including electronic media.

More specifically, register variation is a fundamental aspect of language, deeply influenced by situational contexts. A corpus-based approach reveals systematic patterns of linguistic variation, contributing to a broader understanding of discourse analysis (Biber & Conrad, 2005). Biber and Finegan (1994) stressed that understanding register variation is essential for a comprehensive view of language use and highlighted the importance of a united theoretical approach for sociolinguistic analysis.

In his book, Biber (1995) introduced a multidimensional framework to assess register differences in English, Nuclear Tuvaluan, Korean and Somali. By examining variation across writing and speaking, the framework captures synchronic and diachronic register differences. Register variants are pervasive across languages, with unique and shared characteristics that offer insights into language use.

This research is grounded in understanding discourse patterns and register variation across languages. Biber and Egbert (2018) explored linguistic differences across web registers, providing insights into frequently and infrequently used registers, and offering a broader picture of linguistic variation online through context-specific lexis and grammar.

1.1 Significance of the Research

The study contributes to the expanding corpus on non-native English varieties. It offers insights into how English is adapted and used in Russian media, contributing to the understanding of World Englishes. By applying multidimensional analysis (MDA) to Russian English editorials, it advances MDA methodology and explores the complex interplay of linguistic features in editorial discourse.

The study highlights similarities and differences between Russian and British English editorial styles, shaped by cultural, linguistic and political factors. Understanding English usage in Russian media informs language policy and educational strategies in non-native contexts. It also aids media professionals in recognizing stylistic preferences in Russian English. The research underscores the dynamic evolving nature of English as a global language.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

This study applies multidimensional analysis to compare Russian and British English editorial writing. It identifies and analyzes register-specific features of Russian English editorials, focusing on patterns of linguistic co-occurrences, stylistic features and communicative functions within non-native English varieties.

1.3 Research Questions

The whole study revolves around these main research questions which are as follows:

1. What are the key linguistic and functional dimensions that characterize Russian English newspaper editorials compared to British English editorials?

2. To what extent does the use of English in Russian newspaper editorials exhibit variation and adaptation when compared to British English editorials?

3. How can multidimensional analysis (MDA) be used to identify register-specific linguistic patterns in Russian English editorials to provide the nature of Russian English as a non-native variety?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Multidimensional Approaches to Register Variation

Szmrecsanyi and Wälchli (2014) emphasized the value of combining approaches to studying linguistic variation, demonstrating how subdisciplines can inform holistic analyses. Their focus on feature aggregation and quantitative methods provides fresh insights into language variation in written and spoken discourse.

Egbert and Biber (2018) found that both quantitative MDA and qualitative CDA approaches yield similar results when applying web registers. This suggests linguistic co-occurrence and register prediction are similarly motivated by usage. Gray (2013) explored variation in academic writing, analyzing lexical and grammatical patterns across disciplines using MDA. Findings showed that methodological sub-registers influence linguistic style, underscoring communicative purpose and evidence type as drivers of variation.

Biber and Gray (2013) also explored sub-registers' role in historical linguistic change. They found that change is complex and shaped by subtle, register-sensitive processes, indicating a need for deeper sub-register analysis.

2.2 MDA Applications in World Englishes

In the context of foreign Englishes, Fatima et al. (2023) and Alvi et al. (2016) used MDA to analyze Pakistani English editorials. They observed significant language variation and high use of nouns, public verbs and sentence relatives, reflecting narrative and informational editorial styles. Xiao (2009) extended MDA to World Englishes by adding semantic analysis, enhancing the study of linguistic variation across global Englishes. This model demonstrates how grammatical and semantic elements interact across registers and varieties.

However, despite the wide application of MDA in examining various Englishes, no prior studies have specifically applied MDA to Russian English newspaper editorials.

2.3 Russian English and Multidimensional Analysis

The linguistic characteristics of several Russian genres have also been examined. Braslavski (2011) looked at genre analysis in relation to online searches. Remchukova and Omelianenko (2017) analyzed the linguistic strategies employed in modern television advertising to shape and promote Russia's national image. It considers the exclusive linguistic features that help in the construction of this image rather than mixing it up with other related notions. The research taking place in this publication accentuates the function of the advertising media in the creation of positive and 'politically correct' images of Russia which are instrumental in promoting this country on the world stage. The results indicate that advertising aimed at creating a favorable attitude towards a nation can work wonders for the nation, in this case Russia, and for the theory that media language is very important in influencing public opinion.

Next, Selezneva and Severskaya (2021) studied tactics of promoting the Russian language within the 'soft power' policy of the Russian State and focusing on the problem of the very image of the Russian world and the language in the present day, which includes battles like the information one. Then, Selezneva and Severskaya (2021) explored strategies for promoting the Russian language within the framework of the Russian state's 'soft power' policy highlighting the importance of shaping a positive image of both the Russian world and the language itself in the context of contemporary challenges including information warfare. The findings suggest that 'naïve' advertising serves as a more effective tool for the 'soft power' strategy as it presents a multidimensional and meaningful representation of the Russian language thus fostering a more attractive image compared to traditional professional advertising methods.

Guseynova et al. (2022) examined the socio-cultural contexts reflected in Internet memes across Russian, French, and Azerbaijani segments. It identifies and analyzes meme-creating components revealing how external factors and cultural backgrounds influence the creation and presentation of memes in different languages and cultures. It highlights the importance of presuppositional knowledge for interpreting memes and underscores the impact of contemporary socio-political events such as migration and the coronavirus pandemic on meme content. It demonstrates that the understanding of memes is deeply rooted in the cultural traditions and values of each linguacultural, emphasizing the need for cultural awareness to avoid communicative failures in interpreting these multiple forms of communication.

2.4 Research Gap

Previous studies have extensively explored register variation within non-native Englishes, particularly Pakistani English, Russian English remains significantly underrepresented in the literature.

Despite work on web texts and socio-cultural language use (e.g., Forsyth & Sharoff et al., 2010; Selezneva & Severskaya, 2021; Guseynova et al., 2022), systematic linguistic patterns in Russian English newspaper editorials remain underexplored. Although some studies have examined genre and media discourse in the Russian context, they have not applied the multidimensional framework to editorial writing.

This study addresses this gap by carrying out a comprehensive multidimensional analysis of Russian English editorial texts. It explores how English is adapted and modified in the Russian media context and contrasts these patterns with British editorial practices. By doing so, the study contributes a new perspective to research on World Englishes and expands the methodological application of MDA.

3. Methodology

This study employed multidimensional analysis using the MAT Tagger to examine register variation in editorials from five Russian English newspapers: The Moscow Times, Novaya Gazeta, Russia Today, Sputnik News, and The Bell**.**

The MAT Tagger is programmed with statistical values for British English genres, which served as reference points for comparing British and Russian English editorials. Five influential and widely read Russian English newspapers were selected for their relevance to Russian political, social, and cultural discourse and their availability in English.   These newspapers represent both independent journalism and state-sponsored narratives, offering a diverse linguistic and ideological spectrum. They also represent different geographical regions: Novaya Gazeta and The Moscow Times focus on Moscow, Russia Today represents national perspectives, The Bell is centered in St. Petersburg, and Sputnik News is included for its international coverage of Russian affairs.

Editorials were written by prominent authors and covered diverse topics such as socio-economic and political issues. Each editorial was between 1,000 and 1,100 words in length, with a total of 250 editorials per newspaper, yielding a robust dataset.

Data was collected from official newspaper websites between 2022 and 2024. Editorial content was cleaned and converted into text files for analysis. The MAT Tagger identified the frequency of 67 linguistic features across five textual dimensions, calculating average scores for each. The primary goal was to compare the linguistic characteristics of editorials from these five newspapers using MAT Tagger output.

4. Multidimensional Analysis, Results and Discussion

For a cross-cultural perspective, multidimensional analysis (MD) was applied to assess register variation, initially developed for British English and later extended to other languages. It quantitatively identifies linguistic co-occurrence patterns based on underlying dimensions such as involved vs informational discourse, narrative versus non-narrative texts, and referential elaboration.

Based on MAT Tagger outputs, Russian and British editorials were compared using Biber's (1988) framework, which includes six textual dimensions this method evaluates cumulative linguistic patterns using multiple features, providing a detailed   and comprehensive explanation. The following dimensions are considered:

1. Dimension 1: Involved vs. Informational Production

2. Dimension 2: Narrative vs. Non-Narrative Concerns

3. Dimension 3: Explicit vs. Situation-Dependent Reference

4. Dimension 4: Overt Expression of Persuasion

5. Dimension 5: Abstract vs. Non-Abstract Information

6. Dimension 6: Online Informational Elaboration

Table 1. Comparison of five Russian English Newspaper with each other through Dimensional Scores through Multidimensional Analysis (1988)

No.	Textual Dimensions of Linguistic Variation	Novaya Gazeta	Russia Today	Sputnik News	The Bell	The Moscow Times
D1	Involved vs. Informational Discourse	*-11.13*	*-13.34*	*-13.54*	*-16.36*	*-14.90*
D2	Narrative vs. Non narrative Text	*0.97*	*-0.05*	*0.40*	*-0.78*	*-0.22*
D3	Explicit vs. Situation-Dependent Content	*2.70*	*3.79*	*4.10*	*4.66*	*3.95*
D4	Overt Expression of Argumentation/Persuasion	*-0.19*	*-0.59*	*-1.13*	*-2.30*	*0.08*
D5	Abstract vs. Non-Abstract Information	*2.34*	*2.44*	*-0.47*	*1.55*	*3.21*
D6	Online Informational Elaboration	*-0.28*	*-0.41*	*-1.55*	*-0.91*	*-0.51*

This table demonstrates the results comparing each dimension across the five newspapers in a similar way. The linguistic dimensions have been adapted to reflect likely interpretation based on their scores. Here's what each dimension represents:

1. **D1 (Involved vs. Informational Discourse):** It presents how involved and informational discourse is present in above sample of Russian English newspaper writing. The more negative the score, the more informational the text is. "The Bell" and "The Moscow Times" have the most informational discourse, with "Novaya Gazeta" being the least informational.

2. **D2 (Narrative vs. Non narrative Text):** It reflects positive or negative concerns. A positive score suggests more narrative text, while a negative score suggests a more non narrative text tone.

3. **D3 (Explicit vs. Situation-Dependent Content):** A higher score means more formal and explicit exposition indicating more clarity in expressing ideas.

4. **D4 (Overt Expression of Argumentation):** Higher scores show more overt argumentation, while lower scores suggest implicit persuasion.

5. **D5 (Abstract vs. Non-Abstract Focus):** Higher scores indicate more focus on abstract, while negative scores show a stronger non abstract focus.

6. **D6 (Online Informational Elaboration):** This dimension reflects how much online informational elaboration language is used in the text. Negative scores suggest subjective language.

The analysis on the basis of each dimension along with text sample is given below as

Table 2. Novaya Gazeta

File	Dimension 1	Text Sample
Novaya Gazeta	-11.13	*"The Kremlin has rushed forces to the region but has so far failed to halt the Ukrainian advance, let alone drive Ukrainian forces from Russian soil. Now, according to various reports, they have established an expanded foothold of as much as 1,000 square kilometres. They have also destroyed a lot of Russian equipment and inflicted heavy casualties on Russian forces."*

This table shows dimension 1 in Novaya Gazeta. Dimension 1 (Involved vs. Informational discourse): It presents how involved and informational discourse is present in above sample of Russian English newspaper writing. The more negative the score, the more informational the text is. "The Bell" (-16.36) and "The Moscow Times" (-14.90) have the most informational discourse. This suggests a focus on objective, factual reporting with minimal personalization or narrative involvement. Such style may reflect a journalistic norm that emphasizes professional distance and formality, aligning with practices in expository writing. "Novaya Gazeta" (-11.13) displayed a relatively less informational tone, potentially indicating a more conversational or subjective approach in certain editorials. These patterns support Biber's (1988) findings that informational discourse correlates with institutional, fact-based genres such as news reporting.

Table 3. Russia Today

File	Dimension 2	Text Sample
Russia Today	-0.05	*Wukong was expected to be good, but no one thought it would be this good. In one day, it became the second-most-played Steam game of all time, receiving a 95% positive rating. While some dismiss the popularity due to its Chinese origin, it's similar to how Polish people supported The Witcher.*

This table explores dimension 2 in Russia Today. Dimension 2 (Narrative vs. Non-Narrative Text): Scores across this dimension varied, with "Novaya Gazeta" (0.97) scoring positively, suggesting a stronger narrative inclination. This might reflect a preference for anecdotal framing or storytelling in some Russian editorials. In contrast, "The Bell" and "The Moscow Times" lean towards non-narrative structures, characterized by analysis and exposition. This dimension reflects whether newspapers prioritize storytelling as a rhetoric strategy or opt for analytical discourse. The use of narrative in select Russian newspapers aligns with patterns in non-native Englishes, where mixed rhetorical modes coexist (Fatima et al., 2023).

Table 4. Sputnik News

File	Dimension 3	Text Sample
Sputnik News	4.10	*Florida is finally taking a long overdue step toward restoring voting rights to felons that residents overwhelmingly called for six years ago. Under a new process, felons could learn faster and with more certainty whether they are legally eligible to vote.*

This table demonstrates dimension 3 in Sputnik News. Dimension 3 (Explicit vs. Situation-Dependent Content): All newspapers, especially "Sputnik News" (4.10) and "The Bell" (4.66), showed high scores, indicating a preference for explicit communication. This suggests an editorial style that values clarity, thorough explanation, and self-contained arguments. Russian English newspapers, while non-native, align closely with standard academic or journalistic expository norms. This suggests that both Russian and international editorials aim to present arguments in a self-contained, accessible manner. Russian English editorials appear to converge with British stylistic conventions here, affirming Xiao's (2009) argument that globalization has fostered some convergence in Englishes despite their local grounding.

Table 5. The Bell

File	Dimension 4	Text Sample
The Bell	-2.30	*Hello! This week we cover the opposition backlash to a major documentary on the 1990s published by Team Navalny. We also look at the latest piece of pro-war propaganda in Russian schools and how Moscow is responding to new US aid for Ukraine.*

This table reflects dimension 4 in The Bell. Dimension 4 (Argumentation): Scores were generally negative, reflecting implicit rather than overt argumentative styles. "The Bell" (-2.30) scored the lowest, showing a deliberate avoidance of direct cultural or political constraints, such as the need to avoid openly confrontational rhetoric in sensitive contexts. This suggests a cautious rhetorical strategy, possibly influenced by political sensitiveness. Rather than using direct argumentative language, these newspapers rely on implication, insinuation or reported speech. This is consistent with Selezneva and Severskaya's (2021) observation that Russian media often favors subtle, ideologically coded language. In contrast, "The Moscow Times" (3.1) had a slightly positive score, suggesting a more assertive editorial tone.

Table 6. The Moscow Times

File	Dimension 5	Text Sample
The Moscow Times	3.21	*Ukraine's Kursk offensive has accelerated these processes, revealed them as clearly as possible and set the context in which a number of trends will start to appear with even greater force and speed. Confusion and strange reactions mark the fading of Russian civic consciousness and regional identity, especially in areas where ethnic Russians comprise the majority.*

The above table shows the dimension for D5 The Moscow Times. (Abstract vs. Non-Abstract Focus): High positive score for The Moscow Times (3.21) suggests a tendency toward abstract, generalized commentary. This abstractness aligns with a tradition of elite commentary in Russian journalism, where theoretical and political discourse dominates. This may include theoretical reflections, meta-commentary, or ideologically framed interpretations, particularly in politically sensitive topics. In contrast, the negative score from "**Sputnik News**" may indicate a preference for concrete, event-driven reporting. These findings support Xiao's (2009) and Biber's (1995) assertions that register choices are deeply shaped by sociopolitical context.

Table 7. Russia Today

File	Dimension 5	Text Sample
Russia Today	-0.41	*Click here to read our in-depth coverage of the economic sanctions. Also, don't forget to follow our updates on Telegram and Facebook for real-time news and expert insights.*

D6 (Online Informational Elaboration): This table explores Dimension 6 in Russia Today. The sample shows partial digital interactivity with direct reader engagement strategies such as "click here" and social media prompts. However, the relatively negative score (-0.41) suggests that such elements are limited and not elaborative enough to define the register. Russian English editorials appear more conservative in adopting elaborate hyperlinking, digressions, or participatory cues common in native English online journalism. This aligns with Biber's (1988) view that traditional editorial style resists full digital interactivity, even in online formats.

Table 8. Russian Vs British Newspapers Comparison with Dimensions

No.	Textual Dimensions of Linguistic Variation	Russian Newspaper	English	British Newspaper
D1	Involved vs. Informational Discourse	*-13.34*		*-10.0*
D2	Narrative vs Non-narrative Concerns	*-0.05*		*0.8*
D3	Explicit vs. Situation Dependent Reference	*3.79*		*1.9*
D4	Overt Expression of Persuasion/Argumentation	*-0.59*		*3.1*
D5	Abstract vs. Non-abstract Information	*2.44*		*0.3*
D6	Online Informational Elaboration	*-0.41*		*1.5*

The above table shows linguistic differences between Russian and British newspapers. Russian papers emphasize informational content (-13.34) with minimal personal engagement, while British papers (-10.0) are slightly less focused on information. Russian papers blend narrative and factual elements (-0.05), whereas British papers lean more towards facts (0.8). Russian papers are highly explicit (3.79), while British papers are somewhat less so (1.9). Russian papers use implicit persuasion (-0.59), while British papers are more overt (3.1). Russian papers favor abstract content (2.44), while British papers focus on concrete details (0.3). Lastly, British papers give priority to online informational elaboration (1.5), while Russian papers focus less on it (-0.41).

This complete six-dimension comparison reveals that Russian English editorials are more informational (D1), less narrative (D2), and highly explicit (D3), while relying on implicit persuasion (D4) and abstract discussion (D5). Notably, Russian newspapers score negatively in Dimension 6 (D6), suggesting minimal use of interactive or elaborative online features. British editorials, in contrast, exhibit more reader-oriented online elaboration (1.5), signaling stronger integration with digital news discourse. These results illustrate a stylistic and technological divergence rooted in broader communicative traditions and media ecosystems.

5. Conclusion

This study conducted a multidimensional analysis (MDA) to compare the linguistic and functional features of Russian English and British

English newspaper editorials. By applying Biber's (1988) multidimensional framework, the research identified six key textual dimensions that characterize editorial discourse. Russian English editorials—particularly those from The Bell, Russia Today, and The Moscow Times-tended to exhibit informational density, abstractness, and implicit persuasion. (Sentence removed). British English editorials, by contrast, featured more overt argumentation, direct reference, and concrete language use, aligning with the expectations of mainstream Anglo-American journalistic style.

This study addressed its three main research questions by employing Biber's multidimensional analysis to uncover the linguistic and functional dimensions that characterize Russian English editorials in contrast to British ones. First, it identified dimensions such as "Involved vs. Informational Discourse" and "Overt Expression of Persuasion" as key in distinguishing stylistic variation across the two editorial contexts. Second, the findings showed that Russian English editorials exhibit meaningful adaptation, marked by implicit argumentation, abstract expression, and high informational density-reflecting Russia's socio-political communication norms. Third, the study demonstrated that MDA is a robust methodological tool for capturing patterned linguistic variation across registers, especially within non-native Englishes, and thus contributes methodologically to research on World Englishes.

These findings reinforce the view that English functions as a pluralistic and dynamic global language. They align with Xiao's (2009) argument that the inclusion of semantic-pragmatic features in MDA reveals sociolinguistic distinctiveness in World Englishes, and support Fatima et al. (2023), who found that national media styles reflect underlying communicative norms.

The study expands the application of MDA beyond native varieties, contributing fresh insight into how English is used in politically sensitive, media-dominated contexts like Russia. It also highlights how register variation can be both a linguistic and ideological phenomenon-an important consideration for scholars of applied linguistics, language education, and discourse analysis.

6. Research Contribution/ Implications

This research contributes to applied linguistics by extending multidimensional analysis (MDA) to an unexplored non-native variety-Russian English in newspaper editorials. (Sentence removed). It provides empirical evidence that editorial registers in Russian English reflect distinct stylistic and rhetorical norms, shaped by cultural, political and communicative expectations. Passive constructions were revised for direct, assertive academic style.

By mapping linguistic co-occurrence patterns across editorial texts, the study supports a deeper understanding of media language in global English contexts. It highlights how Russian media appropriates English for specific discursive purposes, contributing to the broader theorization of World Englishes and register variation.

For language educators, the findings have practical implications. Understanding register-specific language use can help design more effective materials for English learners, especially in journalism, media and academic writing. For policymakers and media analysis, this research offers insights into how linguistic style intersects with ideology and identity in cross-cultural communication.

The study also underscores the importance of integrating corpus-based methodologies with critical linguistic frameworks. As English continues to diversify, multidimensional analysis can play a vital role in documenting and interpreting the evolving patterns of global English usage.

Future research could combine MDA with qualitative discourse analysis to explore ideological positioning, intertextual strategies and voice. Cross-regional studies on other non-native varieties would further enrich the comparative scope of global editorial practices.

Authors' Contributions

- Prof. Dr. Habibullah Pathan: Concept of the study, Writing.
- Urooj Fatima Alvi: Collection and processing of data, Literature review.
- Shazia Ayyaz: Data analysis
- Oksana I Aleksandrova: Design of the study, Processing of material with data cleaning tools application.

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No competing interests among authors exist

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data is not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data is available.

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