A Critical Discourse Analysis of Figurative Language in Pakistani English Newspapers

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Abstract

This research is a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Figurative language in Pakistani English Newspapers. A corpus has been compiled from four English Newspapers: Dawn, The News, The Nation and The Express Tribune on the basis of best readership across the country. To extract the figures of speech, the wordlists comprised of various figures of speech has been compiled from the work of the previous researchers. Data has been analyzed on the basis of Richardson (2007) model of Newspaper evaluation through Critical Discourse Analysis. This research highlights the implicit function of figurative language in the English Newspapers. It explores how figurative language is used in communicating ideas to facilitate the readers and to uncover the manipulation through its usage.

Keywords: Critical Discourse Analysis, Figurative Language

1. Introduction

This research is a corpus based study of Figurative language in Pakistani English Newspapers. The research aims to evaluate the use of figurative language in the newspapers according to its importance in facilitating the readers. The study has employed Richardson (2004 and 2007) model of newspaper analysis through CDA. This model studies certain 'Rhetorical tropes' (p.65). It highlights the implicit nature of figurative language used in the Newspapers. Fairclough and Chouliaraki (1999) states CDA as an aid of putting forward changes and creating awareness "of what is, how it has come to be, and what it might become, on the basis of which people may be able to make and remake their lives" (p.4). According to Fairclough, (1995b) discourse practice fills the gap and relate two things i.e. the partition of culture and society on one hand and discourse, language and text on the other.

This research is new in its nature as it studies four figures of speech, which apparently are different in nature and form which are considered to be an important part of language of literature, with a new Corpus based methodology. The subject matter of the research is unique as it selects the study of a new form of language that apparently is not a part of the newspaper text, thus creating a new insight in a different genre. It highlights a different language trend in newspaper text. It helps to develop a new insight about the use of figurative language by using automatic method of study, rather than using old and traditional observation based method of study.

According to Oxford English dictionary (2003) Metaphor and Metonymy are two types of a trope, a word or phrase used in a sense other than that which is proper to it, a non-literal application of language. In metaphor, a descriptive or explanatory word or phrase is transferred to an object or action different from the first word, but analogous to it, to which it is literally applicable. In metonymy, a word or phrase denoting an object, action, institution, etc., is functionally replaced with a word or phrase denoting one of its properties or something associated with it.

Metonymies are highlighted under following criteria as devised by Richardson (2007). According to which the cause is replaced by the effect and a creator is replaced by the product, the user of the object replaced by the object, people replaced by the place in which they work, events replaced by the date, a country, state replaced by the people living in that country.

Hyperbole is overstatement or exaggerated language that deforms facts by making them appear much bigger than they are if looked at objectively. The media use it a lot to make stories seem more important or interesting than they really are (an apparently unfair boxing decision was described as the 'crime of the century' by one newspaper which seems excessive when compared to murder). It may be used to entertain or to describe an incident more seriously. Simile is a figure of speech that is used to make comparison between two unlike things by using words; like, as and like as. It creates a clear relation between two things entities related to each other.

1.1 Research Objectives

➢ To find out how figurative language helps in describing ideas in newspaper

➢ To explore if the figurative language is used for the particular agenda of the newspaper

➢ To examine how figurative language manipulates the opinion of the reader

➢ To identify which figure of speech contributes maximum in manipulation of reader's opinion

2. Methodology

With the purpose to critically analyze figurative language in the Newspapers this study uses corpus based qualitative approach. It also involves quantitative study of corpus and the evaluation of the data (four figures of speech) using model of the Newspaper analysis through Critical Discourse approach. It helps to unroll the implicit nature of figures of speech in this research. Corpus comprised of four Pakistani English Newspapers (Dawn, The Nation, Express Tribune, The News) that are to be analysed through Critical Discourse model of nalyzing Newspapers by Richardson (2007).

2.1 Keyword Lists or Criterion for Data Collection

For all four figures of speech (Metonymy, Metaphor, Hyperbole and Simile) four keywords lists are formulated and selected in order to highlight four figures of speech from the corpus. Metonymy is highlighted through reporting verbs. A list of reporting verbs was randomly selected from internet which employ three kinds of reporting verbs; strong, weak and neutral. Among this most frequently used reporting verb 'said' is selected for making data.

Metaphor has been highlighted by using three linking verbs/ helping verbs i.e. is, am and are. Simile has been highlighted through some simile indicators i.e. like, as and like as. These simile indicators have been used with noun group and adjective to highlight simile through tagged corpus.

Hyperbole has been highlighted by using hyperbole of number; like thousands of, millions of and billions of. Hyperbole of time; years, months, and days has also been part of the research. It also used a list of eight 'Universal Descriptors' all, every, ever, always, nothing, never, everybody and nobody as discussed by Claridge (2011).

3. Discussion

Figurative language is a type of language that uses words or phrases different from the literal meaning. It generally serves purpose of explanation, information, exaggeration or alteration and manipulation. This study discusses these general purposes and their influence on public opinion and interpretation. Language of Newspaper generally influence public opinion on various social, political or moral matters due to excessive use of influencing vocabulary or phrases with different evaluative connotative meanings.

For multidimensional study of figurative language four chunks of Newspapers have been selected. It is comprised of Top News, National, Opinion and Editorial. Among four parts of

Newspaper, opinion and editorial were more subjective in nature. As they involve excessive use of figurative language, other two parts are based upon factual and comparatively objective information.

Data is interpreted on the basis of general observations while reading the Newspaper. Since metonymy is much frequent so it affected more the text as compared to other figures of speech. Metonymy tries to hide the responsible agent for the event and making the things vague and uncertain for the reader. It takes the reader away from reality. Metaphor on the other hand was non-literal use of language making the idea far from the actual reality or facts. Simile makes the things more abstract from concrete. Hyperbole was responsible for making things appear more and extraordinary than actually they were.

Data varied from newspaper to newspaper but overall, Metonymy was the most frequently occurring figure of speech in newspaper. After metonymy, metaphor was the second frequent figure of speech. While remaining two, simile and hyperbole occur in relative proportion in Newspaper corpus as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Frequencies of Figures of Speech in Pakistani English Newspapers

Newspaper	Simile	Metaphor	Metonymy	Hyperbole
The News	170	240	332	66
Dawn	25	65	225	35
The Nation	55	55	350	50
The Express Tribune	39	30	219	29

The evaluation through Critical Discourse model of Newspaper analysis by Richardson (2007) helps to uncover and highlight the implicit nature of figurative language in Newspapers. These rhetorical tools can however help to describe, persuade, emphasize and recognize the main idea. They actually made the reader think; the way writer is thinking and to adopt the viewpoint of the writer. Newspaper text that is anyhow meant to be objective is made subjective by using these 'rhetorical tropes'. Thus molding and changing the opinion of the reader or may create ambiguity and confusion for the reader.

3.1 Metaphors

The study looks into metaphors through Conceptual Mapping theory. It looks metaphor in terms of source and target domain. Conceptual metaphor is the process of interpreting or understanding one domain which is relatively abstract by using another domain which is relatively concrete (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003). For example, 'Time is Money' is a conceptual metaphor. The concrete domain "money" is used to understand an abstract domain "time." Both money and time are the entities that can be used and wasted. In Newspapers however such examples are not very much frequent, rather events or things are discussed in non literal sense e.g. Time is running. This gives an implied meaning as actually time is unable to run so it is a metaphor.

Metaphors are abstract relations which appear to be more convincing and persuade the reader. Use of metaphor usually helps the reader to shape the understanding of an activity as an extra

ordinary activity that is not actually happening e.g. in The News, National; concordance line 206

not succeed in their mission because "ideas are bullet-proof". The News National

Writers use metaphors to communicate or transform complex ideas into what is perceived as "real" or familiar and concrete e.g. *this state of affairs in our country is alarming, US is anti Islam.* Metaphors often provide only one perspective of an issue by blocking or hiding other viewpoints. In addition, meanings can be ambiguous with context depending on the purpose of the user e.g. *the bigger picture is even darker.* As a consequence, how media uses language to define concepts can cause wider social and political implications e.g. *PML-N government in Punjab is under fire*, *the PML-N, is brimming with joy seeing the bunch of "turncoats".*

Generally metaphors are also used to describe some abstract concept in concrete form. It would help the reader to describe the idea and perceive an imaginary idea in writer's mind in compact form e.g. *PPP is sensing a kill, All eyes are on north Waziristan, people of Sindh are living in a fool's paradise.* It is more like imagery in literature.

3.2 Metonymy

Metonymy is the most frequently occurring figure of speech in Newspaper. It makes the greater percentage in all four newspapers in comparison with other figures of speech. Metonymies are highlighted under following criteria as devised by Richardson (2007) i.e. the creator is replaced by the product, the user of the object is replaced by the object, people are replaced by the place in which they work, events are replaced by the date, a country, state is replace by the people living in that country. This substitution as observed during analysis is mainly to hide the actual agent responsible for the action. So agent substituted is sometimes too general that the reader is unable to narrow down the source.

Metonymies are general in nature that might be vague and ambiguous, creating confusion for the reader like *'the court said', ' the order said'*, *'the parliamentarian said'* etc. Several metonymies reflect authorities and high official's e.g. *'The law minister said', 'the Army spokesman said', 'the deputy speaker said'.*

Metonymies also reflect whole part relationship e.g. *'the white house said', 'the US said.* Both represent and refer to America as the state. They sometimes refer to the unknown agents/actors for the event e.g. *'the order said', 'the US official said', ' the sources said', 'A senior Pakistani diplomat said', 'the bench said'* thus manipulating the news. Metonymy represents concrete bodies and institutions that is usually local e.g. *'CIA finds', 'NAB finds', ' APNS comments'.*

The study also categorises metonymy in three types, Neutral, Strong and weak. Findings through that list are less frequent and represent neutral, authoritative and lower status of the agents respectively. Authoritative agents use strong metonymy e.g. *Government insists, Islam forbids e.tc.* Neutral agents use neutral metonymy *e.g. Pakistan Army knows, An American official acknowledges e.t.c.* Metonymy used for pleading, requesting e.t.c. is weak metonymy

e.g. in concordance lines 6, 1 of The News

outs of the PML-N and the top PPP leadership hopes that he would make inroads in it.

Also borders Nuristan province. Pakistan alleges that the governor of Kunar and the Afghan

Among all three neutral metonymy is comparatively frequent representing the neutral stance of the news.

3.3 Simile

Simile is a figure of speech used to compare two unlike things that is often introduced by like, as or like as e.g. *'this bed is as hard as rock'*. Mostly simile in newspaper has been used with preposition with least number of findings e.g. 'developing countries like Pakistan', 'crime like terrorism', 'NEPRA act as unconstitutional', 'president of Punjab Bar association as terrorist'. Similes are more informative in nature describing the implicit realities, without any confusion e.g. *Pakistan as the only villain in the proceedings of Taliban committee.* 'Pakistan' is personified here with a strange character that has negative connotation. Simile is mostly used to describe concrete concepts in abstract form, making it difficult for the reader to interpret the news e.g. Concordance line 653 and 30, in opinion of The News

and the parliament as a fig leaf to cover their reluctance to go The News opinion

placement levels. Singapore is increasingly aging as a population The News, opinion

Similes sometime sketch some imagery also with euphemistic effect. It offers an implied meaning of the fact. Most of the times, many harsh concepts or realities have been explained through this figure of speech. For example *government headed by "US slaves like Asif Zardari" to solve the problems, Extremism as a snake, concordance line 1019 from opinion the News*

lady tried to whitewash America's Afghan war as an effort to save girls like Malala. The News, opinion

3.4 Hyperbole

Hyperbole is a figure of speech used for excessive exaggeration to create a rhetorical effect. It is used to create humour and sensational effect to make idea more manipulative hence exploiting the reader e.g. *'if 2001 and 2004 policies are a failure, how many new exploration blocks were auctioned over last four and a half year of PPP rule'*, *"all citizens are equal before law'* . It sometimes presents the ideas which are perceived as 'ideals' only, which are never followed and never acted upon. Hyperbole of number is very much less in number as it mostly appears with exact numbers and amount e.g. *'Millions of people praying for Malala's life', billions of dollars are spread worldwide on improving waste disposal'*. Hyperbole of time are very few in number that are not noteworthy somehow it is used as *'Arab states after months of Political deadlock'*, Hyperbole may be used as imaginative stories or to show negative and unfortunate act e.g.*' Jordan has nearly two years of peaceful street protest by Islamists', 'IT ministry had become dysfunctional because it had been without a minister for four and a half years', 'sectarian killings and above all enforced disappearances', 'Mr.*

Zardari had gone against all state institutes'.

4. Conclusion

This research has highlighted four figures of speech in a Corpus of Pakistani English Newspapers. Each figure of speech has its own significance in making and describing ideas. There have been frequency differences among all figures of speech. Metonymy is the most frequently occurring figure of speech. It employs both common and proper nouns in the form of the agent in the news. Metonymy is more uncertain and ambiguous in nature as most of the times agent of the news is hidden within a general term. Metaphor and Simile are reciprocal in nature. Former make ideas concrete and factual while later makes the concept more abstract and unreal. Hyperbole is least used in Newspapers but whenever it is used it makes the ideas seem uncertain. It has over exaggeration of ideas which brings the nature of news near to impossibility. However no figure of speech reflects any proper shift towards any particular agenda. Each one plays an individual significant role merely in describing the ideas in order to form the desired public opinion.

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