LINGUISTIC MANIFESTATION OF MAJOR PAKISTANI POLITICAL PARTIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF INTERNET MEMES

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ABSTRACT

This study has explored the linguistic manifestation of internet memes on major Pakistani political parties on social media. Language does not imitate meanings but creates meanings (Halliday 2014). The research analysed the linguistic choices employed in the caption of memes using Halliday's (2014) model of functional grammar. Four political internet memes were selected as study samples from the year 2020-22 from social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. Data analyzed included the types of sentences, word phrases, vocabulary, transitivity, type of humor, and pragmatic analysis to represent the linguistic elements. The linguistic manifestation of internet memes highlighted that word phrases, short sentences, and moderate vocabulary have been used in the caption of the memes. Pun as a type of humor has been used to make fun of a situation to explain the context of the event. Future studies can be conducted to analyze the text color, style, background, and foreground color of internet memes to portray all Pakistani political parties.

Keywords: internet meme, linguistic manifestation, humor, political parties, Functional Grammar

Introduction

The advent of social media has had a great impact on political activities and discourse. Social media is a platform most widely used to spread information on political issues (Doris, 2014). With the proliferation of the Internet in every household, social media sites significantly influence social and political learning (Riaz, 2010).In the emergence of the most powerful form of visual communication on the internet, Memes are considered one of the most widely used forms of communication, appearing most in the form of videos and photos. They can transmit messages in the form of humorous caricatures, and imitations as a visual representation of humor. Their ability to transmit messages humorously is the sole reason for their growing popularity in every sphere of society. Richard Dawkins did the pioneering work on memes. He viewed memes as a cultural unit of transmission spreading from one person to another through imitation (Chielens & Heylighen, 2005). The internet memes are a piece of culture, particular jokes that gain popularity through online transmission. Memes that represent politicians are created for propaganda and massive publicity. Political campaigners used memes to communicate with netizens (Heiskanen, 2017). Political parties have their own media cells Media cells actively generate press releases, news, and memes related to political activities (Ministry of Labor and Employment, 2016).

Research Objectives

1. To explore the linguistic manifestation of the political internet memes of major Pakistani political parties on social media
2. To analyze the language in the captions of the political internet memes of major Pakistani political parties on social media

Significance

Amid the categories that emerged on social media, internet memes have gained a lot of academic attention, because they have been shared on many digital platforms. Memes analysis is vital, as it is considered one of the significant ways of virtual communication. Communication with people reveals that it applies speech acts to understand the message within the context. Therefore, there is a growing trend in understanding and analyzing memes. Scholars have also identified that semiotic and linguistic analysis are intertwined for internet memes (Jewitt, 2014). Thus, the current research aims to find out the linguistic meaning of memes using the Halliday model of functional grammar.

Research Questions

1. What is the linguistic manifestation of the political internet memes of major Pakistani political parties on social media?
2. How is the language used in the captions of internet memes on political parties on social media?

In recent years, the internet has permitted the content to be from person to person. Creating a media habitat that is worthy of the formation of internet memes (Borzsei 2013). The dictionary definition of memes focuses on Internet Memes which are undertaken as multimodal building (verbal-visual), that are circulated by the users of the Internet with the help of their interest and catchiness. Internet memes can be defined as a part of culture, usually a joke that gets influenced with the help of online communication (Davison, 2012). As internet memes circulate fast through and in online communication, this is the main reason why these images/texts contain images named 'memes'(Dancygier, Vandelanotte 2017). The very early concept of memes as cultural information is linked with the theory of imitation and recreation of ideas related to cultural development by Richard Dawkins. (1976) then popularized by Hofstadter and Dennett's The Mind's I (1981). 'Meme' the term first coined by Dawkin (1976) in his book 'The Selfish Gene,' is the thing that spread over the culture. The word meme is the short form of the Greek word 'mimema' which means 'which is imitated' or 'imitated thing'. Just like organisms, memes modify their surroundings to survive. (Constine, 2014). According to Dawkins memes are dialogue to genes, consist of self-contained information, grateful to the person who passes these ideas. These can be tunes, thoughts, Ideas phrases tendencies ways to do pots, and many other ways of building bridges (Dawkins, 1976).

The meme's concept is based on the rule of Universal Darwinism, which states that any piece of varied and selected information gives birth to a new design no matter whether it is cultural or biological. This the reason Dawkins said that any information, whether in the shape of a gene or the form of song is looking for one thing is to be spread far and wide. Internet memes can be as simple as a phrase, or hashtag, just like the Diasoi meme in China (Szablewicz (2014) or the MeToo movement in America. Internet facilitates digital memes to move from person to person following the process proposed by Dawkins. On Carnegie Mellon University's online bulletin board In 1982 the first emotion (:-) was used to flag humor. (Davison (2012). As this emotion had text, humor, and a symbol this emotion became the first type of meme. While Internet memes consist of words, videos, and emoticons but common of all are images with superimposed text that give a merged message. These superimposed text images began to be generated via email, Usenet, email, and, message boards. The early 2000s was the time when researcher started doing their studies on this visual antique. The social networks allowed these memes to go far and viral.(Beskow, et al., 2020). Linor Shifman has done large studies of digital memes with the respective of journalism and communication. In 2013 slightly deviating from Dawkins shifman defined the internet meme as an artifact that a) gives the usual attributes of content, form, and/or stance b) is produced with having a complete sense of each other C) by various users they are transmitted, transformed, and imitated with the help of the Internet (Shifman,2014). Another study revealed that it all depends upon the

meme makers whether they want to communicate positive or negative thoughts. The purpose of the memes is not humor but other than that. The study aims to know about the deep meanings of memes and to investigate their purpose. Multimodal discourse analysis was used with the Pragmatic approach. The five best memes were randomly collected from Google. The memes consisted of text and visual graphics. The results indicated that memes are not only humorous they can be informative and sarcastic. They can also be used for a black campaign. Internet memes provide a way for to people express their thinking purposes explicitly to other people on the internet (Zubaidah & Ardelia,2018). Political actors use internet political memes to circulate their political messages so they can change the beliefs, ideas, and actions of society by giving the ability of memes to plea to cultures and sub-cultures. Canning even surpasses this and says that memes perfectly restore political debates (Canning, Reinsborough, & Smucker, 2017). In a study of the distribution of Internet memes in the 2018 boycott campaign targeting three major brands in Morocco. Multimodal discourse analysis was used. They argued that memes are tactics for social justice, to challenge the dominant power structure. Studies internet memes as digital artifacts. They studied memes related to education, a perennial issue for Singapore, using the social semiotic theory of Kress and Leeuwan. The analysis suggests that memes exhibit dense semiotic meaning-sharing features of comics and sequential art in portraying educational issues related to pedagogy and hegemonic discourse (Moussa et al., 2020)

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Research gap

Since the advent of social media, it has become the most influential representative of international and national politics. A profound number of studies conducted in the aforementioned disciplines are related to political engagement, the influence of political activities (Qazi et al., 2022), political discourse, memetic warfare, and boycott campaigns (Moussa et al., 2020). From the review of the literature, it is evident that there is a dearth of research on internet memes related to the perspective of linguistic analysis. Even though studies highlight the important role of language, functional grammar, and communication, conducting research and analysis is bound to interpreting cultural meanings, and myths. Therefore, it is important to understand the crucial role of language and the interplay of text analysis (Yue, 2019).

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

In the qualitative research design, Halliday's (2014) theory of systematic functional grammar has been adopted as a theoretical framework in which transitivity processes, type of sentences, word phrases, and vocabulary, were analyzed to highlight the linguistic choices used in the caption of the memes. Semantic meanings and context of the language of the caption in the memes were analyzed to explain the linguistic meanings of the caption of the memes. Data is collected using a purposive sampling strategy. 4 memes with captions were collected from different social media accounts from the years 2020-2022. Halliday (2014) explains the transitivity in the material processes of the memes was analyzed by assessing the process of doing or happening between participants, one is the Actor (the one acting or a key participant),

and the other is the goal (affected by the action). Mental Processes include affection, cognition, and perception. In memes it is the language that uses the simple past tense, having two participants' sensors (the one who feels emotional and thinks) and the phenomenon (felt emotional and thought about). Relational processes require assessing two participants i.e. in a finite clause the relational process is concerned with being, possessing, and becoming. Two kinds of relational processes are assessed in the memes: identifying which participants are tokens and values. In behavioral processes the main participant that is assessed is behavior. If there are two participants, the second participant is behavior. In the verbal process all modes of verbal behavior e.g. expressing and indicating. The content of what is being said or indicated is considered a projected clause. Two participants are assessed sayer (addresser) and the receiver (entity targeted by the addressee). The existential process includes the usual verb "be" verb. In linguistics, a sentence is a grammatical unit of a word having a syntactical link to the word that precedes or follows it, bearing several attributes and intonation patterns. Based on function four different kinds of sentences were analyzed in the memes. Declarative or Assertive sentences an informative sentences ending with a period. Imperative sentences express a command, order, or request in a sentence. An interrogative sentence is used to ask a question and ends with a question mark (?).

Data Analysis.

Meme 1

The meme consists of two sentences. "Vote for me" (Imperative sentence) and "I mean, look at me". (Imperative sentence). There is only one-word phrase in the caption. "Come on" (verb phrase). The word 'looking' indicates the material process. The preposition 'at ''on' shows the relational process. The word 'vote' means according to the Oxford dictionary 'a formal choice that one makes in an election or at a meeting to choose somebody or decide something'. The word 'look' means to direct someone's gaze to something or someone in a specific location or direction. The word 'come' with the preposition 'on' is used to encourage someone to encourage to do something. Semantic meanings are highlighted by the word 'vote' with 'for me' indicating that the vote is only for one person. As mentioned in the next caption 'Look at me' shows that only see Imran Khan and vote for him. There is no need to know anything about his political services. The next caption 'Come on' that don't think and give vote hurry up. The context of the language is that vote only for the person and they give a vote to the specific person only by looking at him. People do not need to know very deeply about their careers in politics. Most of the people are ready to do anything on one call of Imran Khan and do not even know the reason behind any of his doing.

Meme 2

The activity depicted in the meme is that the conversation takes place between the mother's picture in a frame hung on the wall (madam Banazeer Bhutto) and her son (Mr. Bilawal Bhutto). The caption of the means consists of"3" sentences. All three captions are proper sentences."Ma, do I have to speak to run this country?" (Interrogative sentences)." If I could do it so can you" (Affirmative sentences)". "Again the enemies of peace and prosperity are standing in front of us. "(Declarative Sentence). There is no word phrase in the caption of the meme. The word 'have' shows the relational process. The word 'standing' shows the material process. Vocabulary indicates the word "Ma, ordo" country, enemies, peace, and prosperity, are the eye-catching words of vocabulary in all three captions, Ma" is written in Roman Urdu. In English, there is no such word in the English dictionary. But on Google site, we get the meaning as "Mother". The word "ordo" is also written in Roman Urdu. The word refers to the language "Urdu" the word country, a notion with its government, occupying a particular Territory, the word 'enemies' is a plural form of enemy. It refers to the person or group of people who have some harmful attention to someone or something. Peace means a period in which there are no war or war-like activities, prosperity means being strong or successful as a Nation, as a person, or as a country. So can you verb phrase refers to the ability to do something. Semantic analysis shows that the very first word in the first caption 'Ma' shows the relationship between the active participant Mr. Bilawal Bhutto with the person (in the picture frame on the wall. 'Ma' indicates the relationship between) mother and son. The sign of '?' indicates that Mr. Bilawal Bhutto is asking for something from his mother's picture. This interrogative sentence shows his insecurity about speaking Urdu. The answer of mother "if I could do it, so can you! "Could Do It" shows that his mother Madam Banazeer Bhutto was a foreigner and could speak Urdu in the country of Pakistan where Urdu is an official language and also shows that politicians and the parents and forefathers are not interested in obtaining education from the native country. They even cannot speak the language of the country about which they dream dreaming to ruling. But the last caption "again the enemies of peace and prosperity are standing in front of us" shows Mr Bilawal Bhutto's speech again delivered in English but not in Urdu. The context of the language can be analyzed in the way that Mr. Bilawal Bhutto is standing in front of his mother's late mother's framed picture set on the wall. There are many questions have been raised about the language of Mr. Bilawal Bhutto. He cannot even speak more than a single line of Urdu correctly in his initial days of politics. So the

meme depicts that may be asking her mother whether he can speak Urdu to run this (Pakistan) country. When the official language is Urdu the spelling of Urdu is also wrong. The answer to frame mother pictures revealed that she had also gone through the same situation as she answered 'if I could do' means she also struggled to speak Urdu. But her struggle paid off 'so can you'! shows that the mother wants to give courage to his son so he can also speak Urdu but what happened even after that courage Mr. Bilawal Bhutto delivered his speech in English because he cannot much struggle with the language as his mother did.

Meme 3

The meme despite that Mr. Nawaz Sharif was the only solution to the very problem is the protection that he and his party have during his every period of administration. The caption of the meme only contains one sentence which is a declarative sentence. "Very simple, Motorway, Metro, Bus, tour of Saudia." (Affirmative sentence) There is no word phrase. There is no transitivity process in the caption of the meme. Vocabulary words are Motorway means 'highway' Tour means to travel for businesses, and education purposes for pleasure (Webster, 2023) Saudia is the name of the country. Semantic analysis indicates that very simple indicates the solution to the problem of the country is. The solution is only motorway, motorbus tour of Saudia. Shows that the motorway is the only solution for road tracks not related to Inflection, the Metro bus only solves the problem of local passengers in the province not related to their salaries, and the tour of Saudia is only related to Mr. Nawaz Sharif himself. Pakistan's problems with inflation, economic decisions, economic crisis, terrorism, and many others cannot be solved by all of the mentioned things in the caption. The context of language shows the time when there was massive ambiguity in the country politically and economically but Mr. Nawaz Sharif has only one solution as he and his party workers only talk about their projects completed a year ago.

Meme 4

The activity depicted in the picture is Mr. Asif Ali Zardari and Mr. Bilalwal Bhutto Zardari waving hands to the public.

There are two captions written in meme.

1. 'Wave to them'

The sentence is imperative: a sentence used to give the command.

2. They paid your Oxford fee

The sentence is a declarative sentence: it highlights a piece of information.

There is no word phrase in the caption of the meme. The word 'wave' shows the material process. The word 'paid' shows the behavior process.

The use of the word "wave" means the way of greeting someone in the way that his hand moves to and fro with a swaying motion. The word "they" refers to the person or people of unspecific gender, indicating the people. The word "Paid" means money that is given for the work to be done. The word "your" points out the specific person in the meme it indicates to Mr. Bilalwal Bhutto Zardari. The word "Oxford" is a noun the name of an institute in the meme. The word "fee" means the fixed rate of money that one has to pay to an institution to get services and benefits. The type of humor used is banter i.e. playful and friendly way of teasing without getting personal, sarcastic, or abusive. Semantic analysis shows the word "to them" highlights the invisible presence of the people. The word "son" highlights the intimacy between the participants, and shows their relation. The phrase "wave to them, son" gives the sense of formal order that the one participant is giving to the other one. Wave is not just a wave of hand it shows something that is needed to do to connect with "Them". The word "son" gives meanings to the tradition or ritual that a son has to follow as his predecessor's ritual. In the bottom caption the word "they" gives anaphoric reference to the word "them" showing the important presence of people to understand the meanings of the meme as a whole. The word "Paid" gives importance to the things that people have done for their well-being. Such as taxes, donations, and funds. The word "Your" gives a particular person's indication of who is receiving all the Good deeds that people have done or doing for him. The word "Oxford" shows the standard and high institute which is not easy for everyone to afford only the person who has high and lavish wealth can think of it. The word "fee" not only highlights the fee of an institution but all the expenditures of their luxury life. The pragmatic analysis of memes revealed that the context of language shown in the caption of the memes is a conversation-taking pace between father and son or two members of a political party. *Epistemic context* is the background or context i.e. Mr. Asif Ali Zardari and Mr. Bilalwal Bhutto Zardari waving hands to the public for the election campaign. However, the caption "Wave to them son, they paid for your tuition fee". It is an indirect message about the socio-political background of Pakistan, where leaders are being criticized for their corruption money laundering, or stealing from the public.

Conclusion

In this era in which we are living most people spend much of their time using the internet so it needs to develop a medium for communication which based on the internet as a mode, such as internet memes. Memes ask for much knowledge to understand their meanings (Kostadinovska-Stojchevska & Shalevska, 2018). Meaning-making is the result of a combination of linguistic and extra-linguistic systems in the series of social interaction and communication. It helps to transform action meanings into linguistic meanings conversely .This research unfolds the use of language as text in the form of the caption of the meme. Based on function, the types of sentences are interrogative, affirmative, imperative, declarative, and

exclamatory sentences. Meme 1 has an imperative, meme 2 has an interrogative, meme 3 has a declarative affirmative sentence, and Meme 4 has imperative and declarative sentences. A word phrase is a group of words that cannot stand alone. In the Analysis of meme 2, the noun phrase is analyzed. As in the analysis of memes 4, and 2, showed material and behavioral, material and mental processes have been analyzed respectively. In every meme, the literal meanings of the words have been analyzed. 'Banter'; a delightful use of language to tease someone is analyzed as used type of humor. In every meme, connotative meanings of the words have been analyzed. And in the pragmatic analysis, every meme context of the language has been analyzed. Analysis of linguistic elements of internet memes on Major Political Pakistani Parties on Social media shows that language is manifested to explain the context of the event and semantic relation among the words through the different types of sentences and use of phrases and to create humor through the use of pun as a type humor in the caption of internet memes on major Pakistani political parties on social media.

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