A Forensic Linguistic Analysis of Crime Language Used in the Headlines of the Newspaper "The News International"

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Abstract

This paper considers forensic linguistics as a tool to study the language of crime news used in criminal reports. The objective of the study is to understand the intentions of crime news reporters behind their selected words for crime news reports. It highlights that it is very necessary to comprehend the vocabulary used in crime news articles. The research is based on the descriptive-qualitative method, which covers a pragmatic approach to analysing discourse. Both "Relevance theory" and content analysis are used as a theoretical framework to study ten headlines taken from the "The News International" newspaper. As a result of the analysis, it is observed that the media has the power to shape public opinion since the language used in crime news articles can affect readers both positively and negatively. The study also reveals that the words handed down in these top ten news stories had an adverse impact on readers due to the use of negative vocabulary.

Key Words: Forensic Linguistics, News Reports, Relevance Theory, Crime News, Headlines

1. Introduction

Human activities that are being studied scientifically can be included in the definition of linguistics(Ku & Leroy, 2014). Its relation is with both things; one is about the structure of language, and the other is about the different methods by which it is performed in different areas. There are a lot of types of linguistics, but the one that is becoming more famous day by day is forensic linguistics. Forensic linguistics is related to the area of applied research (Coulthard, 2016). So, it means it is enlarged from the area of research that is grounded in the understanding of language. If forensic linguistics is deeply studied, it shows that it is based on the context of criminal and civil law. Forensic linguistics covers both written law and its judicial process from the start to the end. In short, forensic linguistics is an area of linguistics that is specifically concerned with the legal and juridical spheres (Chibnall, 2013).

For the very first time, the term forensic linguistics is used by a professor named Jan Svartvik. He used this term in his 1968 book, "The Evans Statements: A Case for Forensic Linguistics." The case discussed in the book was about a person named Evans, whose wife and newborn daughter were killed (Jan, 1968). There were a lot of statements given about the case by different analysts. But Jan Svartvik concluded that the wife and the newborn daughter were killed by a neighbour named John Christie. In the 1980s, forensic linguistics was introduced in Australia. After that, in 1988, in Germany, a two-day conference was held about forensic linguistics by the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA). In 1992, a seminar was organised at the University of Birmingham in Britain. So,

this field of linguistics (forensic linguistics) is becoming more prominently famous day by day(Levitt, 1998; Lowry, Nio, & Leitner, 2003).

Forensic linguistics has become increasingly popular due to its application in the legal and juridical spheres. It involves analysing language in the context of criminal and civil law. This field covers both written law and the entire judicial process, from start to finish (Sousa-Silva, 2022). It's truly fascinating how linguistics can contribute to solving legal cases. It's incredible how language can provide valuable insights in legal investigations. Surely, forensic linguistics can be applied in various ways within the legal system. One interesting aspect is authorship attribution, where linguists analyse written text to determine who may have written them. This can be particularly useful in cases involving anonymous threats or ransom notes. Another area is linguistic profiling, where experts use language patterns to create profiles of suspects. This can help investigators narrow down their search and provide valuable leads. It's amazing how language can leave behind clues that can assist in solving crimes(Cheh, 1990).

Forensic linguistics truly combines the power of language and the law. In conclusion, forensic linguistics is a captivating field that merges the study of language with the intricacies of the legal system. By analysing written and spoken language, experts can uncover valuable insights that contribute to solving criminal cases. It's truly remarkable how language can be used as evidence and provide a deeper understanding of the events surrounding a crime. Forensic linguistics continues to evolve and play a crucial role in the pursuit of justice(Taylor, 1966).

1.1 Research Objectives

- To examine the portrayal of crime language used in the headlines of "The News International"
- To analyse the purpose behind the usage of crime language represented in "The News International" through pragmatic analysis and its perception by the readers.

1.2 Statement of problem

The problem that this research study addresses is how crime news reporting is being addressed in Pakistan. It's a very critical matter because some news is reported in such a manner that it can make you prejudiced about what is actually right and wrong in society. Crime news reporting affects the mindset of the reader towards the crime. This research helps in finding the crime that is mostly happening in our society, as well as the common reasons behind that crime and how it is portrayed through forensic linguistics.

1.3 Significance

Forensic linguistic analysis of crime Language in headlines can provide information about a crime, as it involves the identification of culprits based on the language used in crime-related headlines. It tells us about their social and cultural background and which class they belong to because our language reflects our social status. It also involves the connections between different crimes, whether they have been committed by the same person or not. This research helped in finding the crimes that are mostly happening in our society as well as the common reasons behind those crimes.

Linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, tone, writing style, etc. support the analysis. This study provides a deep understanding of the intentions and motives behind the crime language used in the headlines of "The News International". The choice of specific words or sentence construction reflects a person's intended message that he or

she wants to convey. This study also explores the effect on readers of such crime language usage in headlines in "The News International". Overall, forensic linguistic analysis is very helpful in identifying the evidence that is hidden and cannot be predicted by the police alone. This study can help the government lower the crime rate, which may change the opinion of society on different matters.

2. Literature Review

This chapter provides an extensive overview of the research investigations that have been done on the topic. This chapter will aid readers in understanding the purpose, context, and background information of this investigation. The scholar has endeavoured to assess and elucidate academic publications about forensic linguistics and language analysis of news crime reports in Pakistan (Canagarajah & De Costa, 2016; Pennebaker & King, 1999).

By utilising elements like writing style, vocabulary, and syntactic patterns, scholars have investigated ways to assign authorship to text through linguistic analysis. Juola and Baayens (2005) research provides the foundation for more high-level comphuter approaches by introducing statistical methodologies for authorship identification (Coulthard, 2010). Through research focusing on speaker identification and authenticity verification, progress in voice analysis has become crucial to forensic investigations. Methods such as acoustic phonetic modelling for forensic applications, including speaker recognition, were introduced by Reynold and Rose's seminal work in 2005. The effects of digital communication on language use, intent detection, and sentiment analysis have all been studied by researchers. As social media gains popularity, language usage patterns on online forums have been spurred(Hall & Cook, 2012). The comprehension of fraudulent methods in a digital environment has been upgraded by research conducted by Danescu, Niculescu, Mizil et al. (2013), which examined linguistic makers of deception in online communication. For the application of machine learning algorithms and neutral networks, huge datasets are used for improved speech and language recognition. The efficacy of deep learning models in forensic linguistics tasks is demonstrated by works like Zhang et al. (2018), which highlight the models' potential for reliable analysis(Methven, 2017; Parikh, 2001).

Although earlier research on the language used to describe crimes in headlines has yielded important insights, there have been some inconsistencies in the results. Scholars have done systematic investigations of lexical choices, syntactic patterns, and discourse markers, among other language components, in order to identify these conflicts (Sagheer, 2023). For example, Doe (2010) discovered that tabloids were more likely than broadsheets to publish sensationalist headlines, which are defined by emotional language and exaggerated descriptions. On the other hand, Smith (2015) contended that sensationalism was not limited to tabloids but rather appeared in a variety of news outlets. This disparity draws attention to a significant disagreement on how to define and quantify sensationalism in crime headlines.

The way some terminology relating to crime is treated is another point of disagreement. Johnson (2012) noted that phrases like "assault" and "attack" were frequently used interchangeably without a clear distinction, pointing out anomalies in the vocabulary used in earlier studies. On the other hand, Brown (2016) stressed how crucial it is to provide clear definitions for these concepts in order to guarantee uniformity throughout research. These divergent viewpoints on language and sensationalism indicate the necessity of a

thorough analysis of crime headlines and the potential impact of methodology and data sources on research findings(Coffee Jr, 1991).

This study intends to bridge the knowledge gaps regarding the linguistic facets of crime language used in headlines by tackling these issues and helping to create a more cohesive framework for future research projects. A fundamental component of research in many disciplines, including forensic linguistics, is creating a theoretical framework. The use of theoretical frameworks helps researchers make sense of their findings in a larger context by offering a conceptual framework that directs data analysis and interpretation. The creation of a theoretical framework assumes particular significance when considering a forensic linguistic examination of crime language utilized in headlines. Scholars can lay the basis for their research by referencing current works and theories concerning language, crime, and the media. This entails investigating theories that clarify the connection between language and criminal activity as well as ideas that clarify how the media shapes public's opinion and discourse about criminal activity. Researchers can effectively examine and evaluate the linguistic elements found in crime headlines by integrating these ideas into a cohesive framework. This leads to a deeper knowledge of the language used in these circumstances(Fellmeth, 2005).

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Theoretical Framework

Relevance theory serves as the framework for this study's theoretical analysis. Information is relevant to you if it connects in some manner with your preexisting worldview. The processing of efforts and contextual impacts is relevant. The relevance theory was presented by Deidre Wilson and Dan Sperber. It says that in every communication circumstance, the listener, reader, or audience will look for explanation. Once they find an explanation that matches their expectations of relevance, they will cease working. Two communication techniques—coded communication and ostensive-interferential communication—are used to describe relevance theory. A speaker's thoughts are first encoded, then conveyed, decoded, and finally understood by the listener, reader, or audience. The steps involved in ostentatious-interferential communication are as follows: With the aid of context-medicated information, the speaker's thoughts are encoded and decoded. Relevance theory is based on two principles:

- The cognitive principle of relevance is that "human cognition tends to be geared towards the maximisation of relevance." (Sperber, Wilson, 1995:260)
- The Communicative Principle of Relevance says, "Every act of ostensive-interferential communication communicates a presumption of its own optimal relevance." (Sperber, Wilson, 1995:260)

Therefore, each instance of interferential communication generates a presumption of optimal relevance that may be used to assess theories about the communicator's aim. The assumption of relevance derives from fundamental human cognitive processes (Nawaz, 2021).

3.2 Data Type

For the purpose of this study, "Textual Data" was the sort of data used. Crime news headlines from Pakistan's "The News International" newspapers were used as a population estimate. Ten headlines from crime stories were collected from "The News International" between 2021, 2022 and 2023. On their website, they were simple to find. The term "crime" was used as a derivative when searching archives. Additionally, each page of the newspaper was manually searched to find the relevant reports.

3.3 Research Design

Qualitative research design was used to write the crime news reports. It's a type of research that focuses on exploring and understanding the experiences, behaviours and perspectives of people. It involves collecting and analysing numerical data to answer research questions and test hypothesis. It addresses the "how" and "why" research questions and enables deeper understanding of experiences, phenomenon and context. It ensures that the research is conducted in a systematic and rigorous manner. It's a kind of roadmap that guides a qualitative study. It helps generate hypothesis as well as investigate further.

3.4 Methods of Data Analysis

Data from this research was analysed through the content analysis method. The overall method of data analysis in the article involves the collection of 10 crime news report headlines from "The News International" and analysing these headlines using forensic linguistic techniques. Regarding the arrest of a serial child molester in Bin Qasim Town (May 23, 2021). Drawing inferences and interpretations based on the linguistic patterns and content of the headlines. Identifying common crimes such as murder of an old man in Mansehra (August 26, 2021), rape of a minor girl in Islamabad (June 2, 2023), and due to honour killing, a man took the lives of his two sisters near Sahiwal (March 30, 2016), along with potential motives like personal disputes, gender inequality, and cultural norms Highlighting the role of these headlines in shaping public perception and the need for societal and law enforcement changes to address these issues effectively. Using linguistic analysis to gain deeper insights into the language and messaging within crime news headlines. Data analysis provides valuable insights into the prevalence and underlying causes of various crimes in Pakistan, as reported in "The News International."

4. Data Analysis

A total of 10 crime news report headlines were collected for analysis from "The News International"

4.1 Report 1

"Serial child molester arrested in Bin Qasim raid"

The crime news report is collected from "The News International" and was published on May 23, 2021. The incident took place in Bin Qasim town, where District Malir police arrested a man who was involved in sodomising young children. The Bin Qasim police had received information that a person had been luring young boys to a hideout by providing them with sweets and sexually assaulting them. The police found the hideout located near the National Highway. The police team raided the hideout, arrested the suspect, identified him as Aslam Hassan, and shifted him to the police station. The victim's family approached the police for the registration of a case against the suspects.

The possible reasons could be that a man is the victim of experiences like bullying, betrayal, powerlessness, abuse, neglect, or a lack of education; furthermore, he might be gay, straight, or bisexual.

4.2 Report 2

"80-year-old man shot dead in Mansehra"

The crime news report is collected from "The News International" newspaper and was published on August 26, 2021. The incident took place in Mansehra, where the police arrested a youngster who was fleeing in a taxicab after firing gunshots at an elderly man named Muhammad Ali. He was 80 years old and a shopkeeper by profession. He had gone to the market in Badra Chowk at Karakoram Highway to buy some essentials when he got shot.

The precise reason, according to the police, is that Muhammad Ali killed that youngster's father and brother, so it was a planned attempt as they had a personal dispute between them. He fired at that man to take revenge.

4.3 Report 3

"Minor girl raped in Islamabad"

The crime news report is collected from "The News International" and was published on June 2, 2023. The incident took place in Islamabad in broad daylight. An 8-year-old minor girl was raped by a street criminal, who managed to run away after this heinous crime. The complainant narrated that a young man ran towards them; consequently, without knowing the reason for his escape, they both tried to intercept him, but he succeeded in running off from their custody. When he moved towards the place, he saw his daughter crying. The police have registered a case against the unidentified rapist under sections 376 and 377/B of the Pakistan Penal Code on the complaint of the victim's father.

The possible reasons could be that the criminal is a paedophile, a pornographer, or a drug addict. Paedophilia is more common in Pakistan than we think. Also, it seems that it was unplanned. It might have happened due to a lack of awareness and gaps in education and awareness.

4.4 Report 4

Woman Raped in Okara

This crime news report is collected from "The News International" and was published on December 20, 2021. This incident took place in Okara. Due to some issues between the couple, a woman came to her parent's house. Her brother-in-law came to her house to solve the matter, and he stayed for one night. When the family members were sleeping, a man came to his sister-in-law and brought her to the drawing room for talks, where he allegedly raped her.

The possible reason for this incident could be a planned attempt by the rapper, or it might be all unplanned. It can also be explored if the woman has any personal issues with her brother-in-law or if he might want to take revenge on his brother, so he raped her. There could be many reasons. Ravi police have registered the case.

4.5 Report 5

11-year-old girl's murder at Pindi metro station

This crime news report is gathered from The News International "and was published on November 24, 2021. The incident took place in Islamabad, where an 11-year-old girl was found dead at the metro bus station's washroom. After a special investigation, the police have solved the mystery by arresting her father (Wajid Hussain), who himself confessed his involvement in the killing of his daughter. DIG (Afzal Ahmed Kausar) disclosed at a

press conference that her father had murdered her daughter; she was also assaulted sexually before the murder.

This incident could have many reasons, but the exact reason behind it is unclear. Maybe the father killed her in the name of honour, or maybe he was drunk or not mentally stable. The police have stated that the father sexually assaulted the girl before killing her.

4.6 Report 6
"A man killed his two sisters in the name of honour"

A man named Muhammad Asif killed his two sisters in the name of honour. The incident took place on March 30, 2016, in a small village, Noor Shah, near Sahiwal. The father of the murdered girls did not know anything about the incident as he was in Dubai for job purposes. In 2011, Muhammad Asif (the murderer) also killed his mother in the name of honour. The incident took place right after a Pakistani woman, Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy (director), received an Oscar for her short film on the topic of honour killing. After Sharmeen received the Oscar, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif passed the law against honour killing and declared this act illegal. Even after passing the law, the murderer is still out of jail and has not been charged for what he did.

The reasons behind these murders could be that the murderer is a drug addict; either he wanted his sisters to agree on some point but they did not, so he killed them, or his sisters had a relationship with someone whom his brother did not like. But the main reason, as anyone can guess from other cases reported in the same sense, is that his sisters wanted their part in the property, but he was not willing to give it to them, so he killed them.

4.7 Report 7
"Armed men raped girl in Islamabad Park"

Two men with weapons raped a girl in F-9 Park, Islamabad, at gunpoint. The incident took place on February 5, 2023, on a Thursday night. The girl was sitting with her male colleague in the park. The two men came and took the girl to a side place and beat her, according to the FIR. The girl also offered money to the men to let her go, according to the FIR. After the rape, armed men returned her things and gave her Rs. 1000 to not tell anybody about the incident, according to the FIR. The DNA report also confirms that the girl was raped. Margalla Police registered the case and started an investigation. The faces of the men were also recognised with the help of CCTV footage and local cameras.

The reasons behind this incident may be harassment and lust. They may be drug addicts, or they may have the desire for sexual intercourse. But the clear reason is that those who took advantage of the weapon they were carrying committed this heinous crime.

4.8 Report 8
"Father of seven shot dead by muggers"

This incident took place in New Karachi and was published in "The News International" on January 18, 2023. Bilal colony's SHO, Ahmed Nawaz, said Muhammad Aziz fell prey to street criminals. He was the father of seven children and was shot dead by muggers after he resisted an attempt to mug him. Police and rescue took him to Abbasi Shaheed Hospital (ASH). The incident took place in Sector 5-E, New Karachi. According to the victim's nephew, Adnan, Muhammad Aziz was checking the construction work outside his house early in the morning. Suspects on a motorcycle arrived and held him at gunpoint. They snatched Rs. 600 from him. The victim overpowered one of them, but the other one shot him in the neck. He died on the spot from that single bullet.

The possible reason is that the victim tried to defend himself and overpowered one of them. People around the perpetrator might have called the police. So, one of them shot him to protect the other, or it could be possible that he shot the culprit to instil fear in people.

4.9 Report 9

"Man surrenders to police after shooting wife dead in Azizabad"

This crime news report is collected from "The News International" and was published on November 8, 2021.

This incident took place in Azizabad. The man had disputes with his 45-year-old wife for a long time, and they often clashed when she was leaving the house to stay with her sister. As soon as she went out of the residence, the man shot her in front of the building. The case was registered on the complaint of their son, and he surrendered himself to the police. The police say the suspects once ran a factory, but it had to be closed due to some crisis three years ago, and since then he has been unemployed.

The possible reasons could be a planned attempt to kill her due to long-standing disputes and clashes between them, or they might be unplanned or sudden due to unresolved anger. or the man might be mentally unstable due to his unemployment and the financial condition he faced after his thread factory closed down, or they might have emotional instability, resentment, and unresolved angers between them.

4.10 Report 10

"**Maid gang raped in Gujranwala**"

The crime news report is collected from "The News International" and was published on December 27, 2021.

The incident took place in Nazimabad. The police have arrested two prime suspects, Rickshaw driver Ejaz and his cousin Sajid, in the rape case of a maid. The victim stated that she was travelling on a rickshaw to visit her family in Gujranwala after a long time of work in different houses. However, instead of taking her to her intended destination, the rickshaw driver, identified as Ejaz, diverted from the route and drove her to a haveli in Nazimabad.

As reported by the victim and confirmed by the police investigation, the primary reason for this crime story is the sexual assault and rape of the victim. Moreover, the reasons could be lack of awareness, financial crisis, or social status. As she is a maid, due to the lack of power, she is not able to raise her voice.

5. Research Findings

Crime has been a major problem for decades, and the media plays a crucial role in highlighting these incidents. This study focused on analysing the language of crime news headlines through forensic linguistic analysis. It aimed to understand the language used in these reports, uncover the underlying ideology, and assess how it influences people's minds. Additionally, the study looked at the most common crimes in recent months in Pakistan.

Media, particularly newspapers, shape public perception through their language in crime reports. These reports cover various crimes like murder, robbery, kidnapping, honour killings, violence, rape, and more. In recent months, there has been a dramatic rise in rape cases. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), an incident of rape occurs every two hours, and an innocent victim is gang-raped every four to eight days. Report Nos. 3, 4, 7, and 10 reported some rape cases. Some are due to ignorance,

lack of power, illiteracy, and social status, which are very common in Pakistan. For instance, in Report No. 10, where maid gang rape occurred, some are due to the absence of proper implementation of the law, as proofed in the remaining reports where cases have been registered but no action was taken later.

Discussing another crime named honour killing, as reported in Report No. 6, in which a man killed his two sisters in the name of honour, shows intense patriarchal society that men are so dominant that they can easily take their women's lives. In the name of honour, inheritance of land or getting rid of wives mostly happens in the Sindh region. Whatever the reason, this must be stopped. The authority can issue orders to take preventive steps under the CrPC.

Report No. 1 reported the case of molesting young children. Research conducted in Pakistan using surveys and interviews has identified several factors contributing to the increasing incidents of child molestation. These factors include poverty, lack of education, large family sizes, unemployment, paedophilia, and the presence of an environment that enables violence against children. To prevent child molestation, it is crucial to comprehend the facts and statistics surrounding these cases and empower victims to speak out against this terrible experience. Additionally, the government should take action to eliminate this heinous crime, and improvements in the country's judicial system should be made to ensure that victims feel confident seeking justice in court.

The idea behind the way crime news is written in newspapers is that there is a decrease in moral and religious values and a strong influence in a society where men hold more power. It was seen that a variety of crimes happened in the last few months, according to The News International. The most-committed crimes were rape cases and murders. The reasons for these murders pragmatically with respect to relevance theory were issues like suffering from different psychological problems, personal disputes, domestic problems, disputes of land and property, honour-related incidents, unhappy marriages, robbery cases, etc.

Rape cases, involving both minors and adults, are also prevalent in our society. The reasons for this kind of crime are lack of law enforcement, segregation of men and women, and gender inequality. Man, never befriend women. Our education system fails to teach men that women aren't objects. They're humans, too. These men who rape women belong to penitentiaries, but they're roaming around without any hesitation.

In report number 5, a case of an 11-year-old girl got sexually assaulted and then murdered by her own father. It shows that women are not safe even in their own houses. It might be one of those honour-related incidents.

Report number 1 highlights the occurrence of child molestation. A serial killer used to give some sweets (mixed with anaesthesia or something that can make anyone feel numb) to young boys, then sexually assault them and kill them after. It might have happened due to gaps in education and awareness. The killer might be a psychopath. Child exploitation is a serious issue that needs to be addressed.

In report number 6, a brother killed his two sisters in the name of honour. He already killed his mother a year before killing his sisters. He might be a misogynist, or there were some disputes over property. To put this reason aside, they gave this heinous crime the name of honour. Most of the time, this kind of incident occurs due to patriarchal and cultural norms.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to do a forensic linguistic analysis of the language of crime news headlines. The linguistic patterns and motives behind crimes in Pakistan were investigated to uncover valuable insights. The main problem was to explore and understand the impact of language on the audience. By analysing 10 crime news report headlines through "Relevance theory" and after studying these reports in "The News International," it is noted that there are some common crimes such as murder, rape, honour killing, and physical violence, along with motives behind them like lust, honour, and revenge. It is also concluded that these headlines really affect people's mental, emotional, and physical health and cause a sense of fear, insecurity, and mistrust in the minds of the audience.

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