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Portrayal of Power in the Headlines of Pakistani English Newspapers: A Pragmatic Stylistic Analysis

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Abstract

In the present information age, media texts play a dual purpose of transmitting information as well as being a decisive factor to develop public opinions by creating relevant discourse as per the demand of those with particular interests. Such a situation necessitates a critical inquiry into media texts to desensitize the readers to avoid taking media texts at face value. However, the complex nature of such texts requires multi-perspectivism which is made possible through interdisciplinary studies (Hansen, 2011; Klein, 2004). The pragmatic stylistic framework developed by Black (2006), a combination of two domains, provides us with the tools to disentangle the intricacies of such texts and to read between the lines. In the same vein, the present study utilizes Black's (2006) pragmatic stylistic framework to identify the linguistic and stylistic strategies and also to explore how the language resources are manipulated and used as a tool to depict the interplay of power relations based on difference in position, authority or situation. The data for the current pursuit comprises 30 front-page headlines from *The Daily Dawn* and *The News International*. The data analysis process follows the analytical paradigm of descriptive qualitative interpretation in conjunction with Black's pragmatic stylistic framework (2006). The findings of the study reveal a significant role played by the pragmatic stylistic features in creating and maintaining power relations in newspaper headlines. The findings further validate that linguistic resources are exploited in a way to influence readers' perception of the reported event and to implicitly project newsmakers' ideologies. The findings highlight the need to sensitize the readers to such linguistic manoeuvres in order to help them avoid taking the media texts at face value.

Keywords: deixis, direct and indirect discourse, power relations, pragma stylistic, , speech act
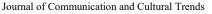
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Introduction

In this information age, media play a great role as sources of information to the general public. These media, both print and electronic, keep us updated on important national and international issues. However, the process of the transmission of information is not always neutral as demonstrated in the literature on mass media (Hall, 1982; Ladd & Lenz, 2009; van Dijk, 1995; Vargo et al., 2018; Zhang, 2014). The process of information transmission through media is tinged with an intent to shape people's perception of certain issues in keeping with the vested interests of those in power. Hence, media attempt to achieve the dual purpose of informing and shaping public perception about certain issues. The media attempts to achieve the latter purpose through the skillful and manipulative use of language resources (van Dijk, 1995).

The concept of power is defined by van Dijk (1987) as a control achieved by the powerful groups in a society on the minds of the masses through the use of both material resources and the structure of text and talk. Hence, through this control of the structure of text and talk the outlooks, beliefs, and ideologies of the general public are influenced to achieve their vested interests. Hence, according to van Dijk (1987), a knowledge of the discursive strategies used in the communication process is of paramount significance in order not to be duped by the manipulation carried out through linguistic means. Hence, a critical scrutiny of language used in media could be useful in laying bare the hidden and implicit meanings. This manipulative potential of media texts renders them perfect for critical investigation.

Although, in Pakistan print and electronic media both are vibrant, however, the print media, particularly, newspapers enjoy a wide readership because of being accessible and cost-effective. The most prominent news in a newspaper is presented in the headline which is conspicuous, and noticed by the readers readily because of being written in large and bold print. The editors make use of the headlines by presenting the information in an intriguing manner to attract readers' attention. According to van Dijk (1987), the headlines are the most significant and conspicuous part of a newspaper and serve as a tool to project ideologies. Besides, headlines also monitor the attention and perception of the reading process. The headlines allow the writers to be flexible and make use of different linguistic features

in order to influence the readers' perception of the reported events (Develotte & Rechniewski, 2001).

Bell (1991) asserts that headlines misrepresent events, demonstrating in her study that news stories have only a 29% accuracy level. It highlights the need to examine news through a critical lens. The newspaper discourse has been subject to scholarly inquiry (Abba & Musa, 2015; Al-Saedi & Jabber, 2020; Monsefi & Mahadi, 2017; Rustam & Bukhari, 2013) due to its significant impact on people's perception. However, the vibrant and dynamic nature of this genre requires to be understood through a combination of perspectives to get a penetrating insight into the phenomenon.

Black (2006) addresses this need by developing a pragmatic stylistic framework. Allan (2006) terms pragmatic stylistics as an amalgamation of theories from pragmatics and stylistics to their application to spoken language.

Black (2006) propounds the framework of pragmatic stylistics as a harmonious blend of pragmatics and stylistics. The present study is an investigation of newspaper headlines from the perspective of power relations created and maintained through the use of linguistic strategies. The study employs a pragmatic stylistic framework propounded by Black (2006) in order to find out the use of pragmatic stylistic strategies on the possibility of different interpretations of the news headlines.

Problem Statement

In contemporary media landscapes, newspapers often exhibit affiliations with multiple organizations and demonstrate inclination towards particular ideologies, potentially influencing the framing and delivery of news. This is done via strategic language manipulation in reporting, driven by external pressures or organizational interests. To understand the mechanisms behind this phenomenon, it is crucial to investigate how these affiliations and pressures shape the portrayal of news and the power dynamics that underpin such practices. This research aims to analyze the interplay between particular linguistic choices and how they shape popular interpretations, reflecting and reinforcing thee underlying power structures and ideological inclinations.

Aims and Objectives

The present research aims to examine newspaper discourse from the perspective of power relations in order to achieve the following objectives.

• To identify the ways pragmatic stylistic strategies have been used in the headlines of the selected English Newspapers in Pakistan

• To examine the way pragmatic stylistic choices, employ power relations leading multiprong interpretations of the headlines in the selected newspapers

Significance of the study

The significance of the current study lies in the application of a new and comprehensive framework of pragmatic stylistics propounded by Black (2006) on newspaper headlines in order to examine the power projection in the headlines. Hence the analysis makes the study unique in terms of examining non–literary texts from this perspective.

The implicit power relations embedded in media texts can be comprehended better if these texts are deconstructed. Since media mirrors the sociological makeup of a society, hence, such a study can add to our understanding of the social actors and processes. The current study attempts to comprehend what and how different linguistic resources are utilized to communicate the desired meanings implicitly. Hence, the present study is significant both on theoretical and practical grounds. The study theoretically contributes by providing new insight into the possible means of meaning-making in the domains of, generally, linguistics and more specifically pragmatics, stylistics, and media texts. The practical significance of the study lies in assisting the readers in comprehending the way effective messages are coded and decoded by the use of stylistic and contextual clues.

Literature review

Pragmatic stylistics, as a field, is an outcome of an amalgamation of pragmatics, stylistics and discourse. A brief overview of the previous research that deals with these converging areas and contributes toward pragmatic stylistics is discussed in this particular chapter. As per the most common definition by Yule (1996), pragmatics, in general, is the study of the contextual meaning or what is meant or conveyed by the speaker under any situation. It further addresses multiple implicative aspects of the communicative utterances in light of the relative distance between the

interlocutors. pragmatics deals with the study of the meanings communicated extra-linguistically and with the help of context, such as intended meanings. The study of contextual meaning is also a part of discourse and critical discourse analysis. The concept of power relations is embedded in critical discourse studies. Analysis of power on micro level in CDA is carried out through the examination of language (Wodak, 2007). Both these fields have an affinity for dealing with the aspect of power via linguistic means, while, stylistics studies the style through the examination of textual mechanism as mentioned by Nørgaard et al. (2010). The present study perceives this useful link between these fields of study and combines pragmatics theories with stylistics.

According to Leech and Short (2007), Stylistics theories were combined with pragmatic theories during the period 1981 to 2007 which proved instrumental in providing a road map for the development of a distinct branch of stylistics generally known as pragmatic stylistics. Through its amalgamation with stylistics, pragmatics can also offer a better explanation for those linguistic features that are impossible to tackle within either of these fields alone. Pragma Stylistics in this regard, is worth providing an integrated framework that encompasses both pragmatics and stylistics. Collectively, it explains the connection between linguistic components and their interpretation under various contexts, depending on the speakers (Al-Hindawi, 2018). However, since it is a recent domain, it is difficult to find studies coalescing pragmatics and stylistics in a collective approach. Black (2006) has contributed to this field by introducing the framework of pragmatic stylistics. In her seminal work, she has not only given an account of the theory but also demonstrated this framework by applying it to different fictional and non-fictional texts. Black has incorporated theories from pragmatics, such as cooperative principles, deixis, speech act theory and politeness principles.

Austin (1962) has presented speech act theory which postulates that while using language for communication, a speaker simultaneously performs three acts: locutionary act; perlocutionary act; and illocutionary act. Searle (1969), Austin's disciple, has further categorized direct and indirect speech acts. His typology follows the way structures and their functions are related to each other in a language system. Searl (1969) presents another typology that focuses on the functional aspect of speech acts: commissive, declarative, directive, expressive, and representative.

A noteworthy contribution towards language in use is from Grice's (1975) theory of conversational implicate. It views communication as a cooperative act which is regulated by four maxims, namely: quality, quantity, manner, and relation. These maxims assert that the communicated information needs to be credible, proper in quantity, circumstantially relevant and clear respectively. Flexibility in maxims leads to flouting, a violation of the above-mentioned rules to pass on intended information, directly or indirectly.

Another fundamental concept in pragmatics is Deixis which generally refers to the pointing devices used in a language. Deixis has two major types: proximal deixis and distal deixis. When we indicate something placed near us spatially, the linguistic indicator used for this purpose is called proximal deixis, on the other hand, the linguistic indicator used to point to the entities remote from us is called distal deixis. Examples include: this, now, and here in the case of proximal deixis and "then" and "there" in the case of distal deixis. Further types of deixis include person, spatial, temporal and social deixis. These postulates assist in comprehending the stylistic layers of language in any text type (Huang, 2012).

Discourse and Newspaper Headlines

Spitulnik (2000) broadly defines Media discourse as non-face-to-face communication. Newspaper text is the most common type of media discourse, as indicated by Pajunen (2008). He further mentions that it functions as a lens for the reproduction of societal norms and values. Within a newspaper, headlines are the most noteworthy part. They are interesting, informative and catchy. Headlines serve a variety of functions in a newspaper which determine its structure and content (Reah, 2002).

Newspaper headlines, because of their striking ability to stir up readers' interest in the news report, are very significant. Headlines employ different linguistic features to deliver information quickly. They often illustrate stimulating examples of language appropriateness that are further empowered by special training in a wide array of skills to establish the rules of headline handling and finally seek out a knowledgeable meaning (Marcoci, 2014).

Review of Previous Studies

In the wake of Black's (2006) seminal work of Pragmatic stylistics, many scholarly pursuits displayed an attempt to prove its validity by

conducting research and applying this framework to both fictional and non-fictional works. The frameworks added pragmatic stylistics as a distinct sub-branch of linguistics and offered new domains for scholarly endeavour. In this vein, certain researchers (Dykstra, 2019; Tsaur, & Tu, 2019) conducted both theoretical as well as empirical studies on the analysis of implicature, dramatic text, review studies, and advertisements respectively. These studies used variations in methodology adopted for data analysis and integrated both qualitative and quantitative paradigms. However, the aforementioned studies suffer due to either focusing on a limited number of pragmatic stylistic features or the over-generalization of findings. Conversely, the study conducted by Mahmood et al. (2017) is comprehensive in nature both in terms of scope and methodology. The study explores the ideological working of political allegiances embedded in newspaper headlines aimed to make the readers perceive the information in the desired direction in line with the ideological stance of the news maker. This study is pertinent to the current research and helps to validate how power relations implicitly work in influencing the interpretation of the headlines.

Some other instances of notable scholarly pursuits are evident in the works of Chang (2016) and Abushihab (2015). Their studies are of an empirical nature and set out to illustrate the validity of a pragmatic stylistic framework on the analysis offictional data, unlike the aforementioned reviewed studies. These studies analyzed the working of pragmatic stylistic features in the text of mystery drama and short stories. However, Chinelo (2015) and Alake (2017) applied this framework to non-fictional data taken from the domain of newspaper headlines and advertisements. These two studies affirmed the role of pragmatic stylistic features as governing tools in power play and meaning construction.

The studies reviewed above are significant as these point to both the scope as well as limitations of the pragmatic stylistic perspective. The present study, however, is comprehensive in nature, both in terms of scope of data and pragmatic stylistic features. Furthermore, it attempts to fill in the gap in the existing literature by conducting an empirical exploration to validate the pragmatic stylistic framework on the non-fictional data of English newspaper headlines to identify the concealed ideologies and power structures.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The current study examines the newspaper headlines, in order to explore the implicit power relations encoded in the headlines as a tool to influence and shape public perception about the conveyed information. The study is mainly qualitative and the analysis is of descriptive and interpretative nature.

However, the analysis also involves a quantitative aspect as it finds out the frequency of different types of pragmatic stylistic features found in the headlines. The quantitative data support the qualitative interpretation of the analysis. In the data analysis process, referential equivalent and descriptive interpretative methods are followed along with axial coding. According to Hill et al. (1997), in the axial coding method, data is organized in accordance with the general domains or categories of the given framework. In line with this methodology, the present study organizes data following the thematic domains of the pragmatic stylistic framework.

Sample Selection Procedure

The sample for the present study comprises the headlines from the English newspapers: *The Daily Dawn* and *The News International (Islamabad)*, published from 12th May 2023 to 14th June 2023. The newspapers have been selected based on their readership, best rankings (Press Release Power) and their duration of publication, prioritizing the oldest ones. . Data has been collected through a purposive sampling technique. Thirty front-page headlines, 15 from each, *The Daily Dawn* and *The News International* have been delimited (according to the scope of the study) as a sample for the present study. The archives of *The Daily Dawn* and *The News International* newspaper have been accessed by visiting their official websites in order to retrieve the data for the said dates.
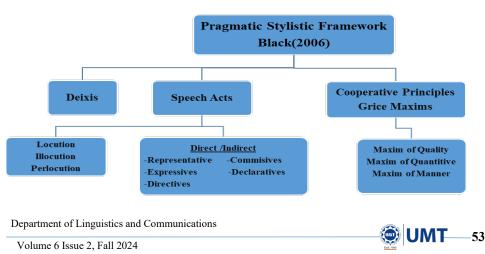
Theoretical Framework

Meaning-making is a complex process that makes use of not only language but also contextual clues to embed interpersonal attitudes in the text. The investigation of this dynamic of the meaning-making process in the data set selected from English newspaper headlines is the focus of the current study. The framework propounded by Black (2006) termed pragmatic stylistics has been used as a lens to analyze the headlines corpus.

According to Black ([2006](#)), meaning-making is an interpretative process, which depends on "other than stylistic elements, such as the situation and implied relations between the addresser and addressee" (Black, [2006](#), p. 23). These pragmatic and stylistic features not only assist in the transmission of information but also in influencing the readers' perception of that information;making them interpret it in a certain way in line with their ideological perspectives. Hence, it is not a simple process of transmitting information but a controlling tool with a power dynamic. Through the use of textual and stylistic features, power relations are created which affect the interpretation of the information. The framework actually points out the possibility of multiple ways of stating essentially the same thing (Black, [2006](#)). This framework selected for the current study is capable of showing how news headlines are invested with interpretational powers through the use of different pragmatic stylistic features. It further explores how pragmatic theories play a role in this process along with different styles adopted in the presentation of the headlines in newspapers.

The use of pragmatic and stylistic features serves the purpose of the genre of newspaper and assists the newsmakers in achieving their agenda through implicit means. The focus of this study is to analyze the play of power relations and their impact on the language used in presenting headlines with respect to " the context of use and the user" (Weber et al., [1995](#), p. 12) through the application of the combined framework of Pragmatic Stylistics. The following diagram depicts the Pragmatic Stylistic framework propounded by Black ([2006](#)) and adopted for the current study.

Figure 1
Theoretical Framework

<mark>**Data Analysis**</mark>

This section of the study presents an analysis of the sample through the lens of Pragmatic Stylistics propounded by Black (2006). The analysis sets out to demonstrate the role of different pragmatic stylistic strategies in the depiction of power relations in the headlines of the selected English newspapers in the context of Pakistan.

Use of Deixis in Power Relations

Deixis are defined by Yule (2022) as linguistic devices that point to something in a context. The data exhibits 9 occurrences of deictic expressions. Out of these 9 instances, 7 expressions fall in the category of social deixis. The selected sample reveals only one instance of place and person deixis, however, these do not play any role in the power dynamics in the under-analysis headlines. Social deixis is used to depict the way headlines portray the societal link between the newsmakers, the readers of the news and the social actors or agents mentioned in the headlines. These can be termed relational deixis and highlight agents' political position and the relative power accompanied by that position, such as PM, CJP, COAS etc.

The use of social deixis in the headlines guides the interpretation of the headlines regarding the power of the main agent mentioned in the headline e.g., in *The News- 12.1: CJP-led bench lavishes relief on Imran,* the use of CJP (Chief Justice of Pakistan) instead of using person's name who is holding the office. The interpretation of the news headline leads to criticism and accusation toward the CJP as a position holder , not the CJP as an individual. The blame seems to fall more on the power position holder and less on the individual. The deixis is used in the headlines as a mask to conceal the identity of the newsmakers and to tilt the voice coming from the main agents mentioned in the headline.

In the data, it is found that the majority of headlines use deictic expressions e.g. PM, CJP, COAS etc. These deictic expressions are an abbreviation of the full titles of the powerful positions that these agents hold. The use of titles of powerful politicians and other administrators not only helps to mask the newsmakers but also gives authenticity and credibility to the news by showing that the locution is uttered by the main agent in the news. The use of deixis as a stylistic strategy is used to shift the blame, in case of controversial or incorrect news, towards the main agent

mentioned in the headline. Hence, it serves to save the newsmaker from the blame for publishing controversial or incorrect news.

Power Relations through Speech Acts

The data analysis exhibits the use of all locations as rhetic acts. Rhetic acts refer to any meaningful communication that takes place in an everyday context. Since the headlines are utterances that are purposeful and meaningful exchanges in real-life contexts, these can be called rhetic acts. The data reveals an extensive use of illocutionary acts which indicates that the readers interpret the headlines in the context which the headline accompanies. This context acts on readers' minds and makes them understand and interpret the headline in the given context only. So far as the use of performative acts or illocutions is concerned, there are 20 instances of representatives, 3 of commissives, and 4 of declaratives in the selected sample.

In day-to-day contexts, different functions are accomplished through the use of illocutionary acts. For instance, declarations are used to proclaim, and representative speech acts are used to assert. Likewise, commissives are used to foretell the future events. However, the data reveals that no particular pattern is followed so far as the functions of these expressions are concerned. In the data, the excessive use of representatives is understandable as the writer's intention is to assert the belief related to different issues. Speech acts are used to perform different functions, such as to state, proclaim, convince, hypothesize, blame, foretell, criticize etc. Through these perlocutions, the background is presented along with the power portrayal.

Table 1

Distribution Pattern of Types of Performative Acts

S.NO.	Type of Speech Act	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Representatives	20	66%
2.	Expressives	00	0%
3.	Directives	01	4%
4.	Commissives	03	10%
5.	Declaratives	04	20%
	Total	30	

The statistics tabulated above show representatives used in greater frequency. In the headlines, representative speech acts are used to insist,

hypothesize or assert. By performing these functions, representatives conceal the agency of the newsmaker and the blame is put on the main agent of the news. This example from the data, '*Dawn-14.4: Social media sites stay inaccessible as govt fears 'exploitation',* shows that the source of news is deliberately omitted in the headlines. This strategy creates a power gap that readers attribute to the figure mentioned in the headline, as inferred from their reading of the headlines. Although the government makes social media sites inaccessible the word '*govt'* is omitted from that part of the information and is attached to the part where the government fears exploitation. The agency responsible for the inaccessibility of social media sites is successfully masked by insisting on the later part of the headline. In this way, through the use of stylistic strategies, the headline performs the illocutionary function of insistence. This allows the newsmaker to control the flow of illocution.

Another type of speech act i.e., commissive is also used in the headlines as a technique to attract readers' attention to the news informing of future events. However, these future events are presented using simple present tense which gives the impression that the event is of urgent importance, hence needs attention. Commissives usually occur either in non-sentential infinitive form or in simple present tense form. In the analyzed data the second type of commissive i,e., simple present tense is used more frequently.

For example, in '*Dawn-13.4: PDM to stage sit-in outside SC',* the placing of the lexicon *'to stage'* makes the future happening a present-day matter. It is a non-sentential infinitive headline. In the above-cited headline, readers' perception is misled into believing a future event as a recent one and of urgent significance. *The News International* uses a similar linguistic pattern to deliver the same information with a slightly more advanced and elaborate technique. For example, in the headline '*The News-13.1: PM ready for showdown to stage sit-in outside SC on Monday'*, an active verb '*ready'* is used alongside the infinite '*to stage'* to create a sense of urgency and recency of a futuristic event. In both cases, a commissive speech act foreshadows the upcoming event through effective linguistic patterns.

In the data, Declarative speech acts are used to ascribe power to the main agent of the news which is apparent in the following example, *'The News-14.1: All responsible for May 9 vandalism will be brought to book: COAS',* the pronouncement comes from an authoritative position that is Chief of

Army Staff. Due to the power and authority vested in the position of the Chief of the Army Staff, the statement is a declaration. Similarly, the headline '*The News-12.3: IMF program or not, Pakistan won't default: Dar'*, is a declaration with a pragmatic sub-function of authoritative affirmation to keep the country economically afloat. The Finance Minister's name steals the power show of the headline hence not only making it a declaration but also offering optimistic assurance for the economic stability of the state. The above-cited headlines make use of the authority of the COAS and Finance Minister to deliver the promise which, otherwise, from the mouth of the newsmaker could have rendered the news incredible. As evident by the statistics given in the table, commissive, representative and declarative speech acts are most frequently used.

Maxims and Power Relations

The following table shows the violation of the maxim of quantity in an overwhelming majority i.e. 18 times. However, its flouting does not influence the interpretation of the headlines with regard to power relations. The maxim of manner, the second most violated maxim, is flouted four times and observed 24 times. Through violation as well as confirmation of the maxim of manner, the headlines portray the intended power relations and sway the interpretation of the news.

Table 2

Distribution Pattern of Violation of M

S.NO.	Type of Maxims	Observance	Flouting
1.	Quality	26	03
1.	Quantity	12	18
2.	Manner	27	3
3.	Relevance	30	0

This headline *'Dawn-12.2: Govt berates Judiciary over 'dual standard''*, observes the maxim of quantity. It is noted that the amount provided is less than what is required. The manner in which the Government criticizes the Judiciary is unclear to the reader. It is unclear to the reader how the Government berates the Judiciary. Further, the phrase '*dual standard*' is a shadowy one as it is unsure about what or how the dual standard is portrayed. The information is insufficient to make complete sense of the situation, therefore, it does not play any part in creating power relations between the agents, i.e., the readers and the newsagents. Since it

communicates incomplete information, it plays no role in creating power relations other than making the reader intrigued about the full information while leading them to the main story of the news.

In the following instances, different dimensions of power relations are highlighted as the news headlines both observe and violate the maxim of quality in different ways. For instance, *'The News-13.3: PM rebukes Imran over allegations against army chief'*, this headline shows the observation of the aforementioned four maxims, however by the use of selected lexicons it depicts power display. In the above-cited headline, the lexicon 'rebuke' contributes decisively to the meaning construction of the news. A person in an authoritative and powerful position (in this case the PM) can express sharp disapproval of an Ex-PM for targeting the Army Chief. Through the use of the word 'rebuke' the power and authority vested in the person of the Prime Minister is highlighted. Here, a verb is used as a tool to encompass and deliver the hierarchy of power in consistency with the present state of affairs. On the other hand, in the headline *'Dawn-14.2: Imran seeks independent investigation into riots'*, straightforward news is presented in a sentential form. However, through the choice and placement of words, power play is embedded. This headline does not contain the source of the news which makes it opinion-based information. The use of the verb *'seeks'*, though the journalist's choice, placed with Imran (the main agent of the news) makes it come from Imran's mouth. Further, the selection of the mild verb *'seeks'* gives Imran's approach towards justice a comparatively softer outlook. At the same time, this linguistic approach is an attempt to maintain confidence and authority over the law and order agencies as well as the Judiciary in the wake of their commitment and capabilities, which is often challenged in the detailed article. This clearly depicts the interplay of power governed through the observation of the maxim of quantity.

As shown in the data, the most important governing factor in the power display in newspaper headlines is the maxim of quality. Its conformation has a larger share in governing the power representation than its violation. For example, in the headline *'Dawn-12.1: CJP 'pleased' to meet Imran, releases him'*, the word pleased plays the power trick. Instead of developing an opinion over the fact that the Chief Justice of Pakistan is pleased to meet an accused in the court, the editor/writer directly uses the most decisive word uttered by the Chief Justice of Pakistan during Imran Khan's hearing.

The magic word is further highlighted with the use of inverted commas. The interpretation is left to the reader's own imagination. This starkly confirms the maxim of quality yet the underlined dereliction or mockery is easily noticed. Further the last phrase '*releases him*' looks like an everyday common occurrence, starkly enhancing the questioning nature of the entire event. Hence, through the confirmation of the maxim, the mistake by the powerful is brandished beautifully.

As per the data, there are 3 instances of violation of the maxim of the manner and all three are accompanied by violation of the maxim of quality. Ambiguity is the main reason behind these violations. Lexical ambiguity also contributes to power interplay and motivation to lead the reader to the story. The ambiguity is often paired with a violation of the maxim of quantity as well as quality to leave out some information for the sheer purpose of curiosity to guide the reader to the main story of the news. For example, in the headline*, 'The News-14.3: Sitting here only due to judiciary, says Imran'*, linguistic ambiguity is created by the use of a vague term *'here'* with multiple interpretations. It is less than required in terms of quantity as well as quality. This makes the interpretation difficult and takes the inquisitive reader to the main story of the news. Further, it mitigates the impact of the blaming nature of the statement which is directed towards the Judges by Imran Khan.

In another headline, '*The News-12.2: Ruling alliance sees red over Imran's 'release'*,' the phrases '*Ruling alliance*' and '*sees red*' give an equivocal tilt to the interpretation. Both are used as idiomatic phrases and if inspected closely, serve the purpose of a metaphor and hyperbole. The former seems a deflection strategy in order to mask the fact that the incumbent government is being addressed (without directly blaming any particular political outfit), whereas, the latter seems to flash and flaunt the extreme agitation of the ruling party in a dramatic yet clandestine way. Upon replacing the idiom 'sees red' with its translation, the naked truth, it becomes a bold mockery directed towards a political party that holds the power. Hence, the linguistic ambiguity presents the explicit distress of the governing agency in a mild wrap. This headline strongly confirms the maxim of quality which enhances the linguistic tactic to handle power softly. In the headlines, power relations are portrayed often indirectly through violation of the maxim of manner along with the maxim of quantity and also through the confirmation of the maxim of quality.

Use of Direct and Indirect Discourse as a Vehicle of Power Relations

In the data, 13 occurrences of direct discourse are identified. In direct discourse, the words of some speakers are reported by presenting them within inverted commas. In newspaper headlines, five occurrences of direct discourse are found. However, in the headlines, the reported verbs are omitted and the commas are replaced with colons, a unique feature of headlines which makes them succinct . In the rest of the eight instances, commas are used along with the reported verb. Direct discourse serves the function of retaining the original essence of the communicated message in the most critical utterances in any text (Black, 2006). Similarly, the use of direct discourse in newspaper headlines shows the importance or emphasis on a particular aspect of a headline.

Direct discourse occurs 11 times in the data. The content of the headlines, which demonstrates the use of free indirect discourse, is related to political events. These headlines depict the actions or verbiage of the political actors. The headlines express the opinions of politicians or government officials who hold power positions. The newsmakers, in fact, attempt to blur the boundary between their insight and the original news by the use of free indirect discourse. The headline blends the perception of the newsmakers and the utterance of the speaker through FID (Redeker, 1996). Likewise, this process influences the interpretation of the headline by manipulating the way content is presented to the readers. Since the authenticity and credibility of the news lie in newsmakers being neutral, therefore, the editors try to achieve the dual purpose. On the one hand, they try to retain their impartial stance and, on the other hand, they convey their ideological perspective to the readers in an implicit way. Through this strategy, they try to influence readers' opinions in an indirect way.

The subtle and appropriate use of FID helps the news makers use the influential persons/institutions

as mouthpieces of their own ideology without being spotted. It lends authenticity to the source of the news headline and serves as a tool to inculcate their personal agenda. As illustrated through the example from the data '*Dawn-14.4: Social media sites stay inaccessible as govt. fears 'exploitation'*, the verbs ' *stay*' and *'fears'* both, are largely the editor's choice in an attempt to create and deliver the information in an intended way, which in the case at hand seems to defend the Government's decision

to block social media sites. The focus is shifted in such a way that the ban on the sites is in the background and the fear of exploitation is in the foreground. Face saving (of the responsible government authorities) is being done successfully through this calculated linguistic choice.

Findings

The Present study sets out to explore the use of Pragma stylistic devices as controlling tools in the interpretation of the headlines in line with the ideology of the newsmakers and editors. The findings of the study reveal the subtle use of pragma stylistic features as tools to control the flow of power among multiple entities (obvious or masked) in the selected headlines. The most used pragma stylistic features include maxims, speech acts, deixis, cooperative principles, and, direct and indirect discourse. Through the use of these pragma stylistic features, power relations between the main agents and the readers are depicted. In this way, the interpretation of the headlines is tilted desirably to implicitly convey and convince the general masses, as evident in the work of Abushihab (2015).

In the analyzed data, speech acts are used in overwhelming quantity as demonstrated in the data analysis section. While there is limited use of deictic expressions, the use of social deixis is significant as it is employed to indicate the power yielded by the main agent in the headline in an implicit way. The use of social deixis also implies the way newsmakers, readers and the main agents mentioned in the news headlines are socially associated with each other. Through the use of such linguistic strategies, readers are led to interpret the headline by the contextualization of power. Likewise, the abbreviated form of deixis is used to shift the power balance. In this way blame/responsibility is put on the main agent (absent/implicit) of the headline.

The representative speech acts make up the majority of the data and depict power relations. These speech acts are used to create and maintain power relations between the newsmakers, the main agents mentioned in the headlines and the readers of the newspaper. These power relations are manipulated when the source of the news is omitted in the headlines which leads to multiple interpretations (illocution). In such headlines, it is the editor who decides perlocution for the readers.

In the headlines, there is also foreshadowing of future events. This is carried out through the use of simple present tense and non-sentential

infinitives. Through the use of this strategy, interpretational power is shifted from the future to the present which intensifies the urgency of the news. Furthermore, it also presents the news as a recent event.

Through this linguistic manoeuvre, the position of the event in the reader's perception is decided by present tense. Similarly, declarative uses the main agent of the news to demonstrate power. Likewise, by the use of declarative the power of the headlines is enhanced by presenting the news as truth in readers' minds. The power relations are also created through the violation of maxims. In this regard, the most violated maxim is that of quantity with 18 occurrences in the data. However due to its limited role in contributing to the production or maintenance of power relations, it has a limited role in the interpretation of the headlines.

Maxim of quality has also been decisive in interpretation, both through being violated or strictly observed. Newsmakers employ it to portray power relations by staying strictly brief and witty (ironic), which is illustrated in the analysis section. This violation of maxim of quality is comparatively less frequent and delivers intended messages through exaggeration. Metaphors and exaggeration are used in a subtle way to create the desired effects and influence the reader's perception of a particular event.

On the basis of the analyzed data, it can be concluded that the maxim of quality has also been used as a tool to depict power relations. Through this linguistic strategy, maxims are manipulated in the majority of the ambiguous headlines. Finally, through the non-sentential headlines, the maxim of the relation is observed. The observance of this maxim also serves the function of saving space as it allows the use of omissions and abbreviations. In this way, this maxim is employed to play around with power. The use of direct discourse is not found in the sample which indicates its lack of significant role in the portrayal of power, conversely, Free Indirect Discourse intervenes by embedding editorial voice into the headlines and lends neutrality to the news.

Conclusion

The focus of the present study is to examine the media discourse, particularly, newspaper headlines in order to identify the linguistic strategies and discourse structures used to create and maintain power relations between the reader, newsmaker, and the main agent mentioned in the headline. The study attempts to explore the role of these pragmatic

stylistic features leading to particular interpretations of the headlines. Black's (2006) Pragma Stylistic framework has been used as a theoretical and analytical lens to analyze the data taken from the headlines of Pakistani English newspapers *The Daily Dawn* and *The News International.*

On the basis of the findings, the study concludes that newspaper headlines reveal a significant use of different pragmatic stylistic features. These features include speech acts, deixis, maxims and direct and indirect discourse. Through skilful and manipulative use of these aforementioned linguistic and stylistic features, newsmakers create power relations between the reader, newsmaker and the main agent mentioned in the headline in order to sway the interpretation of the headline in a particular direction as illustrated in the data analysis section. From the perspective of power relations, these pragmatic stylistic features significantly influence the portrayal of power dynamics and steer the interpretation of news headlines to align with the vested interests of newsmakers

The newsmakers achieve this objective by exploiting linguistic resources and embedding their perspective in the headlines implicitly. As a result, the readers are made to interpret the guidelines in accordance with the linguistic cues found in the headlines. These linguistic cues make the readers take those meanings that the editors want them to take which are in line with their ideological stances. On the basis of the findings the study concludes that the news headlines, through the process of communicating information, also influence the readers in interpreting the news in a certain way which serves the interest of those in power.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of the manuscript have no financial or non-financial conflict of interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Data Availability Statement

The data associated with this study will be provided by the corresponding author upon request.

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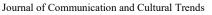
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Appendix A

The Daily Dawn WEB ARCHIVE

Retrieved from: https://www.dawn.com/newspaper/front-page

https://www.news.com/newspaper/front-page

Dated: 12th May2023 to 14th June 2023

DAWN: 12.1   CJP 'pleased' to meet Imran, releases him

DAWN: 12.2   Govt berates Judiciary over 'dual standard'

DAWN: 12.3   Govt tells IMF it will scrap fuel subsidy plan

DAWN: 12.4   Two more audio leaks surface

DAWN: 12.5   Budget to be presented on June 9: Dar

DAWN: 13.1   Victorious' Imran returns home after blanket relief

DAWN: 13.2   Verdicts about Imran termed 'black stain' on Judiciary

DAWN: 13.3   Former PM blame army chief for arrest episode

DAWN: 13.4   PDM to stage sit-in outside SC

DAWN: 13.5   CJP head bench to hear Punjab polls review plea on 15

DAWN: 14.1   Shehbaz wants 'PTI arsonists in jail within 72 hours

DAWN: 14.2   Imran seeks independent investigation into riots

DAWN: 14.3   SCBA urges restrains as PDM gears up for sit in

DAWN: 14.4   Social media sites stay inaccessible as govt fears 'exploitation'

DAWN: 14.5   PCB names Bradburn new head coach

The News:12.1 CJP-led bench lavishes relief on Imran

The News:12.2 Ruling alliance sees red over Imran's 'release'

The News:12.3 IMF program or not, Pakistan won't default: Dar

The News:12.4 Emergency a constitutional option, Asif

The News:12.5 Pro-PTI lawyer 'foretells' Imran's bail

The News:13.1 PM ready for showdown to stage sit-in outside SC on Monday

The News:13.2 Army rules out martial law, says top brass all for democracy

The News:13.3 PM rebukes Imran over allegations against army chief

The News:13.4 Pakistan demands neutral World Cup venues in row with India

The News: 13.5 Rupee posts big single-day gain

The News: 14.1 All responsible for May 9 vandalism will be brought to book:COAS

The News: 14.2 Islamabad sit-in to continue till CJP's resignation: Fazl

The News: 14.3 Sitting here only due to judiciary, says Imran

The News: 14.4 Imran a political terrorist, judiciary protecting him: Bilawal

The News:14.5 Rana Sana wants PTI banned