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RESEARCH PAPER

Gone Yet Not Forgotten: A Discourse Analysis of Obituaries in Pakistani Print Media

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
 *Corresponding Author: adnantahirqureshi @gmail.com	The present study examines the discourse of death announcements in the Pakistani newspaper. The study focused on the specific features of the discourse of the death in the context of Pakistani society taking in account social, emotional and religious aspects of the death. The data for the research is collected in the form of newspaper obituaries published in the local English newspaper the Dawn. The paper emphasizes the discursive nature of the obituaries concerning the meanings they convey, the force and effect they have on the readers from Pakistani society. The features of the obituary discourse were analyzed by following the theoretical concept of Sara Mills (1997). The qualitative method was utilized for analyzing the data by following the concept of discourse. The results show that obituary discourse has a specific order of discourse which separates it from the other discourses, and it is aligned with the social and religious values of the Pakistani society.

Introduction

The means and methods for announcing death vary from culture to culture because they are affected by the socio-religious aspects of society. History shows people followed the practice over the years by choosing different ways based on the need and the technology available. In Pakistani society telephone, mobile phone, TV, newspapers, and social media are used to share the death news. However, sometimes it seems that these are not effective because they are not accessible many times. People use different means according to their culture and social settings. In Pakistan death announcement through the loudspeaker of a mosque is very common even today. The announcement not only describes his name but the address/area, his profession, family and his relationship with the people especially the ones who are known to the public for one or the other reason. Newspapers are also used to announce the death of both famous and common individuals. However, these are limited to a certain class of the society and the common Pakistani man still depends on the announcements made in the mosque. In Pakistan only, some newspapers publish death news articles because the newspaper-reading culture is not very common and secondly other means of communication can be quick and accessible.

The article in the newspapers which discloses an account of the death is called obituary. The word obituary is originated from Mediaeval Latin "obituarius" which means a record of death of a person. An obituary is an article which reports death of a person along with an account of his funeral and some information about his life (Dictionary.com). The language and the expressions used to write an obituary are different in various societies. It depends on the concept of the people about life and death. In Pakistani society death rituals has religious as well as social and cultural values. This is also depicted in the language used to describe either death or the dead. Pakistani newspapers use formal language for obituaries which is brief and compact.

Discourse

According to Sara Mills (1997),discourse can be defined as written or spoken word or utterances or a certain way of communication which is limited to a specific subject or setting like (medical discourse or) legal discourse (Griffin:2005). Oxford dictionary defines discourse as communication either written or spoken. Discourse in the both written and spoken forms keeps a relation with the context in which it occurs. According to Van Dijk(1997) discourse is a text within the context in which it occurs. He (2008) believes that it has a relation with the micro level of the social order and situations where interactions through discourse occur are part of the social structure. The statement refers to the context in which the discourse is carried out. Social structure is the set up or context in which language is being used. Discourses are constructed in the contexts from socio-cultural moral and religious existence of the societies. Text as discourse also mirror the socio-cultural values of the society and discourses present in texts are interwoven with how social actors constitute the social relations (Ledin & Machin, 2019)

Context for Discourse

Humans interact with each other through numerous ways and in many situations. The ways through which they interact are included in the realm of discourse. Discourses involve not only the language but the other the social environment in which it occurs. Therefore, for any type of discourse it is necessary to keep the context in mind. Language is not a neutral tool for the message only but rather all communicative events (Van Dijk, 2001). The nature of the communicative event can be in the form of reading literature, advertisements, conversations or interviews (Griffin, 2005) or newspaper article. Every discourse has certain boundaries in which it occurs. The environment in which discourse occurs has certain rules which are limited to that environment. For example, different situations and disciplines demand a different choice of language which specifies the discourse to that situation or the discipline as in the newspapers a specific language style is followed to publish different types of news stories. This makes a newspaper a document where we find examples of various discourses in one place.

Literature Review

An obituary is one of the news stories which is published in the newspaper (Lynn at. el. 2011). Obituaries describe the news about the demise of the people either known or unknown and give an account of their lives either they are common masses or powerful personalities (Mosses & Marelli, 2003). There is no rule for publishing an obituary in the newspaper anyone can have it after the payment. The study of the obituaries is not new.

Many researchers worked on them Mushira Eid (2002) is one of them. She (2002) studied the presentation of gender in obituaries and compared family obituaries published in the newspaper of different countries. Hume studied obituaries from the American perspective and declare that they are useful for societies because they make the public realize the importance of the great people of society (Hume, 2000). He examined that obituaries highlight the positive picture of the person on society which is very beneficial for the social set up of a country.

Obituaries are written either by following the chronological order of the information given about the demised person or it can be written by the order of accounts according to their importance. The language used to write an obituary is vivid and the forms of the words are used precisely to convey the message adequately. No errors either grammatical or lexical are allowed in an obituary (EMC, 1996). Moses and Marelli (2004) described the structure of obituaries according to the discursive construction of life and death. From the point of view of death and obituary discusses the identification of the person who deals with his name and fame and circumstances which include the date, place, age, and cause of death. From the perspective of life, an obituary tells about the history of the person which is related to his achievement and early history and second is his family in which information about the spouse and offspring is given. Obituaries has a rhetorical structure which differs from culture to culture (Sawalmeh, 2019)

An obituary gives an account of the death of a person. Keeping in mind the severe nature of the obituaries, euphemism is adopted in the writing of them. Right from the beginning, human beings are reluctant to talk about death directly (Fernández, 2006). Therefore, words expressions and utterances used in the obituaries are examples of euphemism. The language of obituaries is very much dependent on the context in which it is written. Any kind of negligence in the selection of words can cause a serious offence against the newspaper. The fragility is due to the emotional value of the obituary which makes it a sensitive type of discourse for social, religious and emotional attachments associated with it. The theme of the language used in an obituary is related to the person from different aspects including his death, achievements, funeral and eventually his burial. All these aspects are not related to each other but when the situation is seen as a whole, they seem to be related to each other (Fries, 1995). They as a unit constitute the discourse of an obituary. Every discourse has a specific context in which certain expressions can be used and not the others. In discourses, if certain utterances are allowed at the same time others are not tolerated to be present (Griffin, 2005). Certain structures are related to the discourses and are responsible for differentiating them from other types of discourses. Discourses have some frameworks which separate the boundaries within these boundaries meanings are negotiated (Mills: 1997). Discursive structures are effective because they support the boundaries between discourses which differentiate them from each other and suggest that the change in the boundaries of the discourses is against the order of discourse(Philips and Jørgenson: 2002). Every discourse is bound to have a structure different from the other and it has to be restricted within an order in which that discourse falls. Discourse is under control of certain actions, rules and functions (which are responsible to keep the order of discourse) which include prohibition of certain topics, valuing the reason, going for truth, role of the author, speakers' role and limits of discourse (Foucault, 1971).

Material and Methods

The study follows the qualitative method of data analysis which is majorly used in the field of discourse analysis. Quantitative analysis is used for large amounts of textual data and relatively small datasets that can be accessed and inspected with relative ease (Brooks & McEnery, 2019). The researcher has analyzed the structure form and register used in the obituary regarding the theoretical framework. The researcher has used the simple random technique for sampling and chose the obituaries published in the electronic edition of the Dawn newspaper. The study has followed the concept of Sara Mills (1997) which says that the meaning, power and effect of discourse are dependent on the context in which the discourse is carried. The study followed the interpretive paradigm of the research and followed the qualitative method of analyzing the data.

Results and Discussion

Pakistani Obituaries

Pakistani obituaries can be divided into two types. Firstly, the obituaries which are from the family and the second type includes the by the co-workers or staff. The obituaries by the family are subjective and emotional. While the obituaries from the staff members of the demised are less subjective. An obituary tells about the life and death of the demised person. The information about the family, children or achievements of the person is related to the aspect of his life. The account of his rank or fame, date, time and place of death or funeral and cause of his death are related to the aspect of his death. Basic information given by the obituaries is same however, in different societies additional information may be given according to the death culture of the area. In Pakistan if the obituary is of a Muslim usually Arabic phrase إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ is written initially. The information about Qul or Soyem (third day of death) is also given. These are the religious rituals which are executed after the death of a person. Sometime for them a separate obituary is published which only is related to the news about the date, day and place where the Soyem will held along with the information about the demised person.
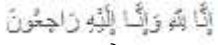
The present study is based on the obituaries published in Dawn newspaper. Usually obituaries appear on the Metropolitan page of the Dawn newspaper. The obituaries are written is the form of a little advertisement which is separate. Usually there is one obituary everyday if they are more than one, they are published in the same form. The researcher has selected 18 obituaries which are related to the news of death, funeral and sometimes Soyem as well and it during the time period 6 months.

Pakistani obituaries reflect the religious, social and cultural aspects of death therefore, they also announce death rituals like Soyem (3rd day of death ritual), Chehlem (40th day of death ritual), Barsi (annual ritual) and Taziat (condolence) on the death of the person. This reflects specific to the religious and social aspects of death in the Pakistani Muslim society. Obituary is related to grief and to maintain the effect of grief in the language used in obituary writing is restricted to the expressions which do not cross the limits of formality and effectiveness and give a feel of sorrow to the reader. The present study discussed the different aspects of the discourse of the obituaries of different kinds and its effect on the readers. The study claims that language of the newspaper obituaries in Pakistan follows specific order of discourse and they are written by following certain

phrases and expression to maintain the formal nature of the subject. It is aimed at exploring whether the discourse used in the newspaper obituaries has some specific features. How obituaries are made effective and complete death stories and how the discourse of obituaries is restricted to the context in which they are written? The study tried to find out which type of language used in newspaper obituaries and its effects on the readers? It also has attempted to explain different features of the obituaries published in newspapers and how the language features of the obituaries give them specific meanings? The focus of the researcher is on the language etiquette of the obituaries which is different from other types of articles published in newspapers. The researcher tried to discover the specific features of the obituaries which help them to maintain the order of discourse.

Format of the Obituaries in Pakistani Newspapers

Opening. Obituaries usually begin with a statement that declares the death of a person regretfully. However, the researcher has found eight different ways to open an obituary.

- Greif statement

- إِنَّا لِلّٰہِ وَإِنَّا إِلَیْہِ رَاجِعُوْن (A Dua recited by Muslims when they hear about the death of a person)

- Name of the person

- The rank of the person

- Adjectival phrase and name i.e. our beloved.

- Relation of the person who is writing or publishing the obituary

- Statement and dua

- Dua and statement

Death Ritual Details

- The funeral/Namaz e Janaza

- Soym/Dua/Quran Khawani

- Burial

Information about the Demised

- Name

- Photograph

- Relation with another person who is well-known either living or dead. Usually for women name of the father or husband or both are mentioned.

- Rank or job

- Day, date and year of death

- Reason of death

- Place of death

- Day, date, time and place of the funeral

- Date and time for post-funeral rituals

- Venue for the rituals (separate for men and women)

Mourners

- Name, address and contact number

- Rank or title

- Relation with the demised

- Monogram if the obituary is given from a company

Death Register

English register	Local register
Grief, demise, soul, eternal peace, funeral services, expired, mourners, passed away, departed soul, bereaved, condolence, sorrow, heavenly abode, sudden death, regret, buried, left.	إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ Fateha, soyem, Namaz-e-Janaza, Maghfirat, Quran Khwani, Isaal-e-Sawaab, Dua, Chehlum, Barsi, Masjid, Imambargah, Zohrain, Asr, Maghrib, Zohar.

Table 1: Death Register

The researcher has divided the analysis of the obituary discourse into three parts which are meaning, force and effect and find out to what extent they are present in the data.

Meaning

The meanings of the words are always in association with other words related to them. The connotation of the words is responsible to give the meanings in their real sense. There are two aspects of meanings denotative and connotative. The words in isolation can give denotative meanings but connotative meanings can only be derived when they occur in the environment in which they occur. Discourse is very much related to the connotative

meanings of the words because any kind of discourse is only successful when the meanings of whatever is said are understood according to the setting or context in which the discourse is carried out. In an obituary words or utterances give the meanings which they give just because they are present in an obituary otherwise other meaning can also be derived from them. Mostly obituaries collected by the researcher start with the following statements.

- With profound sorrow we announce

- We wish to inform you

- We regret to inform our friends

The above statements are meaningful parts of the data butwhen seen without the context they does not given any feel that they are related to the death register and their meanings change. They can occur in many contexts but their meanings will be different one way or the other. Now same utterances are used for discourses other than obituaries.

With profound sorrow we announce

1. With profound sorrow we announce that our manager will not join us for today's party.

2. With profound sorrow we announce that she has joined another company.

3. With profound sorrow we announce that the system is corrupted, so all the data is lost.

In all these statements the utterance has changed the meaning. In 1 the sympathy goes with listeners because they are left by their manager. In 2 a bright member of the staff left the company and employers are having a bad feeling after hearing it. In 3 the problem with the computer made the concerned people sad because they have to write the data again. In all of the three sentences, the meaning of the profound sorrow is not equal to the one present in the obituary (with profound sorrow we announce the sad demise …). Here a sense of pity and sympathy is attached with the meanings of the utterance for losing a thing that could never be recovered. The reader feels the sorrow in the sense which is different from the ones described above. This kind of feeling is the result of the concept which is there in the mind of the person about death. The moment the word sorrow comes the context of the word that is death overcomes the feelings of the reader.

We wish to inform you

1. We wish to inform you that our Manager will pay for today's dinner.

2. We wish to inform you that our daughter is getting married

3. We wish to inform you that you are promoted

The sentences totally change the meanings as the context of the utterance is totally opposite to that of the obituary. The utterance became source of joy and happiness when their context was changed. The change of context totally changed the order of the discourse.

We regret to inform you

1. We regret to inform you that the flight is late

2. We regret to inform you that the program has been cancelled

3. We regret to inform you that rain stopped the match.

The word regret in the above sentences has lost the element of grief instead it has become a formal expression for announcing something distasteful not sad in the severe sense as it is in the context of obituary.

Above description is evident of the fact that the meanings of the utterances in discourse are understood according to the social context in which the discourse occurs, and it is very true for the discourse of the obituaries also.

Force

The force comes in the discourse of the obituary through the words related to the death register. The conceptual meanings related to the death register make it forceful. As said by Sapir words are signs they signify the object to which they are related to. For example, when the word demise is read a concept or picture comes in the mind of the reader according to his perception of the death. The vividness of the mental picture depends on the force the word has in mind of the reader and the context it occurs. The word demise is more forceful than the word death because it is specifically used for the death of a human mostly in a formal situation while death is a common word and it has many concepts in informal situations. The moment demise comes the reader becomes alert due to the force it has in specific context in which it occurs. However, the word death does not have the same force. So the word death is not used in the obituaries as frequently as the word demise. Out of eighteen only one obituary used the word death and it is used with adjective sudden. Short and pithy utterances have more force than the lengthy ones. Therefore in obituaries long sentences are avoided. To make a statement forceful in the obituaries the emotions related to the event are expressed before giving the actual news. "With profound grief we announce" is more forceful than "We announce with profound grief". The first statement helps to arouse the emotions of the reader to react on the news which is coming next so has more force. Similarly the utterance "we regret to inform you" is not forceful if regret is not expressed at the beginning of the sentence. Obituary writers keep in mind this phenomenon and other factors while writing an obituary. They also use local death register to make the language forceful. They usually start obituary with إِنَّا لِلّٰهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُون a prayer recited by the Muslims when they hear some bad news especially news of death of a person. In such cases obituary discourse becomes more forceful.

Effect

Effect and force are related to each other the difference is that force is given by the writer who writes obituaries and the effect is on the part of the reader and is related to his feelings which are developed after reading them. The writers use forceful utterances and expressions to make a piece of writing effective. In obituaries death register is the main thing which affects the reader directly after he reads an obituary. In the above example of obituaries words related to death register are responsible to make them effective for the reader. Adjectives like profound, deep, sudden, mourners and bereaved are effective in the emotional sense. They create a sense of sympathy among the readers. The death registers either local or English are very effective. They make the discourse of the obituary specific and different from other discourses. When the reader comes across the utterance with deep regret, we announce he enters in the domain of the obituary discourse and cut off from the other domains due to the effect the utterance has in the context of obituary discourse. Local or religious register is more effective than the English register used in obituaries because it arouses the feelings which are more powerful due to the concepts attached with them and their association with the religion. For a Muslim the fear of death is not limited to the feelings of the end of life, but it reminds him the horrors and fear of the life after death. When he reads English register it does not make him feel the concept which is associated with the religious words like Namaz e Janaza, Fateha, Soyem etc. with English register the emotions related to with the death take another shape which is less intensive in nature. Therefore, the word funeral is not as effective as Nama e Janaza for a Muslim.

The discourse of the obituaries published in dawn newspaper reflects the social practices related to death in Pakistan. It hasa force effect and meaning which makes the readers sympathize with the unknown demised even. The death register and expression are meaningful and effective in the context of the obituary. The obituaries selected for the study keep the order of discourse because no expression does fall in the domain of the subject which is out of the obituary discourse. The analysis of the data proves the hypothesis that discourse of the obituaries consists of the utterances which are meaningful, forceful and effective in the social context in which obituaries are written.

Findings

The study has found out that the obituary discourse varies according to the religious beliefs of the people of Pakistan. The researcher has come across three variations of the obituaries in this regard i.e. Sunni, Shia and Christian. Most of the obituaries published in the Dawn newspaper additions during the period of data collection were of women. Some obituaries were brief while others give more details of the person and the rituals to be held. Some obituaries publish the photograph of the demised person along with other details. Obituaries from the companies have their monograms in the beginning and their contact detail with email address at the end of the advertisement. Obituaries follow the structures which help them to maintain the discourse for such a grave matter like death. Information about the demised person and death rituals are the main subjects of the obituaries.Around these subjects the related information is woven is a way that the basic framework of the document is not disturbed. The format is influence not only by the style of writing but the background of the person is also responsible of it. Obituaries of

Christians are briefer than those of the Muslims. Christians give information about the funeral of the demised no other ritual is announced while Muslims has many rituals and tradition on the occasion of the death which are mentioned in the obituary. The framework of the obituary is based on the discourse which conveys the meanings of it to the reader. The reader only understands the meanings which are tried to be conveyed by the writer. If the discourse matches the context in which it is present the meanings of it become clear to the reader the way the writer wants them to be. The obituary discourse follows this principle which makes it successful.

Obituaries also give information about the relations of the demised person or the mourners which are the family members of the demised person. If the demised is a female his male relations like spouse and father are mentioned to make it easy for the reader to recognize the lady.

Conclusion

The study has investigated that the language of the obituaries in Pakistani newspapers reflects the socio-cultural and religious aspects of death discourse in Pakistan. There are no words, expressions or utterances which create bad feelings among the readers or offend them. Death register used in the obituaries is euphemized by using such expressions such as passed away, heavenly abode, demise, peacefully, expired, eternal peace and departed. Religious register about death is used to make the discourse more forceful and effective for the readers. The study found out that the obituary discourse is dependent on the death register which makes is limited to the context in which it is present. The discourse of obituaries has certain features like lexical borrowing, code-switching, code-mixing which enhanced the meaning and effect of the language. The study has taken the discursive aspect of the obituaries and is limited to the order of discourse follow. However, there are many other aspects related to the obituaries which can be studied by the upcoming researchers. In the area of language, the obituaries can be selected to find out the style and type of language used in them. The role and significance of the death register in obituaries, the difference in the format of different obituaries can be studied both in isolation and by comparing it with other news articles. The positive approach in the language of obituaries and its reasons and effects is another area in this context. The researcher has come across many types of obituaries which could not be included in the present study. The comparison and contrast of all the types of obituaries and the rationale behind the difference they have can be another topic. The difference between obituaries of male and female and one which are related to the people of different religions can be studied. Finally, the significance of the obituary language can be studied to find out facts about the death culture of a society.

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