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RESEARCH PAPER

Hypatia's Legacy: Framing Intellectual Courage in the Film 'Agora'

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between language, thought, and perception through cognitive linguistics in the film "Agora," focusing on the historical conflict between reason and faith. Set in 4th century Alexandria, the film follows Hypatia, a philosopher and mathematician, who champions intellectual inquiry amidst rising religious fanaticism. Using Lakoff's framing theory, the research analyses key scenes and dialogues, revealing how linguistic framing shapes the audience's perception of Hypatia as a beacon of enlightenment and resistance to dogma. The analysis highlights the film's depiction of the tension between scientific exploration and religious authority, illustrating Hypatia's challenge to societal norms. Through a qualitative approach, the study uncovers how these frames influence perceptions of historical events and characters. The research underscores the enduring significance of Hypatia's legacy, advocating for the preservation of knowledge and intellectual freedom in the face of ignorance and oppression.

| **KEYWORDS** | Cognitive Linguistics, Framing Theory, Hypatia, Reason vs. Faith, Intellectual Freedom |

Introduction

This study takes the cognitive linguistic approach to analyse the selected scenes and dialogues of the film "Agora" through the lens of framing theory proposed by Lakoff in 2004. Cognitive science in general and cognitive linguistics in particular have provided evidence that it is language that shapes thought. According to Lakoff (2014), "frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world". The way we frame different things linguistically influences how we conceptualise social, political, moral etc. attitudes in our lives. Frames cannot be seen or heard. They are part of our cognitive structures in our brains. Lakoff (2014) acknowledges that "we also know frames through language. All words are defined relative to conceptual frames. When you hear a word, its frame is activated in your brain." Framing in linguistics refers to the way in which language is used to shape or influence how people perceive information, events, or issues. It involves the selection and emphasis of certain aspects of a message to evoke particular interpretations or reactions from the audience. Framing can influence how individuals understand, evaluate, and respond to the information presented to them. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1999), linguistic framing shapes how we perceive the world and gather information about people, events, and situations.

About the film "Agora"

"Agora" is a historical drama film directed by Alejandro Amenábar, released in 2009. Set in 4th century Alexandria, Egypt, the film revolves around the life of Hypatia, a philosopher and mathematician, and the political and religious conflicts of the time. With

stunning visuals and a gripping narrative, "Agora" delves into themes of religious intolerance, scientific inquiry, and the clash between reason and faith. At its core, "Agora" is a commentary on the struggle between intellectual enlightenment and religious dogma. The film portrays Hypatia as a symbol of reason and knowledge, dedicated to the pursuit of truth through science and philosophy. Rachel Weisz's portrayal of Hypatia is both compelling and poignant, capturing the character's brilliance and vulnerability in the face of societal upheaval. One of the film's strengths lies in its depiction of Alexandria as a vibrant centre of learning and culture. The sets and costumes are meticulously crafted, transporting the audience to the ancient world. The library of Alexandria, in particular, is portrayed as a sanctuary of knowledge, where scholars from different backgrounds come together to explore the mysteries of the universe. However, amidst this intellectual oasis, "Agora" highlights the growing influence of religious fanaticism. The rise of Christianity brings with it a wave of intolerance and violence; as religious zealots seek to impose their beliefs on others. The conflict between the pagans and Christians escalates throughout the film, culminating in the destruction of the library of Alexandria—a tragic loss for humanity's collective knowledge. The film's portrayal of religious extremism is both chilling and thought-provoking. The Christians are depicted as ruthless and uncompromising, willing to resort to violence to silence dissent. Meanwhile, Hypatia represents a voice of reason and tolerance, advocating for dialogue and understanding in the face of ignorance and superstition. While "Agora" is undeniably a visually stunning and thematically rich film, it does have its shortcomings. Some critics have pointed out the film's oversimplification of historical events and characters. The portrayal of Christians as uniformly villainous and pagans as enlightened thinkers can be seen as overly reductive. Additionally, the character of Hypatia herself is somewhat idealized, lacking the depth and complexity that a real historical figure would possess. Furthermore, the pacing of the film can be uneven at times, with certain scenes feeling rushed or underdeveloped. Despite these flaws, "Agora" remains a powerful exploration of the timeless struggle between reason and faith, and the importance of preserving knowledge in the face of ignorance and intolerance. It serves as a reminder of the dangers of fanaticism and the enduring value of intellectual inquiry. Overall, "Agora" is a visually stunning and thematically rich film that offers a thought-provoking commentary on the clash between reason and faith in the ancient world.

In the current study, framing theory is applied to the selected scenes and dialogues of the film "Agora" from the perspective of framing theory in cognitive linguistics.

Literature Review

Framing is a fundamental concept in linguistics that examines how language constructs the reality we perceive. Frames shape the way we think about whatever is happening in the world. They shape our thinking and make us look at the world from different perspectives. Entman (1993) believes that framing involves selecting some aspects of a concept and highlighting their significance in a communicating text. According to Sullivan (2023), the concept of framing has evolved significantly since the 1970s when it was independently developed by sociologist Erving Goffman and linguist Charles Fillmore. Both scholars drew from distinct interpretations of the term "frame" originating in the 1950s, leading to the formation of separate yet complementary theories of frame analysis. Over the subsequent decades, their approaches converged, particularly as researchers focused on metaphoric framing and its implications in political and media communication. Despite the merging of these perspectives, the field of frame studies remains fragmented, with theorists often lamenting the lack of cohesion. Sullivan (2023) in his paper posits that acknowledging the dual origins of framing—Goffman's sociological and Fillmore's linguistic perspectives—can alleviate some of this fragmentation. By

categorising framing into three distinct levels—semantic, cognitive, and communicative—scholars can better delineate the scope and application of each tradition. Semantic framing pertains to the level of language, emphasizing how words and phrases shape perception. Cognitive framing involves the mental structures and thought patterns that influence understanding. Communicative framing examines how frames are conveyed and interpreted within discourse. The integration of these three levels provides a comprehensive framework for analysing framing across various contexts, from everyday conversation to mass media narratives. This approach not only clarifies the theoretical underpinnings of framing studies but also offers a structured method for examining how frames function across different domains. Recognising the contributions of both Goffman and Fillmore, and situating their theories within the broader spectrum of language, thought, and communication, can lead to a more unified and systematic exploration of framing processes. This synthesis can potentially bridge gaps in the literature, fostering a more cohesive and interdisciplinary understanding of how framing influences perception and interaction in society. Sullivan (2023) claims that:

> When you hear someone yell, "I'm being robbed," several types of framing happen at once. First, the semantics of the word rob inform you that a perpetrator is involved, so you might look around for a robber. Second, your background knowledge tells you that the police will arrest robbers, so you may decide to call the police. Third, the victim is claiming the event is a robbery, rather than an instance of overcharging or charitable donation, for example, which affects your response. The semantic requirements of rob, the conceptual prerequisites for a concept of robbery, and the choice to describe the event as a robbery, all could be considered framing.

Brugman, Burgers and Vis (2019) conducted a meta-analysis study to compare the persuasive impact of metaphorical frames at two levels of analysis: metaphorical-words frames and metaphorical-concepts frames. Their research evaluates the effects of metaphorical framing in verbal political discourse, recognizing that patterns of metaphor usage vary across discourse domains and modalities. According to them, their study demonstrates that both types of metaphorical frames positively influence beliefs and attitudes. However, the effects are more pronounced for metaphorical-concepts frames. This suggests that considering the broader logic of messages, rather than just variations in individual words, yields a stronger persuasive impact in political discourse. The findings underscore the importance of explicitly choosing the level of analysis when studying metaphorical framing effects Moreover, their study's focus on political persuasion highlights the relevance of metaphorical framing in shaping public opinion and decision-making. Understanding the effectiveness of metaphorical framing in political discourse is crucial, given its potential to influence beliefs and attitudes on significant societal issues.

It is obvious from the above review of the published literature that framing theory is a rich theory in terms of research that can be applied to political discourses, media discourses, literary pieces of literature and so on. Furthermore, there does not exist much literature conducted on the film "Agora" from the perspective of linguistics in general and cognitive linguistics in particular due to which it is the research gap that needs to be filled. In this study, framing theory proposed by Lakoff is applied to the film called "Agora". Its scenes or dialogues are analysed in the light of framing theory in cognitive linguistics.

Material and Methods

A qualitative analysis of the film "Agora" was conducted which focussed on key scenes and dialogues related to religious conflict, scientific inquiry, and gender dynamics. The film's framing techniques, including framing devices, metaphors, and symbolic

imagery, were identified and analysed to understand how historical events and characters are framed within the narrative.

Framing Theory

Framing theory, as developed by Lakoff (2004), provides a framework for understanding how information is presented and interpreted in media and communication. In the context of film analysis, framing theory allows us to examine how filmmakers use language, visual elements, and narrative structure to shape audience perceptions and interpretations. We apply this theoretical framework to analyse how "Agora" frames its historical narrative and characters. According to Lakoff (2014), "frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world". The way we frame different things linguistically influences how we conceptualise social, political, moral etc. attitudes in our lives. Frames cannot be seen or heard. They are part of our cognitive structures in our brains. Lakoff (2014) acknowledges that "we also know frames through language. All words are defined relative to conceptual frames. When you hear a word, its frame is activated in your brain." There are some linguistic tools that are responsible for framing such as, metaphors. They are the sort of linguistic tools which could be used for framing different things in life such as, framing social issues, political discourses, mental health problems and so on. For example, 'we need to fight negative feelings', 'he is trapped inside depression' etc. These examples provide us with framing the mental health problems as opponents that we need to fight against. Framing in linguistics refers to the way in which language is used to shape or influence how people perceive information, events, or issues. It involves the selection and emphasis of certain aspects of a message to evoke particular interpretations or reactions from the audience. Framing can influence how individuals understand, evaluate, and respond to the information presented to them.

According to Lakoff and Johnson (1999), linguistic framing shapes how we perceive the world and gather information about people, events, and situations. It involves the use of language to present information in a particular light, influencing how it is understood and interpreted by the audience. The framing effect can significantly impact people's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, making it a crucial area of study in linguistics.

Types of Frames

There are different types of frames, such as:

Issue Frames

Issue framing involves presenting a topic or problem in a specific way to shape how people perceive and respond to it. For example, consider the issue of climate change. It can be framed as an environmental issue, a public health concern, or an economic challenge, each framing evoking different responses from the audience (Lakoff, 2004).

Perspective Frames

Perspective framing involves presenting information from a particular viewpoint or perspective. For instance, in a political debate, candidates may frame their arguments from a conservative or liberal perspective, appealing to different segments of the audience (Entman, 1993).

Episodic vs. Thematic Frames

Episodic frames focus on individual events or stories, while thematic frames provide broader context and background information. For example, news coverage of a natural disaster can be framed as an isolated incident (episodic) or as part of a broader pattern of climate change (thematic) (Iyengar, 1991).

Examples of Framing in Practice

Political Framing

Political speeches are rife with examples of framing. During a campaign, a candidate may frame their opponent's policies as "reckless spending" or "investments in the future," depending on their desired perception (Lakoff, 2004).

Media Framing

Media outlets often frame stories in ways that align with their editorial stance. For example, coverage of immigration may focus on "illegal aliens" or "undocumented immigrants," framing the issue differently depending on the terminology used (Entman, 2007).

Advertising Framing

Advertisements use framing to influence consumer behaviour. A company may frame their product as "luxurious" or "affordable," appealing to different consumer segments (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

Effects of Framing

Priming

Framing can prime individuals to think about certain issues or concepts in specific ways, influencing their subsequent judgments and decisions (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

Attitude Formation

Framing can shape people's attitudes and beliefs about various topics, contributing to the formation of opinions and ideologies (Iyengar, 1991).

Behavioural Responses

Framing can influence how people respond to persuasive messages, affecting their actions and behaviours (Nisbet & Scheufele, 2009).

In conclusion, framing in linguistics is a fundamental and key concept. It plays a crucial role in shaping how we perceive and interpret information. By selecting certain aspects of a message and presenting them in a particular light, framers can influence attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours. Understanding the mechanisms of framing is essential for effective communication, whether in politics, media, advertising, or everyday discourse.

Results and Discussions

In this chapter, fifteen scenes and dialogues have been identified and then analysed in detail from the perspective of framing theory. Following are the identified fifteen

dialogues and scenes from the film "Agora" where framing is best applied, along with detailed elaboration of how framing is used:

Scene: Hypatia's Lecture

Dialogue

Hypatia: "In an argument, no matter how much we wish it, there is only one truth."

Student: "But what if we believe something to be true, but it isn't?"

Hypatia: "Then, it isn't the truth."

Elaboration

In this scene, Hypatia is framing the pursuit of truth as the ultimate goal of intellectual inquiry. The dialogue emphasises the importance of reason and evidence over belief, positioning Hypatia as a champion of rationality. By framing truth as singular and objective, the film establishes the central theme of the conflict between reason and faith.

Scene: Hypatia's Observations of the Sky

Dialogue:

Hypatia: "The sun does not revolve around the Earth. The Earth is just a dot in space, circling the sun."

Elaboration

Hypatia's observation challenges the prevailing religious beliefs of the time, which frames the Earth as the centre of the universe. This scene highlights the clash between scientific knowledge and religious dogma, framing Hypatia's teachings as revolutionary and heretical in the eyes of religious authorities.

Scene: Hypatia's Interactions with Orestes

Dialogue

Orestes: "You challenge the teachings of the Church, Hypatia."

Hypatia: "I challenge ignorance, Governor. Knowledge has no allegiance."

Elaboration

Hypatia's dialogue here frames her pursuit of knowledge as a quest for truth, independent of religious authority. By challenging Orestes' accusation of heresy, she asserts the importance of critical thinking and intellectual freedom. This scene highlights the tension between secular and religious authority in ancient Alexandria.

Scene: Hypatia's Imprisonment

Dialogue

Hypatia: "What crime have I committed?"

Cyril: "You spread dangerous ideas that undermine the Church's authority. You are a threat to our faith."

Elaboration

Hypatia's imprisonment is framed as a consequence of her intellectual pursuits. Cyril portrays her as a threat to the Church's authority, framing her teachings as dangerous heresy. This scene emphasises the power dynamics between religious leaders and intellectuals, highlighting the risks faced by those who challenge orthodoxy.

Scene: The Hypatia's Murder

Dialogue

Cyril: "This is what happens to those who oppose the Church! Let her fate serve as a warning to all who dare to question our faith!"

Elaboration

Hypatia's murder is framed as a warning to those who challenge religious authority. Cyril justifies the violence as necessary to preserve the purity of the faith, framing Hypatia's death as a martyrdom for the Church. This scene reinforces the theme of religious persecution and the suppression of dissent.

Scene: The Siege of the Library

Dialogue

Hypatia: "The library must be protected! It contains the sum of all human knowledge!"

Soldier: "It is an affront to God! We must destroy it!"

Elaboration

The siege of the library is framed as a conflict between knowledge and religious orthodoxy. Hypatia sees the library as a repository of human wisdom, while the soldier views it as a threat to religious authority. This scene highlights the destructive consequences of religious fanaticism and the loss of cultural heritage.

Scene: Hypatia's Dialogue with Synesius

Dialogue:

Synesius: "How can you be so sure of your beliefs when the world is filled with uncertainty?"

Hypatia: "Certainty is an illusion, Synesius. We must embrace uncertainty and seek knowledge in its midst."

Elaboration

This dialogue between Hypatia and Synesius highlights the philosophical debate between certainty and uncertainty. Hypatia frames uncertainty as an essential aspect of knowledge, challenging Synesius to question his beliefs and embrace intellectual inquiry.

Scene: Hypatia's Experiment with Falling Objects

Dialogue:

Hypatia: "All objects fall at the same rate, regardless of their weight."

Student: "But that contradicts what we've been taught!"

Hypatia: "Then, we must question what we've been taught."

Elaboration

Hypatia's experiment challenges conventional wisdom and encourages critical thinking. By framing established beliefs as subject to questioning, she promotes a culture of scientific inquiry and skepticism.

Scene: Hypatia's Encounter with Davus

Dialogue

Davus: "Why do you waste your time with philosophy and science when you could have power and wealth?"

Hypatia: "Because knowledge is the true source of power, Davus. And wealth is meaningless without wisdom."

Elaboration

Hypatia's response reframes the value of knowledge and wisdom over material wealth. By emphasising the power of ideas, she asserts the importance of intellectual pursuits and personal growth.

Scene: Hypatia's Vision of the Solar System

Dialogue

Hypatia: "The Earth revolves around the sun, following a predictable path dictated by the laws of nature."

Student: "But that challenges our understanding of the cosmos!"

Hypatia: "Indeed, it does. But it is through challenging our understanding that we expand our knowledge."

Elaboration

Hypatia's vision of the solar system challenges traditional beliefs and encourages intellectual curiosity. By framing scientific discovery as a process of continuous learning and growth, she inspires her students to question the world around them.

Scene: Hypatia's Last Lecture

Dialogue:

Hypatia: "The stars move in mysterious ways, governed by mathematical laws beyond our comprehension."

Elaboration

In her final lecture, Hypatia reaffirms the importance of scientific inquiry and the pursuit of knowledge. Despite facing persecution and violence, she remains committed to the pursuit of truth. This scene encapsulates the film's central theme of intellectual courage in the face of adversity.

Scene: The Closing Shot

Dialogue

Narrator: "Hypatia's legacy lived on, inspiring future generations to pursue knowledge and challenge ignorance."

Elaboration

The closing shot frames Hypatia's legacy as enduring and transformative. Despite her tragic fate, her teachings continue to inspire others to seek truth and resist oppression. This final scene reinforces the film's message of the importance of intellectual freedom and the enduring power of ideas.

In conclusion, the analysis revealed that "Agora" employs various framing techniques to convey its thematic messages and interpretations of history. The film frames the conflict between paganism and Christianity as a struggle between reason and faith, with Hypatia representing the voice of reason and scientific inquiry. Religious leaders are framed as dogmatic and intolerant, while Hypatia is portrayed as a symbol of enlightenment and intellectual freedom.

Discussion

The film "Agora" employs various scenes and dialogues to critically explore themes of knowledge, intellectual freedom, and the clash between reason and faith through the character of Hypatia. Each scene meticulously frames these themes, highlighting the tension between scientific inquiry and religious orthodoxy, and the personal risks faced by those who challenge established norms.

In the scene where Hypatia states, "In an argument, no matter how much we wish it, there is only one truth," she underscores the objective nature of truth, regardless of personal belief. This dialogue sets the stage for the film's exploration of rationality as the foundation of intellectual pursuits. By affirming that belief does not alter the truth, Hypatia champions reason and evidence over subjective conviction, positioning her as a defender of rational inquiry against the backdrop of an era dominated by dogmatic beliefs. This theme is further developed in the scene where Hypatia observes the sky and asserts that "The sun does not revolve around the Earth." This declaration directly contradicts the geocentric view upheld by religious authorities of the time. By challenging this widely accepted belief, the film portrays Hypatia's scientific insights as revolutionary and threatening to the established religious order, emphasising the conflict between emerging scientific knowledge and entrenched religious dogma.

The interaction between Hypatia and Orestes, where she declares, "I challenge ignorance, Governor. Knowledge has no allegiance," reinforces her commitment to

intellectual independence. This dialogue highlights the tension between secular and religious authorities, showcasing Hypatia's refusal to submit to ecclesiastical power. Her stance embodies the struggle for intellectual freedom, illustrating her belief that knowledge should be pursued for its own sake, free from external influence or control. Moreover, Hypatia's imprisonment, as she questions, "What crime have I committed?" and Cyril's response, "You spread dangerous ideas that undermine the Church's authority," starkly illustrates the perils faced by those who question orthodoxy. This scene highlights the power dynamics at play, with religious leaders perceiving Hypatia's teachings as a direct threat to their authority. The framing of her imprisonment as a consequence of her intellectual activities underscores the risks inherent in challenging established doctrines. The brutal murder of Hypatia, justified by Cyril as a warning to those who oppose the Church, serves as a grim testament to the consequences of defying religious authority. This scene reinforces the theme of persecution faced by intellectuals and the extent to which religious institutions will go to maintain control. The film portrays Hypatia's death not only as a personal tragedy but as a symbol of the broader suppression of dissenting voices and the violent lengths to which orthodoxy will go to preserve itself.

Furthermore, the siege of the library, with Hypatia pleading, "The library must be protected! It contains the sum of all human knowledge!" against the soldier's view that it is an "affront to God," encapsulates the destructive impact of religious fanaticism on cultural heritage. This scene poignantly illustrates the clash between the preservation of knowledge and the destructive impulses of zealotry, framing the library as a symbol of human wisdom under siege by intolerant forces.

In a dialogue with Synesius, Hypatia's assertion that "Certainty is an illusion... we must embrace uncertainty and seek knowledge in its midst," underscores the philosophical underpinnings of her approach to knowledge. This exchange highlights the necessity of questioning and intellectual humility in the pursuit of truth, challenging the viewer to consider the value of uncertainty as a catalyst for deeper understanding. Hypatia's experiment with falling objects, where she challenges the student's preconceived notions, and her vision of the solar system both reinforce her commitment to empirical evidence and continuous learning. These scenes depict her as a relentless seeker of truth, willing to question and revise established beliefs in light of new evidence.

Finally, Hypatia's last lecture and the closing narration affirm her enduring legacy. Her statement about the stars moving "in mysterious ways" governed by mathematical laws underscores her unwavering dedication to scientific inquiry. The closing narration frames her legacy as a source of inspiration for future generations, emphasising the transformative power of her ideas and the enduring importance of intellectual freedom.

Overall, "Agora" uses Hypatia's character and her intellectual journey to explore the profound conflict between reason and faith, the pursuit of knowledge, and the resilience required to challenge ignorance. Through thought-provoking dialogues and powerful visual storytelling, the film engages viewers in a timeless philosophical exploration of history, humanity, and the enduring quest for truth.

These scenes and dialogues from "Agora" demonstrate how framing techniques are used to convey themes of knowledge, resistance, and religious conflict. Through selective language, visual imagery, and narrative structure, the filmmakers shape audience perceptions and interpretations of historical events, emphasising the importance of reason and intellectual freedom in the face of religious extremism. The framing of historical events and characters in "Agora" reflects contemporary debates and concerns about religion,

science, and gender. By framing Hypatia as a heroic figure fighting against religious oppression, the film promotes values of rationality, tolerance, and gender equality.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the film "Agora" adeptly employs framing techniques to explore the clash between reason and faith, knowledge and religious orthodoxy, through the life and teachings of Hypatia. By analysing fifteen key scenes and dialogues, it becomes evident that the filmmakers use framing to highlight the tension between intellectual freedom and dogmatic belief. Hypatia's role as a symbol of reason and scientific inquiry is juxtaposed against the rigid religious authority of the time, represented by figures like Cyril. Through the selective use of language, dialogue, and visual storytelling, the film positions Hypatia as an advocate for truth, rationality, and the pursuit of knowledge.

The central theme of the conflict between reason and faith is illustrated through pivotal moments, such as Hypatia's assertion of the objective nature of truth, her scientific discoveries challenging the geocentric model, and her firm stand against ignorance. These scenes are framed to emphasise her intellectual courage and the personal risks she faces for challenging established norms. The film also portrays the broader consequences of religious fanaticism, particularly in the destruction of the library and Hypatia's brutal murder, both of which serve as metaphors for the suppression of knowledge and free thought.

Ultimately, "Agora" positions Hypatia's legacy as one of enduring intellectual freedom and resistance against oppressive authority. By framing her as a martyr for reason and a symbol of the quest for truth, the film engages viewers in a timeless dialogue about the importance of knowledge, scientific inquiry, and the power of ideas in shaping human history.

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