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RESEARCH PAPER

Figurative Use of English Language in the Headlines of Pakistani Newspapers: A Case Study of Daily Times

1Muhammad Abdullah*and 2Dr. Zohaib Zahid

1. MPhil Scholar, Department of English Linguistics, The Islamia University of Bahwalpur, Sub Campus Rahim Yar khan, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, Department of English, The Islamia University of Bahwalpur, Sub Campus Rahim Yar khan, Punjab, Pakistan

| *Corresponding Author | zohaib.zahid@iub.edu.pk |

ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the figurative language used in the front page headlines of Daily Times newspaper from January 1st to January 20th, 2023, using Perrine's theory of figures of speech. A descriptive research design was employed to analyze the types of figures of speech, their connotations, linguistic functions, and editorial advantages. Metaphors were most frequent, making up 30% of cases, followed by paradox, synecdoche, hyperbole, metonymy, and personification. The primary function was emotional intensity, accounting for 55% of the total. The results give an insight into how journalists use language to grab reader attention and simplify complex ideas. Researcher suggests broadening the study to include a wider range of national English-language newspapers for a comparative analysis. Analysis of reader engagement through surveys or experimental studies could provide valuable insights. Broadening the scope to digital news platforms and social media could reveal differences in language use between online and traditional media.

| **KEYWORDS** | Figures of Speech, Laurence Perrine, Linguistic Functions, Newspaper headlines |

Introduction

Figurative language is the art of using linguistic elements to move beyond their literal meanings, conveying deeper, more nuanced understanding (Adkins, 2001). It transforms words into tools that evoke vivid imagination and engage intellectual faculties. From Shakespeare's poetry to Plato's prose, figurative language has been an indispensable tool for literary giants. It involves deliberately departing from literal meanings to achieve specific effects or communicate profound ideas (Abrams and Harpham, 2009).

Figurative language is vital in literature, serving as a means of communication that transcends literal interpretation to uncover deeper, implied meanings (Elder, 2004). It allows writers to push linguistic boundaries, express abstract complexities, stir emotions, and create vivid imagery beyond ordinary experience. However, limiting figurative language to traditional literature is unfair; literature is merely one avenue to explore life's depths through imagination (Jones, 1968). Figurative language extends its impact to modern mediums like newspapers, advertisements, magazines, and opinion pieces, proving just as effective outside conventional genres. As a spectrum of rhetorical devices, it captures attention, conveys messages efficiently, shapes perceptions, and influences discourse (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002). In journalism, it becomes a

powerful tool for inspiring, informing, and driving action when wielded by skilled writers (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2007).

At the core of newspaper journalism lie headlines—powerful tools designed to grab attention, deliver news instantly, and leave a lasting impression. Their primary function is to clarify the essence of an article for the reader (Van Dijk, 1988). Crafting a headline is a challenge, as it requires condensing a lengthy news piece into a few compelling words that inform and engage in an instant. Figurative language plays a pivotal role here. A well-crafted headline transcends literal meanings, conveying the depth of a story in a single line. Newspapers thus act as laboratories of style, where journalists experiment with language, narrative, and imagination to captivate readers (Eco, 1984). In conclusion, figurative language becomes a powerful journalistic tool, capable of persuading, influencing minds, and shaping society's collective consciousness.

In non-English countries like Pakistan, English newspapers often rival or surpass local-language publications in societal contribution. They act as windows to the world, offering perspectives that transcend language barriers (Crystal, 2003). As bridges between local, national, and international discourse, these newspapers foster cultural dialogue and collaboration among diverse linguistic groups (Kachru, 1997). Headlines, central to this communication, demand the use of figurative language to succinctly convey complex stories to both local and international audiences. This challenges journalists' proficiency in English, particularly its figurative dimensions. English newspapers in Pakistan, such as Dawn, The News International, The Express Tribune, Pakistan Today, The Nation, and Daily Times, significantly influence national and international dialogue. Among these, Daily Times stands out for its distinct use of figurative language in headlines, a feature that caught the researcher's attention.

Founded by the late Salman Taseer, Daily Times is a leading publication, issued daily from Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi, and a member of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society. This study is focused on analyzing the use of figurative language in front page headlines of the Daily Times. The researcher aims to identify the types of figures of speech used, discuss their connotative meanings in context of respective news story, determine the linguistic functions performed and discuss the editorial benefits achieved by their use. The study uses Laurence Perrine's theory of figures of speech as theoretical framework.

Literature Review

Laurence Perrine's theory of figures of speech has its origin in Perrine's renowned book Sound and Sense: An Introduction to Poetry (1956). In his book, Perrine has categorized figures of speech into twelve categories, and the functions performed by them into four. The types of figures of speech classified by Perrine are:

i) Metaphor: A metaphor links two distinct conceptual domains, using attributes of a source domain to describe a target domain (Simpson, 2004).

ii) Simile: A simile links two distinct conceptual domains by making use of comparative words such as "like," "as," "than," or "resemble" (Kennedy and Gioia, 2007).

iii) Personification: A Personification assigns human attributes to non-human entities (Kövecses, 2010).

iv) Apostrophe: An apostrophe addresses an inanimate object, idea, or something absent as if it was there alive (Kennedy and Gioia, 2007).

v) Metonymy: A metonymy uses something closely related to represent something intended (Perrine, 1969).

vi) Symbol: A symbol conveys some meaning which is beyond its literal meaning (Perrine, 1969).

vii) Synecdoche: A synecdoche uses a part of something to represent the whole thing, or vice versa (Keraf, 2004).

viii) Allegory: An allegory is a narrative style in which the events and the characters are symbols of abstract ideas (Kennedy and Gioia, 2007).

ix) Paradox: Paradox is a statement that on surface seems self contradictory but actually holds a deeper meaning (Kennedy and Gioia, 2007).

x) Hyperbole (Overstatement): A hyperbole is a deliberate exaggeration of something to emphasize it (Kennedy and Gioia, 2007).

xi) Litotes (Understatement): Litotes involve ironical downplaying of something to produce an effect (Kennedy and Gioia, 2007).

xii) Irony: Irony involves a contradiction between the surface meaning and a deeper meaning (Kennedy and Gioia, 2007).

The functions of figures of speech, as categorized by Perrine, are:

i) Imaginative Pleasure: Figures of speech serve as a stimulus for a person's imagination, evoke emotions of pleasure by tapping into his personal experience and memory, and provides him joy utilizing his own creativity.

ii) Additional Imagery: They enhance a text by providing vivid mental images that complement abstract concepts, enriching the reader's experience and making comprehension more engaging and satisfying.

iii) Emotional Intensity: Figures of speech convey abstract ideas while intensifying emotional responses, making the emotions associated with a message more profound.

iv) Concise Expression: They allow writers to communicate more in fewer words, enabling readers to grasp deeper meanings without extensive explanation, relying on the figures of speech to shape their understanding.

Amirulloh, Suryanto, and Lestari (2023) conducted a figurative stylistic analysis of fifteen business news articles from The Times website, aiming to identify various figures of speech. Six figures were found: metaphor, parallelism, personification, prolepsis, repetition, and simile, with metaphor being the most frequent. Afifah and Alwasilah (2022) analyzed feature profiles published in Kompas newspaper in January 2021. Their study identified seven figures of speech: euphemism, metaphor, allusion, climax, hyperbole, synecdoche, and simile, with hyperbole being the most prevalent. Widyanti (2013) examined advertisements in Harpers Bazaar Magazine, focusing on three consecutive months. Six figures of speech were identified, including metaphor,

metonymy, personification, simile, hyperbole, and synecdoche, with metaphor being the most common.

Rohani and Arsyad (2018) conducted a figurative stylistic analysis of rubric features from The Jakarta Post in December 2017. Thirteen figures of speech were found, with simile being the most frequent. Prahetta (2015) analyzed the Metropolis rubric from Jawa Pos newspaper in March 2015. Six figures of speech were identified: hyperbole, simile, metaphor, personification, symbol, and onomatopoeia, with hyperbole being the most common. Kasma, Utami, and Jayantini (2021) analyzed CNN International News headlines posted on Facebook in the second half of 2020. Four figures of speech were identified: metonymy, simile, hyperbole, and metaphor, with metonymy being the most frequent.

Nainggolan, Siahaan, Sinurat, and Herman (2021) analyzed Joe Biden's victory speech upon becoming POTUS. Five figures of speech were found: metaphor, hyperbole, personification, simile, and litotes, with metaphor being the most frequent. Schultz (2012) compared the use of metonymy and metaphor in ten articles from The Sun and The Telegraph, collected over five days. The study found no significant difference in the use of metonymy between the two newspapers, though metaphor usage varied slightly. Sihite (2016) conducted a figurative stylistic analysis of English programs on Metro TV covering the 2017 Indonesian election campaign. The study aimed to identify the figures of speech used by the speakers, with personification being the most frequent. Sufa and Liusti (2022) analyzed sports news from four selected Indonesian online portals published in January 2022. The study identified fifteen figures of speech, with metaphor being the most common.

Juanda, Mulyaningsih, Amalia, and Supriadi (2023) conducted a figurative stylistic analysis of Kamala Harris's victory speech after becoming U.S. vice president. Hyperbole was found to be the most frequent figure of speech used. Al-Khasawneh (2021) studied Saudi news headlines related to COVID-19 published in early 2020. Seven figures of speech were identified, including hyperbole, personification, understatement, synecdoche, apostrophe, paradox, and metonymy, with personification being the most frequent. Zhou (2017) analyzed fifty selected headlines from Thai English media sources and newspapers. Six figures of speech were commonly used, including metonymy, personification, metaphor, oxymoron, alliteration, and quotation.

Firdariani and Lestari (2024) analyzed news titles from the IDN Times World Cup channel in December 2022. Four figures of speech were identified: metaphor, simile, personification, and hyperbole, with metaphor being the most frequent. Tannia (2015) analyzed opinion column headlines from The Wall Street Journal published in March 2015. Six figures of speech were found: metonymy, teasing, hyperbole, irony, repetition, and idiom. Shie (2011) conducted a figurative stylistic analysis of news articles from The New York Times and its Taiwan-based publication, Times Supplement. The study compared the use of metonymy and metaphor, finding both more extensively used in The New York Times. Laosrirattanachai and Rimkeeratikul (2017) analyzed advertisements from three American travel magazines (Condé Nast Traveler, Travel+Leisure, and Luxury Travel Advisor) published in 2017. The study found repetition, alliteration, and parallelism most common in headlines, while assonance, alliteration, and hyperbole were prevalent in the body of the text.

Material and Methods

Research Design: A descriptive research was used to analyze and describe the figures of speech in the sample.

Theoretical Framework: The used Laurence Perrine's theory of figures of speech as its theoretical framework.

Data Sampling: The consisted of front-page headlines from Daily Times newspaper, published from January 1st, 2023 to January 20th, 2023.

Data Collection: Data was collected through systematic reading and listing of headlines containing figures of speech from the sample, in chronological order.

Data Analysis: Data was analyzed line by line, identifying the figure of speech, discussing its connotative meaning in context, and determining its function.

Synthesis of Findings: The findings were presented in both tabular numerical form and textual form to summarize and conclude the analysis.

Results and Discussion

On January 1st, 2023, the headline "visibly invisible interference" appeared, featuring a paradox. It highlights Imran Khan's remarks to journalists about military interference in political affairs, despite the military's typical claims of neutrality. The paradox reflects the contradiction between the military's self-proclaimed impartiality and its evident involvement. The primary function of this paradox is to enhance emotional intensity.

Another headline, published on January 4th, read "From 'best' to 'worst'," containing hyperbole. The news reported on a white paper released by PTI, comparing the country's economic conditions before and after Imran Khan's ousting. The paper painted a stark contrast, labeling the prior economic state as the "best" and the current one as the "worst." This hyperbole serves to amplify emotional intensity by exaggerating the comparison. Another headline, "Salman Taseer: The Light Shines On," uses a metaphor. It reflects a biographical piece about the late Salman Taseer, the founder of Daily Times, highlighting his virtues and societal contributions. His lasting impact is symbolized as "shining light" in the headline. The metaphor's function here is to add imagery.

A headline from January 5th, "Govt hits back," also contains a metaphor. The news reports the PDM government's response to PTI's white paper on the economy. The finance minister labeled the white paper misleading and blamed the PTI government for the ongoing economic crisis. The metaphor "hit back" portrays this strong and accusatory response, akin to a boxer striking back at an opponent. The metaphor's function is to intensify the emotional tone.

On January 6th, the headline "SC – the last hope" features hyperbole. The news covers Imran Khan's request for a judicial commission under the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) to investigate an assassination attempt on him. His plea reveals his deep frustration with the executive institutions like the police and judiciary, marking the Supreme Court as his "last hope" in these dire circumstances. The hyperbole serves to emphasize emotional intensity. Another headeline, "Neither snap nor delayed polls" is a paradox. The headline stems from PPP Chairman Bilawal's ambiguous statement about elections,

where he claimed his party would accept neither early nor delayed elections. This paradoxical remark either implied a reluctance to hold elections or an insistence on sticking to the constitutional timeline, but the lack of clarity made it headline-worthy. The paradox's function here is to offer concise expression.

On January 7th, a headline read "Be cruel to be kind," a clear paradox. The news reported massive protests in Waziristan against rising terrorism, where protestors demanded the government take harsh action to eliminate terrorism. The headline captures the contradiction of using cruelty (eliminating terrorists) to achieve the greater good of kindness (protecting citizens). The paradox's function here is emotional intensity. Another headline on the same day, "Unneutral neutrals," also presents a paradox. It refers to Imran Khan's statement accusing the military establishment of engaging in political manipulation while claiming to remain neutral. The paradox highlights the contradiction between their self-proclaimed neutrality and their actual involvement. The function of the paradox here is emotional intensity. A third headline on January 7th was "Sincerely 'insincere', PM to Imran Khan," another paradox. The news covered PM Shehbaz Sharif criticizing Imran Khan for his stance against former army chief Bajwa, accusing him of ingratitude after being brought to power by Bajwa. Sharif also echoed PDM's narrative that Imran's tenure was the cause of the country's problems. The headline implies that Imran pretended to be sincere, but in reality, he was not. The function of the paradox here is emotional intensity.

On January 10th, the headline "World comes to 'rescue'" contains metonymy. The news covered pledges of financial aid totaling $10 billion to flood-stricken Pakistan. Here, the word "world" represents the governments, nations, and institutions that made these pledges. This metonymy adds imagery, helping the reader visualize the global response to the crisis. On January 12th, "I'll erase all 'red lines'" featured a metaphor. Imran Khan told his party members that anyone who thought they could impose limits on him was mistaken. The "red line" symbolized the establishment's rejection of Khan, using the metaphor to emphasize his defiance. The metaphor serves the function of emotional intensity. On the same day, "Vote of confidence in Geneva" used hyperbole. PM Shehbaz Sharif described the pledges from the international community at the Geneva conference as a "vote of confidence" in his government, implying that these pledges reflected significant trust. The overstatement conveys emotional intensity.

On January 13th, "Sigh of relief for Pakistan" used synecdoche. The headline referred to Pakistan securing a loan rollover and an additional $1 billion, bringing relief to its struggling economy. The term "Pakistan" here stands in for the government and other stakeholders. The synecdoche serves the function of added imagery. On January 14th, "Shehbaz, Zardari move to calm 'angry' MQM-P" used synecdoche. The "angry MQM-P" referred to the disgruntled leaders and members of the party, rather than the party itself. This synecdoche functions as concise expression. On January 16th, "Controversy shrouds Sindh LG polls" used a metaphor. The term "shrouds" referred to the election's loss of credibility due to allegations of rigging and malpractice. The metaphor adds imagery, suggesting the election's questionable nature. On January 17th, the headline "PPP wins the race" used a metaphor, comparing the competitive nature of elections to a race, with PPP emerging victorious in the local body elections in Karachi. The metaphor enhances imagery by likening elections to a race.

On January 18th, the headline "ONE VS NO ONE" was a paradox. It highlighted Imran Khan's decision to contest alone in by-elections across 33 constituencies, while the PDM alliance chose not to contest at all. The paradox contrasts "one" (Imran) with "no one" (PDM's absence), offering imaginative pleasure. Another headline on the same day,

"PDM tries to pick interim CM," used synecdoche. The term "PDM" represented the leadership of the parties in the alliance. The synecdoche provides concise expression by simplifying the reference to the entire group. On January 19th, the headline "Post-poll violence hits Karachi" used personification. It described the violence following the controversial local body elections as if the violence itself were an active force impacting Karachi. This personification creates emotional intensity. On January 20th, "Public shall decide red line, not you" featured a metaphor. The headline summarized an interview with Imran Khan, where he emphasized that the public, not the military establishment, should have the power to decide the "red line" in choosing their leaders. The metaphor reinforces emotional intensity by conveying Khan's commitment to democratic principles.

The researcher identified six types of figures of speech out of the twelve classified by Perrine. The most frequently used figure of speech was metaphor, appearing 6 times (30% of the total). This was followed by paradox, also with 6 instances (30%), and synecdoche, with 3 instances (15%). Hyperbole was used 3 times (15%), metonymy and personification each appeared once (5% each). No instances of irony, simile, apostrophe, symbol, allegory, or litotes were found in the sampled headlines.

Table 1
Frequency and Percentage distributions of figures of speech

Figure of Speech	Frequency	Percentage
Metaphor	6	30.00%
Paradox	6	30.00%
Synecdoche	3	15.00%
Hyperbole	3	15.00%
Metonymy	1	5.00%
Personification	1	5.00%
Irony	0	0.00%
Simile	0	0.00%
Apostrophe	0	0.00%
Symbol	0	0.00%
Allegory	0	0.00%
Litotes	0	0.00%
TOTAL	20	100.00%

The researcher found that among the 20 figures of speech identified in the front-page headlines of Daily Times from January 1st, 2023, to January 20th, 2023, all four functions of figures of speech classified by Perrine were represented. The most common function was "emotional intensity," performed by 11 figures of speech, accounting for 55% of the total. The function of "added imagery" was represented by 5 figures of speech, making up 25% of the total. "Concise expression" was performed by 3 figures of speech (15%), while "imaginative pleasure" was the least common, with only 1 figure of speech (5%).

Table 2
Frequency and Percentage distribution of functions of figures of speech

Function	Frequency	Percentage
Emotional intensity	11	55.00%
Added imagery	5	25.00%
Concise Expression	3	15.00%
Imaginative pleasure	1	5.00%
TOTAL	20	100.00%

Conclusion

The researcher conducted an in-depth analysis of the Daily Times' front-page headlines from January 1 to January 20, 2023, uncovering key insights into the strategic use of figurative language in editorial writing. The findings highlighted metaphor as the most commonly used figure of speech, employed to create vivid imagery and evoke strong emotions. By transforming abstract ideas into tangible scenarios, metaphors simplify complex concepts, enhancing reader engagement and subtly shaping perceptions of the news.

Paradox emerged as the second most frequently used device, with its contradictions designed to spark curiosity and make headlines more memorable. These paradoxical phrases invite deeper engagement and can even fuel debate. Synecdoche and hyperbole were tied for third in prevalence. Synecdoche allows for concise yet impactful headlines by representing a whole through a part, capturing interest while conserving space. Hyperbole, on the other hand, emphasizes urgency or importance, drawing immediate attention and eliciting emotional responses. Metonymy and personification were the least frequently used. Metonymy contributed brevity and cultural resonance, while personification made abstract concepts relatable by infusing them with human-like qualities, enhancing imagery.

The study also identified "emotional intensity" as the most common function of figurative language, accounting for 55% of its usage. This strategy captures attention by evoking empathy and urgency, making headlines memorable and shareable. "Added imagery," present in 25% of cases, ranked second. By creating mental pictures, it transformed abstract issues into more relatable and visually engaging narratives. "Concise expression" was the third most common function (15%), helping communicate key information efficiently and making headlines stand out. Lastly, "imaginative pleasure," though less common, proved effective in drawing readers by sparking curiosity and encouraging deeper exploration of the stories.

In summary, the analysis revealed that the Daily Times skillfully uses figurative language to engage readers, evoke strong emotions, and inspire critical thinking, while leveraging concise phrasing and vivid imagery to sustain interest.

Recommendations

Due to the scope and time constraints of this study, the researcher focused specifically on the Daily Times newspaper, analyzing its front-page headlines published between January 1 and January 20, 2023. The analysis was limited to the twelve figures of speech defined by Laurence Perrine and examined the four functions of these figures as outlined in his framework. This research bridges journalism, linguistics, and literary studies, illustrating how figures of speech not only engage readers but also influence their perceptions. It offers valuable insights into editorial strategies, highlighting the role of figurative language in shaping public discourse. Additionally, the study contributes to linguistic research by applying literary analysis to media headlines and serves as a useful resource for students, educators, and aspiring journalists.

The researcher recommends broadening the study to include a wider range of national English-language newspapers in Pakistan to enable a comparative analysis of figurative language use across publications. This could provide a deeper understanding of varying editorial practices. Longitudinal studies are also suggested to examine how the use of figurative language in journalism evolves in response to socio-political changes

over time. To further explore the impact, the researcher proposes investigating reader responses to figurative language in headlines through surveys or experimental studies to assess its effect on engagement and comprehension. Finally, analyzing the use of figurative language in digital news platforms and social media could reveal differences in how language is employed and perceived in online versus traditional print media.

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