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Cohesive Ties in some Brexit Cartoons: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis

A B S T R A C T

The current study tries to tackle some cartoons about Brexit, aiming at analyzing them textually and visually, checking the occurrences of cohesive ties within these cartoons. The study adopts De Beaugrande and Dressler in their book 'Introduction to Text Linguistics' (1981) for textual analysis, and Kress and Van Leeuwen in their book 'Reading Images' (2006) for the visual. The study hypothesizes that cartoons, as any means of communication, utilize linguistic as well as visual elements in order to deliver its messages; and that certain textual relations are used, together with certain visual criteria, can make a given cartoon communicative more than when other relations are used. The data are (6) cartoons selected from different English newspapers, within the years (2006-2009). These cartoons tackle Brexit as a condition for selection. The Study comes up with some conclusions, the hypotheses above are achieved with some other conclusions

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علاقات الترابط في عدد من الرسوم الكارتونية الخاصة بالبريكست: تحليل خطابي متعدد النماذج

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الخلاصة

تعد الرسوم الكارتونية أحد الوسائل الإعلامية التي تنشر في الصحف والمجلات لإيصال رسائل متعددة الأغراض، لعل من أبرزها السياسية والاجتماعية، إذ يقوم الرسام بتجسيد نقده لحالة ما في رسم كارتوني عادة ما يكون ساخراً. ومن الممكن دراسة هذه الرسوم الكارتونية من الجانبين اللغوي والصورى لتوظيفها للعناصر الأساسية لهذين الجانبين ضمن دراسة واحدة متعددة النماذج. منذ قرار بريطانيا بالخروج من الاتحاد الأوروبي (بريكست) والتصويت فعلياً على الخروج، بدأت

الانتقادات لهذا الحدث تزداد وتتطور لتشمل العديد من الوسائل التواصلية ومنها الرسوم الكارتونية، إذ توظف وسائل الإعلام زوايا خاصة من إصداراتها لهذا الحدث. تتناول الدراسة الحالية بعضاً من الرسوم الكارتونية الخاصة بالبريكست كمادة للتحليل متعدد النماذج، إذ يتم البحث عن العلاقات التي تجعل النصوص اللغوية متماسكة ومتراصة، موظفة لنموذج دي بيوجراند ودرسلر (١٩٧٦) للتحليل اللغوي ونموذج كانتر كريس و فان ليوين (٢٠٠٦) للتحليل الصوري. تفترض الدراسة بعض الفرضيات ومنها ان الرسوم الكارتونية كغيرها من وسائل التواصل الصوري توظف عناصر لغوية لتتمكن من اىصال الهدف المصممة لأجله. وقد توصلت الدراسة إلى تحقيق فرضياتها والخروج ببعض من النتائج الأخرى.

1. Introduction

Cohesion, together with coherence, is one of the main factors in any attempt of text analysis. It deals with the grammatical and semantic ties within a specific text, that make a piece of related words intelligible and eventually communicative.

The great event of Britain Exit (henceforth Brexit) from the European Union, witnessed a special importance of the whole world generally, and different means of media in particular. Cites of social media seriously deal with the crisis of Brexit, many studies, articles, tweets, cartoons and other means are published daily.

The study aims at showing how texts are usually related and bound to each making meaningful wholes; showing cohesion in short texts used by the producers and how they use them; and investigating the different elements used in caricature designing linguistically and visually. Hence, it is necessary to manage a multimodal analysis for a proper interpretation of media text.

The study is restricted to cohesive relations in multimodal texts. It is limited to the exploration of any type of cohesion that can be found within the texts in the data under study. These are cartoons depicting the Brexit.

The current study adopts an eclectic model. It is to be conducted from two different levels: the first is taken from a discursive level of analysis, while the second is taken from a semiotic level. The discursive level is concerned with analyzing cohesion using the textual analysis adopted by De Beaugrande and Dressler in their book **Introduction to text Linguistics'** in (1981). The semiotic level, on the other hand, is concerned with analyzing cartoons using the visual analysis adopted by Kress and Van Leeuwen in their book **'Reading Images'** in (2006).

De Beaugrande and Dressler's (1981) maintain that Cohesion can be shown by the use of grammatical and semantic ties. As for Kress and Van Leeuwen indicate that multimodal analysis can be achieved by analysing the visual elements. These are: participants, gaze , distance, angle, modality, and composition.

2. Discourse Analysis

Linguists, have two approaches in defining discourse analysis; grammatical and functional. Stubbs (1983:1) for example, defines discourse analysis regarding the functional side as "language above the sentence level or above the clause." focusing on the grammatical boundaries of the unit.

The core of discourse analysis, to some other linguists, is 'language use'. Linguists, accordingly, differed in presenting a precise definition of the field, yet they united in the 'core', i.e., language use. Brown and Yule (1983: 3) state that "the analysis of discourse is the analysis of language in use". Fairclough (1992: 28), on the other hand, regards it as "more than just language **in** use: It is language use", or it is 'the language itself'.

Discourse analysis, as a process, implies some other linguistic terms, the **text** is one of them. Text linguistics seeks to give the linguistic unit a dimension beyond the grammatical description, i.e., a socio–communicative shape. It does not concern the concrete side of the unit.

There is a kind of overlap in the use of text and discourse. The term 'text' is used, sometimes, interchangeably with 'discourse', and a clear distinction between them is not clearly settled. Some linguists regard them synonymously used, others speak about a difference in length, being written or spoken, and of other linguistic points of view.

Stubbs (1983: 9) speaks of 'written text' and 'spoken discourse', and concerning length, he mentions that discourse might be of greater length than text, yet it is larger than a sentence. Fairclough (1995:4) mentions that it is a traditional view about text to be mainly written while it is in fact may be written or spoken.

Texts can correspond with any linguistic unit: from a letter or a sound to a sentence or more. To identify a unit as a text, yet, differs from interpreting it, this is where discourse comes in, and why it needs to be distinguished from text (Widdowson, 2004: 8). He adds " I identify a text not by its linguistic extent but by its social intent".

Every text, to be linguistically communicative, should occur within an appropriate context, otherwise, it is meaningless. What is the concept of context, then?

'Context' is something allusive and, just like discourse, is differently interpreted. Some linguists, like Widdowson (2004: 36), date the term 'context' back to Malinowski, just like the trace of the term discourse back to Harris.

Discourse analysts believe that choices in linguistics are not arbitrarily made, therefore, they try to arise some questions such as what happens in a stretch of talk, who are the participants, where and when, and the like. These questions are the factors that form the context governing a piece of language (He, 2001: 431– 432).

Linguists have conducted many studies through the last decades, attempting to analyze cohesive features. The 'seminal' work on cohesion is by Halliday and Hasan, who devote a great book for cohesion alone entitled *Cohesion in*

English (1976). It deals with cohesion and its different types. The concept of cohesion, according to them, is a semantic one. Its focus is on meaning–relations within the text, where the interpretation of one element in a given discourse is dependent on that of another. According to that relation, it is implied that one element presupposes the other Halliday and Hasan (1976).

The function of cohesion in the text is linking, it provides syntactical and lexical attachments within the text producing textual unity. This function is syntactical, it imposes certain organizational patterns upon the text, i.e., the surface text (de Beaugrande & Dressler 1992: 48).

Cohesion can be grammatical or lexical, every type falls into some other sub classifications. Grammatical cohesion refers to the structural content, and it is categorized into four main ties: reference, substitution and ellipsis and conjunction, while lexical cohesion is shown by ties of lexical words.

3. Semiotics

The sign, the nucleus of Semiotics, is an action between pairs that is regarded as a signifier/ signified relation or rather an expression/content relation (Eco, 1986:1).

Chandler (1998:3) defines the sign as "any physical form that has been imagined or made externally (through some physical medium) to stand for an object, event, feeling, etc., known as a referent, or for a class of similar (or related) objects, events, feelings, etc., known as a referential domain".

Semiotics is concerned with how meaning is produced, or what makes a given utterance meaningful. Meaning in objects, in the theory of Semiotics, is believed not to be inherent, i. e., "meaning is constructed by a competent observer — a subject — capable of giving 'form' to objects" (Martin & Ringham, 2006: 175).

4. Multimodality

Multimodality is to somewhat an eclectic approach that has developed from Halliday's theory of communication (Halliday, 1978) together with the effects of cognitive and sociocultural works. First books and papers on multimodality were published by the mid to late 1990s. These studies focus primarily on visual communication and the image– writing relationship (MAY& Hornberger, 2008: 358).

Multimodal researches increasingly expanded in mid 2000s onwards when systemic linguists and language researchers became interested in language with other resources. 'Communication is being inherently multimodal', was acknowledged explicitly (O'Halloran, 2011: 6).

5. The Models Adopted

Two models summarized in this work have been adopted. The first model is by De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) for analyzing cohesive ties (this is the discursual level of analysis). The second model is by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) for analyzing images (this is the semiotic level of analysis).

1. De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981)

In their model, Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) paved the way to discursual analysis, they argue that for a piece of speech to be communicative, it should meet seven standards of textuality, these are: cohesion and coherence, intentionality and acceptability, informativity, situationality and intertextuality. The focus in this study is upon cohesion.

Cohesion concerns the way the components of the surface text, i.e. the actual words we hear or see, are *mutually connected within sequence*. The surface components depend upon each other according to grammatical forms and conventions, cohesion, therefore rests upon grammatical dependencies.

In every text, cohesion can be shown by different kinds of lexico– grammatical relations, every instance of relation resembles one tie. Cohesive

ties, for de Beaugrande and Dressler, are named according to the type of relation occurring. These are **pro-forms** for (replacing elements with shorter forms), **ellipsis** for (the omission of surface expressions), **recurrence** (i.e. the repetition of elements or patterns), **parallelism** (the repetition of a structure by filling it with new elements), **paraphrase** (the repetition of content conveyed through different expressions), **junction** with four major types: **conjunction** (between same-status elements which are both true in the textual world), **disjunction** (between entities of alternative status of which only one can be true in the textual world); **contrajunction** (between same-status entities which are seen as incompatible or unexpected in the textual world); **subordination** (between two entities, the status of one of which depends on that of the other, e.g. cause and effect), in addition to aspect and tense. The absence of these relations might be a sign of non-text.

Linguistic devices, for Beaugrande and Dressler, serve to trigger the mental construction of a textual world and, therefore, the choice and use of cohesive strategies in text building reflect cognitive factors.

2. Kress and Van Leeuwen's Model(2006)

Kress and van Leeuwen concentrate on the significance of visual elements on images. People, places, and things (including abstract things) all are involved in visual analysis.

There is an interaction, according to them, between people, places and things depicted in the images of visual communication. An interaction occurs also between the producer and the viewer of the image. Image analysis seeks the following elements:

1. Participants: an image may include two types of participants:

- Represented participants (people, objects, places, products depicted in images).

- Interactive participants (real people who communicate with each other through the image. (The producers and viewers of images).

2. The Gaze: There are two kinds of gaze:

- Demand gaze when the participants face the viewer, looking directly to him.
- Offer gaze when the participants do not face the viewer directly.

3. Distance: The distance is the relation between the represented participants and the viewers. The level of intimacy between them is detected according to this distance.

4. Angle: The position of the photographer when depicting the image, it is called the angle of interaction. There are two kinds of angles.

– Horizontal plane

– Vertical plane

5. Modality: concerns whether what we hear or see is true or not, it is shown through the colours of the image. There are three rules of colour as markers of naturalistic modality.

– Colour saturation,

– Colour differentiation

– Colour modulation

6. Composition: this involves the way representational and interactive elements relate to each other, and how they are integrated into a meaningful whole.

6. Data Analysis

Image (1):



i. Textual Analysis:

A news: "Britain may quit E.U."

Greece: "But I AM STAYING!"

- "but" , here, is for **conjunction**.
- '*quit*' is antonymous with '*staying*', the presence of Greece, even, is collocated with the exit of Britain, since the former has great debts the matter that makes Greece fear of dismissal.
- 'I'm staying' is not followed by 'in *the E.U.*', just like that of 'Britain may quit *the E.U.*', this absence shows **ellipsis**.

ii. Visual Analysis

The participants are six cartoon characters, (5) of them stand for the (EU), and one for Greece; a table for negotiation; the flag of EU; a paper in their hands.

The participants have indirect relationship with the producer and the viewer, the gaze is not directed to them, giving a far and unfriendly distance between them.

The image is of horizontal angle and the a front view, indicating that the participants are in equal position with the viewer.

The modality is low, the visual representative of the objects depicted in the image make them far from realistic with the dominance of some shades of blue. The central position of the participants indicates their importance. They are the nucleus of the information.

All the Ps are gathered to the area of *old*, except the *Greece* who is to the area of the *new*, their astonishment is expected but the latter's replay is unexpected.

iii. Multimodal Blend

The image depicts the reaction of EU members to the news of UK decision to exit, this situation may activate other members to exit, except for the Greek, who can never think of exit due to their debts and trade deficit.

Image (2):



i. Textual Analysis:

a signboard "*Exit*"

- A news: "Great Britain, taking very precise steps towards a successful *exit* from the European union?"

The word 'exit' is repeated, we have **recurrence**.

ii. Visual Analysis

The participants are a clown about to fall with his hat flying in the air and his scooter going away, a toy car, a ball and three bottles, a door for exit, and a league representing EU with a falling chair referring to Brexit.

The gaze offer, the participants do not face the viewer that leads to the lack of intimacy between them. The angle is horizontal, we have oblique angle from left to right showing the unreality of what the participants perfume, with a detachment from the viewer

Modality is low, the main participant is not much nearer to real life and that is reflected through the low colour saturation. The main participant is in the center while other participants are to the margins with a pit of contradiction between the image and the text.

iii. Multimodal Blend

The man resembles UK, his clothes are in the shape of the British flag. Their decision to exit is depicted as being a mistake. The man is about to fall down. This symbolizes the case of UK which is about to be destroyed when exiting.

Image (3):



i. Textual Analysis:

- A man carrying a sign: "At last *we* 've got *our* country back?"

'we' and 'our' are deictic **proforms**.

- There is a **recurrence** of the word '*Brexit*' between the sign a man is carrying, and a sign someone is carrying who is encouraging Brexit.
- there is other relations among the clothes and accessories the man is wearing, there is '*cloth*' and '*suit*', the '*watch*' and '*shoes*', the '*printing press*' and '*paper*' and finally '*champagne*' and '*cork*'.

ii. Visual Analysis

The participants are a giant cartoon character representing Britain holding a cup of champagne, a flag and a bottle of cork in his pocket. He is stepping a mini car and there is a crowd of people behind him.

The man is gazing to the viewer directly, with a low angle causing the main participant look awesome and imposing, giving him a superiority on the viewer. The modality is low, the image is far from reality, and the composition is contradictory.

iii. Multimodal Blend

in this image, the producer criticizes the fact that the British Citizens hopes that they could get rid of the EU, yet they are in fact owed to the countries of EU with many of the necessary equipments of everyday life.

Image (4):



i. Textual Analysis:

a signboard "Let's take our country back, vote leave"

- Newspaper (1): "Brexit chaos"
- Newspaper (2): "Brexit they lied"
- A man: "can I take my vote back?"
- There is a **recurrence** of the word '*Brexit*' between the newspaper a man is carrying, and another dropped on ground. Another **recurrence** is of the two words '*back*' on the sign and in the bubble of the man's speech.

ii. Visual Analysis

The participants are a British man holding a newspaper, Big Ben is to his right, a tree embraced with a fence and on the latter is a signboard. Two thrown flags, papers and a newspaper on the ground.

The man is gazing directly to the producer creating an atmosphere of intimacy between them. The image is made from a horizontal angle, from left to right. The producer situated himself in a side position.

Modality is high with a normal colour saturation. The position of the sign in the left of the image makes it the given information while the man and the bubble of his speech are to the right, they are the new elements.

iii. Multimodal Blend

This image depicts two main ideas: the first is the chaos of exit/ remain conflicts occurred in UK after voting; and the regret of some of those who have voted on behalf of exit. They wish another vote could be done to correct what they have done in the first vote.

Image (5):



i. Textual Analysis:

- A man in the airplane: "Pardon me sir, may I suggest *you* to take *a parachute with you*?"
- A British man: "Thanks, the flag will *do*!"
- "you" is repeated twice, there is a **recurrence**.
- the phrase "a parachute with you" is substituted by "do!", here is a relation of **proforms**.
- 'the flag' has a relation with the 'parachute', they are both fabrics.

ii. Visual Analysis

The participants are the back part of an airplane representing EU with two characters; one of them is British who is about to descend while the other is an EU member who offers the former a parachute.

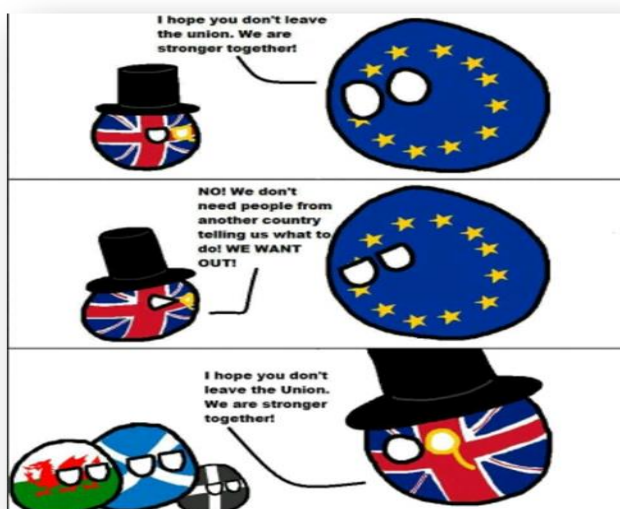
There is no gaze in the image, the participants are too far from the viewer, there is a very little interaction between them. The producer gives the image in a horizontal angle, which creates an involvement with the viewer.

The modality is high with normal colour saturation. The participants are centered in the image giving a real composition. They receive the main focus in the image, with the colours of UK's flag in colours differing from the background.

iii. Multimodal Blend

The image shows a great satire for the UK citizens who are happy of exiting the EU, yet they are not aware of the consequences of the exit. They are depicted as falling down without parachute, that means destruction.

Image (6):



i. Textual Analysis:

–EU to Britain: "I hope you don't leave the union. We are stronger together"

–Britain to EU: "no, *we* don't need people from another country telling us what to do! *We* want out!"

–Britain to Scotland, N. Ireland and Wales: "I hope you don't leave the union. We are stronger together"

– 'we' is repeated twice in Britain speech, here is a **recurrence**.

– "I hope you don't leave the union. We are stronger together" of EU is repeated by Britain, we have another **recurrence**.

ii. Visual Analysis:

The participants are cartoon drawings standing for EU, Britain, Scotland, N. Ireland and Wales. The participants' gaze is offer, they all offered to the viewer as actors in a play.

The producer situated himself in a place fronting the participants giving a horizontal angle, which raises a sense of involvement with the viewer. Modality is low, the participants are not part of real world. The elements are centered in the image.

The main focus in the first two parts is on the EU, it is depicted as greater in size and to the right, the area of importance, unexpected and new; in the third part, however, the focus is shifted to UK compared with the other three.

iii. Multimodal Blend

The image depicts the real fact that UK is composed from three countries in addition to N. Ireland. Since UK decides to leave the unity it belongs to, the constituents of UK, in analogy, would seek for leaving their unity in the future. UK is criticized as doing things , it is afraid of being done within the future.

7. Conclusions

The study comes up with the following conclusions:

- Cartoons as other means of communication, utilizes both linguistic and visual elements in delivering the message they are designed for. The first hypothesis, then has been achieved.
- By the use of cohesive ties, cartoons look rather communicative more than with the application of other standards, this achieves the second hypothesis.
- Cohesion occurs with, even, simple short texts.
- Cartoon is an important message that utilizes all the linguistic structures.
- The producer may use a single word to make the whole image sensible.
- Images, as well as texts, can produce a visible unit of meaning.

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