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A Pragmatic Study on the Death of Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi in Selected Newspapers

ABSTRACT

Language is an essential instrument in the hands of journalists, who use it to achieve a variety of goals. The gap of the current study is to figure out the hidden meanings that are covered in the newspapers about the death of the Iranian President death Ebrahim Raisi. The study aims to explicate how the pragmatic implications are used in the media coverage of the Iranian president's death. The qualitative method was used for data analysis. Two global newspapers, namely, Le Monde from France and The Times of India, were selected to investigate the data extensively. Grice's implicature theory (1975) was applied to explicate the implied meanings. The findings of the study reveal that the journalists in these two newspapers frequently convey implied ideas that are carried out depending on the context through the use of particularised conversational implicature. It is concluded that these newspapers utilise certain interpretations that convey the concept of support and criticism based on the event. Lastly, the study contributes in offering deep understandings for journalists, educators, students of English, researchers and policymakers since it illustrates how the news is framed to report on global events.

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دراسة براغماتية عن وفاة الرئيس الإيراني إبراهيم رئيسي في صحف مختارة

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المستخلص

تعتبر اللغة أداة أساسية في أيدي الصحفيين، يستخدمونها لتحقيق أهداف متعددة. تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى كشف المعاني الخفية المتعددة التي رافقت وفاة الرئيس الإيراني إبراهيم رئيسي. لذا، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف كيفية توظيف الدلالات البراغمية في التغطية الإعلامية لوفاة الرئيس الإيراني في الصحف. تم اتباع المنهج النوعي لتحليل البيانات. وتم اختيار صحيفتان عالميتان، هما لوموند الفرنسية وتايمز أوف إنديا، للتحقيق في البيانات على نطاق واسع. واستُخدمت نظرية التضمن لغريس (1975) لشرح المعاني الخفية. وقد أظهرت النتائج أن الصحفيين في هاتين الصحيفتين ينقلون في كثير من الأحيان أفكاراً ضمنية يتم تنفيذها اعتماداً على السياق من خلال استخدام التضمن الخاص بالحوار. توصلت الدراسة إلى أن هذه الصحف تستخدم تفسيرات معينة تحمل مفهوم الدعم والنقد بناءً على الحدث. وأخيراً، تُعدّ هذه الدراسة مهمة للصحفيين والمعلمين وطلبة أقسام اللغة الانكليزية والباحثين وصانعي السياسات، إذ توضح كيفية صياغة الأخبار لتغطية الأحداث العالمية.

الكلمات المفتاحية : التضمن، التداولية، وفاة رئيسي

1. Introduction

A historic event occurred on Sunday, May 19, 2024, when a helicopter crashed near Varzaqan, Iran. This event had an impact on the whole area and the entire globe. The helicopter was transporting a number of prominent Iranian officials, including President Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Governor Malek Rahmati of East Azerbaijan, and Mohammed Ali Ale-Hashem, the supreme leader's envoy to East Azerbaijan (Rafizadeh, 2024). Newspapers are seen to be an effective way to disseminate world news. The event was extensively covered in the media, especially in newspapers. According to Khalid and Ahmed (2014), newspapers are the primary platform for the sharing of information. In the modern era, they are important agenda-setters. Newspapers provide a vital public relations role by providing in-depth perspectives on topics such as insecurity and environmental issues. In addition, newspapers are regarded as an influential means which is utilized to convince readers. Direct or indirect instruments are used by the newspapers to impact public opinion. One of the ways that is used to make this effect is the implementation of hints and indirect messages to move those readers in a specific

direction. This direction takes different sides, whether socially, politically, or economically. Based on this information, news framing is a deliberate process, it is well-arranged policy that carries an intentional ends with the emphasis that the newspaper plays a pivotal role on uncovering unknown news which are efficient for public in order to produce a change in political prospect and display a new concern (Rizk,1994).

The language of journalism is an interesting task to be investigated as it provides a critical perspective on the variations and power of each journalistic discipline. This kind of language makes it easier to comprehend how journalists fabricate facts or reports, formulate opinions, provide anticipated news, and distinguish media language from other languages we come across. Fundamental journalistic practices include fact-checking, interviewing, and investigation that are conveyed to media consumers with the goals of informing, persuading, and reinforcing public opinion using deceptive tactics(Adeoit, 2023).

The goal of community service is to provide the community with factual information through a good interview, writing, and screening process before being given to the public. In order to ensure that the information conveyed is factual and accounted for, there should be more gatekeeping or filtering of information from online newspaper media. Users can access information through an easily accessible online platform without purchasing newspapers (Mahdi,2024). Moreover, as political events grow more frequent and news media outlets compete with one another, news production becomes increasingly important in an effort to sway the audience's opinion. Consequently, news reporters have a tendency to select specific occurrences that may be considered noteworthy. News production, however, becomes the reporters' major focus, and the different methods they employ to do this fall within their principal responsibilities. Pragmatic language processes are the best approach to providing and revealing obscure meanings among the perspectives (Al-Hindawi and Al-Ebadi, 2017)

Therefore, the fundamental focus of the current study is to explore how pragmatic implications are used in the media coverage of the Iranian president's death in French and Indian newspapers. This study is necessary in order to uncover the hidden meaning in every newspaper by employing pragmatic appurtenances. The study of pragmatics in

linguistics examines how meaning is influenced by context. According to Mey (2001), "pragmatics studies the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society"(p.6). In addition, Crystal (2003) adds that pragmatics is utilized to draw attention to the function of language users, their decisions, and the limitations they face. Thus, the study aims to find out the pragmatic significance of implicature in relation to Grice's maxims and the most frequent kinds of implicatures that are employed to depict the death of Raisi.

2. Literature Review

2.1 News Discourse and Pragmatics

Kress (1989) states that discourse is a methodically organized set of assertions that, by applying and repeating the human experience, reflect the institution's meanings and values; it influences the participants' surroundings and forms reality.. This corresponds to Fowler's (1991) recent view that discourse both limits the way in which we can debate topics and serves as a means for producing understanding about multiple things. In this regard, Al-Duleimi & Al-Ebadi (2016) admit that language serves as the primary means of controlling the beliefs of others. Thus, it is clear that news discourse is never value-free; rather, it is a reflection of values. Language seems to be a useful tool for communicating these values. News reporters' style choices might convey their distinct perspectives and have various societal ramifications. The reporters of news articles demonstrate the arguments, and the characteristics that are assigned to them represent the knowledge that the discourse creates (Bell, 1991).

According to Katz (1992), the intended language has two inferences: the first is that language communicates to a specific audience in order to create the conditions for the desired knowledge and empathy, and it is not a separate body of logical intentions. The second is that spoken language is a concept itself. Concerning the first inference of language, Leech (1983) argues that pragmatics is considered to be associated with potential meaning, or how participants negotiate meaning in their interaction, since it examines how they use language to reflect contextual and social factors as well as to influence the addressee's thinking. Furthermore, Thomas (1995) points out that pragmatic meaning is something that is created by speakers and listeners. This viewpoint sees

language as an action or a process of using words to accomplish tasks. Thereby, acts such as promising, reporting and so on are never done without employing words. In this consideration, Montgomery (2007) asserts that such doings are the primary elements of news discourse.

2.2 The Cooperative Principle (CP)

According to Mey (2001), pragmatics is the study of language use in communication when people interact cooperatively. Paul Grice is the first academic to discuss the concept of cooperative principles in relation to linguistic communication acts. The cooperative principle is described by Grice (1975) as follows: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it happens, by adhering to the accepted objective or course of the talk interchange in which you are involved"(p.37). Grice identifies four pragmatic maxims or principles—the quantity, quality, relationship, and manner maxims—that are integrated into his theory:

1. The Quantity maxim: be informative and give information as much as needed, but no more.
2. The Quality maxim: be truthful, and do not give false information.
3. The Relation maxim: be relevant.
4. The Manner maxim: be brief and clear.

With the line of this perspective, Birner (2013) confirms that in order to be cooperative, interlocutors must remain focused on the subject of their conversation, or at the very least, on the pertinent aspects of it; they must convey information that can be accurately, plausibly, and succinctly interpreted; they must avoid presenting disorganized and disjointed thoughts and ideas, but rather provide a fully understandable contribution. They should avoid introducing irrelevant information.

2.2.1 Flouting the Maxims

The participants themselves are not always able to adhere to the conversational maxims, and conversations do not always flow successfully. The phenomenon known as the "flouting maxim" occurs when individuals disregard the conversational maxims. When a speaker or writer disregards at least one cooperative principle in a speech or utterance, it is considered a violation of the principles. It is indicated that the speaker's or listener's

remark comes after the speaker concludes and applies the cooperative principle. The cooperation principle is not always upheld in realistic communication(Grundy,1995). Hence, it is possible to flout Grice's maxims, so the meaning can be inferred as the speaker's attempt to demonstrate their points by breaking at least one of them in a statement or speech. Moreover, people may flout a maxim because they are unable to speak clearly or because they intentionally want to deceive (Thomas, 1995). Additionally, Cutting (2002) mentions that "whenever a maxim is flouted, there must be an implicature to save the utterance from simply appearing to be a faulty contribution to a conversation" (p. 76).

2.3 Grecian Implicature

The idea of implicature might be presented as a new approach to meaning description. Grice's primary impact on the concept of meaning is the distinctive, unconventional way of talking about meaning in conversation—a meaning that is referred to as non-natural. Meaning in linguistics, particularly structural linguistics, is influenced by many notions of norms that characterise natural language (Saussure, 1968). Lawal (1997) declares that implicature is the space between what is stated directly and what is implied but not clearly stated. It is the distinction in a communication between what is stated and what is inferred (or intended).

According to Grice (1975), implicature occurs when a speaker implies something that differs from what they say. Furthermore, when Grice establishes the four maxims of quality, quantity, manner, and relevance, he indicates that the hearer should anticipate the notion of implicature to represent the utterer's aim in the interaction if the utterances disrupt any of these four maxims. The most exciting implicature is viewed when a maxim is flouted. Additionally, Yule (1996) maintains that implicatures are something that goes beyond the meaning that is expressed literally. Therefore, listeners must be able to decode the speakers' unspoken meanings.

It is essential to interpret these statements from the viewpoint of the listeners. Thomas (1995) demonstrates how an implicature is intentionally generated by the speaker and may (or may not) be understood by the hearer. In contrast, an inference is the hearer's creative act based on the evidence at hand, and it could differ from the speaker's intended

meaning. As well, implicature and inference are not characteristic of the words themselves but of participants' intentions and interpretations. The speaker's intended implicature may differ from the hearer's inference (Archer, Aijmer, & Wichmann, 2012)

In order to show this discrepancy between the hearer's inference and the intended implicature, the following example from the film 51st. A character named Felix De Sousa instructed Frederick, a member of his criminal group, to "take care of Laurence, the chemist." But De Sousa discovers the chemist's body when he opens the trunk of the car! "What happened?" De Sousa asks Frederick, confused.

(2a) Frederick: You told me to take care of him

(2b) De souse: Oh, Shit! I meant to take care of him in a realistic way, not to kill him!

Adopted form (Archer, Aijmer and Wichmann, 2012)

2.3.1. Types of Implicature

Grice (1975) distinguishes between what is said and what is meant by the listener in the communication. Based on this idea, he offers certain types of Implicatures that are used by individuals. Smith (1982) asserts that sense and reference are the foundations of meaning, and this is seen in the philosophy of language when reference is more characteristic of utterances than of linguistic contexts. Thus, Grice (1975) distinguishes between two types of implicatures: conventional implicature and conversational implicature. The first one is predicated on the use of certain words in the context and the meanings they convey. Therefore, neither the notion of cooperative principles nor the explanation of specific context in conversation is relevant. In other words, when a small set of words is used, they produce conventional implicature, which is a characteristic of those linguistic items. Conventional implicature also has the unique quality of being context-independent, meaning that it is tied to a particular language statement and does not necessitate computation based on the maxims of cooperation. The conventional implicature is produced in the following example:

A- He is an Englishman; he is, therefore, brave.

B- He is an Englishman; he is brave.

In light of the adverb "therefore", it introduces the implicature that the referent of "he" is brave because he is English.

Conversational implicature is the second type of implicature. This kind of implicature expresses the notion of an inferred meaning that the person who understands the context can predict. Conversational implicatures are inferences made on the assumption that the speaker and the addressee have knowledge of and agree with the communicational norms (Griffiths, 2006).

This type of implicature is divided into two types:

1. Particularized Conversational Implicature

Levinson (2000) argues that particularised implicature occurs when specific context factors are taken into account. It indicates that in order to comprehend the additional meaning

that is being delivered, the listeners must possess certain prior information or deductions (Alhusseini & Khaluhin, 2025).

2. Generalized Conversational Implicature

Without specific context, generalized conversational implicatures are recognised (Birner, 2013). According to Levinson (2000), generalized conversational implicature is conversational implicature that takes place without mentioning any specific context-specific characteristics. It implies that listeners may comprehend the meaning of an exchange without any specific proficiency or comprehension (Alhusseini & Khaluhin, 2025).

3. Methodology

This study employs the qualitative analysis method as it depends on selecting particular newspapers that include useful information that supports the objectives of the investigation. Merriam and Grenier (2019) state that there are several reasons why qualitative research ought to be carried out. First of all, qualitative research is a valuable instrument for characterizing our social environment and our lives (Mawat & Mohammed, 2023). Second, the fundamental tenet of qualitative research is that people socially create meaning via their interactions with the outside world. Finally, it helps people make sense of their experiences. Furthermore, according to Lapan, Quartaroli, and Riemer (2012), qualitative research provides the subject of the study with significant information from the researcher's point of view. Qualitative researchers could look at how their methods work

with the research. Additionally, a qualitative study focuses on people's views and interpretations of various events they have encountered, capturing their viewpoints in a natural environment (Lincoln, 1994).

The selected data are extracted from a well-known information-sharing newspapers that provide a variety of news about Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi's death on May 19, 2024. These newspapers include reports with a variety of elements, including words or phrases, plane crashes, and so forth. Thus, two newspapers are selected, namely, *Le Monde from France* and *The Times of India*. Among the factors taken into account during data collection are the variety of news and culture. In order to present an organised analysis, the study involves a number of steps. First, choosing six extracts with various forms and contents to analyse them pragmatically. Second, selecting three of each newspaper to understand the processes by which it develops and reveals hidden meanings. The criteria of choosing these extracts are based on the linguistic variety, offering contrastive views between these two newspapers, and the sufficient information that are related to the event.

In this work, the Grecian notion of implicature is used. Grice (1975) claims that implicature is gained through verbal exchanges, which is why the researchers chose this theory. People's utterances are often understood by the readers even when they do not explicitly state their intentions because they are founded on particular ideas. Therefore, the concept of CP reflects these ideas. Grice's theories can therefore be applied to improve comprehension of the pragmatic elements of the media language that covers the event of the Iranian president's death.

4. Data Analysis

The researchers organise the newspapers into two sections to provide an orderly presentation of the analysis. French newspapers are placed in the first one, whereas Indian ones are included in the second. Two English extracts are selected from each newspaper for the analysis.

4.1. Analysis of French Newspaper

Extract 1

“The death of Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi at the age of 63 in a helicopter crash on May 19 ushers in a period of political uncertainty in Iran, as the Middle East is

shaken by the war in Gaza and the succession to the 85-year-old Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic, Ali Khamenei, looms large” (Golshiri & Zerrouky, 2024, p.1).

The extract indicates that Iran is in a tough situation as a result of the death of its president. By saying that **"ushers in a period of political uncertainty in Iran,"** the journalist implies the possibility that Iran's leadership is not strong enough to handle such a crisis. The journalist suggests that the regime suffers from potentially weak management. Furthermore, the statement **"the Middle East is shaken by the war in Gaza"** implies that Iran is involved in the Eastern regional conflict, and Iran's future is entirely mysterious at the time of Raisi's passing. It is a particularized conversational implicature as the journalist does not explore the relation of Gaza's war with this incident in order to convey indirect meanings, which require the readers to interpret. The maxim of quantity is flouted in the text because there is insufficient information about the critical period that the uncertainty of Iran, as well as not much explanation about the war in Gaza and its impact on the future of the Iranian regime.

Extract 2

“Ebrahim Raisi, the eighth president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, died on Sunday, May 19, in a helicopter crash in a mountainous region of the country's northwest. The 63-year-old ultraconservative cleric, elected in 2021 in a widely boycotted election, died while returning to Iran from a state visit to Azerbaijan”. (Golshiri & Zerrouky, 2024, p.2).

The extract has two particularized conversational implicatures. Firstly, the language implicitly suggests that Raisi's death was caused by environmental factors like heavy fog and high winds rather than human intervention by referring to **"a helicopter crash in a mountainous region."** Therefore, by mentioning only the natural causes, the journalist implies that there is no conscious intention behind his death, just a spontaneous occurrence. Secondly, by stating that Raisi was **"elected in 2021 in a widely boycotted election,"** the journalist implies doubt on the legitimacy of the newly elected president, who was not widely accepted by his people. That means, the regime in Iran is poor from transparency to let people come to power without the correct management of elections. Thus, the implication is that the election regime process is manipulated. The maxim of

quantity is also flouted in the text because the journalist doesn't adequately illustrate the role of a mountain in the accident of the president. As well, the phrase "**boycotted election**" is not related to the above text, as the journalist explains about the way that the incident happened. So, the maxim of relevance is disregarded within this utterance to imply the previous implication.

Extract 3

"To gauge the impact of the death of President Ebrahim Raisi, who died in a helicopter crash on Sunday, May 19, it is necessary to consider his role in the political system of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the direction of its foreign policy. It is, in a word, limited. It is not the president who ultimately makes the decisions, but the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic." (Golshiri & Zerrouky, 2024, p.3)

The extract discreetly criticises Iran's president by depicting him as a character with limited autonomy. The statement "**it is, in a word, limited**" suggests a strong implication that the president does not have entire decision-making authority in his presidential positions, implying that he is actually controlled. The journalist violates the principle of manners. He is very vague and short, with little detail to help clarify the point. It invites the idea that Raisi's death is significant for the regime. This sort of implicature is particularized because it demands that readers deduce hidden meanings from the speech.

4.2. Analysis of Indian Newspaper

Extract 1

"Raeisi and his foreign minister were returning from a visit to Iran's East Azerbaijan province when their helicopter reportedly encountered bad weather and had to make a hard landing. While there are unconfirmed, speculative reports of foul play, with the needle of suspicion pointing to Israel, these are unlikely to have a grain of truth". (Times Of India, 2024,p.1).

The underlying implication of this utterance is that the president's death was caused by weather, casting doubt on the official account. The phrase "**reportedly encountered bad weather**" raises scepticism about the official explanation, which may not be entirely accurate. Additionally, the journalist mentions unverified reports of foul play, but then dismisses them. This suggests that conspiracy theories, especially those involving Israel, are in fact rumoured to be engaged and spread on global news. This particularized conversational implicature is the result of the journalist's flouting of the maxim of quality

by employing speculative and not concrete language. Moreover, the journalist in this statement does not explain sufficiently who raises these suspicions and how to flout the maxim of quantity, too.

Extract 2

“Raisi, 63, who was elected president in 2021, has been a prominent figure in Iran, known for tightening morality laws, cracking down on anti-government protests, and pushing nuclear talks with world powers”. (Times Of India,2024, p.2) .

The extract suggests that Raisi is a powerful and capable president who has actively contributed to Iran's advancement. It is implied that Raisi gained power through a system of elections rather than by force or arbitrary choice by mentioning **"who was elected president in 2021."** This refers to the legitimacy level of the election, and the Iranian regime follows a systematic and lawful means to choose the President. As well, there are anti-government demonstrations during Raisi's presidency, as implied by the phrase **"cracking down on anti-government protests."** In other words, there is opposition that needs to be addressed immediately, which means employing force and harsh measures to eliminate it. Due to the ambiguity of the statement and the lack of facts about how and why Raisi abused them, the maxim of manner is flouted. Particularized conversational implicature is utilized in this text.

Extract 3

“Raisi enacted the hardline policies of his mentor Khamenei aimed at entrenching clerical power, cracking down on opponents, and adopting a tough line on foreign policy issues such as nuclear talks with Washington to revive Iran's 2015 nuclear pact”. (Times Of India,2024, p.3) .

The style of this extract suggests that Raisi is not an independent political player, but rather one who works under the authority of the Supreme Leader. The phrase "Raisi enacted the hardline policies of his mentor Khamenei" implies that Raisi is controlled by Khamenei in all of his policies, both domestically and internationally. The journalist violates the quantity maxim by presenting only a little information regarding Iranian policies and the character of the government. This leads the reader to infer the text's indirect meaning. The implicature is a Particularized type.

5. Discussion of Results

The investigation examines how French and Indian media employ pragmatic tools, particularly Grecian maxims, to represent distinct ideological viewpoints. The French newspaper delivers critical and suspicious tales by employing particularized implicature and violating maxims, notably the maxims of quantity, manner, and relevance. The hidden implications carried by violating the cooperation principle are varied.

It is delicately presented that the Iranian regime lacks an organised structure to run politically sensitive events, as in "**ushers in a period of political uncertainty in Iran,**" which violates the relevance and quantity maxims, leading the reader to assume regional instability and a problematic function. In addition to that, the report is focused on the geographical conditions that were the main causes behind the crash to dismiss all theories of conspiracy. Moreover, it is frequently noted that the president's election was not conducted in a democratic manner, implying systematic problems in the administration, as in the phrase "elected in 2021 in a widely boycotted election". The final excerpt demonstrates Raisi is out of actual authority and is completely under the supreme leader's influence.

The Indian newspaper has a more sophisticated approach, with developing scepticism and accurate reporting. The implications offered by this publication are negative, but it avoids overt opinion in favour of a more diplomatic approach. The statement "**While there are unconfirmed**" violates the principle of excellence by implying conjecture in the topic of Israel murdering Raisi and focusing on the adverse weather circumstances that led to his death. This reference to the systematic technique used in the election of presidents suggests that the Iranian regime is a planned functioning organisation. At the same time, the flouting of the manner maxim suggests that the administration suppressed demonstrations while the president was alive. The final extract uses a particularized implicature to emphasise the concept of power acquired by Iran's supreme leader, implying that Raisi is subject to a higher authority.

6. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the analysis, the study concludes that the chosen data from French and Indian newspapers use both particularized conversational implicature by

flouting certain cooperative principle maxims to convey implicit meanings that influence the public's perceptions related to the death of Ebrahim Raisi. The analysis of the French newspaper uncovers the following implications. Firstly, the president's death is caused by geographical conditions to convey the idea that it is a mere accident without casting any doubt on any part. Secondly, the analysis shows the negative impact of this incident on Iran's stability to suggest that Iran lacks strong leadership to handle such disasters. Thirdly, the journalists use hints on the mistrust that surrounds Raisi's presidency because of the election boycott, with emphasis on the main authority is handled by the supreme leader. Thus, the French newspaper portrays Raisi's death in a bad light, according to all of these interpretations, to reflect a critical reporting rather than a neutral one.

Conversely, the analysis of the Indian newspaper comes with the following results. Firstly, Raisi's death is caused by natural causes, but the journalist begins to doubt the reality of the information that the incident may be a deliberate conspiracy, especially when it comes to Israel. Secondly, it is disclosed that Raisi's governance is systematic and lacks any hints of its inadequacy to suggest that Iran follows a regulatory and lawful way in positioning people. Thirdly, the analysis emphasises that the president's moves are controlled by Ali Khamenei to have a similar view to the French newspaper, which presents this idea. According to these interpretations, the Indian newspaper portrays Raisi's death in a more positive light than a negative one. Finally, the researchers affirm that the theory of implicature plays a significant role in revealing the hidden meanings of the journalistic texts in both French and Indian data that are concerned with the coverage of the Iranian president's death.

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