

A Multi-model Perspective of Economy-related Semiotic Discourses of Pakistani Print Media

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Abstract: Graphic satire is one of the important genres of print media and it is very tactfully used to cartoon the dual faces of the politicians and other persons belonging to various domains of life. Its significance cannot be denied as cartoons are meant for everybody. The present study critically decodes the semiotics related to IMF and economic issues of Pakistan which appeared in Dawn (daily) from May 1st 2023 to May 1st, 2024. The present study employs an integrated research design to analyse the data, which comprises three modes. These modes include word, picture and remarks of focus group participants. The integrated research model has been devised by drawing upon Fairclough (2003), Kress (2010) and Kruger's (2002) research model to analyse visual and verbal modes used in the cartoons. In order to validate findings of semiotic analysis the study employs Kruger's (2002) model of Focus Group discussion data analysis. The findings of the study reveal that the emerging themes include dearness as frightening phenomenon, clutches of IMF on Pakistan, collapsing economy of Pakistan, mockery of Pakistan's economy, price hiking and its comparison with petrol bomb falling on Pakistani masses. The study maintains that print media discourses mirror social reality of a particular context and are best sites of ideological investment.

Key Words: IMF, Economy, Cartoons/Semiotic Discourses, Ideology, Semiology, Multimodality

Introduction

Fairclough (2003) maintains that no use of language is ideology free. Ideologies can be disseminated through different modes of language. Human beings communicate through verbal and non-verbal means of communication. In order to communicate more efficiently they communicate through linguistic and meta-linguistic modes. Meta-linguistic communication includes gesture, posture, eye contact and facial expression. Semiotic discourses are considered as one of the best modes of non-verbal communication because they carry bundle of interpretations. They are meant for everybody and are decoded accordingly. The employment of word- picture technique make communication more effective. At present, various visual and verbal practices are used to disseminate desired ideology to the target audience. These visual and verbal techniques include use of typographic techniques, foregrounding, backgrounding and the use of high and low angle technique. All these linguistic spins are ideological.

Van Dijk (2009) argues that Print media discourses are highly polarized and most often controlled by powerful groups. According to him whatever appears in media must be seen with critical eye because it reflects not the real rather the mirror image some constructed reality. Similarly, the semiotic discourses of print media cartoon the dual faces of the people and represent existing realities humorously but with serious purpose underneath. Most often, analogical representation of persons and events finds representation through semiotic discourses of print media. Sometimes, events are persons are represented employing the visual and verbal technique of exaggeration. An important thing about language to be considered is its arbitrary nature. Therefore, it is asserted that semiotics is culturally

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oriented and our senses are culturally trained to extract meanings out of them. Besides, visual imagery is context specific and no finality can be had about them as they are meant for everybody.

Significance of Newspaper Discourses

Newspapers have a special place in the stream of modern inventions due to their wider circulation and easily accessible for general masses. Dailies have different parts such as; Post-titles, editorials, caricatures, debates, interviews etc. Print media discourses (newspapers) contain plethora of information and headlines (an initial and most important part of the newspaper) are designed keeping in view the target readership. The headline (s) is/ are considered as index of the newspaper. Newspapers are designed according to the interest of its readerships. The issues related to the target readership find representation through the editorials and cartoons of particular newspapers. Urdu and English newspapers highlight the matters through their linguistic and semiotic discourses considering their target readership. The issues related to gender, class, power and politics usually are represented through different genres of newspapers. Therefore, it is inferred that print media like other forms of media is polarized and act as a distorting prism.

Different Genres of Newspapers

Newspapers have different genres such as headlines, editorials, semiotics, etc. Caricatures and cartoons are considered an important genre of newspapers because they persuade the target audience. These are designed keeping in view the target readership. Various techniques are used while designing caricatures in order to grab the attention of the target readership such as plain headline, metaphor headline, tagging and questioning headlines. Semiotic discourses are also considered as one of the significant features of the dailies because they embody bundle of interpretations. It is often believed that a picture speaks more than a thousand words and our sense of sight is mostly considered as most reliable as our sense of hearing. It is right to say that every genre of newspapers has technicalities of its own.

Significance of Political Cartoons

Political cartoons are one of strongest means of conveying political discourses of a society to the general masses. They perform dual function. On one hand, they provide humor and on the other they satirize existing socio-political issues. They are capable of providing social critique in the fewest possible words with the help of images. They are meant for everyone. Even nonprofessional can decode them as well. They are very handy in shaping public opinion regarding certain issues. Political cartoons have become an important genre of print media. Most often, it is observed that political cartoons embody the concept of de-naturalization of language. Most of the time one can observe disparity between linguistic and semiotic texts.

Marcel (2016) maintains that cartoons can play their role in shaping social reality and enhancing creativity, language skills, and cognitive abilities. Most often distorted version of reality it represented through them and at the same time, they represent conflicting social issues. Semiotic discourses can play their role in amplifying silenced voices and highlighting critical social issues. In this way, they are capable of providing subtle social critique with the underlying purpose of reformation of certain social issues. Another important function of political cartoons is that can play their role in opinion formation about certain social issues besides providing entertainment.

Literature Review

This section discusses critically the previous researches conducted in the similar domain. This has been done to generate gap for the present study. Sajid et al. (2022) critically examined the caricatures related to the US-Taliban relationships. The data for the present study collected from daily Dawn Pakistani English newspaper (1st January 2019 to 31st December 2019). It was analyzed at linguistic and semiotic levels by applying Kress and Hodge's (2010) Social Semiotic Approach and Kruger's (2000) Focus Group Discussion (F.G.D) research model. The findings reveal that there is no permanent concept of friend and foe in politics and print media discourse (s) is considered one of the appropriate sources for ideological investment. The parallelism between the mentioned research with the present one is that it also attempts to critically analyze the semiotic discourses, which appeared in Pakistani English Dawn Dailies (from 1st may 2023 to 31th may 2024).



Shakeel et al. (2023) conducted semiological discourse analysis of flags of thirty countries. The study employed social contemporary approach to multimodality to analyze the data at linguistic and semiotic levels. The conceptual framework comprised Kress and Hodge's (2010) research design. The levels of analysis discussed in the research model include, production and reception of meanings at various levels. The findings of the study reveal that flags reveal a nation's ideological and historical landscapes. The linguistic and semiotic modes employed are highly ideological and most often rooted in to history of that particular region and nation.

Saeed (2022) conducted a research related to political ideologies that how ideologies are propagated through semiotic discourses. The researcher has collected data from the Urdu (Jang) and English (Dawn) National dailies (1st February 2022 to 31st March 2022). It was decoded at linguistic and semiotic levels. A triangular research model was devised by drawing upon Fairclough (2003), Barthes (1973) and Kruger's (2000) research models. It was done because the data comprised three modes. Moreover, it also illustrates that politics is a game of an individual's interest where he/she wants to achieve success. The present research is similar with the mentioned one as it also critically analyzes the caricatures, which appeared in the national English (Dawn) newspapers (from 8th may 2023 to 31th may 2023). However, time span for data collection and data sources are different.

Sajid et al. (2021) conducted a research on the analysis of semiotic discourses related to gendered roles, which appeared in Urdu and English textbooks (based on Single National Curriculum 2021-2022, from grades 1 to 5, taught in Pakistan). The data was collected from English and Urdu textbooks. The researchers applied modified research models of Fairclough's (2003) model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Barthes' (1974) model of Semiological Discourse Analysis (SDA) to analyse linguistic and visual data. The data was analyzed at linguistic and semiotic levels. The research contends that semiotic discourses of primary textbooks play an important role in disseminating desired gendered ideologies to the young learners. The dominant emerging themes from the mentioned research include the role of women in professional, social and domestic domains. It correlates with the present study that the study at hand analyses visual and verbal contents mentioned English newspaper during the mentioned time span.

Sajid et al. (2021) conducted a research that aimed to decode the semiotics related to religio-political ideologies. The data source comprised English newspaper Dawn (1st October 2020 to 30th November 2020). The caricatures that carry the religio-political ideologies have been analyzed at linguistic and semiotic levels. In order to validate the findings, the researchers also conducted a focus group discussion (F.G.D) interview from two groups (Linguists and non-Linguists). The researcher has applied two research models of Hodge & Kress' (1997) research model and Kruger & Casey's (2000) Focus Group Discussion (F.G.D) interview. The findings revealed that most often politics is done in the name of religion and different religio-political parties exploit the people either in one way or the other.

Sajid et al. (2021) decoded the semiotics related to the representation of COVID 19 and political issues. The data for the present research has been collected data from the daily Dawn (English) and Jang (Urdu) newspapers (15th of March 2020, to May 15, 2020). The data (semiotic discourses) has been analyzed at linguistic and semiotic levels by applying the research models of Kress (2010) and Krueger (2001). The findings for the study reveal that semiotic discourses are culturally loaded and these are meant keeping in view the target readership. The present study correlates with the mentioned one as it also tries to decode the caricatures, which appeared in national English Dawn newspapers (from 1st may 2023 to 31th may 2023). The present is different from the above discussed studies because it critically analyses economy related cartoons by using integrated research approach and to the best of researcher's knowledge perhaps no study has been conducted on the mentioned data from devised theoretical perspective.

Research Methodology

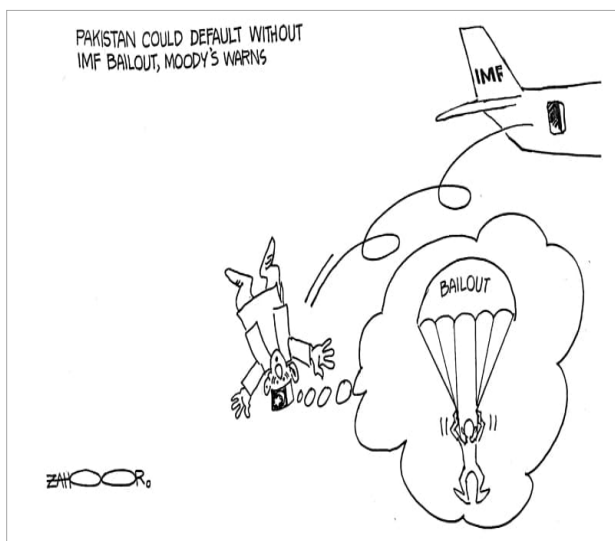
The present research is qualitative in nature because it critically analyses the semiotic discourses related to economic issues, which appeared in the selected Pakistani English newspaper (Dawn). The data for the present study has been analyzed by applying an integrated research theory of Kress and Hodge's (2010) model of the Contemporary Social semiotic Approach and Krueger's (2000) Focus Group discussion (F.G.D) technique. The proposed contemporary social semiotic approach works at these levels:

1. What explicit ideologies are being reflected in the text?
2. How are meanings being constructed in the text?
3. What links have been co-related in order to construct meanings in the text?
4. How are meanings being constructed according to the needs of social environment?
5. Whose benefit and agency are at work in the making of meaning?

However, the researchers have also conducted two focus group discussions among different participants. The researchers formed two groups and each group comprised 06 participants. First group comprises (06) participants who are M.Phil. in English and the second group also consisted of (06) participants. The participants in the second group are equally qualified but in different subjects. It was done to collect multiple opinions on the semiotics selected for discussions. The data has been recorded and analyzed by applying Kruger's (2000) Focus Group discussion (F.G.D) model which works at word, context, frequency, internal consistency, and finding the big idea levels. The rationale behind applying an amended research model is that the data for the present research comprises into three modes i.e linguistics, semiotic, and focus group participants' discussion. The researchers needed to analyze each aspect of language by applying the relevant research model accordingly. The selected caricatures related to the national economic issues have been critically decoded by employing an amended tri-angular research approach.

Data Analysis

Semiotic I



de Saussure (1916) opines that caricatures carry plethora of meanings at surface and deeper levels and context specific. Besides, he argues that our senses are culturally trained to analyze the semiotics comprehensively. Similarly, the semiotic and linguistic text under analysis illustrate the unstable condition of Pakistan due to the economy instability. Moody warns that Pakistan could default without International Monetary Fund (henceforth IMF) and warning seems has been issued by someone having high authority. India is much stronger than Pakistan and the PM of India (representative of the country) is in the position to warn Pakistan. The linguistic text could be the political instant that general elections are going to be held in India and it could be a political stunt to represent Pakistan in miserable condition for positive self-

representation. This aspect could please the Indian people in order to vote for a particular ideological group. The irony of situation is that others are telling that Pakistan's economy is in bad shape and it is a threat for our survival. It could have been indicated by some Pakistani leader. It implies that Pakistani leaders are totally unaware of present condition. By employing word-picture conjunction technique the message has been disseminated that without the bailout process of IMF Pakistan's survival is endanger as has been shown through the semiotic under analysis.

Kress (2010) believes that different linguistic and visual modes are employed to convey underlying ideology more persuasively. In this regard, the use of word- picture conjunction plays a significant role. Similarly, Moody wants to convey the message to the Indian people that his leadership India is getting more and more stable economically. This can be seen from the crumbling economy of Pakistan, which is always at the mercy of IMF. The last part of the Aeroplane (tail) is visible which carries the written text (IMF). The falling rope is a symbol of hope for Pakistan provided by IMF. The semiotic under analysis implies that as usual the only hope of survival for Pakistan is to get hold of the rope which has been fallen by IMF. The cartoon connotes that it is not only difficult for Pakistan to get hold of the rope, rather, it is equally difficult to cope with IMF's conditions.

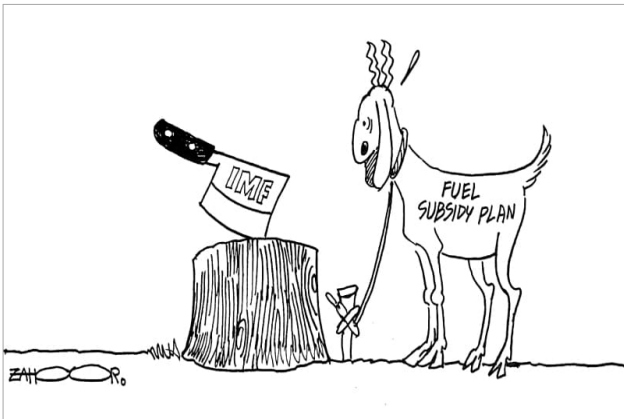
Hodge and Kress (2010) opine that semiotic are more loaded with multiple meanings as compared to written mode of language. One of the interpretations of the cartoon under analysis is that IMF has gone away leaving Pakistan

in trouble but there is a hope that we can save Pakistan provided the falling rope is firmly caught. It is observed that discourses are deeply rooted into history and we cannot decode them without having sound knowledge of history. In the given semiotic is decoded from this lens, it can be inferred that IMF had/ has been offering bailout packages to Pakistan from time to time but to no avail. The history of Pakistan shows that so far, Pakistan is unable to survive without the bailout process of IMF and this picture illustrates the same situation. The last part of the Aeroplane symbolizes the past history and it is the strategy of IMF to help Pakistan. Mood's remarks indicate that we (IMF) are the last hope for Pakistan. It is a game of interests that by providing bailout IMF wants to implement its agenda on Pakistan. The words "Default" and "Bailout" both are co- related to economy related issues.

The cartoon being analyzed connotes that the mode of global competition has changed. At the moment Pakistan is facing traditional and non-traditional security threats. The present scenario shown in the picture falls in the domain of non-traditional security threats. Economy is a non-traditional security threat. This threat is more dangerous as compared to traditional security threat. If you have money you can buy rockets, weapons, establish an army and you can create a technological base to defeat the enemy but if you don't have money, you can't do anything. In the present era, sustainable economy is more important than anything else. The head falling position of Pakistan symbolizes that Pakistan may go bankrupt any moment if IMF's bailout is not there.

Fairclough (2015) argues that no use of language is ideology free. Meanings can be changed by changing linguistic moves. Similarly, the modal verb "Could" which have been used in the linguistic text implies the degree of uncertainty (doubt) and if we go through the history of Pakistan right from the beginning it has been economically unstable and whenever it came to the state of stability it was because of the parachute provided by IMF. The falling man shown in the picture is a metaphorical representation of Pakistan. The overall impression of the picture is that Pakistan may become bankrupt without bailout of IMF. The linguistic and visual modes illustrate that IMF is the only ray of hope for Pakistan to survive. The irony of situation is that how long will it continue.

Semiotic 2



Eco (2001) maintains that a picture is worth than a thousand words and our sense of sight is mostly reliable than our sense of hearing. Human beings make maximum use of body language while communicating with others. Similarly, the semiotic (showing a tied goat) under analysis metaphorically represents the public of Pakistan. It (the tied goat) seems frightened and the context shown in the picture reveals that it has every reason to be frightened because the death instrument (butcher's axe) is there before it. The only benefit that government provides to the people is the fuel subsidy. International Monetary Fund (hence forth IMF) is creating

pressure over Pakistani government of cut down the fuel subsidy which is given to the Pakistani people and the Pakistani people seem frightened. Pakistani public as have been represented by goat have always been serving as a sacrificial goat for the benefits of ruling elite class. It is obvious from the picture that on one hand Pakistani people are sacrificing their hard-earned money at the altar of IMF but, on the other hand they are getting nothing in terms of relief from dearness. It means that Pakistani people have been butchered by IMF so far because of the lavish spending of the ruling class.

Bojorkvall (2014) argues that visual and verbal practices used in the semiotic discourses are layered and embody various cultural connotations in them. Likewise, the cartoon under analysis depicts that Pakistani public are meant to suffer badly because of wrong policies of their governments. They have always been suffering for the sake of others. With every passing day, terms and conditions of IMF are getting tougher and tougher for the people of Pakistan. They are unable to resist rather badly tied to unbreakable chains as has been shown in the picture. The concept of representer and represented is quite obvious. The people of Pakistan have been de-humanised by their analogical representation with helpless animal. This is how, it can be said that discourses reflect the prevailing socio-political tendencies of a

particular context. The black and white color is obvious in the picture which implies that now the things between Pakistani government and IMF are in black and white that Pakistani people will have to suffer endlessly to pay back to IMF.

Leeuwen (2011) is of the view that semiotic discourses denote and connote things simultaneously. It is obvious from the cartoon being decoded. It can be inferred from the text that one of the root causes of economy crisis in Pakistan is the lack of long-term planning to create local wealth. We have been consulting IMF since 1960s. This picture implies the relationship with IMF it is obvious that IMF has never been friendly to Pakistan. It always prefers its own interests and then issues instalment of loan to Pakistan. It has always been cutting the best slice of Pakistan for its own interests. Now historical perspective it obvious there many countries in the world who have got rid of IMF by proper planning and honest efforts. The text under analysis implies that these things are missing among the ruling elite of Pakistan. Therefore, the general public has to suffer as sacrificial goat. The goat which has been represented could run away but the cutting instrument which represents IMF it can hit from the distance. It implies that we are badly trapped. The operating hand can be IMF itself, which is run by the ten countries. There can't be any possibility of survival for Pakistani people because the goat (which represents the Pakistani people) is tied with a rope and IMF can cut it into pieces at any time. The tale of the goat is upwards and it implies that it is frightened. Therefore, the overall impression of the scenario shown in the picture is that Pakistan because of her poor economy is at the mercy of IMF. The use of typographic techniques in the form of word-picture conjunction, the use of capital letters and bold font implies the severity of the issue. The underlying ideology being disseminated is that the sooner Pakistan's economy gets better, the better it is.

Focus Group Findings

As mentioned in the methodology section that the present study employs Krueger's (2002) model of Focus group discussions (FGD) analysis. He asserts that that in order to do in-depth ideological analysis one needs to use FGD tool to validate his/her analysis. By conducting FGD one can get multiple opinions on certain issues in the form of supporting or competing discourses. This cannot be had through one to one discussion. Therefore, this technique of FGD has been used in the study to validate the findings of semiotic analysis. The following section reproduces the remarks of participants. These are as under:

"I guess the picture explains a very miserable condition of Pakistani people. The speech bubble on the head of the goat according to me symbolizes the only worry among Pakistani masses. it can be guessed that the survival of Pakistan from the sharp axe of IMF is almost impossible",

Another participant remarked which are as under:

"The whole scenario highlights the relationship between Pakistan and IMF. Pakistan has been shown as a weak animal which is at the mercy of IMF. Moreover, the picture represents master slave relationship as well."

Another participant expressed her views as under:

"I am more interested in highlighting linguistic and semiotic techniques used in the cartoon. The use of capital letters and bold font highlights that it is a very significant issue for Pakistan. Pakistan should plan how to get rid of IMF. For the time being it seems almost impossible for Pakistan until or unless some revolutionary steps are taken."

While expressing her views one of the participants argued which is as under:

"It is evident from the history of last sixty years that Pakistani economy has never been stable, it is surviving because of aid from IMF. Now the rulers of Pakistan have become habitual of IMF. However, the picture shows that Pakistan has no identity of its own if IMF is not at her back."

Still another participant expresses his views which have been reproduced as under:

“The linguistic and semiotic texts give threatening message. The linguistic choices such as default and bale out connote that Pakistan is facing more of non-traditional threats. The last hope for the survival of Pakistan is to catch the rope lowered by IMF can Pakistan not survive at her own?”

It is obvious from the remarks of the Focus Group Discussions, Participants that now Pakistan's economy is in miserable condition. In order to make it stable, Pakistani Government will have to think out of the box. Until or unless revolutionary steps are taken, no betterment can be expected. It is necessary to earn independent identity for Pakistan.

Findings and Conclusion

The analysis of data collected for the present study reveals that Pakistan is facing traditional and non-traditional threats. The findings of the study reveal that non-traditional threats (instable economy is more dangerous than the traditional threats. The study reveals that Pakistan at present is totally at the mercy of IMF. Though the history of depending on IMF's aid is very long, yet revolutionary steps and honest efforts can turn the table. However, the study concludes that print media semiotic discourses are one of the significant means of ideological investment. They mirror sociopolitical trends prevailing in a particular society.

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