Chapter 4
Linguistic Elements as Tools for the Analysis of Media Narratives

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ABSTRACT

A close linguistic analysis of media discourse might provoke and provide useful information regarding the power of media itself and the way people construct meanings. The present study seeks to explore how social problems are reflected in media texts. The representation of social problems—crime, poverty, migrant crisis, as well as minority groups—contains linguistic elements which are aimed at constructing certain images of these issues. Figurative linguistic elements are used to enhance the reliability of the story, to appeal to the readers' emotions, and to manage the story and the sequence of the events which are being represented. A proper use of language in the representations social problems could be considered as an effective tool to keep readers interested in the story and transform it into one that is engaging and reliable at the same time.

INTRODUCTION

Society has been extensively immersed in media content for the last few decades, as the number of Internet users has reached almost 5 billion today, accounting for nearly 40% of the total population. At the same time, according to live data provided by InternetLiveStats, the number of internet sites will soon reach 2 billion. As Koltay (2011) notes, media content has an impact not only on the reader's views, but also influences human behaviour and our daily processes of communication as well as collaboration. The understanding of media becomes vital if media is seen as an opportunity for individuals to share digital messages and an opportunity to impact ones' beliefs as well as present different kinds of information. The capability to analyse critically media information can help to understand the true depths of a story as well as identify the message which was meant to be sent to the reveivers. As Bernoff and Li (2008) suggest, social media as an ecosystem may be analysed from the participants' perspective in their capacity as creators, critics, collectors, followers or spectators. Taking into account the type of social media, the

information on social media can be seen as "half-life information" or "depth of information" (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011). The former refers to the time limit the information is seen as useful, while the latter is attributed to the richness of content the information provides.

Today's media can be defined as a means of mass communication which disseminates the message to the readers (Crow & Lawlor, 2016). It can reach the public using different platforms, such as advocacy media, social media and other forms of information transfer. Moreover, the multiple actors in media can frame the message they send differently. Origin, production, content as well as effects of message can be constructed and designed using different framing techniques and processes which mostly depend on setting, intention, motive and effect the message should achieve (Mathes, 2012).

One of the most important things about media texts is the meaning that these texts are conveying. However, media texts often have a meaning which the reader is conscious of, but, in addition to that, there are other meanings which may be produced unconsciously by the reader (Burton, 2010). Then, readers choose whether they are controlling their engagement with the text or no, depending on their interests or experience. Thus, a text can mean different things for different readers. It can be said that "anything may be described as a text if people can engage with it to produce meanings about themselves, their society and their beliefs" (Burton, 2010, p. 6). The increasing number of possibilities of interactions in digital media allows individuals to become active participants in content creation as well as devour different kinds of media content. At the same time, social media offers huge potential for "mass-self communica-tion" (Castells, 2013), introducing the forecasting and possible solutions for problems or raising sensitive issues. Multimedia discourse, as noted by Fairclough (2015), is compelling due to the power relations it contains. Nevertheless, these casual interactions and commitments between diverse activities, events, texts and structures of social and cultural life, as well as the reasons for their evolvement and influence, might be analysed by critical discourse analysis in order to explore why they are invisible.

BACKGROUND

The emergence of digital interactions provided an empowering opportunity for individuals to become active participators in content creation as well as absorb different kinds of media content. In particular, these days, modern interactions are all about "the widespread use of hashtags and social media logos in promotional texts such as adverts and TripAdvisor reviews or new forms of protest mobilization, e.g. through Facebook" (Khosravinik & Unger, 2015, p. 206). These and a number of other different types of digital content become a fundamental aspect in the life of the modern society, which is inseparable from digital interactions. As Anozie (2018) argues, messages in media reflect events happening in a particular society. Furthermore, the societies with positive value systems, balanced economic and political systems will revel in positive transference from the media, while in the opposite case, the meanings derived from the media could be negative. Anozie (2018) notes that "understanding the societal makeup will reveal the value systems, and cultures, which the members live by, and how these affect their conducts and their response to media messages" (p.423), guiding society towards the existing relations between the influ-ence of mass media and the effects of negative cultures and value systems on a particular society. The social media might be seen as platforms for creating new policies and making members of society accept these new policies, thus regulating and determining the attitudes of community members (Selvi, 2018).

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