



Political Resistance on Social Media: An Evaluation of Figurative Language

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▪ **Vol. VII, No. II** (Spring 2022)

▪ **Pages:** 23 – 30

▪ **p- ISSN:** 2521-2982

▪ **e-ISSN:** 2707-4587

Key Words: Social Media,
Politics, Political Resistance,
Figurative Language

Abstract: The use of resistance against ‘power’ is prevalent in the politics on social media, which is practised in different forms like pictures, and comments showing anger or hate. So, this study highlights the linguistic specifications of language’s use in political resistance on social media by underlining figurative language. The study follows the theoretical base of Foucault’s studies (1977) & (1982) by pinning the concept of ‘resistance’. For this purpose, Facebook’s public group named as PTI TIGERS was selected (because of the high number of group members) to take the data. Data was narrowed down to the specific content. Through the use of figurative speech, different focused aspects and intentions of political resistance show the semantic complexity of using resistance-based figurative expressions by the public.

Introduction

The proliferation of social media in our daily lives is an important discussion nowadays. The influence of social media has changed our lives significantly. The use of social media is increasing day by day due to the significance and interest of people (Mizuko, et al. 2008). We are becoming dependent on social media for news, sports, knowledge, studies, entertainment, political facts, national or international events, and many more. Social media is a kind of compressed world through which any information can be gained through a click or touch whenever, wherever we want.

Social media has changed our lifestyles and ways of doing things. Thus it is also influencing the political awareness of people because social media is used for political purposes too, like campaigns, revolutions, resistance, agendas, public support, opinions etc. So, the shift of political activities from traditional to internet-based activities made people more into the political practices on social media as discussed by B. Leticia (Bode 2016). Voice is raised through social media under political activity to show

resistance against dominance or practice of power. Thus, this political resistance is shown actively via social media sites where access to a wide audience is possible. According to Michel Foucault, resistance in the form of a movement against power and power and emerges where power and power relations are practised (Power And Resistance In Human Society 2018). Resistance can be taken as a sign of voice against dominance or power. Resistance brings ineffectiveness to practices and relations of power.

The purpose of this study is to throw light on the integration of social media and politics and then on the language of political resistance on social media and, moreover, to underline the figurative language used in the language of political resistance to highlight the specifications of language and its significance associated with resistance against power. Figurative language of resistance attracts more sympathy from people and makes the issue more impactful in this way. So this study is important as it addresses these notions associated with the language of resistance and, more precisely, the figurative use of language because the figurative language has some kind of

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emotional impact on the psychic of human beings which penetrates and affects people in a more influential way (Roberts and Kreuz 1994). This study addresses the following research questions:

- How figurative language is used in political resistance on social media?
- What is the key function of figures of speech other than fanciful, poetic and ornate construction in political resistance on social media?

These research questions will enable the readers to have the conception to understand the facts behind the resistance on social media through the lens of language use and how the effect of resistance is exaggerated through the figures of speech in order to penetrate into the psychic of the target readers and audience and have significant influence. Integration of hate, contempt, and anger is also portrayed through the use of figures of speech in the language of resistance to social media politics. All these specifications are helpful to spread notions of resistance efficaciously. So highlighting all is to signify the importance of language use, that how language is treated in an innovative manner to reach its target goals as in the case of resistance. Play with language is important in resistance as it aims to raise the stance collectively and effectively.

Proliferation of Social Media

Time changes with the advent of new technologies. New technological innovations change the way, lifestyle, behavior, attitude and modes of learning. The internet is one of the wonders of these technological innovations which has shifted our lives from traditional to modern living. People have become more digitalized due to internet-based technologies. Our dependence on the internet is directly increasing and making us more into the digital world through the internet. Past traditions of doing things have been transformed towards the modern and active digitalized modes.

Media has also changed due to the integration of the internet into our daily lives. Media is an important part of our society. Focus from traditional media to social media is a remarkable invention in the digital world which has made people more connected with each other. Social media is the form of electronic media enabled through the internet to make online communities or circles and is used for the purpose of communication, interaction as well as sharing our feelings, ideas, personal messages, pictures or videos or other content etc. (Merriam Webster (Online Dictionary) n.d.). Social media sites include

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp etc. Interactional movements are also becoming prominently active and filling the gaps among people across the world due to social media.

The interest of the public has made social media a significant and an emerging source of information, knowledge, ideas, news, learning factors and so on. As stated by Marc Pransky, the involvement of youth seems more vibrant and active on social media due to the contemporary trends of digitalization and internet-based communication. David Buckingham is of the view that social media has more participation on behalf of youth as compared to other age groups because of their engagement in activities. Thus, youth can be addressed as the 'drivers of the social media' and leads the political activities in diverse ways on social media sites (Buckingham 2008).

Politics and Social Media

Social media has also changed the political landscape due to the interest of the public in social media. Politics and media both are highly linked with each other as viewed by Altheide. According to his views, politics is also a social system which influences media and is also influenced by media; thus, their connection is clearly associated with each other (ALTHEIDE 2004). Political actors are aware of all these changes and thus move with the developmental changes in social media and transition from traditional media to social media in order to retain the essence of politics. Klinger asserts that the mobility and migration of political parties can be observed on social media and how they are focusing on their narratives through social media (U. Klinger 2013).

According to the theoretical approach of 'Media Logics' (Altheide 2016), political use on social media is not unidirectional which means it is not receiving content and movement from one sided but is based on interactions among two groups: creators and receivers. Receivers matter more in this scenario as they interpret the stance and add their own opinions because social media provides strong freedom of expression. Thus, they influence the political aspects of social media in a diligent manner. Participation of the public in political activities adds to political awareness through social media. Thus politics and social media are integrated with each other strongly.

Under all this discussion, we can say that social media has enhanced the political awareness of people and tried to influence opinion formation. Political mobility is thus activating the political consciousness of people and as a result, politics on social media has been anchored into the tradition of social media for

the last few years. All activities regarding politics are spread at the public level and get more comments, views, insights, sharing, etc. due to the direct involvement of the public, especially the youth. Social media is known as the 'hub of political activism'.

The use of social media for politics is wide across the world. We find strong instances of political activities on social media like election campaigns, political movements, political resistance etc. All these activities are establishing social media as a means of the political movement. These activities are studied by different researchers across the world with different contexts and under the use of different social media sites for different political purposes: (Fria and Missaglia 2014), (Nyarwi Ahmad and Popa 2014), (Dezelen, Vobic and Maksuti 2014), (Patrut and Monica Patrut 2014). A survey report by *Pew Research Centre America* also highlights the political power of social media and its excessive use of it for political campaigns by providing statistical data in the context of American politics (Rainie, et al. 2012).

Ausserhofer claims that Twitter (social media site) has more political associations in the social media avenue because political parties usually rush more towards tweets on Twitter regarding political activities and purposes (Ausserhofer and Maireder 2013). Other than Twitter, the use of Facebook is also much more popular among the public and politicians for political activism pursuits. Pages and Groups linked with political parties are being used for practising power or resistance which makes people more involved and to react by sharing an opinion or criticizing the stance (Bode 2016) because political resistance or power is not one sided but perceived two-sided reaction: from public and political parties on social media. Other sites like Instagram and YouTube are also prevalent under the same parasol of political power and resistance. So, social media sites are being used significantly for political power and resistance.

Power and Resistance on Social Media

Power and resistance are linked with the concepts of Michel Foucault (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* 1977) (Foucault, *The Subject and Power* 1982). According to Foucault, resistance can't be practised without the presence of power or power relations. His views of power are somehow complex and face a series of critiques. He discussed power initially with the crime scene of punishment to prisoners in Europe and explained the stance on exercising power. His concept of power is inductive as well as seductive, easier and difficult which

constrains and forbids. Power is an action over the actions of people which will lead to dominant relations. But Foucauldian Power is not as structural dominant but in the form of tiny or micro power relations embedded in society which he called 'micro-power'. Thus power is present everywhere and practised between a structure and individuals: structure means organization or institution or a body.

In order to recognize power or power relations, there are some postulates claimed by Michel Foucault: (Martin Rojo 2017)

- Power is not practised in a single direction but multi-directionally, based on the network of relations of power.
- It may be visible or invisible, present or hidden at the same time.
- Power doesn't get intensive at one place but practised overall in multiple levels and localities.
- Power is not always destructive but may be constructive as in the construction of knowledge because power and knowledge are strongly correlated with each other.
- There is a feasible probability of resistance where power is exercised or practised.

These general perspectives regarding power also include the fusion of resistance linked with the exercise of power. So, it is said that resistance is integrated with the exercise of power but in the opposite direction to dissociate power structure or relations, as claimed by Michel Foucault (1982). Thus, resistance is directly dependent on the power or power relations. Naraghi (2012) asserts that resistance is a form of struggle which is taken against the form of power to bring ineffectiveness in the power relations. As the form of power, resistance also spreads in multi-dimensional ways and that is why it is called as 'transversal'. Struggle in resistance fulfils the purpose of opposing the power and, more precisely, the source of power which has direct effects on the agents or individuals as a whole (Rezvani-Naraghi 2012).

Practices of power and resistance have been prevalent on social media for a few decades and have penetrated our lives vigilantly. Political power and resistance are on the same page on social media. For example, power is practised for election campaigns of political parties to dominate the minds of people for opinion formation and rapport-building (Dezelen, Vobic and Maksuti 2014). As a result, political parties give agendas to shape the mind of the public and make their party a sign of uniqueness and difference from others by exercising power over the other

political parties. According to the perspectives of power, campaigns are not consistent at one place but spread at multiple places within the concerned border and can be spread across borders due to international interests. These political campaigns on social media affect the public at a large scale due to the proliferation of social media into the grain of individuals as do the power. Mottos, agendas, revolutionary steps, planning, policies, priorities, rankings etc. regarding political activities are practised through the relation of power which brings comparison with other political parties and other policies or agendas. In this way, social media is being used for political power and resistance on social media (Fria and Missaglia 2014).

As power is discussed in relation to resistance, thus instances of resistance can also be observed on social media. Opposition parties resist the powerful parties in many ways under politics on social media (Patrut and Monica Patrut 2014). There are many movements and steps (national or international) which are facing resistance on social media as Kamil Demirhan (2014) mentions that politics on social media is now more at an advanced level and involve the public more vigorously, as shown in the Gezi Park movement in Turkey and protests in Southern Africa (Demirhan, 2014), (Mare, 2014). Social media is also used to prepare the public for riots and revolutions by arousing emotions under the political resistance (Bute, 2014). Raising voices for rights is also accompanied by social media to resist. Different sects, groups, parties, mindsets...do resist for their own utility. This immense political use of social media is making social media more vibrant politically.

Research Methodology

This research is solely based on a qualitative approach, which focuses on highlighting language specification by indicating figures of speech embedded in the language of political resistance on social media and the significance of figures of speech.

Theoretical Framework

The language of political resistance is taken to see the use of figures of speech embedded in the content of resistance on social media. This research will highlight the significant purpose of using specific figures of speech in the language of resistance to make it more impressive and effective. Language matters a lot in any content related to anything because it is the essence of anything, especially in the digital world, where everything is associated with language as a medium of portraying things. So, this study highlights

the language specification to have an understanding of language use in different ways to fulfil the political purpose. Moreover, which key purpose is followed in using figures of speech voluntarily or involuntarily on social media. For this purpose, data is narrowed down to the Facebook page 'PTI TIGERS', which is selected to answer the research questions. Due to the high range of posts and sharing, only corruption related posts are selected to view the figurative use of language by defining figures of speech and their significant purpose under political resistance on social media.

As data consists of different modes like text, images, memes, videos, and polls thus data was converted to the text to study but the essence of the language and conceptual meaning were not affected. Posts were translated into English through the literal translation (where needed) which did not act and influence the basic core meaning.

Data Collection

Sample

The whole range of posts regarding political resistance on social media is available to address the research questions. But due to the unlimited range of data regarding resistance on social media, data was narrowed down to have more insights into the data selected. For this purpose, 'Facebook', a social media app, is selected. Facebook app has high popularity among youth and other age groups in Pakistan. More than 32 million people are using Facebook in Pakistan, according to the statistics of *Internet World Stats* (Internet Usage in Asia, n.d.).

As the title is based on politics of resistance on social media, political integration is kept under consideration. The researcher narrowed it down to the resistance from political parties which seems more spread to the public. Then one party is selected due to the high followings, likes, ratings and interest of the public. To see the ratings, Facebook pages and groups were seen and scrolled down to estimate the number of members in groups or pages of political parties on Facebook. Due to the ratings, likes and number of members PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) was selected to take sample.

There was variety of groups and pages established by PTI workers and administration on Facebook having a high number of members. The group which appeared first on the Facebook search page was selected because of the highest number of members in the group. Group is named as *PTI TIGERS* and has more than 1.3 lac group members.

This group receives more than hundreds of posts on a daily basis and is moderated by a team of members.

There are lacs of posts in the group since the time of creation in July 2017 as trend of PTI is more towards the anti-corruption movement which is also included in their party policy and agenda as mentioned on their online website of the party (Anti-Corruption Policy, n.d.). Strong resistance is shown against corruption by PTI members through social media. So, posts of resistance against corruption were taken to address the research questions. These posts hunt other political members of different political parties who are involved in corruption. So this is the strong resistance campaign which is part of the selected Facebook group. Only 20 posts of resistance against corruption were taken to study. These 20 posts were selected which appeared first by searching the keyword 'corruption', thus posts which appeared at the first twenty, were selected.

Nature of the Data

The selected first 20 posts were based on different types of data like images, videos, text images, quotations, and simple text in Urdu, English or Punjabi languages. Videos were excluded because of the diverted content. A literal translation of some posts was made (where needed) to address research questions. In pictures, focus was given on the text embedded in the picture and significance of figurative language used. Quotations or simple text was taken to highlight the figurative part and its significance. Under all this data, figures of speech used in the posts in the form of language (written, or image) was focused.

Ethical Considerations

The data of this study belongs to the public group associated with the ideology of one political party. Informed-consent rules were followed appropriately. After selecting the population and sample in the form of the group and posts, a request message was sent to one of the admins (of five) to take permission to use the data for research purpose. Short summarized points of research were sent to admin to explain the purpose of using data. All purposes and outcomes were explained clearly to admin, that there is no personal and political inclination of researcher and research is solely based on academic purpose. Assurance was given to the group admin regarding the privacy of group members. After getting permission, names of post-senders were kept under privacy. No additional content was made associated with selected group, to ensure objectivity.

Data Analysis

Data is taken to underline figures of speech in language of the sample based on resistance against corruption. After that, significance purpose of figure of speech will be highlighted that how it is supporting the stance under resistance. Figures of speech like similes, metaphors, allusions, idioms, symbolism etc. are highlighted to know the significance of its use and key purpose of using specific figure of speech. Taken sample is analyzed as a whole. These figures of speech are fulfilling the aim of resistance based on sarcastic comments to resist and show hate towards corruption and doers.

Table 1. Facebook Posts of Resistance and Integrated Figures of Speech

S. No	Posts (Content of Resistance)	Figures of Speech
1	<i>Queen of Corruption</i>	Metaphor: Queen
2	<i>Is Corruption ke saaye tale hm ek hain...</i> (we are one under the shed of corruption)	Idiomatic phrase (modified to the subject)
3	<i>Pro harami, chor family, patwari</i> (Professional adulterine, thief family, patwari)	Metaphors: Pro harami, chor family, patwari
4	<i>Maal e muft, Dil be rehem</i> (Urdu idiom)	Idiom of Urdu
5	<i>Is khaandan se bra koi kmzrf, chor, lutera ni dekha. Dheet b ese bnte jese begunah hon...</i> (Haven't seen greater senseless, thief, looter. Pretend like non-sinners)	Metaphor: Kmzrf, chor, lutera Similie: Dheet b ese bnte hn jese begunah hon
6	<i>Ye sb Corrupt mafia ke khalaf jiddo johd jaari rabe gi</i> (Struggle will be continued, against all this corrupt mafia)	Metaphor: corrupt mafia (as well as an allusion)
7	<i>Sb patwarion, corruption me doobon pe laanat</i> (Curse on all patwaris and full corrupt people)	—
8	<i>They all have to be hanged like traitors</i>	Simile: like traitors

9	<i>Awam 35 saal se ***** party ke kutte ko sher ki trh smjh rahe the.</i> (Public had been considering ____ dog of party as lion from 35 years)	Simile: Sher ki trh
10	<i>Corrupt, ghaleez, notorious mafia, seslian mafia</i> (Corrupt, filthy, notorious mafia, Sicilian Mafia)	Metaphors: Corrupt, ghaleez, notorious mafia Allusion: Seslian Mafia
11	<i>God father of corruption who looted the poor people of Pakistan</i>	Allusion: God Father
12	<i>Tsunami ne in ki corruption ko nanga kr dia hai</i> (Tsunami has made their corruption naked)	Symb olism: Tsunami
13	<i>Ki dassan me mulk da baal, kutti ral gai choran naal</i> (what should I tell of country, bitch got allied with thieves)	Idiomatic phras e of Urdu: kutti ral gai choran naal
14	<i>Corruption ki gnga me bath dhone wale begherat azeem insan</i> (great stupid people involved in the corruption)	Oxymoron: begherat azeem insan
15	<i>Haramion ki haram krda krtooten</i> (Illegal acts of adulterine)	Alliteration: Haramion ki haram...
16	<i>Behti hawa sa tha wo, urti patang sa tha wo...or phr sari dolat ura ke le gya!</i> (he was like blowing breeze, like the flying kite...and then flown with the whole wealth)	Simile: Behti hawa sa Similie: urti patang sa

All the data was in English, Urdu or Roman Urdu. Literal translation is done for the clarity of intended meaning of the statement where needed. This data is depicting resistance in different forms mostly by criticizing severely by using extreme figures of speech. These figures of speech are signifying the level of resistance by anger and hate towards corrupt body and corruption. All figures of speech which are expressed in the data, are showing different level of resistance.

Results and Discussions

Example 1 is based on the metaphor of 'queen of corruption' which highlights the corruption at an extreme level because the queen is one of the highest designations. An edited photo was displayed with this phrase to refer to the aimed target. In the second example, an idiomatic phrase is used (Is corruption k saaye tale hm ek hain) which is modified with the subject of corruption to give the message of the unity of the corrupt group. In the third example, different metaphors are used to enhance the power of resistance towards the corrupt people. Next statement is based on an idiom of Urdu (Maal e muft, Dil be reheme) which is focusing on the intent of corrupts towards the wealth of public and wasting it carelessly. Succeeding example use metaphors (kmzrf, chor, luteri) which demonstrate the substituting words for corrupts in Pakistani context and in the same way simile in this example (dheet bese bntehnjese begunah hon) illustrates the pretension of corrupt people as pure. The metaphor of 'corrupt mafia' is used in the proceeding example which also acts as an allusion associated with the

criminal gang in America (from the late 19th century) (Wikipedia, n.d.).

Example 8 uses simile (hang like traitors) to reveal the hate against corruption. In the same way, the next example is based on the use of simile (kutte ko sher ki trh smjh rahe the). This use of simile demonstrates the dislike of people under corruption and also associates the political sign of one political party and links it with the dog as a sign of lowness. In the next neighbouring example, the use of allusion can be observed which also acts as a metaphor: 'Sicilian Mafia' which is associated with the criminal group in Italy thus, mentioning in this sentence means to link corrupt elements with evil and criminal groups as a symbol of hate. Similarly, example 11 has allusion to 'God Father' which is a movie *The God Father* based on the novel of the same name. This allusion is bridging corrupt elements with criminal family of *The God Father*. Next adjacent example included use of symbolism of 'tsunami' which illustrates the change of corrupt system. The idiomatic phrase of urdu is used in succeeding example (kutti ral gai choran naal) which highlights the inclusion of other political members with corrupt people. In the succeeding example use of oxymoron can be seen (begherat azeem insan). It consists of two contradicting ideas but satirically taunts the target. Example of alliteration was also found but that doesn't serve the purpose of political meaning (haramion ki haram krda krtooten). In the last example given in the table use of similes can be observed (behti hawa sa tha wo, urti patang sa tha wo...). These similes highlight the nature of corrupt people that how they fly away after doing all these nasty acts of

corruption.

These figures of speech serve different semantic purposes in the discourse of political resistance. It also highlights the element of hate as well as anger which is embedded in the content through the use of figures of speech. Under the analysis of data, figures of speech serve different semantic purposes based on the political notion for different purposes: to show hate, anger, contempt and moreover, to make them as 'others'. All the discourses of resistance included in the data tell us about the political language under the resistance against corruption. The significant use of figures of speech affects the public more effectively and become the reason for the spread of the post. The level of criticizing and satirizing can also be estimated through the use of figures of speech in the language of resistance.

Conclusion

This study gives insights regarding the political use of figures of speech in political resistance and how the content is made effective for the public. The element of resistance is also accomplished through the use of figures of speech as it is based on severe criticism and sarcasm which is depicted through the use of figures of speech. This study illustrates the conceptual base regarding resistance in politics on social media. This study will explore different avenues under the parasol of the language of power and resistance associated with politics. Moreover, this study will act as the base to study the impacts of figures of speech on the readers and audience and how it directs them to resist in the same way. Exaggerating the stance of resistance is an important outcome of integrating figures of speech. This specific purpose of using figures of speech enhances the political aims as discussed in this study.

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