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## A Cognitive Stylistic Analysis of Daily Yahoo Stories

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### Abstract :

Cognitive stylistics is one discipline of applied linguistics that relies on the reader's interpretation and inference of the meaning of the text depending on his background knowledge. It studies how the reader understands the text and mapping it with his real experiences (Jeffries and McIntyre, 2010). The present study is a cognitive stylistic analysis of digital stories. Digital stories are short narratives made by a combination of different sorts of digital media such as pictures, audios and videos. These digital media are employed to tell stories about oneself, famous people, and important events. The analyzed stories are selected from "Daily Yahoo Stories" and are analyzed according to Lakoff (1993) approach,

The analysis investigates the use of figures of speech in this type of stories and how they are mapped with the reader's perceptions. The results show that figures of speech like simile, personification and metaphor do exist in everyday language. Also the use of multimedia alongside with the use of figures of speech in digital stories play a great role in interpreting and understanding the text by the reader.

**Keywords:** Cognitive stylistics, conceptual metaphor theory, digital stories, digital media

### 1. Aims and limitations of the Study

One of the major aims of cognitive stylistics is to inspect the creativity of language with a focus on the reader conceptualization of the text. The present study is limited to analyze five stories from "Daily Yahoo Stories". These stories are written in everyday language. The study aims at exploring the figures of speech in the selected stories. It also aims at proofing that metaphor is not limited to literary language, but it is found in everyday language as well.

### 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1. Cognitive Stylistics

When talking about style of literary texts, stylisticians refer to the “textual patterns” that are used by the author in the text neglecting the creativity of the author on one hand and the reader’s interpretation and his reactions towards the text on the other hand (Stockwell, 2015). The collaboration between the reader and the text has not been the concern of both literary criticism and stylistic study. However, in the last two decades more emphasis has been given to the authorial and readerly creativity.

Stockwell (2015) asserts that stylistics tackles the capacities spouts from pragmatic, sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. These fields provide means for explaining the meaning inference, textual patterns and context. This leads to the emergence of new trends in the study of language that is the cognitive linguistics which focuses on the “language and language user in the context” (p.234). Along the same line great efforts have been devoted to applying a scientific approach to the analysis of literary text. This approach is called cognitive stylistics where the main concern is to look at the text as “a natural human capacity” that can be interpreted in relevance to the reader’s reaction to the text. A cognitive stylistic approach goes beyond the textualist stylistic explanations and put the reader’s mental activities in the heart of its concern (Woldemariam, 2015 p.18). This reader focus is adopted by (Cronquist 2003:1) who assumes that cognitive stylistic explores the text and how the reader’s mind contribute to reading. It also studies the reader’s comprehension of certain linguistic and poetic features and their impact on him. According to cognitive stylistics” reading is an active process and the readers play dynamic and active role in the construction of the meaning of the literary texts” (Patil, 2014 p.82)

Likewise Jeffries and McIntyre (2010) proceed that cognitive process tries to confine how the reader maps between the perception of the text and his real schematic knowledge (cited in Patil, 2014:82-83).

To sum up cognitive stylistics draws on the readers’ response to certain patterns in the text and how they utilize their “schematic knowledge in the interpretation of literary text” (ibid).

## **2.2 Metaphor**

According to the classical theory, metaphor is defined as a special use of certain linguistic item to express a concept in a way that

is not related to its literary meaning. It is considered as a comparison between two different things sharing one common characteristic (Lakoff, 1993p. 1-2). Metaphor is mostly used to compare between two things that are not similar to each other but share some concept in common to add some creativity to the literary work.

Lakoff, (1993) demonstrates that the conceptual realization of the text doesn't lie in the linguistic expression itself but in the thought (how a particular linguistic item is understood and interpreted).

Metaphors are thus neither simply linguistic forms nor mere ornamentation in cognitive linguistics, but have been regarded more importantly as textual manifestations of underlying shared, or perhaps even universal, properties of human perception( Stockwell,2015p. 236)

Metaphor has been tackled for a long time with reference to the literary language only. This theory has no longer been accepted in contemporary studies. Some linguists assume that since metaphor is conceptual and its locus is thought, then metaphor is also existent in everyday language (Turner, 1991). This assumption is also adopted by (Lakoff, 1993) who believes that the use of metaphor does not appear in literature only, it is also found in everyday language and what is known as poetic metaphor is an extension of everyday metaphor and it makes use of everyday metaphor.

Lakoff (1993) makes a distinction between the traditional and the contemporary views of metaphor. Traditionally, anything that is literal is considered to be not metaphorical. Accordingly all everyday language, definition given in dictionaries and the concepts used in grammar are literal and not metaphorical. In this respect, metaphor is limited to the literary language. These assumptions are defeated when enormous conceptual metaphors are discovered in our everyday language . Lakoff (1993p.40 ) presents several examples by which he emphasizes the presence of metaphor in everyday language. For example when one says

“our relationship has hit a dead-end street”.

“ We are at crossroad”

“ look how far we have come”

“Our marriage is on a rock”

In these examples love is compared to a journey. People are travelers who share the same goals and the relationship is the vehicle that helps them to continue their journey and achieve their goals. In all the above examples love is conceptualized as a relationship that cannot be continued. Lakoff, (1993) raises an inquiry concerning the conceptualization of love as a journey, he wondered on what bases one uses these expressions to refer to love in this way. He gives the answer that such conceptualization is not based on English grammar or lexicon but it lies in the conceptual system concerning English language understanding. He adds that metaphor means understanding one domain (love in this example) in term of another domain (journey). Lakoff (1993) called this understanding or conceptualization as “mapping”

In our example the mapping is :

- The lovers correspond to travelers
- Problems and obstacles in their relationship are compared to the difficulties in travelling.
- The relationship correspond to the vehicle
- The lovers’ aims are compared to their intentions in the journey

Then mapping is a set of relationships that allows to understand one concept (love) through using the knowledge we use to understand another concept (journey).

This discussion asserts the existence of metaphor in everyday language, the following section will shed the light on one kind of stories namely Digital Stories as an example of narrative that is written in everyday language

### **2.3 Digital stories**

Digital stories (DS) are short narratives that are mostly narrated by first person and combining digital media like music, videos and images with narration. Digital story telling (DST) started when people who were able to access digital media began to tell their stories through these media and other people were deprived to share this experiences. When technical devices became pervasive and available to all people, it became possible for everyone to create and tell his own story. The spread of digital story telling attract the attention of those who are interested in pedagogical materials and they begin to use digital stories in their classrooms. The use of DST in the classroom “ encourages students to tell story experience rather than a

series of chronological event” (Garrely,2008p.3). Students nowadays can make use of DST for different reasons; DST help them to improve their critical thinking and to collaborate with each other. In addition it allows them to know more about cultures societies since they communicate through digital media all over the world.

DS are told by ordinary people not by professional authors. In accordance to that, the language used in these stories is the everyday language. The narrative is not the literary narrative that we see in short stories and novels. Yet DS are not empty from the figure of speech like metaphor or simile. In this research I inspect figures of speech in one kind of DS namely Daily Yahoo Stories (DYS) and how the narrators employ them in everyday language .

### **3. Data Selection**

(DYS) are stories sent to yahoo’s agents everyday. They are similar to newspaper’s stories in the sense that they don’t have titles, they have headlines instead. The headlines summarizes the story providing answers for the five WH questions; who, what, where, when and why. DYS contain narratives, videos and images. Part of the stories are told by the real characters of the stories.

Five stories are selected randomly for the purpose of analysis. Because the stories do not have titles, they are numbered so I can refer to them easily throughout the analysis.

The selected stories are:

1. “Chris Evans helps Regina Kings. And wins hearts Rescuers find” missing California sisters
2. “Young sisters found alive after frantic search”
3. “Students struggle after national college chain abruptly closes”
4. “R. Kelly interview a spotlight moment for Gayle King”
5. “parkland survivor kills herself after year of anguish”

#### **4. Data Analysis and Discussion**

The analysis will be carried out on the basis of Conceptual Metaphor Theory (which has been discussed in sec. 2.2) by Lakoff (1993). The analysis focuses on three types of figures of speech used in the stories namely simile. Personification and metaphor.

As it has been mentioned previously, the narrators of the stories are not professional authors, the figures of speech are not used for the purpose of creativity and novelty. They are used as a common habit

by the participant in the stories. For example the first sentence in story ( No.1) “ Chris Evans helps Regina Kings. And wins hearts”

“ the chivalry of the star... towards the Supporting Actress was caught on camera and spread like wildfire on social media”.

Two figures of speech can be detected in this extract; personification and simile. The narrator assimilate the spread of news to the quick spread of the fire to show that the news are transported very fast. On the other hand the fire is being personified as a wild to confirm the same idea. The application of the figures of speech leads the reader to transfer his perception from quick spread of news to the quick spread of the fire “as it is one of the function of metaphor is to alter or transfer reader’s perception of the target domain” (Areef, 2016p.26)

In story No.2 “Young sisters found alive after frantic search”

two metaphors are detected:

“ she looks like a seasoned outdoor gal”

The two girls when found , they were weak and their clothes were very dirty. The metaphor is used here to show their miserable state. There is a mapping between the appearances of the girls and the image that is drawn by this simile.

Another example of metaphor appears in the following sentence;

“She melted on the phone”

This metaphor is used by the sheriff when he calls the girls’ mother to tell her that they found her daughters. The metaphor conveys that the impact of the news was very strong that the mother shocked and faints . The picture of melting is interpreted by the reader as a loss of consciousness.

No.3 Students struggle after national college chain abruptly closes

One of the narrator in story No. 3 says;

“To have done all this work and gone this far to do what I’m dreaming of doing”

This sentence contains a metaphor. The narrator uses the phrase (gone this far) to refers to her progress in study and that she finished most of her work in order to achieve her dream. She compares her study to a journey. The reader infers from this metaphor that the

narrator doesn't complete this journey (her study). Similarly, in the following sentence

“I'm not going to walk away from my dream for that.”

the narrator uses the phrase “to walk away “ to assert her insistence on completing her journey which is perceived by the reader as completing her study .

Another figure of speech is employed in following extract from story no.3

“ the final nail in the coffin for a university.”

Personification is created here by giving something that is used for human (coffin) to an inanimate thing (university) to show that university is completely corrupted. The reader establishes a mapping between the two domains; the corruption of the university and putting a nail in the coffin.

No. 4 “R. Kelly interview a spotlight moment for Gayle King”

The following sentence is taken from story No. 4

"She kept her composure and came equipped to battle."

The story is about an interview between two opponents. This quote is a metaphor that is used here to describe one of the opponents who was very calm and completely ready to defy her antagonist. The ready answers are compared to the equipments and the interview to a battle, to explicate that the discussion is very hot.

No.5 “parkland survivor kills herself after year of anguish”

“She lit up every room she entered.”

The story is about a teen ager who commits a suicide and the quote is a comment of one of her friends. Her friends is mourning her by this metaphor. She compares her friend to a candle. By doing so she is describing the lovely spirit of her friend and how she turns the gloomy atmospheres into brightening ones.

There is a conceptual mapping between two domains candle and the lovely personality of the girl. This presents a positive evaluation of the dead girl that gives a good impression about the girl and may lead to an inquiry “ *why she commits suicide?*”

## 5. Results and conclusions

The analysis of the five stories yields the following results

1. The hypothesis that metaphor or figures of speech exist in everyday language as it is assumed by Lakoff (1993) is not strongly asserted in this research. The analysis reveals that

figures of speech are rarely used in daily yahoo stories (as a representative of everyday language). When analyzing the stories the researcher detects nine usages of figures of speech In the five stories. that means, nearly two occurrences of the three types of the figure of speech in each story. Yet this frequency is not considered very low in comparison to the length of the stories because (DYS) are very short.

2. (DYS) are narrated by ordinary people who use figures of speech by accident without aiming to enhance creativity in the story as it happens in the language of literature when authors employ figures of speech to show the novelty of their works.
3. (DYS) contain videos, audios and images in which the real participants narrate part of the story, and the figures of speech are mostly found in these parts.



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تحليل اسلوبي ادراكي لقصص ياهو اليومية

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علم الأسلوب المعرفي هو أحد التخصصات اللغوية التطبيقية التي تعتمد على تفسير القارئ والاستدلال على معنى النص اعتماداً على معرفته الخلفية. فهو يدرس كيفية فهم القارئ للنص ومقارنته بتجاربه الحقيقية. تعد هذه الدراسة تحليل اسلوبي ادراكي للقصص الرقمية. القصص الرقمية هي قصص قصيرة تم إعدادها من خلال مجموعة متنوعة من أنواع الوسائط الرقمية مثل الصور والتسجيلات الصوتية ومقاطع الفيديو. يتم استخدام هذه الوسائط الرقمية لرواية قصص عن شخصيات عادية او مشهورة وأحداث مهمة. اختيرت القصص التي تم تحليلها من "Daily Yahoo Stories" وقد تم تحليلها وفقاً لنظرية (Lakoff 1993)

يبحث التحليل في استخدام البلاغة وانواعها في هذا النوع من القصص وكيف يتم تعيينها مع تصورات القارئ. تظهر النتائج أن انواع البلاغة مثل التشبيه والتجسيد والاستعارة موجودة في اللغة اليومية. كما أن استخدام الوسائط المتعددة جنباً إلى جنب مع استخدام أشكال الكلام في القصص الرقمية يلعب دوراً كبيراً في تفسير وفهم النص من قبل القارئ.