

A Linguistic Study of Persecution in the Language of the Iranian Newspapers After Mahsa Amini's Crisis

Dounia Emad Tareq

Department of English, University of Baghdad, College of Languages, Baghdad, Iraq

دراسة لغوية للاضطهاد في لغة الصحف الإيرانية بعد أزمة مهسا أميني

م.م. دنيا عماد طارق

قسم اللغة الانكليزية، كلية اللغات، جامعة بغداد، بغداد، العراق

dounia.emad1992@gmail.com

Dounia.e@colang.uobaghdad.edu.iq

DOI 10.58564/MABDAA.66.2.2024.1041

ملخص البحث

الدراسة الحالية مكرسة للتحقيق في الاضطهاد بلغة الصحف الإيرانية بعد أزمة مهسا أميني من الناحية اللغوية. تهدف الدراسة إلى التعرف على الأدوات البراغماتية والسميائية والخطابية التي يستخدمها المحررون والتي تظهر اضطهادهم للاحتجاجات. الدراسة نوعية بطبيعتها وتستند إلى نموذج انتقائي يتضمن نظرية بارتس (١٩٦٨) للسميائية، ونظرية ليج (١٩٦٩) للأدوات البلاغية ونظرية غرايس (١٩٧٥) للتضمنيات. تم اختيار تقريران من صحيفتين إيرانييتين هما: صحيفة كيهان الدولية وجريدة طهران كعينات من الدراسة الحالية، تقرير واحد لكل صحيفة. بعد تحليل البيانات المختارة، تبين أن التقارير المختارة تحتوي على بعض أشكال الاضطهاد التي يتم التعبير عنها عبر أنواع مختلفة من الأدوات اللغوية بما في ذلك؛ المعاني الضمنية للمحادثة والمعاني الضمنية والتضمنية، والأدوات البلاغية مثل؛ المجاز، الاستعارة، التجسيد، الرمزية والمبالغة. وقد أثبتت هذه الوسائل اللغوية أن رؤساء التحرير يرفضون المظاهرات وينكرون حريتهم في المطالبة علانية بمطالبهم. لذا، تعرض لغة المحررين اضطهادهم للمتظاهرين ومطالبهم المشروعة. **كلمات مفتاحية:** لسانيات، براغماتية، سيميائية، بلاغة، اضطهاد، مهسا أميني.

Abstract

The present study is devoted to the investigation of persecution in the language of the Iranian newspapers after Mahsa Amini's crisis from the linguistic point of view. The objectives of the study is that it aims at identifying the pragmatic, semiotic and rhetorical devices that are utilised by the editors and which show their persecution of the protests. The study is qualitative in nature and it is based on an eclectic model that includes Barthes's (1968) theory of semiotics, Leech's (1969) theory of rhetorical devices and Grice's (1975) theory of implicatures. Two reports from two Iranian newspapers, namely; the Kayhan international and the Tehran times, have been selected as samples of the current study, one report for each newspaper. After analysing the selected data, it has been found that the selected reports contain some forms of persecution which are expressed via different types of linguistic devices including; conversational implicature, denotative and connotative meanings, and rhetorical devices such as; metaphor, allegory, personification, symbolism and hyperbole. These linguistic devices have proved that the editors reject the protestors' demonstrations and deny their freedom of asking for their demands publically. Thus, the editors' language presents their persecution of the protestors and their rightful demands.

Keywords: Linguistics, pragmatics, semiotics, rhetoric, persecution, Mahsa Amini.

1. The Problem of the Study

Mahsa Amini, 22, died while in the custody of the morality police, causing civil unrest in Iran to reach a level that has not been witnessed in years. Justice for Amini, the preservation of civil and political rights, and accountability

from the government are among the demands of the demonstrators. The demonstrations, which have now spread to more than 80 Iranian towns, are said to have resulted in the detention of hundreds of individuals, including several journalists. Internet connectivity in the entire country is still restricted due to strict government restrictions on its use. Many people who have researched the nation's protests believe that the uprising is unlikely to slow down very soon (Kohli, 2022). Iranians find a number of things annoying, including the country's strict restrictions on people's political beliefs and free speech as well as the unequal treatment of ethnic minorities by the government. International Health Regulation claimed that at least 1,200 people, including 29 journalists, 20 activists, and 19 teachers, had been arrested in the previous three weeks based on official arrest records (Kohli, 2022). Newspapers, TV. Channels and social media have addressed the Iranian protests and have talked about the Iranian government practises against the protestors. These types of media use different linguistic devices in describing these protests. Using the linguistic devices make the language of these newspapers and channels somehow ambiguous and has different interpretations. Figuring out the true interpretation of such language is a difficult task for the majority of common readers and those who lack knowledge of such kind of language. The language of the editors contains different messages and meanings towards the events. The Iranian newspapers have addressed the events in a way that has shown their rejection to the events. Thus, the language of the Iranian newspapers about these event have not been dealt with before, the linguistic features of such language have not been uncovered. Therefore, the current study is dedicated to uncover the pragmatic, semiotic and rhetorical devices found in the language of media and to explain their use of expressions which are ambiguous and some other expressions have implied meaning.

1.2. Research Objectives

The currents study aims at:

1. Identifying the pragmatic devices used by online newspapers in their reports about the events in Iran after Mahsa Amini's Crisis.
2. Finding out the semiotic devices adopted by the newspapers reports on these events.
3. Figuring out the rhetorical devices utilised by the newspapers in the reports on the events in Iran.

1.3. Research Questions

1. What are the pragmatic devices used by online newspapers in their reports about the events in Iran after Mahsa Amini's Crisis.
2. What are the semiotic devices adopted by the newspapers reports on these events.
3. What are the rhetorical devices utilised by the newspapers in the reports on the events in Iran.

1.4. Procedures of the Study

1. Reviewing literature about the meaning of linguistics, pragmatics, semiotics and rhetoric, the language of Media and the Iranian protest 2022.
2. Selecting (2) reports as samples of analysis for the present study.
3. Developing an eclectic model based on Grice's (1975) theory of implicatures, Barthes's (1968) theory of semiotics and Leech's (1969) theory of rhetoric for the analysis of the selected data.
4. Discussing the results, summing up conclusions, setting up recommendations and suggestions for further studies.

1.5. Limits

The study is qualitative in nature that attempts to investigate the different linguistic features found in the language of the selected newspapers' reports.. The study is limited to the analysis of events in Iran after Mahsa Amini's crisis in two online Iranian newspapers namely; The Kayhan International and Tehran Times. The data under investigation consists of two reports, one reports of each Newspaper. Additionally, the study deals with the data from the pragmatic, semiotic and rhetorical perspectives and has adapted an eclectic model which is based on Grice's (1975) theory of implicatures, Barthes's (1968) theory of semiotics and Leech's (1969) theory of rhetoric for the analysis of the selected data.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Linguistics: An Overview

Acquiring explicit language awareness needs systematic and scientific investigation of language. Through referring it to systematic and rigorous analysis, linguistics seeks clear information about language. The analysis is empirical, which is systematic, objective, and seeks explicit information. The scientific study of language is linguistics (Varga, 2010). Lim (1975) defines linguistics as "the scientific study of language" (p.3). The structure or analytical approaches that are known as the scientific method often exist in linguistics. Within the context of

any general theory of language structure, language analysis is systematically performed (Hakansson & Westander, 2013). Human language is a very complex device that can be studied at various levels and from different points of view, interpreted as a structured use of speech sounds, signs, and written symbols for communication between individuals (Masaitiene, 2009). An objective, systematic, and clear account of (some elements of) language, i.e. an explicit grammar, is the product of linguistics (Rezqallah & Jasim, 2020). Linguistics includes different disciplines that deal with language from different perspectives. Three of the linguistic disciplines namely; pragmatics, semiotics and rhetoric are discussed as follows:

2.1.1. Pragmatics

According to Leech (1983), pragmatics is an investigation of how contextual meanings are expressed. According to Yule (1996), pragmatics is the study of how a listener (or reader) interprets the meaning that is communicated by a speaker (or writer) (Yule, 1996). The contextual use of language in pragmatics is connected with the importance of utterances. Saleem and Alattar (2020) illustrate that pragmatics deals with the utterances by which specific events are meant, the deliberate acts of speakers at times and places, usually involving language. This implies that pragmatics is equivalent to the expressions in which the context-dependent on the particular case consisting of time, place, and language can be drawn. Language is not meant by the form of the basic language, but by language application. It is confirmed by Levinson (1983) that the study of language use is pragmatic. Generally, on the basis of its context and use, pragmatics can be characterised as the analysis of the meaning of utterances (Saleh & Alattar, 2021).

2.1.1.1. Implicature. The earliest proponent of implicature, Grice (1975), asserts that a speaker's demands may be separated into what the speaker "says" and what the speaker "implies" via a phrase. This results in what Grice (1975) refers to as conversational implicature. According to him, to suggest anything is to infer something that may go beyond what is said. Implicature is defined as what the speaker could imply, imply, or mean in addition to what the speaker says (Levinson, 1983). In other words, implication creates some explicit interpretation of how something may signify more than what is explicitly stated. The intended meaning of a speech can be communicated by the speaker either openly or indirectly (Hussein & Fadhil, 2021). Charles (2002) opines that an implicature is a connection made between one utterance and another by the listener (or reader), and this association is always made unintentionally by the listener or reader. The two primary categories of implicature are covered by Grice (1975):

1. Conventional implicature: It comes out of the conversation in which words are used and their common meanings. Grice gives the example, "She was poor but she was honest," which implies a contrast between poverty and honesty. He thinks that "but" has the same truth-conditional meaning as "and" and also has the extra conventional meaning that the conjuncts are a little bit different.

2. Conversational implicature: It happens as a result of broad principles governing expressive behaviours. Grice (1975) explains the phenomena of conversational implication and lays out the guidelines that allow speakers to invariably imply more than they actually say. According to Griffiths (2006), conversational implicature refers to inferences that depend on the existence of linguistic prerequisites, such as the widespread belief that communicators should try to tell the truth.

2.1.2. Rhetoric

In order to influence other people's decisions or behaviours, Kennedy (2007, p. 13) defines rhetoric as "the force inherent in thoughts and feelings communicated via a system of indications, especially language." When we speak to others about our thoughts and feelings with the goal of convincing (influencing) them, we use rhetoric. Lakoff (1982) defined persuasion as the non-reciprocal endeavour or purpose of one person to change another person's intentions, behaviour, feelings, or worldview through communication. To commit the audience to a course of action is the speaker's objective while persuading someone, which is referred to as "a directive speech act." Persuasion is an effort to make the reality reflect the words as a consequence. Therefore, Larrazabal and Korta (2002, p. 1) claim that "it is quite difficult to "marry" such an ancient discipline as rhetoric with such a new discipline as pragmatics" if people do not put them in the same "register level," i.e. in the level of intentionality.

2.1.2.1. Types of rhetorical devices. Leech (1969) identifies some rhetorical devices which are presented as follows:

1. Simile. In reality, the terms simile and metaphor are the same thing. They compare two completely different objects side by side. Similes are used to explicitly compare two objects, and they are denoted by words or phrases such "like," "as," "than," "similar," "resemble," or "seems" (Leech, 1969). Similes, which are the simplest form of rhetorical language, are frequently utilized in poems.

2. Metaphor. Metaphors compare two things without using the words "like" or "as." Examples: The house is covered in a layer of snow. (The home is covered in snow) (Leech, 1969, p. 151).

3. Personification. Personification is giving non-human entities, such objects or animals, human characteristics. To give accurate descriptions, authors give objects a human quality. Examples: My pen was scribbling all over the paper. (I was typing at a breakneck pace.) As the wind blew, the leaves jived (Leech, 1969, p.158).

4. Symbol. According to Leech (1969, p. 154), a symbol is described as something that implies more than it actually does. Maybe a metaphor is the greatest way to understand a symbol.

5. Allegory. According to Leech (1969, p. 166), an allegory is a narrative or description with a deeper significance. A description with a secondary meaning is an allegory. The deeper meaning is distinct from what is described. Consider this: A cheerful squirrel was thrown a pine cone, which caused him to flee in chattering terror.

6. Hyperbole. An explicit exaggerated is a hyperbole. In order to emphasize a point, hyperbole is frequently employed. Using hyperbole literally is inappropriate (Leech 1969, p. 168).

2.1.3. Semiotics

Semiotics is a broad topic that, according to Prior (2014), is primarily concerned with examining the many sorts of signals communicated through various mediums. Semiotics, according to Eco (1976), is all about signals. It deals with signs of all kinds, including symbols, gestures, images, sounds, phrases, and body language. Such symbols and signals might be interpreted as referencing or signifying anything. It is challenging to think of anything as a sign if it cannot be understood as a sign and if it does not signify anything, according to Eco (1976).

Cobley and Jansz (2000) believes that understanding a sign only occurs when the sign is connected to a shared system of norms, becoming a distinctive component of these conventions and serving no purpose or need outside of these systems. According to Cobley and Jansz (2000), signals serve as a form of code between the observers and their past experiences and knowledge. Simply put, it implies that humans create meaning by using a variety of signals to understand, perceive, and share knowledge and information. According to Cobley and Jansz (2000), understanding a sign requires some information based on socially acceptable norms and practises.

2.1.3.1. Barthes' theory of semiotics. One of the key ideas for examining and comprehending sign systems is Barthes' semiotic theory from 1968. This theory has been demonstrated to be useful and practical in the investigation of signals, the analysis of their composition, and the expression of their meaning (Barthes, 2005) In his semiotics research, Barthes (1968) aims to develop a semiology that considers all cultural artefacts with metaphorical connotations. He covers a variety of signals and items, such as furniture, clothing, dishes, etc., that have significance even when they are not intended to be communicative in his study of semiotics. According to Barthes (2005), every object or sign has a connotative meaning in addition to its denotative meaning. According to Barthes (1990), nothing can be meaningless. For instance, the hue of a telephone can be interpreted differently; a pink telephone is associated with femininity or womanhood, whereas a white telephone signifies wealth. Any object, including drinks, food, wine, etc., is seen as a component of a certain discourse based on its connotation (Barthes, 1990, 2005) According to Barthes (1968), each sign may be interpreted on two different levels: the main one is denotation, and the secondary level is connotation.

1. Denotation: Barthes (1968) says that denotation refers to the exact and immediate connection between a sign and its reference. This sort of connection between the signified and the signifier is evident and reflects the sign's clear meaning. The general meaning that is understood and accepted in society is referred to as the denotative meaning of a sign. "The denotative meaning involves referential meaning," according to Sobur (2009), "it tends to be characterised as the definitional, or literal, conventional meaning of a sign" (p. 263). According to Panofsky (1970), the denotative meaning of a sign refers to the plain and evident picture that is understood by every individual within a certain culture or civilization (Panofsky, 1970, p.51).

2. Connotation: Barthes (1967) The subsequent category of interpretation, which encompasses signifiers and signified, is defined as connotation. The term "connotation" refers to the sign that may be inferred from any denotative sign's signifier. That merely implies that there are several connotative interpretations for each denotation. According to Barthes (1968), a sign's connotative meaning is its principal concern. According to Fiske (2010), the connotative meaning of a sign relates to the "cultural meaning which is attached to a term, it refers to the connection that takes place whenever then sign encounters the feelings and social norms of the reader" (p. 54). Barthes (1968) rejects the notion that a sign has just one degree of meaning and maintains that there are an infinite number of implications that may be derived from a single sign.

2.2. Meaning of Persecution

Rempell (2011, p.3) says that the intentional mistreatment of one individual or group by another person or group is known as persecution. The most common forms of persecution are those motivated by politics, racism, and religion, although there is obviously some overlap between these classifications. The infliction of pain, harassment, confinement, dread, or misery can all be used to prove persecution; however, not all suffering will always do so. The severity cutoff has generated a lot of debate.

Serious discrimination that denies or infringes upon basic rights constitutes persecution, which is a crime. The worldwide declaration of human rights for and the international agreement on civil and political rights include the rights to life, liberty, and security of person, equality, and non-discrimination. They also include the freedoms of assembly, speech, and religion, as well as the freedom from arbitrary detainment and treatment that is inhumane or degrading (Rempell, 2011, p. 3). Rempell (2011, p.4) claims that prejudice, ignorance, and bad preconceptions are frequently the causes of persecution. Many individuals respond with distrust or even hostility to someone whose look, culture, or attitude is unusual because they fear the odd or unknown. Rempell (2011, p.3) It is said that any behaviour that marginalizes someone or places them in a position of inferiority qualifies as persecution. Particularly persecution has historical roots in notions of one group's superiority over another, which were historically used to justify persecution of 'lower' communities. Despite the widespread rejection of such views today, persecution still exists.

2.3. The Language of Newspapers

Newspapers, in general, provide "representations" of the social world since the press has tremendous social influence due to its capacity to communicate information to hundreds of thousands of people. According to van Dijk (1996), social power refers to the symbolic and persuading ability to influence targets' thoughts to a certain extent. Conboy (2010, pp.2–3) said that newspapers are formed to symbolise an "elaborated kind of interaction" between their anonymous readers, to provide anything beyond the random "dry" news or happenings of the day. Currently, newspapers are distributed via multiple social and worldwide channels that support contemporary technology and computer devices in order to offer their readers a sense of "communal voice" (p.3). Newspapers have varying degrees of influence depending on "the scope, frequency range, and style of their reporting." These factors influence both the type of news or topics that customers become worried about, as well as their views and feelings towards them. Newspaper discourse is important because it is a genre of writing with the ability to impact the social thinking of those who read it (Hart, 2010, p.17). According to Fries (2001, p.13), modern newspapers feature a variety of distinguishable "text classes or genres." A contrast is established between hard news and soft news in the study of current English newspapers. According to Bell (1991), "hard news" is either concerned with "spot news" (accidents, catastrophes, crimes) or with certain critical events such as those in (politics, economics, and diplomacy). Soft news refers to "human interest stories" that are frequently told in an "involved, personal, and colloquial style." According to Xekalakis (1999, p.99), hard news is given in a neutral, formal, and detached manner. According to Fowler (1991, p.4), newspaper language is "the representation of the world in language" because it contains various linguistic and stylistic characteristics that contribute to provoke readers in forming a new impression and lead them towards certain ideological perspectives on a specific subject. As a result, many language scholars believe that newspaper language has a significant influence on the way of life and how people perceive, whether positively or negatively, about genuine global events.

2.4. Events in Iran After Mahsa Amini's Crisis

Despite Mahsa Amini's death has sparked the protests, tensions are already mounting for more than twelve months, with minor demonstrations breaking in other regions of the nation for various reasons. Specifically, residents have been growing frustrated with the lack of water in the nation and deteriorating economic circumstances, demonstrated throughout most of 2021 (Fassili, 2022). Tensions have grown since the country's new president has assumed office in 2021, aggressively enforcing stricter norms and laws governing women's clothing (Askew, 2022). However, Mahsa Amini's passing served as the last drop for the Iranian people, who quickly took to the streets to protest their basic rights. Video footage depicts flares in the sky, smoke over the homes, gunfire in the distance, and fatal scenes on pavements as a result of protesters' calls for strikes throughout the past several months (Karadsheh, Qiblawi, & Pourahmadi, 2022). Remember that activists and experts are increasingly choosing to characterise the protests as a "national revolt" and changes in order to highlight the seriousness of the issue and distinguish them from prior protests. Most activists' goals are for the "abolition of the dictatorship of the Islamic Republic," which is extremely different from previous experiences, according to Roham Alvandi, associate professor of History at the London College of Economics and Political Science, via CNN (Karadsheh, Qiblawi, & Pourahmadi, 2022). The slogans, advertisements, internet messages, and the site of the

protests all point to the end of the corrupt administration, authoritarian ideology, and economic downfalls. Actually, activists have decided to stage strikes and demonstrations in Iran's most important political and economic centres (Karadsheh, Qiblawi, & Pourahmadi, 2022). In reaction, the regime's police and military forces clamp on the protestors, resort to brutality and utilise their firearms to kill those blaring their horns. And police fire at both young and old people", "conflicts between youthful protestors and highly militarised law enforcement officers." Shots and flames streaked across the night sky" (Karadsheh, Qiblawi, & Pourahmadi, 2022). It can be noted that there are additional allegations of the Iranian regime closing down its morality police as a response to the demonstrations; nevertheless, these assertions lack evident official proof, and the situation remains unsettled (Dudgeon, 2022). The latest protests in Iran occur more than a decade after the Arab Spring ripped across the Islamic world, causing regime change in some countries but complicated, long-running civil battles in others. Nevertheless, since 2018, a fresh wave of public protests has swept Lebanon, Iraq, and now Iran, indicating the collapse of the region's Shia governing class, much as the Arab Spring predominantly signified a popular uprising against the Sunni ruling elite (Rojhelati, 2022).

3. Methodology

The type of analysis used in this study is qualitative in nature. Sadeq and Rezaqallah (2021) define qualitative procedures as those that allow the researcher to view the situation from the perspective of the persons involved. The analytical approach can produce useful qualitative results to close the gap in social research (Alattar, 2014). To put it simply, qualitative research is more likely to focus on smaller samples where the researcher serves as an integral part of the instrument and collects data in a natural setting in order to uncover its significance using a range of qualitative methods, including description, explanation, and exploration (Fadhil & Rezaq Allah, 2021). Moreover, a research design is defined as a "plan" or "strategy" for research inquiry or a method by which research study issues and difficulties are addressed throughout the research evaluation (Creswell, 2014, p.22). Research design is not a "blueprint," as Thyer (1993, p.94) defined it. A strategy that includes several critical procedures ranging from data collection to answering research questions to data analysis (AbdulLateef, Kadhum & Rdhaiwi, 2016). The current study, on the other hand, considers the analysis of selected data represented by twelve reports selected from online American, and Iranian newspapers. These newspapers tend to give daily reports as well as updates of different topics written by different journalists by which each one of them reflects his/her insights, and opinions in a way that is consistent with newspapers policies. Furthermore, the current study employs a qualitative research approach, which produces more "dependable" comprehensive correct replies to research questions (Ary, Jacob, and Sorensen, 2010, p.29). Besides qualitative research analysis, the current study adapts an eclectic model based on Grice's (1975) theory of implicatures, Barthes's (1968) theory of semiotics and Leech's (1969) theory of rhetoric for the analysis of the selected data. The corpus of the current study is comprised of two newspaper reports about the events in Iran after Mahsa Amini's crisis, which represent various ideas and perspectives about the Iranian political system and political circumstances. The reports are chosen from two Iranian online newspapers Which are represented by the Kayhan International (www.kayhan.com) and The Tehran Times "TT" (www.tehrantimes.com).

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Analysis of the Kayhan International Report

The report that has been selected from this newspaper is entitled "No Legal Grounds to Designate Iran's IRGC as 'Terrorist' Entity". It has been published on 21 February 2023 at 21:35. The analysis of this report goes on three levels; the pragmatic, semiotic and rhetorical levels as follows:

Extract (1)

"The riots broke out after the death in police custody of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian woman".

This extract has a linguistic meaning which is represented by the use of some pragmatic, semiotic and rhetorical devices. From the pragmatic perspective, the above extract includes a conversationally implied meaning. This kind of meaning is found in the phrase "the riots" which is a clear persecution of the protestors' rights in expressing their demands publically. The phrase conversationally implies that the editor does not respect the protestors and does not consider their actions legal or rightful. The editor clearly persecutes the protestors' rights in starting their peaceful protests and considers what they do mere riots. From the semiotic perspective, the above extract comprises two levels of meaning namely; denotative and connotative meanings. The phrase "the riots" encompasses denotative and connotative meanings. The denotative meaning of the phrase is that it represents the Iranian protests. Its connotative meaning, on the other hand, is that it stands for the editor's negative perspective of the protests in Iran and his persecution of their freedom in expressing their demands. From the rhetorical perspective, the above

extract contains a sort of meaning which is represented by the use of a rhetorical device. The phrase “the riots” includes some sort of metaphor as a rhetorical device. The phrase, however, metaphorically means that the editor talks about the protests but does not address them as protests because he does not stand with them and does not support them instead, he address them as riots and denies their rights in starting their protests. He is seen to reject their demands and this is considered a clear persecution of human rights and freedom.

Extract (2)

“rioters went on a rampage, brutally attacking security officers and causing massive damage to public property”. The linguistic meaning of this extract is constructed via using different pragmatic, semiotic and rhetorical devices. In the above extract, the phrases “rioters, attacking security officers, and causing massive damage” have a pragmatic meaning which appears in a form of conversational implicature. The phrases, conversationally imply that the editor accuses the protestors of being riot makers who kill the security officers and damage public properties. This means that the editor uses a language that persecutes the protestors and deprive them from the freedom of expressing their opinions concerning the situation in Iran and the suppression they suffer from In terms of the semiotic meaning of the above extract, the editor uses the expressions “rioters, attacking security officers, and causing massive damage” which contain two levels of meaning namely; the denotative meaning and the connotative one. Denotatively, these phrases mean that the editor accuses the protestors of attacking the security officers and damaging public properties. Connotatively, the phrases mean that the editor addresses the protestors as if he addresses terrorists who threaten the security, unity and stability of the country. The editor’s language can be understood that he does not give the Iranian people the right to start these protest and does not consider their protest as rightful. He regards them as rioters that seek killing the security officers and the destruction of the country. Regarding the rhetorical meaning of the above extract, the phrases “rioters, attacking security officers, and causing massive damage” comprise hyperbole as a rhetorical device. The editor vividly exaggerates his description of the protestors by regarding them as rioters, who cause massive damage to public properties. The editor via this form of device is regarded as a persecutor who does not give the protestors the right of protesting against the regime.

Extract (3)

“Dozens of people and security personnel were killed throughout the riots.” The linguistic meaning of the above extract is formulated by utilising various types of pragmatic, semiotic and rhetorical devices. In terms of the pragmatic meaning of the above extract, the editor conversationally implies that the rioters are the reason behind killing dozens of people and security forces. In this extract, the editor classifies the Iranian people into, people, security forces and rioters. This means that the editor does not regard the protestors as a part of the people of Iran. In fact he regards them as killers and terrorist that want to destroy the country and its unity. This is a clear persecution to the Iranian protestors who have fed up with the social, political and economic suppression they live in. Concerning the semiotic meaning of the above extract, it is believed that the extract includes denotative and connotative levels of meaning. Denotatively, the editor describes the protestors as rioters who killed many people and security forces. Connotatively, the editor presents the protestors as violent makers, killers and terrorist who attack the security of the country and cause the death of many people and security forces. They intend to destroy the unity of the country and unrightfully attack the public properties. Concerning the rhetorical meaning of the above extract, it is found that the extract contains the rhetorical device of hyperbole. The editor is noticed to exaggerate in his description of the events by considering them as rioters. The editor, exaggeratedly, regards the protestors as the reason that caused the death of dozens of civilians and security forces.

Extract (4)

“Iran’s intelligence bodies have found footprints of American and other Western spy agencies in the violent riots”. The linguistic meaning of this extract is formulated by the use of different forms of pragmatic, semiotic and rhetorical devices. Concerning the pragmatic aspect, the phrase “footprints of American and other Western spy agencies in the violent riots” is believed to include a form of conversational implicature. Via such a phrase, the editor, however, conversationally implies that the actions of riots are supported by the Western spy agencies. This is a clear accusation of the protestors and means that the editor considers them a threat to the unity and stability of the country. this can be understood as a kind of persecution where the editor does not give the protestors the right to demonstrate and ask for their demands freely. In terms of the semiotic aspect, the phrase “footprints of American and other Western spy agencies in the violent riots” is noticed to include denotative and connotative meanings. The denotative meaning of this phrase is that the editor states that there are American and Western spies involved in the riots. The connotative meaning, in the same vein, is that the editor accuses the protests to be instigated and

supported by the Western countries who seek the downfall and destruction of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The editor regards the protests as a mere threat to the country and do not have true and legal demand. This, in fact, is considered an obvious form of persecution of the protests. In terms of the rhetorical meaning of the above extract, the phrase "footprints of American and other Western spy agencies in the violent riots" is found to include some sort of metaphor as a rhetorical device. The editor metaphorically speaks of the protests by considering them a threat that cooperate with the Western spies. The editor's language can be understood that he stands with the regime against the protests and rejects their demonstrations. The editor's rejection of the protestors' demands is a clear persecution.

4.2. Analysis of the Tehran Times Report

The report that has been selected from this newspaper is entitled Charring public property never means democracy: senior Sunni cleric. It has been published on November 19, 2022 at 21:49. The analysis of this report goes on three levels; the pragmatic, semiotic and rhetorical levels as follows:

Extract (1)

"protests supported by foreign governments have erupted in many Iranian cities" The above extract has a linguistic meaning that is formulated through different pragmatic, semiotic and rhetorical devices. Pragmatically speaking, the phrase "protests supported by foreign governments" comprises a conversational form of implicature. Via such a phrase, the editor conversationally implies that the protests did not happen legally and rightfully but the protestors are instigated and supported by the enemies of Iran who want to destroy the country. Semiotically speaking, the phrase "protests supported by foreign governments" encompasses denotative and connotative meanings. The denotative level of meaning is that the editor accuses the protests to be supported foreign governments. The connotative meaning, in the same vein, is that the editor considers the protest to be the result of the conspiracies of the Western governments on the Islamic Republic of Iran. Rhetorically speaking, the phrase "protests supported by foreign governments" contains allegory as a form of a rhetorical device. Via such a form of rhetorical device, the editor says something and implies something deeper. He says that the protests are supported by foreign governments and implies that the foreign governments are behind these protests. The editor means that the foreign governments have instigated these protests by which they want to destroy and ruin the unity of Iran. This is an obvious persecution and deprivation of the protestors from their freedom in demanding their rights.

Extract (2)

"the violent protests have led to death of dozens of civilians and security personnel". This extract has a linguistic meaning which is formulated via different pragmatic, semiotic and rhetorical devices. Regarding the pragmatic devices, the phrase "the violent protests" includes a conversational form of implicature. The editor conversationally implies that the protests are violent and they are the reason behind the death of many people and security forces. This is a clear persecution where the editor does not give the Iranian people the right of protest and accuse them of being the reason of death and destruction. Regarding the semiotic aspect of the above extract, the phrase "the violent protests" has denotative and connotative meanings. The denotative meaning of this phrase is that it refers to the actions the protestors do during their demonstrations. Its connotative meaning, in the same vein, is that it refers to the editor's accusation of the protestors of being killers who killed many civilians and security officers. The editor denies the protestors' rights and regards what they do as mere killing, violence and destruction.

Regarding the rhetorical aspect of the above extract, the phrase "the violent protests" contains personification as a rhetorical device. The editor personifies the protests as violent protests that caused the death of civilians and the destruction of public properties. Describing the protests in such a way means that the editor rejects the protest and stands against them. This is considered as a persecution where the editor stands against the protestors' determination to achieve their rightful demands.

Extract (3)

"The chaos that has followed the riots has also provided opportunity for terrorist assaults". The linguistic meaning of this extract is constructed by adopting some pragmatic, semiotic and rhetorical devices. In terms of the pragmatic aspect, the phrase "The chaos" includes a conversational form of implicature. The editor conversationally implies that the protests in Iran represent a chaos that gave the chance to the terrorists to attack the public properties. This means that the editor considers the protests a means that has been exploited by terrorists to achieve their aims by destroying the unity and stability of the country. In terms of the semiotic aspect of the above extract, the phrase "The chaos" contains denotative and connotative levels of meaning. The denotative meaning of this phrase is that it signifies the editor's accusation of the protests by presenting them as chaos. The

connotative meaning of the phrase is that it signifies the believe that the protests are mere chaos that provided the opportunity for the terrorists to act against the safety and security of the country. This is regarded as a clear persecution where the protests are deprived from their rightful demands and the freedom of expressing their opinions regarding the situation in Iran. In terms of the rhetorical aspect of the above extract, the phrase “The chaos” comprises symbolism as a rhetorical device. The editor depends on this device to symbolise the protests as a chaos that acted against the security of the country. The editor thinks that the protests helped the terrorists to appear publically in many cities and act freely by attacking the civilians, security forces and public properties. This means that the editor looks at the protests negatively and rejects what they do in the country. The editor’s perspective of the protests is considered a sort of persecution since the editor denies the protestors’ rightful demands.

Extract (4)

“Children should not be orphaned in the name of protest. The enemy seeks to create insecurity in our society and will hatch any conspiracy to achieve this goal”. The above extract has a linguistic meaning that is formulated via some pragmatic, semiotic and rhetorical devices. Pragmatically speaking, the phrase “Children should not be orphaned in the name of protest” encompasses a sort of conversational implicature. The editor conversationally implies that people should not protest in order not to get killed and their children should not be orphaned. This means that the protests are prevented from going out to the streets to ask for their demands which is seen as a form of persecution. The editor also implies that the enemies have made use of the protests to conspire against the security and unity of the country. Semiotically speaking, the phrase “Children should not be orphaned in the name of protest” comprises denotative and connotative meanings. The denotative meaning of this phrase is that it signifies the editor’s rejection of the protests. The connotative meaning of the phrase is that it refers to the idea that protests are only a source of instability that gives terrorists the chance to harm the country’s peace and defence. It means that those who demonstrate are banned from stating their demands in public, which is viewed as a sort of persecution. The editor further hints that the nation’s adversaries are plotting to undermine the security and unity of the country by taking advantage of the protests. Rhetorically speaking, the phrase “Children should not be orphaned in the name of protest” includes metaphor as a rhetorical device. The editor metaphorically speaks of the protests as being the reason behind killing people and orphaning the children. Describing the protests in such a way means that the editor believes that the enemies of the Islamic Republic of Iran make use of such protests and attack the stability and unity of the country. This refers to the editor’s denial of the protestor’s right and it is considered a clear persecution.

4.3. Discussion of the Results

The analysis of the selected data shows that the editors of the Iranian newspapers namely The Kayhan International and Tehran Times use some sort of language to express the persecution to the protests that started after Mahsa Amini’s crisis. The linguistic meaning of the editors’ language include different pragmatic, semiotic and rhetorical devices. In terms of the pragmatic devices, the selected reports are found to include different forms of conversational implicatures. Via such form of implicature, the editors intend to convey some implied meaning that cannot be figured out from the linguistic text but it requires a contextual knowledge. In terms of the semiotic level, the selected reports are found to include some expressions that have two levels of meaning including the denotative and connotative levels. the denotative level represent the literal and explicit level of meaning while the connotative level represent the implied and intended level of meaning which is found in the language of these newspaper reports. In terms of the rhetorical level, the selected reports are found to include different rhetorical devices via which the editors discussed their point of view of the protests. The selected reports are found to include metaphor, hyperbole, symbolism, personification allegory. These devices are adopted by the editors to convey more meanings and messages that represent their persecution of the Iranian people and their freedom to ask for their demands publically.

5. Conclusions

After analysing the selected data and discussing the results, it can be concluded that the language of the Iranian newspapers encompasses linguistic expression that show the editors’ persecution of the protestors that have started their demonstrations in Iran after Mahsa Amini’s crisis. The editors are depend on implied meanings, denotations, connotations and on rhetorical devices to express their intention towards the protests. They use a language that represents their rejection of what the protestors do and they deny their right and freedom to demonstrate against the regime. The editors, in many instances, prefer to call the protestors as rioters, chaos and violence makers, those who are supported by foreign governments, terrorist, supported by the Western countries and the enemies of the

Islamic Republic of Iran. The editors have never admitted that the protestors have the right to demonstrate and express their demands freely. This shows the extent to which the editors persecute the protestors and stand against them.

References

- AbdulLateef, R. Y., Kadhum, S. F. and Rdhaiwi, N. H. (2016). A Pragmatic analysis of a selected Presidential Funeral Eulogy. *Al-Adab Journal*. DOI: 10.31973/aj.v1i118.372
- Alattar, R. A. S. (2014). A Speech act analysis of American Presidential speeches. *Arts Journal* / No.110 2014 / 1436
- Ary, D., Jacobs, L.C., Razavieh, A., & Sorensen, K.C. (2010). *Introduction to research in education*. Wadsworth Cengage learning.
- Askew, J. (2022). Iran protests: What caused them? Are they different this time? Will the regime fall?'. *EuroNews*. <https://www.euronews.com/2022/11/25/iran-protests-what-caused-them-whois-generation-z-will-the-unrest-lead-to-revolution>.
- Barthes, R. (1967). *Elements of semiology*. London: Jonathan Cape.
- Barthes, R. (1968). *Elements of semiology*. New York. Hilland Wang.
- Barthes, R. (1990). *Mythologies*. İstanbul. Turkey: Hürriyet Yayınları.
- Barthes, R. (2005). *Semiological adventure*. İstanbul, Turkey: YKY.
- Bell, A. (1991). *The language of news media*. Blackwell.
- Charles W. (2002). *Introducing English semantics*. London and New York.
- Cobley, P. and Jansz, L. (2001). *Introducing semiotics*. Icon Books. Cambridge University Press.
- Conboy, M. (2010). *The language of newspapers: socio-historical perspectives*. Continuum international publishing group.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches*. Sage.
- Dudgeon, I. (2022). Is Iran's regime making concessions as it tries to crush protests?'. *Australia Strategist Policy Institute*. <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/is-irans-regime-making-concessions-as-it-tries-to-crush-protests>.
- Eco, U. (1976). *A theory of semiotics*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Fadhil, D. J. and Rezaq Allah, M. S. (2021). A feminist discourse analysis of writer's gender biases about violence against women. *Journal of the College of Languages*. P-ISSN: 2074-9279. E-ISSN: 2520-3517. 2021, No.(44) <http://jcolang.uobaghdad.edu.iq>
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36586/jcl.2.2021.0.44.0021>
- Fassili, F. (2022). Iran forcefully clamps down on protests against growing water shortages. *The New York Times*.
- Fiske, J. (2010). *Introduction to communication studies*. Routledge.
- Fowler, R. (1991). *Language in the news*. Routledge.
- Fries, U.(2001).Text classes in early english newspapers. *European Journal of English Studies*. 5.2, 167–180.
- Grice, P. (1975). *Logic and conversation*. Harvard University Press.
- Griffiths, P. (2006). *An introduction to English semantics and pragmatics*. Edinburg University Press Ltd.
- Hakansson, G. And Westander, J. (2013). *Communication in humans and other animals*. Amsterdam. John Benjamins.
- Hart, C. (2010). *Critical discourse analysis and cognitive science: New Perspectives on immigration discourse*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hussein, A. L. and Fadhil, A. A. (2021). Why phrasal-prepositional verbs intimidating constructions? <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/349176149>
- Karadsheh, J., Qiblawi, T., & Pourahmadi, A. (2022). How Iran's protests transformed into a national uprising. *CNN World*. <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/10/13/middleeast/iran-protests-national-uprisin-gcmd-intl/index.html>
- Kennedy, G. (2007). *On rhetoric: A theory of Civk discourse*. OUP.
- Kohli, A. (2022). Here's What Has Happened in Iran Since the Death of Mahsa Amini. <https://time.com/6220853/iran-protests-mahsa-amini-what-to-know>
- Lakoff, R. (1982). Persuasive discourse and ordinary conversation, with examples from advertising. In Deborah Tannen (Ed.) *Analyzing discourse: Text and talk* (pp. 154-169). Georgetown University Press.

- Larrazabal, L and K. Korta (2002). Pragmatics and rhetoric for discourse analysis. University of Basque Country.
- Leech, G. (1969). A Linguistic Guide to English Poetry. New York: Longman Inc.
- Leech, G. (1983). Principles of pragmatics. Longman.
- Levinson, S. (1983). Pragmatics. Cambridge University Press.
- Lim, K. (1975). An introduction to linguistics for the language teacher. Singapore University Press.
- Masaitiene, D. (2009). Introduction into linguistics: A teaching guide. Vytauto Didžiojo Universitetas Kaunas.
- Panofsky, E. (1970). Meaning in the visual arts. Harmondsworth: Penguin
- Prior, P. (2014). Semiotics. In L. Constant, and S. Brian (Eds.), The Routledge companion to English studies (pp. 160-173). London, UK: Routledge.
- Rempell, S. (2011). Defining persecution. Utah Law Review. Social Science Research Network. 2013 (1). doi:10.2139/ssrn.1941006.
- Rezqallah, M. S. and Jasim, R. K. (2020). A Linguistic Analysis of Tennis Players' Speeches. Al-Adab Journal – No. 132 –(1) (March) 2020 / 1441
- Rojhelati, Z. (2022). The Demonstrations for Mahsa Amini: A Turning Point in Iran. An initiative of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy.
- Sadeq M. S. and Rezqallah, M. S. (2021). An Error Analysis: Iraqi EFL College Learners Problems in British Diphthongs and Triphthongs Pronunciation. Al-Ustath Journal for Human and Social Sciences Vol.(60) No.(1) (March) -2021AD, 1442AH)
- Saleem, A. G. and Alattar, R. A. S. (2020). Pragmatics of Political Blame in British and Iraqi Parliaments. Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Volume 11. Number1 March 2020 Pp.331-375 DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no1.24>
- Saleh, D.S. and Alattar, R. A. S. (2021). A Pragma-Stylistic Study of Misdirection in Selected Detective Novels. Journal of the College of Languages. P-ISSN: 2074-9279 E-ISSN: 2520-3517, 2023, No.(47).63-103. <http://jcolang.uobaghdad.edu.iq> <https://doi.org/10.36586/jcl.2.2023.0.47.0063>
- Sobur, A. (2009). Semiotika komunikasi. Bandung: PT Remaja Rosdakarya.
- Thyer, B.A. (1993). Single-systems research design. In R.M. Grinnell (ed) Social Work, Research and Evaluation (4th ed). Peacock.
- Van Dijk, T.A. (1996). Power and the news media. Hampton Press.
- Varga, L. (2010). Introduction to English linguistics: A companion to the Seminar. Lorand University Budapest.
- Xekalakis, E.(1999). Newspapers through the times: foreign reports from the 18th to the 20th centuries. Dissertation Zurich.
- Yule, G. (1996). Pragmatics. Oxford University Press.