



## Pragma Stylistic Features as an Interpretative Tool: An Analysis of Dawn Newspaper Headlines

*Sundas Mehreen*<sup>1</sup>

*Dr. Sarwet Rasul*<sup>2</sup>

*Yasmin Akhtar*<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>M.Phil Graduate, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi

<sup>2</sup>Chairperson, Department of English, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi

<sup>3</sup>Lecturer, Department of English, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi

### Abstract

The combined studies of pragmatics and stylistics are less explored and often approached as pragma stylistics and pragmatics of style. The burgeoning field of interdisciplinary studies is well documented (Edwards, 1996, Klein 1990, 1996) and is the need of the day in this information age in order to get a clear understanding of the intricacies of language use in media texts. The fruitful link between pragmatics and stylistics can be exploited for an in-depth study of language use in media. However, the current study examines the representation of Pakistani English Newspaper headlines in terms of interpretation by adapting the Pragmatic Stylistic framework propounded by Black (2006). The sample for the study consists of 28 front-page headlines from The Daily Dawn, a top-rated and the oldest English newspaper in Pakistan. The data inquiry is undertaken with the analytical paradigm of descriptive qualitative interpretational analysis. The analysis provides evidence that pragmatic stylistics features govern the interpretation of the headlines from the writer/editor's perspective. The variational use of Pragmatic Stylistic features in headlines cater to the variation of news events. The study concludes that being a governing factor in interpretation, Pragmatic Stylistic features are crucial to be understood by the writers.

**Keywords:** Pragmatic Stylistics, interpretation, descriptive analysis, media discourse

### 1. Introduction

The inevitable nexus between language, communication, and media contribute to the fabric of present-day society to a great extent. Despite digital technology and the advent of the internet, print media, such as newspapers, magazines, etc. not only hold their ground as efficient sources of information (Kim and Ward, 2012) but also support social sustainability (Fortunatia and O'Sullivan, 2019). Newman survey (Newman, et al, 2019) demonstrates that the average level of trust in news is 49%, which is the main factor that can be tempered easily to create a mindset, promote an ideology or build an image and lead the public towards a certain desired interpretation of the newspaper text.

Newspaper is conventionally considered a written media with the highest readership, as Van Dijk (1986) mentions that "for most citizens, the news is perhaps the type of written discourse with which they are confronted most frequently" (p. 156). Newspaper headline being a striking feature of newspaper is skimmed by most of the readers. Headlines play a significant role in the comprehension, perception, and processing of the news text by the reader and express the quintessence of the news story with utmost brevity and attract the attention of the readers (Ungerer, 2000). Hence the headlines are deemed an appropriate medium to be manipulated in the expression of desired perspectives and ideologies (Farrokhi et al, 2019). Newspapers headlines because of their unique linguistic features and functions have been extensively studied from different perspectives e.g. (Abba & Musa, 2015; Monsefi



and Mahadi 2017; Ismail, 2016; Ismajli, 2020 etc.). However, these studies lack comprehensiveness and take either a stylistic, or pragmatic analysis separately. Recently stylistics is seen approaching pragmatics to understand, discuss and identify numerous features of literary and non-literary texts, especially, in the domain of interpretation. This juncture of stylistics and pragmatics resulted in a new sub-branch of linguistics called pragma stylistic or pragmatic stylistics, a term coined by Hickey (1993), which has been used as a useful framework for text analysis. Black (2006) contributed to the field by propounding a systematic framework for the pragmatic stylistic analysis of the text and found the pragmatic theories useful in the interpretation of literary and non-literary text. For further profoundness, pragma-stylistics offers more complete explanations for many unexplained phenomena than stylistics or pragmatics can do alone (Black, 2006).

The present study, along with demonstrating the feasibility of Black's (2006) Pragmatic stylistic framework to the analysis of the language of newspaper headlines, a non-literary text, also attempts to explore the way the pragma stylistic features influence a certain desired interpretation of the newspaper headlines.

## 1.2. Aims and Objectives

The aim of the present endeavor is to explore the linguistic strategies employed in the headlines by the newsmakers in order to influence a certain desired interpretation of the English newspaper headlines within the purview of the Pragmatic Stylistics framework propounded by Elizabeth Black (2006). The particular focus of the study is on the following objectives:

- To explore which linguistic resources/features are manipulated to make the readers interpret the Headlines of the Newspaper *The Daily Dawn* in the desired direction
- To examine how and to what extent the identified linguistic resources/features contribute to the interpretation of the Newspaper Headlines in *The Daily Dawn*
- To establish the feasibility of pragmatic stylistic framework( Black, 2006) in exploring the role of linguistic resources leading to the interpretation of the selected newspaper headlines

The present study is significant as it attempts to combine two genres, i.e. pragmatics and stylistics, and collectively applies pragmatic theories and stylistic features to the newspaper headlines, to reach at a comprehensive understanding of the understudied phenomenon than stylistics or pragmatics can do alone. Furthermore, the study comes out as the first of its kind to study newspaper headlines from this perspective and has both practical and theoretical significance. The study is important for its theoretical contribution to the knowledge in the domains of media discourse, pragmatic stylistic, and overall, to the field of linguistics. The practical contribution of the study lies in demonstrating the way linguistic resources can be manipulated for ideological purposes and the possible ways of seeing through them and decoding them. Thus, the study sensitizes the possible ways through which the discursive structures are utilized to make a certain mindset and, hence, power is exercised through discursive means to achieve the ideological aims. Considering the sociopolitical environment in Pakistan, where most of the masses are semiliterate and depend on the opinion of others, particularly, the educated elite, critical analysis of news language can provide an insight into the process of news production. The analysis also lays bare the real agenda behind the manipulation of the linguistic resources by the media groups.

## 1.3. Research Methodology: Sample and Framework

### *Type of Research*



The current study undertakes a descriptive and interpretative analysis of newspaper headlines, hence, it is qualitative in nature. It takes guidelines from the assumption that reality is socially constructed and the analysis of any text needs to be contextualized (Reeves & Hedberg, 2003). The referential equivalent method is employed to examine the data grounded in e.g. socio-political, socio-cultural, and socioeconomic factors. The data is organized through axial coding or general domains (Hills et al, 1997). In this study, the data is organized under pragmatic stylistic features as suggested by Black (2006). Flexibility, a marking feature of descriptive analysis (Elliott & Timulak, 2005), makes the use of presupposition and implicature inevitable in this research.

**1.4. Study Sample**

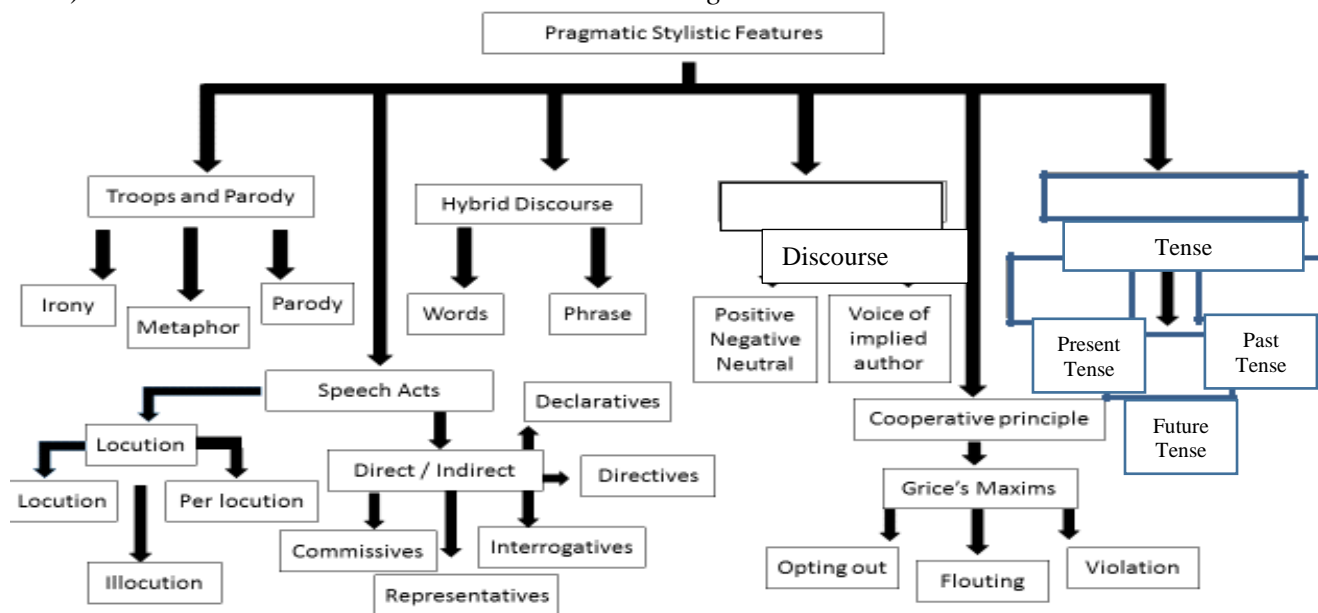
The sample for the study comprises 28 purposively chosen first-page headlines from the English newspaper *The Daily Dawn*. The data is collected randomly from the newspapers published from 21 December to 27 December 2017. The rationale for selecting *The Daily Dawn* newspaper is its largest readership because of its being the oldest English newspaper in Pakistan. The Daily Dawn has been rated as the topmost read newspaper in Pakistan by pakwired.com (2014). The data was collected from the website of *The Daily Dawn* newspaper by accessing the archive section (Appendix A).

**1.5. Theoretical Framework and Model for Analysis**

The present study is underpinned by pragmatic Stylistic theory, a sub-branch of linguistics, and defined as stylistics with the addition of a pragmatic component. It emerged from van Dijk’s (1972) suggestion of reserving stylistics as theoretical and linguistic branch of both linguistics and stylistics wherein there is its practical coincidence with the theory of performance and pragmatics, hence, resulting in a new sub-branch of pragma stylistics. Through this combined theoretical nexus the understudy phenomena can be explained in a more comprehensive and complete way than by either pragmatic or stylistic study alone. The study adopts Black’s pragmatic stylistic (2006) framework for the analysis of the data. Black (2006) in her model of analysis elucidates the way pragmatics plays a part in the stylistic analysis of written discourse and proposes essential elements in the interpretational process of written discourse. According to Black (2006), meaning-making is an interpretative process that varies from reader to reader and depends on non-grammatical and non-semantic aspects of language besides the linguistic features.

The present study analyses the data through the following selected dimensions of the framework propounded by Black (2006): tense; speech acts; cooperative principle and Maxims; Dietic Expressions; hybrid discourse cooperative principle, hybrid discourse, and echoic discourse (Black, 2006).

Figure 3.1





## 2. Literature Review

In the analysis of media text an overlap in the fields of discourse and communication is inevitable leading to the term media discourse which is broadly defined by Spitulnik (2017) as a type of communication not conducted in face to face manner. Pajunen (2008) mentions the newspaper discourse as a type of widely read media discourse. The global access to newspapers makes them useful tools to influence opinions and attitudes. Newspaper text carries different news reports and stories and each of which is preceded by headlines. Headlines briefly and artfully summarize the essence of the detailed news report and due to their unique linguistic features and functions have attracted the attention of scholarly research in different disciplines including linguistics, media studies, and discourse, etc.

According to Reah (2002), in newspaper texts, very often readers only browse the headlines and stop to read those articles with the most attractive headings. Headlines are important because they are used to stir up readers' attention, create curiosity and give information quickly and accurately (Ungerer 2000; Develotte and Rechniewski 2001; Van Dijk 2013). Because of their potential to make use of different linguistic features, newspaper headlines are constructed and manipulated to achieve certain purposes (Al-Hindawi, 2018).

According to Missikova (2007), the comprehension of a written text is aided by a tracing process which uses linguistic or extra linguistic clues such as stylistic features, context, presupposition, implicature etc. to decode information and bridge textual gaps. The aforementioned linguistic items fall under stylistics and pragmatics respectively, hence, a comprehensive analysis of such texts demands combined tools from pragmatic and stylistic. Although both Pragmatics and Stylistics approach language differently (Galita, 2011) recently modern stylistic studies have shown an inclination towards the study of the function of linguistic utterances. The resultant studies are called pragmastylistic or pragmatic stylistics studies. Since 1990 pragmatic stylistics emerged as a distinct branch of linguistics. Black (2006) presented a systematic theoretical framework for Pragmatic Stylistics analysis of literary and non-literary text alike. Black (2006) along with theorizing the field, also demonstrates the application of this framework to different types of texts in her book.

The field is further enriched by the contribution of the Chinese scholars through the application of Black's work to different texts (Jobbert, 2008). The most eminent works that stand out in this regard include Zhao Chaozhu (2001) for his pragmatic analysis of implicatures; Zongxin (2002) work on *Pragmastylistics of Dramatic Texts* and Tu Jing's (2005) review of literary pragmatics (Yijun, 2019).

Chovanec (2003) studied data from 242 newspaper headlines from *The Electronic Telegraph*, a British daily newspaper. The study identified three types of present tenses on the basis of the function it is made to fulfill, namely, stating a past event; foregrounding other tenses; presenting headlines based on nominalization. The present study gets a guideline from the aforementioned study in the organization of the analysis of tenses. Likewise, Praskova (2003) collected extensive data comprising 200 headlines from different British newspapers with the aim to determine the most recurrent grammatical features of the headlines and identified some common characteristics of the headlines. However, the study pointed out the difficulty of coming up with generalized patterns due to the diversity of multiple grammatical features and their different combinations in the headlines. In the same vein, Widyanti (2010) following a descriptive qualitative method analyzed data collected from *Harper's Bazar Magazine* published in 2012 and analyzed the use of figurative devices, namely, metaphor, metonymy, personification, synecdoche, and hyperbole that perform different functions and give the headlines a flavor of advertising language. On the other hand, a study conducted by Chang (2014), used a combined pragmatic and stylistic framework for Mistry drama with the intent to find out the pragmatic functions of dialogues. The study successfully demonstrated the use of pragmatic



concepts to achieve aesthetic effects through dialogues. The current study takes insight from Chang’s study in the presentation of pragmatic stylistic features of speech acts and implicatures.

Chinelo (2015) studied headlines selected from the national dailies and demonstrated how ambiguous speech acts serve as stylistic devices to engage the readers’ attention. The study effectively presented the impact of pragmatic ambiguities on the style of the text. A similar study was carried out by Alake (2017) to find out the stylistic impact produced through the exploitation of different linguistic resources in the data consisting of Electronic Advanced Fee Fraud text. The analysis was carried out through combining pragmatic and stylistic tools. The study concluded that the fee fraud texts have persuasive functions and can be categorized as a sub-genre of advertisement.

The current study is unique in the sense that it aims at studying the henceforth unexplored domain of news headlines in Pakistani context from the purview of pragma stylistic framework to find out the role of pragma stylistic features in enforcing a particular interpretation of the headiness on the readers.

### 3. Data Analysis and Discussion

The following six pragmatic stylistic features are identified in the selected data: tense; speech acts; cooperative principle and maxims; dietic expressions; hybrid discourse. The analysis focuses on how these features, which are based on different pragmatic stylistic perspectives, act as influencing agents and contribute to a certain interpretation of the selected English newspaper headlines.

#### 3.1. Tenses

The distinctive linguistic style of the headlines hinges on the functional use of different tenses and the role these tenses play in the interpretation of the newspaper content (Hameed, 2008). Four major categories of tenses i.e. the present, past, future, and ambiguous tenses have been identified in the data. The occurrence of each tense is quantitatively presented in the tabular form below.

**Table 1**  
**Numeric Distribution of Tenses in Headlines**

Name of Newspaper	Present Tense		Past Tense		Future Tense		Ambiguous		Total
	Fr.	Pr.	Fr.	Pr.	Fr.	Pr.	Fr.	Pr.	Fr.
<b>The Daily Dawn</b>	21	(75%)	3	(11%)	NIL	0%	4	(14%)	28

##### 3.1.1. Present Tense

The data reveals that in majority of the headlines (75%) present tense is used. This tense is used to perform the function of not only reporting some events taking place in the present but also of stating the events that happened in past or may take place in future. According to Halliday (1985 as cited in Chovanec, 2003), this extensive use of present tense in the headlines is a characteristic feature of newspaper discourse. This suggests that the reported events are recent and of urgent nature and, hence, need to be given prompt attention (Moe, 2014). Most of the sample headlines are stated in simple present tense which is termed ‘historic present’ by Chovanec (2014). For instance, *Dawn-23(2) Nisar backs PML-N move to name Shahbaz as PM candidate* and *Dawn-25(1) KP threatens to boycott CCI over ‘trespass’* inform the readers of Nisar’s backing of PML-N’s move to propose Shabaz Sharif



as PM candidate and of KP's warning of boycott to CCI over trespass respectively. Though these two events have taken place in the past or near past but the headlines employ verbs 'backs' and 'threatens' instead of 'backed' and 'threatened' which not only adds sensationalism to the news by indicating its immediacy but also leaves a strong impact on the reader by suggesting a recent economic relief, on the one hand, and lurking danger to the lives, on the other hand, respectively. Hence, through the use of present tense and invocation of contextual clues the readers are made to interpret the given headlines in the desired direction. Furthermore, through the use of present tense readers' attention is focused on the main verb and object in the sentence, foregrounding the main actor and action leading the reader to easily interpret the information. This point is further demonstrated by the following examples from the data. **'Dawn-21(2) Pakistan issues visas to spy Jadhav's mother, wife ; Dawn-22(4) UN assembly rejects US Jerusalem move'**

Another pragmatic stylistic feature found in the data is the use of present tense with reverse order of clause or phrase where the main actor is stated at the end preceded by the comment made by the actor/ agent. There are four occurrences of this feature with the purpose to create a sensation or hype by foregrounding the main agent. Through the use of this stylistic technique readers' attention is shifted from the speaker to the content of the statement guiding the reader to interpret the headline devoid of the agent, in order to absolve the agent from blame or responsibility. The following example from the data demonstrates this strategy. **Dawn-22(2) Pakistan's view on terror list accepted in new Heart of Asia declaration: FO** Another example from **Dawn-27(1) -Musharraf treason case behind disqualification, says Sharif**

Some of the headlines are also observed to have infinitive form and elliptical. e.g. **DAWN-23(2) Nisar backs PML-N move to name Shahbaz as PM candidate** and **Dawn-25(3) PML-N asks Qadri to rely on courts, not agitation** In these headlines the infinitive is used to refer to an event that is to take place in future time. However, in this headline present tense is used at the initial position in the sentence which is meant to mislead them into interpreting that the reported event is an urgent matter claiming their utmost attention, e.g. **Dawn-24(1) - PTI to launch movement for Fata-KP merger**. This headline contains infinitive that indicates a lack of specification of the time of occurrence of the event. The headlines framed in such a way can fit to express any time depending on the context. The above-cited headline implies a future event by the use of the infinitive. Through the use of infinitives, the writers manipulate readers' interpretation of the headlines by making them perceive a future event as a present one while at the same time emphasizing the urgent nature of the event.

In the selected sample, past tense occurred only 3(11%) times e.g. **Dawn-21(1) Isolation forced govt to sign deal with protesters, Senate told'**. Past tense is mostly used to quote someone else's words, called 'pieces of other's discourse' (Black, 2006), e.g. **Dawn-22(1) PM tasked to forge consensus on Fata reforms bill**. The aforementioned headline reports the third party i.e. Senate's discourse, hence, it is recounted by the use of past tense. There is also the use of other stylistic elements, such as, semicolons, colons, commas, etc. in lieu of reporting verbs. Through this stylistic device reader's attention is diverted from the main agent to the stated comment in the sentence. Hence, this stylistic feature contributes to a different interpretation of the piece of news than could have resulted from omitting this feature.

### 3.1.2. Ambiguous Tense

In the data, 4 (14%) headlines could not be put into any tense category because of the lack of any obvious tense marker. This leads to ambiguity and results in multiple interpretations of the given headlines. This ambiguity functions in masking agency and, hence, avoiding blame or responsibility. Stylistically, this function is achieved through the use of omission and nominalization.



### (a) Omissions

An omission that is considered to be a matter of choice in the newspaper discourse (Lemke, Horch & Reich, 2017), is also found in the selected newspaper headlines. The data reveals 4 instances of unnecessary omissions. This stylistic feature seems to be utilized to save newspaper space. Some of the omissions of the words carrying low information render the sentence ambiguous and make the headline strike like a punch line of an advertisement. The function of such omissions is to intrigue curiosity in readers (Pajunen, 2008). *Dawn-21(4) No headway in govt-jirga talks on Fata reforms* Another headline from the data e.g. *Dawn-25(4) US-Israel-India nexus in the making: Rabbani* sounds like a phrase because of omission of helping verb *has been*, hence, it makes the readers interpret the information by foregrounding that something worth mentioning has taken place and reader's attention is directed to the main agent.

### (b) Nominalization

The selected data shows the use of nominalization in headlines, for instance, *Dawn-21(1) Isolation forced govt to sign deal with protesters, Senate told*. This headline manipulates the grammatical rules and gives ambiguous meaning. In the above-cited example, the nominalized word masks the agency foregrounding the government as intended by the writer or the editor. It also performs a persuasive function during the interpretation process.

## 3.2. Deictic Expressions

Deixis, especially, temporal and spatial are used as pointing devices in a given context, according to Yule (2000). The stylistic technique is sparingly used in the selected data as only one instance of temporal deixis is found, e.g. '*DAWN-ECP says delimitation of constituencies to begin on Jan 15*'. However, three instances of social deixis are identified in the data. Through the use of this stylistic device the writer presents Through the use of this stylistic device the writer makes the issue recent and immediate. The aforementioned example from the data hints at the perennial social relationship of the reader with the prime minister in the national context. Likewise in this headline *Dawn-23(4) FO assails Pence over 'inappropriate' remarks in Kabul*. In this headline 'FO' is a social deixis. The use of the social deixis in an abbreviated form highlights the main agent of the news. It also highlights the social power associated with the agent and, hence, contributes to the interpretation of the news headline in this context.

## 3.3. Speech Acts

This part of the analysis is based on the speech act theory propounded by Austin and Searle (1962) to explore the common speech acts. The analysis also attempts to explore the role of these speech acts in the interpretation of the given news considering the socio-political context of Pakistan. The following table demonstrates the most recurrent performative act patterns found in the data. According to the frequency, representatives with 13(46%) occurrences are the most recurrent speech acts while declarative acts with 8 (29%) occurrences are second and commissives are the third most frequently utilized illocutions occurring 43(14%) while Expressives and directives have the least frequency that is 2(7%) and 1(4%) respectively.

**Table 2**  
*Distribution Pattern of Types of Performative Acts*

S.NO.	Type of Speech Act	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Representatives	13	46 %



2.	<i>Expressives</i>	02	7%
3.	<i>Directives</i>	01	4%
4.	<i>Commissives</i>	4	14%
5.	<i>Declaratives</i>	08	29%
	<i>Total</i>	28	

### 3.3.1. Locutionary Acts in Newspaper Headlines

All the headlines in the selected sample are rhetic acts. The headlines require the reader to know the events and political figures which are referred to in the background of the headlines and provide a context for the interpretation of the particular news. For instance, *Dawn-21(2) Pakistan issues visas to spy Jadhav's mother, wife* the mentioned headline refers back to an event about the involvement of a captured Indian in an attacks in Baluchistan.

### 3.3.2. Illocutionary Act in Newspaper Headlines

The data demonstrates extensive use of illocutionary acts due to the fact that each news naturally has some context and background which makes it perform some action in the mind of the readers. Due to this aspect, the informative and persuasive functions of the news headlines are enhanced (Botha, 2017).

*Representatives* acts are “statements and descriptions” (Black, p.31, 2006) and through these speech act speakers’ world view in accordance with their understanding is offered. An overwhelming majority of Representatives (46%) are found in the data. For instance, the headline, *Dawn-21(4) No headway in govt-jirga talks on FATA reforms* conveys to the readers the stalemate in the talks between government and Jirga on the issue of FATA. Because of frequent overlap between illocutionary acts and perlocutions their role in the interpretation is discussed under the heading of perlocutionary Acts.

*Expressive* speech acts exhibit a speaker’s attitude, such as applauding, condoling, blaming, or expressing pleasure, and have an interpersonal function (Black, 2006). There is only one instance of this speech act in the study sample i.e. *Dawn-23(4) FO assails Pence over ‘inappropriate’ remarks in Kabul*.

*Directive* speech acts are essentially commands (Black, 2006). The selected sample has two instances of this speech act i.e. *Dawn-22(1) PM tasked to forge consensus on Fata reforms bill* The use of the directives makes the readers interpret the news as coming directly from the authoritative figure of the prime minister. In this way the headline is made to have a forceful impact on the readers. The news is interpreted as if the promised task will be fulfilled.

*Commissives* are used sparingly in the headlines and occur only 4 (14%) times in the data. Commissive speech acts which include promises or threats etc. are employed by a speaker to commit himself to some future course of action (Black, 2006). These perform the function of expressing promises, future plans, or commitments by the politicians or government authorities in the political news. For instance, ‘*Dawn-24(1) PTI to launch movement for Fata-KP merger*’ informs the reader about the possible merger of Fata and KP, which is a potential menace to the opposition. Likewise more examples in the data are: *Dawn-24(4) Despite criticism, CJ vows to fight for people’s rights and Dawn-25(1) KP threatens to boycott CCI over ‘trespass’*. The role of these stylistic features in the interpretation of the given headlines is of preparing the readers to accept the results of the news unquestioningly.





The data reveals 8 (29 %) occurrences of *Declaratives* that overlap with representatives of assertive nature. These also emphasize specific statements and the readers readily accept this headline due to the insistent nature of the statement. Other declaratives found in the data are used to make the statements made by either political figures or institutions emphatic and insistent, e.g. ***Dawn-22(2) Pakistan's view on terror list accepted in new Heart of Asia declaration: FO and Dawn-23(3) No evidence against bloggers accused of blasphemy: FIA***. Thus, the use of the declarative in the headlines emphasizes the reported news and persuades the readers in accepting the news at its face value without questioning its veracity.

### 3.3.3. *Perlocutionary acts in Newspaper Headlines*

The resultant impact of the speech act on the readers includes informing, encouraging, promising, criticizing, hypothesizing, insisting, blaming, suggesting, appreciating, and persuading. The use of the representative and declarative speech acts in the given headline persuades the readers of the veracity of the news. e.g. '***Dawn-26(1) Envoy says Iran not giving arms to Houthis***' is a representative which insists on the demand of not being called a major terrorist ally. Through the use of '*Envoy*' as an authentic source, the writer affects the interpretation of the headline in the desired direction. Since the news is ascribed to the authoritative figure of the "Envoy" hence, it persuades the readers to accept the news as an authentic one.

Other than the use of persuasion as a technique through exploiting the linguistic resources, readers' interpretation is also affected by the use of other representatives, such as threatening and suggesting, etc. For example, '***Dawn-24(1) PTI to launch movement for Fata-KP merger***' suggests an upcoming happening opposite to this headline, '***Dawn-25(1) KP threatens to boycott CCI over 'trespass'***' which is an indirect threat. The commissive speech acts due to their suggestive nature make the readers interpret the given headline positively, e.g., ***Dawn-22(1) PM tasked to forge consensus on Fata reforms bill***' and '***Dawn-24(1) PTI to launch movement for Fata-KP merger***'.

### 3.3.4. *Ambiguity in the Division of Speech Acts*

The analysis of the selected sample shows an overlap in different types of speech acts, due to which multidimensional contextual clues lead to multiple interpretations causing ambiguity (Nwala & Umukoro, 2017). Such speech acts are very often deliberately used by the journalists in the headlines to provoke inquisitiveness in readers about the news (Ezekulie, 2015). The analysis of the data reveals 4 headlines with ambiguous speech acts e.g. '***Dawn-24(4) Despite criticism, CJ vows to fight for people's rights***'. The aforementioned headline can be labeled as commissive if we interpret as Chief Justice vowing to fight for the rights of the masses, and at the same time, it can also be labeled as representative if we interpret it as appreciation of the Chief Justice for commitment to stand up for the rights of the people. On the other hand, '***Dawn-24(1) PTI to launch movement for Fata-KP merger***' is a representative as well as declarative. This ambiguity in conveying clear meanings renders the headline open to multiple interpretations (Nwala & Umukoro, 2017).

## 3.4. Maxims of Quantity, Quality and Manner

In the data, maxims show a common trend and seem to play a significant part in influencing the point of view from which interpretation of the headlines is made within the socio-political context of Pakistan. Headlines show flouting of different maxims which is evident from the statistics given in the table below.

**Table 2**



### *Distribution Pattern of Types of Performative Acts*

S.NO.	Type of Maxims	Observance	Flouting
I.	Quality	26	02
1.	Quantity	10	18
2.	Manner	24	4
3.	Relevance	28	0

The selected sample shows that in 18 occurrences maxim of quantity is compromised. Most of these violations take the shape of abbreviations. The reason of this stylistic technique seems to make the headlines, catchy and attractive for the readers, giving it promotional effects like advertisements and also to save space. As Liu (2012) opines that headlines which are shorter in length have more probability to be retained by the memory and have promotional effects like advertisements. A few examples of the use of abbreviation as a way to flout maxim of quantity are: '**Dawn-24(4) Despite criticism, CJ vows to fight for people's rights**'. '**Dawn-24(1) PTI to launch movement for Fata-KP merger**'

In the data two headlines violates the maxim of quality while 26 headlines conform to this maxim. '**Dawn-25(4) US-Israel-India nexus in the making: Rabbani**', violates maxim of quality. Through the use of metaphoric expression in the headline "*nexus in the making*" intensity of cooperation between India and Israel on multiple levels is suggested which in the backdrop of strained India Pakistan relations gives the readers a tinge of insecurity. The readers, being Pakistani patriotic citizens interpret the news as a signal of potential danger and feel insecure in the context of India Pakistan's conflicting situation and could sense some ill will brewing that may be harmful to Pakistan. The headline is, thus, interpreted in the socio-political background of the countries and their relationship.

Maxim of manner is violated only in four headlines in the selected data. This stylistic feature, in '**Dawn-25(4) US-Israel-India nexus in the making: Rabbani**' shows semantic ambiguity and, hence, is open to multiple interpretations based on a personal level of creativity and knowledge of the readers. The headline cannot be categorized under any tense, and, hence gives ambiguous meaning.

### **3.5. Direct and Indirect Discourse**

Through direct discourse a text is hauled out from its original context and planted in a new and different context through the use of discourse markers, such as, quotation marks and reporting verbs. This assigned syntactic position lures the readers to view the given news in terms of second discourse context (Black, 2006). The understudy data reveals 6 occurrences of direct discourse. However, direct discourse found in the data is marked by differences in punctuation as conventional stylistic features. For example, '**Dawn-23(3) No evidence against bloggers accused of blasphemy: FIA**' and '**Dawn-25(4) US-Israel-India nexus in the making: Rabbani**' In the data some of direct discourse employs commas instead of quotation marks. For example, '**Dawn-21(1) Isolation forced govt to sign deal with protesters, Senate told**'.

In Free indirect discourse, omniscient narrator is used (Maier, 2017) and the main clause states the notion with the use of exclamation marks and slang and omission of reporting verbs (Black, 2006).



There are 12 occurrences of Free Indirect Discourse found in the data, e.g. *'Dawn-23(4) FO assails Pence over 'inappropriate' remarks in Kabul'* and *'DAWN- Nisar backs PMLN move to name Shahbaz as PM candidate'*. Through the choice of verbs, such as, 'seeks' and 'backs', the editor/writer makes the reader interpret the words in the desired direction guided by the reporting verbs though the original news consist of Pope and Nisar's locution. The reader is made to conform unconsciously to the perspective of the editor. Redeker (1996) calls the headiness in this category *'journalist's commentary'*. The boundaries between original news and editor's commentary are blurred and through the use of FID interpretation

### 3.6. Hybrid Discourse

Black (2006) mentions that hybrid discourse is generated when two language systems coexist in one discourse either in the form of a single word, phrase or clause due to which the perspective of the whole sentence is changed. Through the use of this stylistic technique, the interpretation of a headline is influenced. This term is broad enough to cover and overlap with intertextuality, free indirect discourse and garden path utterances and will be analyzed under the following heads.

### 3.7. Intertextuality

Intertextuality, a technique for the production of hybrid discourse, echoes one text into another (Black, 2006). There are 2 instances of intertextuality found in the data. For example, *Dawn-22(1) PM tasked to forge consensus on Fata reforms bill*, In this headline, the phrase *'forge consensus'* is a common idiomatic expression in the English language and it refers to "making something by exerting". Hence, the phrase suggests and struggle discourse that is blended with the struggle of creating consensus. However, the interpretation of such headlines depends on the socio-political contextual knowledge of the reader.

### 3.8. Garden Path Utterances

Sometimes the writers/editors leave the headline open-ended by phrasing it in an ambiguous manner and leaving it open for interpretation in multiple ways by the readers. Black (2006) terms such statements as Garden Path Utterances, which make the readers stumble upon unexpected meanings fallaciously. The understudy data has 8% garden path utterances showing two patterns: phrase-based; clause based.

Phrase based utterances, such as *Dawn-25(4) US-Israel-India nexus in the making: Rabbani'*, create hybridity due to its ambiguous nature and offer multiple interpretations concealing the actual news. The readers are left wondering about the type of nexus between the US and Israel. Similarly, *'Dawn-26(3) How Kashmir found mention in 'Islamabad Declaration'*, this headline is in the form of a question and gives incomplete information the making the readers wonder about the correct interpretations from the multiple explanations. At the same time it intrigues curiosity in readers to pursue the full story in order to make sense of the headline.

## 4. Findings and Conclusion

The analysis of the selected headlines through the prism of pragmatic stylistic framework propounded by Black(2006) shows that the newsmakers exploit different linguistic resources for the purpose of not only attracting readers' attention but also in influencing their interpretation of the given headline in the desired direction and hence achieve the ideological aims. A great amount of guesswork is required in the interpretation of the utterances. It also involves the ability of drawing inferences to get at the meanings intended by the speaker. A knowledge of the pragmatic and stylistic dimensions of language is of great value as it deals with meaning and interpretation based on particular use of language and aspects of the context respectively (Lyons, 1977). The study finds that the news makers



use linguistic resources to tilt the construction of headlines in order to make the readers interpret it in the desired way without explicitly stating it. The data analysis reveals the use of tenses, deictic expressions, speech acts, maxims, direct and indirect discourse and hybrid discourse as recurrent pragmatic stylistic features in Pakistani English newspaper headlines. The study also sought to find out the contribution of these pragmatic stylistic features in swaying readers' interpretation of the given headlines. The analysis of the data highlights that tenses are the most extensively used features that are instrumental in swaying reader's interpretation of the headlines. The linguistic clues and resources are exploited by the editors to focus the reader's attention on certain facts while making them overlook others.

The present tense is the most used tense in the understudy headlines with the stylistic variation of reversing the order of phrases and clauses, infinitive, nominalization, omission, etc. to influence the interpretation of the headlines. Through the use of past tense in the form of rhetorical questions, the headlines are made suggestive and open-ended leading to multiple possible interpretations. However, the highest ratio of impact on the interpretation is seen through the use of ambiguous tense. Such headlines lack any tense marker and, hence cannot be placed under one category. Among different pragmatic stylistic features, the category of deictic expressions is the least used feature in the headlines.

The findings of the study indicate the contribution of speech acts in foregrounding and backgrounding in delivering the message in the intended direction, thus affecting interpretation. The quantitative use of representatives is (46%), expressive (7%), directive (4%) commissives (14%), and declaratives (29%) in the data. The representatives are made to function in making the reader accept the veracity of the news through their insistence nature. Commissives foretell while expressives and directives involve readers' feelings and compliance respectively. The declaratives announce the tidings forcefully. The notable violation found in the data is that of the maxim of quality and manner. In the flouting of these maxims metaphors are used as stylistic tools leading to multiple interpretations due to their suggestive nature.

The stylistic features, such as, commas and quotation marks, and omission of reporting verbs are also used in an overwhelming majority not only as stylistic features but also to make the headlines topical sentences through which editors' opinions are fused with the actual news affecting the interpretation of the headlines. Likewise, hybrid discourse, intertextuality, and garden path utterances are also used as linguistic tools in the sample headlines.

Pragmatic Stylistic framework by Black (2006), a recent development in linguistics, is one of the methodologies which can best be utilized to find out the meaning-making process and the underlying ideological positions. The study provides clarity to the application of the Pragmatic Stylistic Framework to the non-literary discourse, i.e. newspaper headlines an untapped domain so far. The study proves the viability of the framework in examining the textual and contextual features of the newspaper headlines from a critical angle.

In the light of the findings of the present study, it can be concluded that newspaper headlines contain different pragmatic and stylistic features. These stylistic and contextual clues, as asserted by Van Dijk (1988) activate the general knowledge of the readers about language and assist in the interpretation and meaning-making process of the given text. Newsmakers purposively through the construction of the news in a particular way make the readers arrive at proper inferences. Hence, the headlines along with performing their main function of informing the reader also exert a deep influence on public opinion and convince them to accept the point of view expressed in the article.



### References

- Al-Hindawi, P. F. H. (2018). Pragmastylistics: The Integration of Pragmatics and Stylistics. *University of Babylon: College of Education for Human Sciences*, 101(24), 113-132.
- Alake, T. O. Pragma-stylistic Analysis of Selected Nigeria Electronic Advanced Fee Fraud Texts.
- Abba T. S. and Musa, N. (2015). Speech Act Analysis of Daily Trust and The Nation Newspapers Headline Reports on “Boko Haram” Attacks. *Journal of Communication and Culture*, 6 (1), 63-72.
- Austin J.L. 1962: How to do things with words University Press, Oxford
- Botha, L. (2017). Utilizing social media to the benefit of companies (Doctoral dissertation, North-West University (South Africa), Potchefstroom Campus).
- Black, E. (2006). Pragmatic stylistics. Edinburgh University Press.
- Chovanec, J. (2003). The uses of the present tense in headlines. *Theory and Practice in English Studies*, 1, 83-92.
- Chovanec, J. (2014). *Pragmatics of tense and time in news*. John Benjamins Publishing Company
- Develotte, C., & Rechniewski, E. (2001). Discourse analysis of newspaper headlines: a methodological framework for research into national representations. *The Web Journal of French Media Studies*, 4(1), 1-12.
- Elliott, R., & Timulak, L. (2005). Descriptive and interpretive approaches to qualitative research. A handbook of research methods for clinical and health psychology, 1(7), 147-159.
- Ezekulie Chinelo, J. (2015). Speech Acts Ambiguity as a Pragma-Stylistic Strategy in Newspaper Headlines. *Humanity & Social Sciences Journal*, 10(2), 47-54.
- Farrokhi, F., Ansarin, A. A., & Ashrafi, S. (2019). The Conceptual Metaphors of Building and Construction in Newspaper and Research Article. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 2(4), 290-328.
- Galita, R. (2011). A pragma-stylistic approach on deixis. *LiBRI. Linguistic and Literary Broad Research and Innovation*, 2(1), 36-50.
- Hameed, H. T. (2008). Tense in news headlines. *Journal of Research Diyala Humanity*, (30).
- Hickey, L. (1992). *Politeness apart, Why Choose Indirect Speech Acts?* *Linguae Stile*, 27 (March 1992).
- Halliday, M. A. (1985). Systemic background. *Systemic perspectives on discourse*, 1, 1-15.  
<https://pakwired.com/top-5-pakistani-newspapers/>
- Liu, F. (2012). A Study of principle of conversation in advertising language. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 2(12), 2619.
- Nwala, M. A., & Umukoro, B. A. (2017). Investigating the Meaning of Newspaper Headlines: The Issue of Ambiguity. *African Research Review*, 11(3), 87-96.
- Redeker, G. (1996). Free indirect discourse in newspaper reports. *Linguistics in the Netherlands*, 1996, 221-232.
- Rustam, R. (2013). Pragmatic Analysis of CNN Headlines Representing Pakistan. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Muzaffarabad, Pakistan.
- Reeves, T. C., & Hedberg, J. G. (2003). Interactive learning systems evaluation. *Educational Technology*.
- Hill, C. E., Thompson, B. J., & Williams, E. N. (1997). A guide to conducting consensual qualitative research. *The counseling psychologist*, 25(4), 517-572.
- Ismajli, F. (2020). Transforming News Journalism from Newspapers into Online Media in Kosovo. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*, 3(1), 214-225.



- Ismail, H. M. (2016). Pragmatic and Semantic Potential of Newspaper Headlines. *US-China Foreign Language*. David Publishing. 14(11), 753-762.
- Lemke, R., Horch, E., & Reich, I. (2017). Optimal encoding!-Information Theory constrains article omission in newspaper headlines. In *Proceedings of the 15th Conference of the European Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics: Volume 2, Short Papers* (Vol. 2, pp. 131-135).
- Miššiková, G. (2007). Analysing translation as text and discourse. JTP.
- Monsefi, R. and Mahadi, T. (2017). The Rhetoric of Persian News Headlines: A Case Study of Euronews. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 6(2), 36-45.
- Moe, S. (2014). A Brief Study on the Language of Newspaper Headlines Used in “The New Light of Myanmar”. *Hinthada University Research Journal*,
- Maier, E. 2017. The Pragmatics of Attraction: Explaining Unquotation in Direct and Free Indirect Discourse. In P. Saka & M. Johnson (eds.), *The Semantics and Pragmatics of Quotation. Perspectives in Pragmatics, Philosophy and Psychology* 15. Cham: Springer: 259-28
- Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Kalogeropoulos, A., & Nielsen, R. K. (2019). Reuters Institute digital news report 2019. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism
- Pajunen, J. (2008). Linguistic analysis of newspaper discourse in theory and practice (Master's thesis).
- Reah, D. (2002). *The language of newspapers*. London: Routledge
- Searle J.R. 1969: *Speech Acts*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Mass.
- Siposova, A. (2011). Headlines and Subheadlines: Tense, Modality and Register Based on Discourse Analysis of The British Tabloid The Sun. Unpublished Master's Thesis. Dissertation, Masaryk University, Berne, Czech Republic.
- Spitulnik, D. (2017). Alternative small media and communicative spaces. In *Media and democracy in Africa* (pp. 177-205). Routledge.
- Stipanović, I. (2017). *Intertextuality in headlines in tabloid showbiz news* (Doctoral dissertation, Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences.).
- Ungerer, F. (Ed.). (2000). *English Media Texts-Past and Present Language and Textual Structure*. Philadelphia PA: John Benjamin's.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1972). *Foundations for typologies of texts*.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1986). *5News Schemata*.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1988). *News analysis. Case Studies of International and National News in the Press*. New Jersey: Lawrence.
- Van Dijk, T. A. (2013). *News as discourse*. Routledge
- George Yule. (2000). *Pragmatics*. Shanghai: Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press
- Wu, Yijun. "A Literature Review on Cooperative Principle." In *4th International Conference on Contemporary Education, Social Sciences and Humanities (ICCESSH 2019)*, pp. 974-978. Atlantis Press, 2019.



@ 2021 by the author. Licensee University of Chitral, Journal of Linguistics & Literature, Pakistan. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).



### **Appendix A**

#### **The Daily Dawn WEB ARCHIVE**

##### **<https://www.dawn.com/newspaper/front-page/2017-12-21>**

- Dawn-21(1) Isolation forced govt to sign deal with protesters, Senate told
- Dawn-21(2) Pakistan issues visas to spy Jadhav's mother, wife
- Dawn-21(3) IHC stays Dar's trial in accountability court
- Dawn-21(4) No headway in govt-jirga talks on Fata reforms

##### **<https://www.dawn.com/newspaper/front-page/2017-12-22>**

- Dawn-22(1) PM tasked to forge consensus on Fata reforms bill
- Dawn-22(2) Pakistan's view on terror list accepted in new Heart of Asia declaration: FO
- Dawn-22(3) FO says India misused list for political point scoring.
- Dawn-22(4) Pakistan to retain full spectrum deterrence policy

##### **<https://www.dawn.com/newspaper/front-page/2017-12-23>**

- Dawn-23(1) ECP says delimitation of constituencies to begin on Jan 15
- Dawn-23(2) Nisar backs PML-N move to name Shahbaz as PM candidate
- Dawn-23(3) No evidence against bloggers accused of blasphemy: FIA
- Dawn-23(4) FO assails Pence over 'inappropriate' remarks in Kabul

##### **<https://www.dawn.com/newspaper/front-page/2017-12-24>**

- Dawn-24(1) PTI to launch movement for Fata-KP merger
- Dawn-24(2) Pakistan, Iran agree on joint aerial border monitoring
- Dawn-24(3) New Delhi confirms visit of Jadhav's mother, wife
- Dawn-24(4) Despite criticism, CJ vows to fight for people's rights

##### **<https://www.dawn.com/newspaper/front-page/2017-12-25>**

- Dawn-25(1) KP threatens to boycott CCI over 'trespass'
- Dawn-25(2) Dawn's history project comes to an end
- Dawn-25(3) PML-N asks Qadri to rely on courts, not agitation
- Dawn-25(4) US-Israel-India nexus in the making: Rabbani

##### **<https://www.dawn.com/newspaper/front-page/2017-12-26>**

- Dawn-26(1) Envoy says Iran not giving arms to Houthis
- Dawn-26(2) Historic decision on Fata-KP merger taken
- Dawn-26(3) How Kashmir found mention in 'Islamabad Declaration'
- Dawn-26(4) Indian spy on death row allowed to meet family

##### **<https://www.dawn.com/newspaper/front-page/2017-10-27>**

- Dawn-27(1) ECP accepts Imran's apology, drops contempt petitions
- Dawn-27(2) SC summons record of internees at 45 centres
- Dawn-27(3) Abbasi defends LNG contract with Qatar
- Dawn-27(4) Arrest warrants issued for ex-PM Sharif