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Emotive Implicatures In The Rhetoric Of Muslim Women

Abstract

The aim of the research is to study and determine emotive implicatures in the speeches of Muslim women on Ted/TedX platform. Overall five speeches of total duration of 75.68 minutes were analysed utilising framing theory (Minsky 1974) and the theory of implicature (Grice 1967). Methodologically the article also uses approaches, such as anthropological tradition that focuses on cultural practice and critical discourse analyses that views language as the social practice (Fairclough 2001).

In the process of research specific phrases, words and episodes that evoked certain emotions were marked in the speeches and were analysed according to framing theory focusing on the essence of the utterance and its emotive implicature. Also each speech was studied through the perspective of cultural and social practice that made possible to distinguish not only emotive implicatures but the elements that cause the emotional reaction and therefore implications.

Speeches used in the article are available online on Ted.com platform and YouTube with full transcriptions. Reason for choosing these specific speeches was influenced by the problem of stereotyping Muslims with violence and terrorism in the western society. Therefore, the subject-matter is very sensitive for both cultures. Consequently, it was interesting to investigate how women address these issues in their speeches and how they create desired emotive implicatures. The article concentrates especially on women because they are often targeted as the victims of stereotyping because of their headdress.

The research showed that speakers used cultural frames to elucidate main values of society. By emphasising how these moral values were mistreated by stereotypical judgements the speakers managed to create emotive implicatures of sadness, anger, protest and empathy.

Key words: Framing; Stereotyping; Emotion study;

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1. Introduction

There are lots of stereotypes concerning Muslim communities in western society, most popular of which seems to be stereotyping Muslims with terrorism and violence. This research studies how Muslim women try to deconstruct these stereotypes and construct social identity through emotive implicatures.

The notion of conversational implicature was developed by Grice implying that the hearers are capable of intuitively working out the implied meaning of the utterance (Grice 1975, pg: 50). Accordingly under the term emotional implicature we imply emotionally framed message carried out and worked out through linguistic and non-linguistic data used in the process of communication.

Framing emotions is another issue that needs to be explained. The theory of frames, (also referred to as the theory of scripts or schemes), discussed by various scholars (e.g. Minsky 1974; Schank & Abelson 1975; Fillmore 1976) explains how we store our knowledge of the world around us. In this particular case by framing emotion we imply the different ways in which speakers manage to emotionally influence listeners, namely using frame evoking targeted passages that are used to create certain emotional setting that is further developed by the speaker to rebuild their social identity.

Studying emotion is somewhat problematic issue as you can't be sure of objectivity, because every emotion in its term is subjective in nature and every emotion is expressed and experienced by different intensities according to the person's overall experiences, upbringing and socio-cultural background. So the subject-matter is quite complex as it requires interdisciplinary approach from cultural, social, psychological, anthropological and linguistic views. However, in the article we do not concentrate on different approaches of studying emotion, nor do we imply the emotions to be the main research question. We are interested in emotions as long as they are purposefully created implicatures which are used as catalysts by speakers to deconstruct stereotypical judgement and build new social identity.

2. Methodology and Data

Five recordings from TED.COM platform with a total duration of 75.68 have been analysed utilizing CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) (Fairclough 2001) with social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner 1986), theory of implicature (Grice 1967) and framing theory (Minsky 1974; Fillmore 1976).

Critical discourse analysis made it possible to study the issue from social perspective in terms of identity construction and stereotype rejection. Specifically sentences and phrases that focused on stereotypical judgements were singled out and analyzed through social identity theory, emphasising the three principles of the concept of social identity. The second approach utilises theory of implicature (Grice 1967) and examines what is the role of emotional implications in creating social identity. Creating emotive implicatures was achieved through using frames that in particular situations created particular emotive implications. In the process of research Framenet data was used to study different frames. This project is based at the University of Berkeley and provides the biggest frame database for English language.¹ Overall the text was analysed according to three different approaches that were combined together for a more detailed analysis.

According to Social identity theory “social group is composed of individuals who perceive themselves as representatives of the same social category and they share emotional involvement in this definition of themselves.” (Tajfel&Turner 1986, pg: 283). In the discussed speeches the speakers defend the face of their community by showing that they represent the same society as the audience.

Tajfel &Turner introduced some theoretical principles of the concept of social identity, namely: (Tajfel&Turner 1986, pg: 284)

1. Individuals strive to achieve or to maintain positive social identity.

2. Positive social identity is based to a large extent on favorable comparisons that can be made between the in-group and some relevant outgroups: the in-group must be perceived as positively differentiated or distinct from the relevant out-groups.

3. When social identity is unsatisfactory, individuals will strive either to leave their existing group and join some more positively distinct group and/or to make their existing group more positively distinct.

The first level of analyses focused on the theory of social identity, meaning that the text was analysed according to three principles of the concept of social identity. On the second level these targeted units were analysed according to what emotive implicatures they carried out, for each phrase containing emotive implication specific frames were singled out and analysed.

¹ <https://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu/fndrupal/>

(Framenet is both human- and machine-readable lexical database for English language with more than 1200 semantic frames.)

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For example, to analyze the following passage from the speech: **What does my headscarf mean to you?** (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=18zvlz5CxPE>) three different levels of analyses were used:

Example 2:

“Someone who looks like me walks past you in the street. Do you think they're a mother, a refugee or a victim of oppression? Or do you think they're a cardiologist, a barrister or maybe your local politician? Do you look me up and down, wondering how hot I must get or if my husband has forced me to wear this outfit? What if I wore my scarf like this? “

*What if I walked past you and later on you'd found out that **actually I was a race car engineer**, and that I designed my own race car and I ran my university's race team, because it's true. What if I told you that **I was actually trained as a boxer for five years**, because that's true, too. Would it surprise you? Why? “*

Ladies and gentlemen, ultimately, that surprise and the behaviors associated with it are the product of something called unconscious bias, or implicit prejudice. And that results in the ridiculously detrimental lack of diversity in our workforce, particularly in areas of influence. Hello, Australian Federal Cabinet. (Applause)

On the first level the text was analysed according to social identity construction theory and the specific parts that corresponded to three main principles were singled out: According to the first principle the speaker should maintain positive social identity. To do so the speaker emphasized couple of stereotypes widely used when speaking about the Muslims. Mainly the “issue” of wearing headscarf. This way the audience sees the speaker as positive group member as opposed to the all the others portrayed as having negative identity. This positive identity is based on comparisons the speaker makes between the societies perceptions of her and actual reality. This way she follows the second principle. As for the third one, which implies for the member to either leave the unsatisfactory group or to make it more positive, the speaker emphasises the problem in society and distances herself from it.

On the second level of research we look at emotive implications. Mainly we are looking for emotive implicatures of sadness, protest, anger and empathy. In this example, we have the emotive implicature of empathy that is created through using comparisons that also distinguished the speaker's positive identity. After attributing the appropriate emotive implicature we then move to analysing the text according to framing principle. Frames are the tools that make it possible for the audience to correctly decode the message carried out through linguistic data. In this case frames serve as catalysts to connect linguistic message with its

emotive implicature. For example, in this passage, the speaker uses the frame of “performers_roles”, in framenet database it is defined as: “A Performer has a certain Role in a Performance and plays their part by following the directions in the Script for that particular Role.”

(Retrieved from:

https://framenet2.icsi.berkeley.edu/fnReports/data/frameIndex.xml?frame=Performers_and_roles)

In this case this frame is used to carry out the differences between the perception of Muslims and the reality and the frame carrier lexical unit is the verb - to be.

2.1 Data Collection

Speeches used in the article are available online on Ted.com platform and youtube with full transcriptions. TED speeches were chosen initially because the speakers are the experiencers of the problems they speak about and it was interesting to investigate how they managed to deliver the problem to the audience as they were emotionally interwoven to the issues.

The following speeches were analysed in the data of the article: (Last visited: 08/14/2019)

1. The Muslim on the airplane by Amal Kassir

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIAm1g_Vgn0)

2. Islamophobia killed my brother. Let's end the hate

(https://www.ted.com/talks/suzanne_barakat_islamophobia_killed_my_brother_let_s_end_the_hate/transcript?referrer=playlist-misconceptions_of_islam_and_mu#t-870503)

3. What it's like to be Muslim in America

(https://www.ted.com/talks/dalia_mogahed_what_do_you_think_when_you_look_at_me/transcript?referrer=playlist-misconceptions_of_islam_and_mu)

4. What does my headscarf mean to you?

(https://www.ted.com/talks/yassmin_abdel_magied_what_does_my_headscarf_mean_to_you/transcript?referrer=playlist-misconceptions_of_islam_and_mu)

5. What my religion really says about women

(https://www.ted.com/talks/alaa_murabit_what_my_religion_really_says_about_women/transcript?referrer=playlist-misconceptions_of_islam_and_mu)

3. Findings and Discussions

The research showed that in order to follow the three principles of social identity concept the speakers used emotive implicatures of sadness, anger, protest and empathy. In creating these emotive implications they also utilised frames.

According to the first principle it is important to have positive identity, for this speakers tried to address stereotypes and consequently use emotive implicature of empathy.

Example 1.

The Muslim on the airplane by Amal Kassir

(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UIAm1g_Vgn0)

“Whenever I travel, I carry a little metal box of Altoids mints because after a four-hour, 7 AM flight, everyone has bad breath, so almost anyone is willing to take the mint from the Muslim on the airplane....”

My name is Amal. It means 'hope' in Arabic. Most days my name is waitress at my family's Damascus restaurant, full-time university student and then some, pre-law, world traveler, 11 countries.

My name is I've performed poetry in eight of those countries.

(Cheers) (Applause)

International spoken word poet, unapologetic Muslim woman. Syrian, American, hijabi, activist, social justice advocate.

*My name is **writer, teacher, Colorado-born Mile High baby!** (Laughter) (Applause)*

*But **at the airport**, my name is **random search.** (Laughter)*

*And **on the street**, it's **terrorist, sand nigger, raghead, oppressed**, and **on the news**, it's **ISIS, jihadi, suspect, radical.***

My name is, "Could your Muslim neighbor be an extremist?"

In order to create emotive implicatures in this particular example the speaker uses the frame of “Being_Named”. Framenet database gives the following definition for it: “This frame concerns entities conventionally being referred to by particular names.”

(https://framenet2.icsi.berkeley.edu/fnReports/data/frameIndex.xml?frame=Being_named)

By framing her identity the speaker emphasised the stereotypical judgements of Muslims. At first, in order to create positive identity she uses humor (*Whenever I travel, I carry a little metal box of Altoids mints because after a four-hour, 7 AM flight, **everyone has bad breath**, so almost anyone is willing to take the mint **from the Muslim on the airplane....***) and later focuses

on to the number of issues expressed in a way to emotionally influence the audience and make them feel empathy. This emotive implicature is achieved through creating sharp contrast between opposing elements. In this case by using “being_named” frame the speaker manages to create this clash acquiring different names. Consequently these oppositions are followed with the emotive implicatures of anger and protest as the speaker gradually makes these contrasts sharper and sharper. From the **example 1** we see how the speaker first frames her identity as waitress, student, traveler, and as opposed to these, then identifies herself as:” *unapologetic Muslim woman, Syrian, American, hijabi, activist, social justice advocate*”. Eventually on the last stage of identity construction to make their group more positively distinct speakers try to use emotive implicature of sadness that is again carried out through “being_named” frame. For example: “ *And on the street, it's terrorist, sand nigger, raghead, oppressed, and on the news, it's ISIS, jihadi, suspect, radical. My name is, "Could your Muslim neighbor be an extremist?"*” Overall by using “being_named” frame the speaker first creates emotive implicature of empathy by following the first principle of identity construction. She manages to oppose herself to the out-group members (audience) and creates the emotive implicature of anger, and in the end, creates emotive implicature of sadness through making herself and therefore her community more positively distinct by emphasising some harsh stereotypes used by outgroup members.

This cycle of creating social identity through using frames that result in emotive implications is present in all five speeches and also repeats throughout the whole speech.

Example 2:

What it's like to be Muslim in America

([https://www.ted.com/talks/dalia_mogahed_what_do_you_think_when_you_look_at_me/transcript?referrer=playlist-misconceptions of islam and mu](https://www.ted.com/talks/dalia_mogahed_what_do_you_think_when_you_look_at_me/transcript?referrer=playlist-misconceptions_of_islam_and_mu))

“What do you think when you look at me? A woman of faith? An expert? Maybe even a sister. Or oppressed, brainwashed, a terrorist. Or just an airport security line delay. That one's actually true. “

In this example we have the opening phrase of the speech. Like in the previous one the speaker again uses humorous passage to create positive identity and here again by using “being_named” frame creates oppositions between stereotypes that results in emotive implicature of empathy.

In the following passage (Example 3) the speaker continues using this frame to make herself more positively distinct from the community and again uses emotive implicature of

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empathy. This way the speaker manages to deconstruct widely spread stereotypes about Muslim communities and distance herself from these stereotypical judgment to rebuild her identity as being the same as the audience's.

Example 3:

"Well, for those of you who have never met a Muslim, it's great to meet you. Let me tell you who I am. I'm a mom, a coffee lover -- double espresso, cream on the side. I'm an introvert. I'm a wannabe fitness fanatic. And I'm a practicing, spiritual Muslim. But not like Lady Gaga says, because baby, I wasn't born this way. It was a choice. "

Later in her speech this emotional setting is changed into sadness and anger (Example 4). In this case the speaker is using the frame of "being_questionable" defined by framenet database as: "In this frame, an Entity or Behavior is suspicious or otherwise subject to question. The general implication is that the Entity or Behavior provides evidence for some (as yet unproven) socially undesirable conclusion about a (usually implicit) Social_actor. (Such conclusions often include the idea that some individual is lying, or that a crime was committed.)" (https://framenet2.icsi.berkeley.edu/fnReports/data/frameIndex.xml?frame=Being_questionable)

By using this frame the speaker also follows the second and the third principles of identity construction as demonstrates how out group members made her feel rejected, therefore emphasising her social identity as more positively distinct and creating emotive implicature of anger.

Example 4:

And then that terrible morning of September, 2001. I think a lot of you probably remember exactly where you were that morning.And I switch the channel and I hear, "... Muslim terrorist ...," "... in the name of Islam ...," "... Middle-Eastern descent ...," "... jihad ...," "... we should bomb Mecca." Oh my God.

*Not only had my country been attacked, but in a flash, **somebody else's actions had turned me from a citizen to a suspect.***

That same day, we had to drive across Middle America to move to a new city to start grad school. And I remember sitting in the passenger seat as we drove in silence, crouched as low as I could go in my seat, for the first time in my life, afraid for anyone to know I was a Muslim.

4. Conclusion

Studying emotion is extremely difficult, however it gives greater insight into way of thinking and constructing ideas. The research showed that speakers used different frames to elucidate main values of society.

On the other hand, framing theory made it possible to be the theoretical and also practical framework because it is language independent and gives opportunity to generalise concepts without connecting it to a particular culture or language.

To conclude, we can say that the speeches demonstrated a pattern that the speakers followed to achieve main goals of their speeches, namely to destroy stereotypical judgements and to create new social identity. Therefore they tried to destroy these stereotypes by emphasising how moral values were mistreated by outgroup members and through emotive implicatures of sadness, anger and empathy. However, this article did not concentrate on particular emotions, it would be interesting for further study to analyse emotions as concepts and to compare their usages by different genders.

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