

Just a Joke is not a Joke, Stereotyping Ethnic Groups in Pakistan: A Linguistic Study

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Abstract

The formal, functional, and social aspects of discourse are examined in this study using social media data to look at how ethnic stereotypes and prejudices are spread and promoted in Pakistan through sugar-coated jokes. The formal aspect (Harris, 1970) examines syntactic constructs and lexical choices that contribute to the formation of stereotypes. The functional aspect of ethnic stereotypes, according to Halliday and Matthiessen (2013), is on the communicative roles they play, such as establishing group boundaries, expressing prejudice, or reiterating power relations. Lastly, the social component (Foucault, 1970) considers larger social and cultural contexts that impact the adoption of ethnic group stereotypes. The study emphasizes the need of promoting inclusive, courteous speech that values diversity and multiculturalism as well as increasing awareness of how language impacts social relationships. To foster a positive and tolerant culture requires confronting damaging stereotypes and misconceptions.

Keywords: Jokes; Stereotyping; Ethnic; Pakistan; Linguistics

Introduction

A representational strategy employed to portray the other in a negative light is stereotyping (Hall, 1997). According to Dyck and Holtzman (2013), jokes and humor are often seen as a means of amusement, stress reduction, and social bonding. However, jokes can also be harmful, particularly if they promote bigotry and negative stereotypes. Pakistanis regularly utilize jokes to convey ethnic and cultural distinctions, just like people in many other countries.

Formal Aspect of Discourse

The concept of the formal component of conversation was initially proposed by Zellig in 1970. According to this theory, language's formal and structural features are more important than the information or meaning they communicate. Harris claims that examining the formal structure of the speech might provide insight into the social and cultural contexts in which language is employed.

The study uses a linguistic approach to assess the formal feature of language in light-hearted comments and jokes regarding different ethnic groups in Pakistan. The study examines the linguistic structures, the language employed in these jokes, and the ways in which language is employed to produce humor. The study considers how linguistic techniques are used to perpetuate negative attitudes and prejudices and stereotype different ethnic groups. The goal is to highlight the ways in which language is used to establish and uphold stereotypes and to look into how this affects relationships and social views.

Functional Aspect of Discourse and Social Aspect of Discourse:

Michael Halliday (2013, 2008) defines the functional aspect of discourse as the ways in which language is used to carry out certain communicative tasks, such giving information, making requests, expressing feelings, or establishing

connections. Halliday's functional model of language, also referred to as systemic functional linguistics, emphasizes the importance of the social context, speaker intentions, and listener expectations in relation to language use.

However, Michel Foucault's *Social Aspect of Discourse* (1970) addresses the power relations that underlie language production and interpretation. According to Foucault, discourse serves as a system of power dynamics that defines social reality and influences people's feelings, thoughts, and behaviors in addition to being a vehicle for communication. According to him, dominant groups use language to create and maintain power relations, while marginalized groups try to oppose and subvert these dominant discourses.

Furthermore, Foucault stressed the importance of examining the cultural and historical contexts of discourse formation as well as the ways in which various discourses interact and overlap. He clarified that because discourse analysis may reveal the underlying power structures that underpin society, it may be a means of enacting social and political change.

The study also looks at the social and functional aspects of discourse, emphasizing how humor is used to both exclude and marginalize particular groups as well as to create social bonds and relationships (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013). The analysis takes into account how humor functions in social interactions and how it shapes social attitudes and behaviors (Brinton, 2015; Gehrke, 2022; Ehrich, & Koster, 1983; Kasper, 1982; Hobbs, 1979).

The study also looks at how humor affects interpersonal connections, investigating how it may promote social harmony or conflict. In the end, the study aims to clarify the intricate relationship between language, humor, and social attitudes as well as provide insights into how stereotypes might be contested and destroyed.

Literature Review

Humor is frequently used to unite individuals and foster a feeling of shared experience (Hay, 2000). However, humor can be harmful and polarizing if it is founded on stereotypes and unfavorable presumptions (Gonzales & Wiseman 2005). Like many other nations, Pakistan has developed a complex social and cultural landscape as a result of ethnic and linguistic diversity. The use of language and humor, which may both reflect and reinforce stereotypes and prejudices, frequently, reflects this diversity (Morreall, 1983).

The goal of this research study, "Just a Joke is not a joke: Stereotyping Ethnic Groups in Pakistan - A Linguistic Study," is to investigate how language and humor contribute to prejudice and stereotypes against ethnic groups in Pakistan. The study will specifically concentrate on how humor and language are used to perpetuate unfavorable opinions and stereotype ethnic groups.

Pakistan is a multilingual and ethnically diverse nation with a long history. According to the 2017 census, there are over 200 million people living in Pakistan. The main ethnic group is Punjabis, followed by Pashtuns, Sindhis, and Balochis. There are numerous additional small ethnic groups in the nation, including the Hazaras, Kashmiris, and Mohajirs (Liljegren & Akhunzada, 2017). Despite this diversity, animosity and bloodshed have often resulted from Pakistan's linguistic and ethnic divisions (Azim 2022; Majeed, 2010). Widespread prejudices and negative assessments of different ethnic groups are often reflected in language and humor (Hussain, 2022; Shah, Naveed & Kanwal, 2022; Weaver, 2014).

Language and humor are useful instruments for communication and socialization (Marfatia, 2023; Taylor, Simpson & Hardy, 2022). They have the ability to both reflect and mould attitudes and ideas. In Pakistan, negative stereotypes and prejudices against different ethnic groups have been spread through language and humor (Hussain, 2022; Shah, Naveed & Kanwal, 2022). Jokes about Pashtuns being violent or Balochis being backward, for example, can foster negative opinions of these ethnic groups.

Jokes are used as clandestine means of spreading and enforcing prejudice and negative sentiments (Allport, 1954; Freud, 2004). According to Burma (1946), comedy frequently hides some malice. Humor has an impact on group morale (La Fave, 1977). Similarly, Davidson (1987) thinks that even jokes meant to be funny are frequently overdone and that the majority of ethnic jokes are disparaging. In a similar vein, ethnic humor devalues civilizations by turning them into humorous anecdotes and promotes race theory (Howitt & Owusu-Bempah, 2005).

Jokes have been studied using a variety of methods, especially in the domains of media and cultural studies. In the form of remarks, sociologists have offered critique. A fundamental explanation of cultural racism in British comedy has been established by Husband's (1988) neo-Marxist theory. He claims that humor is based on binary stereotypes that are essential racist propaganda weapons. Medhurst (1990) explores the comedy of Black Britons in relation to racism in a comedy account that views it as inherently political, claiming that comedy is always about power; there are those who laugh and those who are laughed at (1990).

According to Hall (1997), stereotyping is a representation practice that tries to describe the other, the different, which is why ethnic groups are stereotyped in these jokes. Similarly, Talbot (2003) characterizes it as a form of social representation directed toward subordinate groups by the dominant group. Furthermore, it has been described as the

social practice of applying a set of common-sense attributions to entire groups in order to interpret their behavior and personalities (Cameron 1988). Stereotyping is "part of the maintenance of social and symbolic order," according to Hall (1997).

Stereotyping involves the "splitting" and "exclusion" processes. In order to depict the subordinate group as "what we are not," it separates the normal from the aberrant and the acceptable from the undesirable, eliminating the latter in each instance (Dyer 1977). Stereotyping has been noted in media, folk writing, social media, and other social representational activities.

These stereotyping practices and the beliefs that give rise to them, along with the hegemony and superiority of one group (the ruling group, us, the normal) and the submissiveness of another group (the subordinate group, them, the deviant), establish social beliefs about "the others." Stereotyping ethnic groups through language and humor is not exclusive to Pakistan. In many countries, stereotyping based on race, ethnicity, and other traits is a common occurrence. Nonetheless, it's critical to comprehend the particular ways that preconceptions are maintained in various cultural situations.

The aim of this study is to explore how jokes serve the process of stereotyping ethnic groups in Pakistan. In particular, the study will focus on how jokes are employed by means of popular media including films, television shows, and social media. At the same time, the study will pay attention to how ethnic groups interpret stereotypes. The outcomes of this research will be significant to reveal the role played by language and humor in sustaining stereotypes and prejudice. Thus, it is possible to use the results of this study to reduce prejudice.

The current study deals with the perpetuation of stereotypes and prejudices towards various ethnicities in the country through language and humor. In analyzing the role of language and humor in the formation of attitudes and opinions, it is possible to understand how stereotypes are being perpetuated and how they can be fought. The results obtained through this study will have significant implications for ensuring better tolerance and understanding between different ethnicities.

Methodology

This section of the research discusses the methodology used to analyze the jokes obtained from the social media networks such as Facebook. The qualitative approach was used in the research for classification of jokes on the basis of form and content (Sandelowski, 1995). Purposeful sampling was used to select relevant jokes from a range of social media sites (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016).

Following the collection of the jokes, the data was examined using formal language analysis, functional analysis, and social discourse analysis. The formal linguistic analysis, which was based on Harris (1970), was used to determine the structural features of the jokes. Based on Halliday's systemic functional linguistics, the functional analysis focused on the humor's capacity to convey specific meanings. Lastly, the study of how jokes were used in Pakistan to uphold prejudice and stereotypes against different ethnic groups benefited from the social component of discourse analysis, which is based on Foucault (1970). The study's methodology was designed to offer a comprehensive examination of the linguistic strategies employed to accomplish the objective of using jokes to reinforce ethnic stereotypes.

Analysis

(I)

Pathan, sindhi, Balochi Farishtay sy bolay k ALLAH sy arz karo k Jahan dekho har Mehkmay mein Punjabi hi hoty hain, kue?

Farishta bola:

Mai hunr Gya ty Hur ayay . . . :->

It is like a pun based on the use of words and common misconceptions about the various groups in Pakistan, especially the dominance of Punjabis in the politics of the country. The pun involves the use of terms that are only used in Pakistan, and also names of different regions, and this makes the pun easy to comprehend only by those within the culture.

The joke is split into two parts; the first is about how Punjabis seem to be the only ones occupying the seats of power, and the second part is the humorous twist, which is done by the Farishta character. It may not be understandable

to people who are not familiar with the context and depends on linguistic and cultural expertise to be properly appreciated.

This joke's practical purpose is to make the audience laugh. It entails a light-hearted investigation of societal power structures and language variety. However, bias, discrimination, and negative sentiments against particular ethnic groups might result from ethnic jokes. Social cohesion can be hampered by stereotyping and making jokes about particular ethnic groups based on their language background.

The reputation of Punjabi people as conceited and self-centred is reinforced by this humorous discourse, which has a negative connotation about them. The joke suggests that Punjabi dominance prevents people from other provinces from achieving success or having equal representation in the government. A joke like this can encourage prejudice and discrimination against Punjabi people as well as bad attitudes and sentiments toward them. Jokes and remarks that reinforce ethnic stereotypes or disparaging remarks must be avoided.

This joke's sociological component illustrates how people's perspectives and experiences within a society can be influenced by their ethnic identities. It captures the irritation and amusement that people of non-Punjabi ethnicity may experience when they believe that Punjabis have an excessive amount of power. The joke also illustrates how language and culture can cut across ethnic boundaries by highlighting the common experiences and cultural allusions among Pakistan's various ethnic groups.

(2)

Math teacher ek baloch se >

agar tumhare pocket me 1000 rs hon aur 2nd pocket me 2000 rs hon to tum kia sochogy?
baloch?

arry hum ne kisi or kakameez to nahi pen liya

A maths teacher and a Baloch person are reflected in the humor. "If you have 1000 rupees in one pocket and 2000 rupees in the other pocket, what would you think?" is a financial question posed by the maths teacher. "Did we steal someone else's shirt?" is the Baloch person's amusing response, implying that he might have taken someone else's shirt. The joke's setup, which is frequently employed in formal speech, presents a setting that seems serious or ordinary, but the gist gives a funny twist that defies expectations. The joke is based on a pun in which the Baloch person purposefully misinterprets the question in order to get a funny answer.

It also depends on the audience's knowledge with the cultural stereotype that associates Baloch people with theft. But it is important to note that such assumptions may prove to be counterproductive and should not be sustained. The point of the joke lies in entertaining the audience through their laughter. The assumption built in the joke is an example of the functional use of language. The element of surprise in the response is a source of humor that goes against the assumption of the audience.

It is important to note that ethnic jokes can sometimes be destructive and can result in developing a negative prejudice against particular communities. The joke referred to above tends to propagate the stereotype that the Baloch people are dishonest or tend to engage in acts of stealing. It is crucial to realize how our actions may influence others and not promote any harmful stereotypes or prejudices.

(3)

Best Pathan Joke



Pathan Ny Bache Ka Nam **MQM** Rakha

Dost:
Apko MQM Sy Nfrat Hy
Phr Apny Bete Ka Nam MQM Ku Rukha,

Pathan:
Hum Sari Dunya Ko
Batana Chata Hai **Pathan MQM Ka**
Baap He.

Pathan named his child MQM. The other asked you extremely hate MQM then why you named your child MQM. The Pathan replied so that i may prove that i am father of MQM"

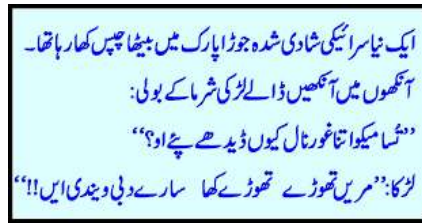
The joke starts with the Pathan naming his child MQM, a reference to a Pakistani political party. The other person in the joke asks the Pathan why he would name his child after a party that he allegedly despises, expressing shock and perplexity. The Pathan's response, in which he says that he can establish his paternity by naming his child MQM, is the main discussion.

Because it plays on the term "father's" dual meaning, the joke is intended to be humorous. The Pathan is actually referring to being the biological father of his own child, even if the other person believes he is referring to being the MQM party's founder or leader. The listener laughs as the word play adds a humorous twist.

To provide a hilarious effect, the joke combines wordplay with defying expectations. The joke depends on the listener's comprehension of the political party and the word "father"'s dual meaning. From a discourse analysis standpoint, the joke seems to be an example of a disparaging joke that capitalizes on unfavorable assumptions about the Pathan community and their alleged affiliation with Pakistan's MQM political party. The joke centers on the political party's name and is predicated on the idea that the Pathan community is frequently linked to political violence and extremism. There is a possibility that these jokes may cause harm to these individuals and perpetuate preconceived notions about certain groups of people.

Moreover, the joke reinforces the belief that the Pathans are a violent group and are easily connected with the negative aspects of society. It is important to remember that such stereotypes may result in discrimination and exclusion of certain groups from society in real life. We need to realize what language we use and which stereotypes we promote. In addition to refusing to joke about ethnic stereotyping and discrimination, we need to strive to create a diverse society.

(4)



*One new Siryaki couple was sitting in a park and eating chips
The girl asked from boy by looking at boys' eyes that why you are staring at me like this
The boy replied why are you eating too much the chips*

Joke usage involves various functions of language such as the role played by the fact that it is the girl who initiates the conversation and the boy replies to her in accordance with turn taking in conversations. Additionally, the joke depends on the pragmatic interpretation of language because the boy's response is purposefully unclear and surprising, while the girl's remark is intended to be seen as an inquiry about the boy's feelings for her.

This joke can be examined from a discourse perspective as a style of humor that capitalizes on the notion that members of the Siryaki ethnic group have an unhealthy relationship or are obsessed with eating. The main idea behind the joke is that the Siryaki female is eating too many chips, which is why the Siryaki boy is staring at her. Because it reinforces unfavorable assumptions about a specific ethnic community, this joke may be hurtful and damaging. Additionally, it perpetuates the notion that making fun of ethnic groups. It also reinforces the idea that it is acceptable to mock or make fun of people based on their ethnicity, which can lead to discrimination and prejudice.

(5)



*A Pathan in college asked from girl
Did you get married?*

Girl replied "No"

The Pathan replied in broken Urdu which was mocked

The joke is a dialogue between a college lady and a Pathan, a member of the Pashtun ethnic group. When the Pathan enquires as to whether the girl is married, she responds negatively. Others make fun of the Pathan's response, which is in broken Urdu. The humor in the informal joke is derived from cultural assumptions and prejudices. In particular, it makes use of the misconception that Pathans are less educated and less fluent in Urdu, the national language of Pakistan. This stereotype is strengthened by the Pathan's poor Urdu.

Additionally, the joke exhibits linguistic prejudice by assuming that the audience will find humor in the Pathan's bad Urdu. Another instance of how language may be used to marginalise and denigrate particular communities is the ridicule of the Pathan's Urdu. The joke may be deemed improper and disrespectful in formal conversation since it uses linguistic prejudices and cultural stereotypes to create humor.

A formal analysis of the joke shows that it establishes the expectation that the Pathan's inquiry regarding marriage is motivated by love interest in the girl. But by highlighting the Pathan's poor language abilities, the punchline defies this assumption. In order to provide a hilarious effect, the joke also makes use of the assumption that Pathans are illiterate and speak bad Urdu. Additionally, it is ironic that the Pathan cannot speak Urdu because the joke is being told in Urdu, suggesting that the audience and joke teller are more fluent in the language than the Pathan. It is disrespectful and damaging to make fun of the Pathan people's language abilities.

From a discourse standpoint, the joke employs language to accomplish a particular communicative goal, which is to create humor through the conversation between a college lady and a Pathan student. The joke is based on the conversation between the Pathan and the girl. In various cultures, the Pathan's question, "Did you get married?" is used to find out if someone is in a relationship. "No," the girl's straightforward response doesn't reveal much about her private life. But the Pathan's terrible Urdu is what makes it funny. He draws attention to his limits linguistically by speaking in another language than his mother tongue. This is more obvious when his speech is mocked. This interaction results in a moment of humor that is based on the social and cultural context of the use of language.

This joke could be viewed from a discourse perspective as a funny illustration of linguistic and cultural differences. The humor comes from the fact that the audience knows that Pathans are often thought of as weak in Urdu, which is a very common language in Pakistan. The Pathan boy's proposal to the attractive female in bad Urdu further advances the stereotype. The joke also touches on the concept of cross-cultural communication and the potential for miscommunication due to language and cultural disparities. This would totally ruin the Pathan boy's attempt to display his love to the attractive girl and make a marriage proposal. The lady would either misconstrue his intentions or be put off by his linguistic capabilities.

The humor of this joke is in the contrast between the earnestness of the attempt of the Pathan boy to express his love in a language other than his own, and the awkwardness that flows from his lack of fluency. It also stresses the importance of good communication and understanding in all types of relationships, regardless of language or cultural differences. It is important to work toward inclusion and respect in all types of communication, and to be aware of the impact our words and actions can have on others. We should strive to develop empathy, diversity and understanding in our relationships with other people, rather than holding on to negative assumptions.

Discussion

This article, "Just a Joke is not a joke, Stereotyping Ethnic Groups in Pakistan: A Linguistic Study," addresses the problem of stereotyping and its implications for Pakistani ethnic groups. The research is based on the language of jokes in the light of the formal discourse and shows the reproduction of negative stereotypes of ethnic groups. The research also investigates the social context in which these jokes are told and how they are used to normalize prejudice against marginalized groups. The study employs linguistic analysis to demonstrate how jokes can reproduce negative sentiments toward minority communities and reinforce stereotypes.

From the perspective of the functional analysis of discourse, the study highlights the use of humor as a tool for social control and for the maintenance of power relations. The study also suggests that people may use telling a joke as a way to validate their place in the social hierarchy and signal that they belong to a certain group. The paper discusses the larger societal consequences of discrimination and stereotyping from the perspective of social discourse. Jokes and other uses of language that normalize discriminatory attitudes are said to have long-term effects on marginalized groups such as diminished opportunity and social marginalization. The report also calls for greater awareness-raising and education on the negative effects of stereotyping and the need to promote tolerance and diversity in society.

One of the main merits of this study is that it examines the linguistic aspect of stereotyping certain ethnicities in Pakistan. In fact, the scholars determined the linguistic components that make these slurs and jokes particularly damaging through their comprehensive study of derogatory comments about different ethnicities. For instance, one of the aspects that the scholars identified is that jokes about ethnicities tend to distort or exaggerate some features of cultural traditions or stereotypes associated with those ethnicities. Another important statement made by the authors is that these jokes and slurs can be viewed as a form of verbal violence since they can lead to stigmatization.

The authors note that such general discriminatory and unequal patterns are often associated with the use of derogatory statements about some ethnic groups. For instance, according to them, derogatory statements about the minority Baloch ethnic group in Pakistan might foster negative perceptions and attitudes about this particular ethnic group, which may be used as an excuse for any discriminatory policies or practices. The authors also note that derogatory statements might increase conflicts and disagreements between different ethnic groups, which might result in undesirable outcomes for society.

In addition, the research is quite important in that it reveals the way in which humor contributes to the continuation of ethnic prejudice. The authors argue that it can be particularly damaging for jokes and slurs aimed at disadvantaged or marginalized groups, even though humor is commonly perceived as something that is harmless or even beneficial to social interactions. Moreover, it is noted that it becomes difficult to combat and challenge the negative stereotypes when they are expressed in humorous form because they are always presented as "just a joke."

Finally, the report also presents some recommendations on how to cope with the issue of ethnic stereotyping in Pakistan. First of all, the authors underline the importance of fostering constructive and positive forms of intergroup communication, as well as making people more aware about the harm that negative language and jokes can cause. Next, the authors suggest challenging the negative stereotypes and attitudes towards marginalized ethnic groups by means of using media and educational activities. Finally, according to the authors, some additional social and political reforms are needed to tackle the injustice and inequality behind ethnic stereotyping and discrimination.

Conclusion

The conclusions made by the research indicate that ethnic stereotyping is a major issue in Pakistan. There have been many instances of linguistic features being used to stereotype ethnic groups, and these include derogatory terms, negative attributes, and oversimplification of complex topics. The research has also highlighted the impact of ethnic stereotyping on society, which includes prejudice, segregation, and discrimination.

For addressing the issue of ethnic stereotyping in Pakistan, according to the report, it is crucial to ensure sensitivity related to language and culture. The report suggests that one must be aware of language that tends to stereotype different ethnic groups and prevent it. In addition, it is also important to raise awareness and provide education in relation to cultural diversity and tolerance for individuals.

The article "Just a Joke is not a joke, Stereotyping Ethnic Groups in Pakistan: A Linguistic Study" offers a valuable contribution to our understanding of the complex issue of ethnic stereotyping in Pakistan. By focusing on the linguistic, social, and cultural dimensions of this phenomenon, the research suggests that a more elaborate and comprehensive approach needs to be taken to deal with the issue of ethnic diversity and inequality. Ultimately, it shows how important it is to promote more positive intergroup communication and tackle stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes.

In conclusion, this study provides some very enlightening data regarding the complex issue of ethnic stereotyping in Pakistan. It emphasizes the necessity of developing some strong programs that could help in the promotion of cultural sensitivity and awareness in the country. Moreover, the research provides a model by which one can understand the language of ethnic stereotyping. It is important to emphasize linguistic and cultural diversity in order to create a better society in Pakistan.

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