Language of COVID-19: a Verbal & Visual Analysis of Humor Prevalent in Caricature Genre of Media Discourse

Sadia Mumtaz[1]
Munazza Khurshid[2]
Zara Khalid[3]
[1]MPhil Scholar, Fatima Jinnah Women University, Rawalpindi
[2]MPhil Scholar, Foundation University, Islamabad
[3]MPhil Scholar, Foundation University, Islamabad

Abstract

Languages continue to develop, modify, and reshape during unprecedented situations (Paton, 2020). Language fluidity and its flexible nature tend to be weapons in the hands of linguists and artists to cope with unprecedented difficult times. The current situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is posing significant socio-cultural challenges globally and specifically in Pakistan. The present study attempted to explore the role of the caricature genre in COVID-19 media discourse in terms of expressing humour by different verbal and visual elements of language. The sample was selected from four Pakistani newspapers The Nation, The Express Tribune, Dawn, and Pakistan Today (January 2020 to April 2020) by purposive sampling. The data was qualitatively analyzed under the framework of GTVH proposed by Attardo & Raskin (1991). The study revealed that skilled integration of innumerable verbal and visual rhetoric not only functions in terms of persuading the reader through implicit humour prevailing in caricature discourse but also communicates thoughtful information with the use of various literary devices like satire, irony, symbolism, analogy, etc. In this way, media discourse strengthens and motivates individuals and governments to confront the grim situation caused by coronavirus with ultimate laughter. This study will provide insights for future researchers to explore the element of humour prevalent in social media discourse like Twitter, Instagram, and Memes by unveiling implied meanings to better relate to the Pakistani context.
Keywords: language, humour, socio-cultural change, caricatures, COVID-19 discourse

1. Introduction

Language is an exceptional social phenomenon which continues to work in the phase of construction and reconstruction by adopting several linguistic and visual modalities. Language and society serve for a dialectical relationship (Fairclough, 1992) in which language is shaped by society and society shapes the language in various circumstances. Society comprises various social practices that consist of diverse social elements that can affect and can be affected by the discourse. Humor is a universally practiced phenomenon which differs in its very nature across different socio-cultural contexts. In the late 19th century humor was considered as a defense mechanism against obstacles and elements of distress (Freud, 1928). According to psychoanalytic theory (Martin & Ford, 2018), humor not only helps to release fear and anxiety but also presents the intimidating perspectives of reality in a humorous way. For Freud (1905), humor serves as a catharsis for pessimistic energy. As per Wilson, Kasriel, and Rust (1977) humor is an adaptive technique which helps individuals in better survival during severe conditions.

Language is fluid and flexible in nature. It encompasses various terminologies with the passage of time that is the sign of living and dynamic language. English is lingua franca and shows

such synthetic powers in terms of revival of old affixes and creation of new ones (Offne, 1995). This continuous growth and change are essential for life and vigor of any language. The English language is flexible and adaptable to the needs and demands of any unprecedented situation. It is slowly embracing the modifications and shifting day to day. With the passage of time, there are several changes that have evolved in terms of culture, heritage, attitude, and social environment. Hence, a rigid language cannot exist, so it must be dynamic and adaptive so that it fits into every situation.

According to Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker, a pandemic is "an unprecedented public health challenge" requiring an "unprecedented solution" (BORRELLI, 2020). In the time of crises and unprecedented situations, there would be more pressure on existing language resources. Language serves for fulfillment of the communicative needs of society, and it is normally considered that poor language with good intentions often do more harm than good. Therefore, a good, comprehensive, and effective language is very important for successfully dealing with unprecedented situations. Language change occurs at all domains; in terms of new vocabulary or word formation by the processes like coinage, blending, acronym etc, use of phrases, figurative language, visual language encompassing gestures, signs, and symbols etc. Every change is linked to specific context and circumstances in which it occurs. Linguistic change is directly related to the expected outcomes of a situation, it is used as a tool to accomplish certain tasks and objectives.

Humor is a very complicated phenomenon, and it is generally treated as "a form of social play" (Vandaele, 2010). Due to its varied nature its precise definition is difficult that is why different researchers attempted to encompass its variant nature by its various definitions.

According to the dictionary of English language Turner (1986) humor can be defined as "the faculty of perceiving or expressing what is amusing or comical". As per Attardo (1998) "linguists, psychologists and anthropologists have taken humor to be an all-encompassing category, covering any event or object that elicits laughter, amuses or is felt to be funny". The (Bremmer & Roodenburg, 1997) view that humor is a message transmitted through different mediums, including action, writing, speech, or images, and it evokes smile or laughter.

Humor is always a complex interaction due to linguistic, social, psychological, ideological, and historical factors. Due to its complex nature, humor is being studied in different disciplines with various perspectives along with linguists who studied it by focusing on various linguistic (text) and nonlinguistic means (visuals). Different theories have been given in order to define, explain, and analyze humor in different verbal and visual comics.

Caricature is an important but oblivious genre of media discourse in Pakistani context specifically in COVID-19 circumstances. Caricature artists/ cartoonists adopt several techniques like labeling, exaggeration, symbolism, analogies etc to create humor. There always lies an implicit or hidden meaning in this form of art by means of verbal and visual tactics in order to express their opinion with changing times, targeting particular audiences. A small image or short text expresses a trend, psyche, society, culture and belief (Shaikh, Tariq, & Saqlain, 2016). It is an art or skill in the hands of artists to target a larger audience. Caricature artists are integrating literary devices along with visuals to create humor in order to spread awareness and persuade people towards particular interpretation. Along with persuasion, it also serves for ridiculing or criticizing any thought, person, or situation through text and graphics.

This study attempted to investigate both verbal and semiotic language structures employed in COVID-19 caricatures in terms of humor formation. The framework for analysis is adopted

from General theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) developed by Attardo & Raskin (1991). According to Attardo & Raskin (1991) model of analyzing humor, there are six elements that can contribute towards humor depiction:

1. The language (LA): it accounts for phonological, morphological, lexical, syntactic, semantic, elements for verbalization of text.

2. Narrative strategy (NS) includes strategies employed for narration like dialogue-type, expository, riddles etc.

3. Target (TA) is described as an individual, a group, behavior or an ideological target that is criticized and ridiculed.

4. The situation (SI) usually refers to the social context of humor.

5. The logical Mechanism (LM): relationship between figure and its background.

6. Script Opposition (SO): It involves overlapping and opposing concepts

The primary concern of this theory is to analyze language structures with respect to six elements provided by the GTVH model in order to understand how the genre of caricature/cartoon in media discourse is helping individuals to cope up with difficult times in a lighter mood and less stress.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

The study focuses on the role and use of different strategies for creating humor through caricatures in COVID-19 discourse of Pakistan.

Languages always play a vital role in unprecedented times. It continues to adapt various possible forms to achieve certain targeted outcomes. The current COVID-19 pandemic has a strong linguistic impact along with certain other repercussions, so the intended study attempted to unveil the role played by media discourse by using several verbal and nonverbal linguistic modalities for creating humor in order to cope up with difficult situations.

1.2. Significance of Study

This study is an attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis on the powerful role of Pakistani caricature discourse in creation of humor to produce a soothing effect on an individual's nerves during COVID-19 misery. The current COVID-19 pandemic is bringing change in society and language is shaped by society, so it is changing with the passing time and circumstances. This study will reveal that integrating humor with new COVID-19 related words and vocabulary is an effective strategy to confront distressing issues and to raise awareness.

This study will contribute to existing Pakistani literature in terms of elucidating visual humoristic function through caricature genre in Pakistani context targeting specifically COVID-19 media discourse. It will provide an opportunity for other researchers to explore the role of humorous verbal and visual mediums as a powerful way to teach kids about COVID-19.

1.3. Research Gap

This study tried to fill the gap of research based in Pakistani context, on elements of humor in COVID-19 discourses. It will contribute towards exploring the most essential and effective element of creating laughter and amusement in this nerve-racking situation caused by a pandemic.

1.4. Delimitation and Limitation of Study

The study is delimited to the caricature genre of media discourse due to limitation of time and resources while it is limited to qualitative analysis of caricature discourse and does not account for an experimental analysis due to current lockdown scenario caused by COVID-19 pandemic.

1.5. Operational Definitions of Key Terms

Following are the key terms used in this study along with their operational definitions:

Hyperbole

It tends to be an expression of exaggeration used to ridicule or create humor by over emphasizing the content.

Symbolism

It is a term used to convey meaning beyond its literal purpose which is often used to symbolize two different abstract ideas.

Satire

Satire is a figurative device used to criticize, ridicule, and expose one's stupidity or vices especially in the context of politics and other topical issues.

Idiom

It is a fabricated language which presents meaning other than its literal meaning.

Irony

Irony is a literary technique which signifies the ultimate opposite of what is literally spoken or written to create humorous and emphatic effect.

Metaphorical Proverb

It is formulaic language that is based on traditional insightful sayings that refers to one thing by mentioning another.

Sarcasm

Sarcasm employs humorous ways to mock someone or something.

1.6. Research Objectives

➢   To analyze the impact of language change for generating humor during COVID-19 in Pakistan

➢   To explore linguistic and visual strategies causing humor prevalent in Pakistani caricature discourse

1.7. Research Questions

1. How language change is contributing towards creating humor during COVID-19?
2. What are the strategies employed in Pakistani caricatures for humor enactment?

2. Literature Review

COVID-19 is setting new norms and innovations in the linguistics field too. Different linguists and researchers are contributing their part to deal with exceptional situations with more responsible and productive ways in order to fulfill certain requirements.

Language change often tends to be initiated under different pandemics, epidemics and other socio-political circumstances (Paton, 2020). The earliest of this appears in the 1347-50 age of great plague, termed as '*Pestilence'* later reduced to '*pest'* having different connotations nowadays. *Smallpox* (1560s), *epidemic, pandemic* (17th century), *black plague* (1600s), *Black Death, self-isolate, self-quarantine* (17th century), *self-quarantined* (adjective) etc, names to report different infectious diseases in different sudden situations. Due to expansion of world, the diseases also expand and so do language and reported several new and modified linguistic developments like *Yellow fever* (1738), *Spanish Influenza* (1890) reduced to *Spanish Flu* in great epidemic of 1918, *Polio* (1911) from *Poliomyelitis* (1878), *AIDS* (1982), *SARS* (2003), and *Corona virus* due to its resemblance with solar corona appeared first in 1968 but now it is part of every discourse in 2020 due to great devastation caused by *Coronavirus* also known as COVID-19.

Humor is universal but culture specific. According to (Jiang, Li, & Hou, 2019) different individuals perceive humor differently with respect to their socio-cultural context. The study argued that both eastern and western cultures mostly use humor as a coping strategy in order to deal with difficult situations, but their frequency of usage and perceptions may differ. Different psychologists suggested that humor tends to boost our immune systems by relieving additional stress, anxiety, and tension. Thus, contributes towards optimistic emotions and notions (Cheung & Yue, 2012), (Martin & Ford, 2018), (Lefcourt, 2001).

A research study was conducted by Susan (2020) on the impact of changing language in unprecedented times. Researcher reported the use of technical vocabulary used during COVID-19 pandemic crafted from public discourses. The study suggests that language choices are sub consciously crafted in unprecedented times and serves as an only effective medium for the construction of a sense of responsibility in the public. Different linguistic choices like choice of words, phrases, metaphors, and other grammatical elements are strong enough to achieve certain outcomes during unexpected situations of pandemics.

In the context of global crises during various pandemics, many words and phrases have become frequently used and become part of everyday discourse. These are certain linguistic developments that are continuously studied by various researchers. The OED Editorial (2020) analyzed the language corpora in terms of language used during COVID-19 in various discourses. Frequency of COVID-19 vocabulary was analyzed from December 2019 to March, 2020 that shows various developments in language usage, semantic differentiations, grammatical transformations etc. This study depicted how an unprecedented situation motivates language resources to increase their exposure and usability with various reshaping and reconstruction of available resources.

There is increased usage of some words during COVID-19 pandemic which were observed and analyzed by different researchers and lexicographers. Semantic webs and word-formation approaches of COVID-10 vocabulary suggested the increased frequency of usage along with most words being modified, coined, blended, and clipped in order to produce diversified meanings. These words are dominating the global discourse nowadays through government statements, science papers, international policies, social media, newspapers, and other mediums of communication (Li, 2021).

Current global situation suggests that social change brings immense linguistic change. COVID-19 a shorten form of coronavirus disease 2019, (WFH) *working from home* first attested as noun in 1995 and as verb in 2001, *self-isolation* (1834), *self-isolating* (1841), *social distancing* (1957) , the term *Infodemic* (a portmanteau word from *information* and *epidemic*) coined in 2003 for the SARS epidemic , *PPE* (personal protective equipment) 1977. There are number of slang terms that were introduced during COVID-19 for creating humor in depressing time like *Covidiot* (a blend of COVID-19 and idiot) who disregards healthy and safety guidelines about corona virus, *zoom-bombing* (interruption of unwanted guests during zoom meetings), *Doom scrolling* (tendency to scroll bad news), clipping of corona to '*rona*', *zooming* (as a verb), etc (OED, 2020).

2.1. Previous Studies

In a study done by Shaikh, Tariq, and Saqlain, (2016), a semiotic analysis of political cartoons published during the 2003 election was explored. It presented a clear picture of how communication tools through the internet and mass media integrate to produce dominant political

themes. The study analyzed the manipulating strategies used in political cartoons in terms of persuading to vote in favor of respective parties.

The study on political caricature discourse depicts the role of symbolic significance in terms of carrying social and ideological meanings (AbdulRafay & Khan, 2018). The researchers analyzed the role of print media in manipulating the public opinion in favor of different political parties. The CDA of the study suggested the biases of print media toward the government and ridiculing the opposition parties by its humorous caricature discourse.

According to Niaki and Rakhshandehnia (2015), humor is considered as a consequence of civilization by which ideologies are introduced in society and contribute towards power and dominance of certain groups and classes. The researchers explored the humor discourse prevalent in short story "spring in the Ashes" by Zakria Tamer, which employed the use of verbal, situation, and character humor to depict distancing of Syrian people from humane-Islamic life.

 Political cartoons constitute a multimodal genre within media discourses. The Sani (2012) examined the role of verbal and visual elements of political cartoons formulated by Nigerian cartoonists to construct a satire to initiate positive and local reforms in Nigeria. The study concluded the lexical typology comprises five elements; coinage, loan word, word class, connotation, and denotation along with the frequent use of interjections to express their strong emotions and feelings.

The research study by Baig (2019) suggested the usage of both semiotic and linguistic discourses as a powerful means of constructing desired belief and achieving preferred response. The study explored the role of humor in advertising genre. The researcher wraps up the study with the finding that humor is monotony breaker and serves for bestselling strategy for advertisements. Individuals are persuaded by the humor and marketers are employing humor as a weapon in advertising discourse. They recommended the use of sensible and intelligent use of humor to promote the products and if it is handled properly, it will captivate the interest of consumer towards the product.

Another study exploited the use of syntactic structures to enhance humor recognition. Experimental analysis and results demonstrate that independent syntactic structures can help to identify the kind and content of humor (Liu, Zhang, & Song, 2018). Linguistic insights of the study cited those humorous texts use simple words with complex sentence structures, more vivid with auxiliary adverbs, negation and rhetoric questions, involve more personal pronouns and questions as in conversations. This study provided a completely new insight of humor computation by indicating stylistic characteristics of humor.

The study by Tsakona (2009) suggested the complex nature of analyzing humor due to its implicit nature. The study stated that in cartoon discourse meaning is created through two semiotic modes: visual and verbal for communicating a message implicitly. Researchers used the framework of GTVH with a social semiotic approach to identify pun, exaggerations, contradiction, and neologism etc. which accounts for encoding of humor. The study concluded that in cartoons there are humorous representations of beliefs and views that are all part of visual literacy.

Change is the central element for the healthy growth and development of language. In an unprecedented situation, language plays a vital role for meeting communicative needs of a society by adapting and reshaping new vocabularies, linguistic and visual modalities of a language via certain processes. Humor is playing a crucial role in terms of coping up with the current situation

with a sense of relief and responsible behavior by using rhetoric for convincing and communicating an imperative message.

3. Research Methodology

The current study employed a qualitative approach and is exploratory in research design. A qualitative research approach presents a more detailed and comprehensive overview of the problem. Barbour (2008) stated the importance of qualitative methods as they expose and pick up the mechanisms existing between different variables with detailed explanations and interpretations. It also provides an opportunity to explore "embedded processes" (Barbour, 2008, p. 13). Hence, a qualitative approach was adopted to explore the synthesis of verbal and visual strategies in order to create humor amid COVID-19 pandemic. The sample consisted of caricatures on COVID-19 from four Pakistani newspapers; (The News, The Express Tribune, Pakistan Today, Dawn) and sample is drawn by purposive sampling from January 2020 to April 2020. The framework for analysis has been taken from General theory of Verbal Humor (GTVH) developed by Attardo & Raskin,(1991) focusing on five main elements of theory except (script opposition/SO) to analyze humor with respect to its targeted socio-culture context. The study explores both verbal and visual elements of caricatures embedded with implicit goals and targets to be fulfilled through skilled usage of language structures. The primary concern of this theory is to analyze language structures with respect to six elements provided by the GTVH model in order to understand how incorporation of humor in the genre of caricature/cartoon in media discourse is working along COVID-19 pandemic.

3.1. Theoretical Framework

Different linguistic theories emerged for producing humorous effect in terms of semantic, pragmatic, and syntactic viewpoints. Two most influential linguistic theories of humor are semantic script theory of humor (SSTH) formulated by Raskin (1985) and General theory of verbal humor (GTVH) developed by Victor Raskin and Salvatore Attardo (1991). SSTH deals with cognitive linguistic structures to make text funny and humorous while GTVH accounts for six elements or knowledge resources to expose implicit humor in text.

According to (Attardo, 1998), GTVH can be applied to a variety of humorous texts that can range from short narratives like simple jokes to long narratives like sitcoms, comics etc. The (Paolillo, 1998) adopted GTVH for the analysis of comics and stresses which recommends its "easily extendable nature to visual humor such as comics".
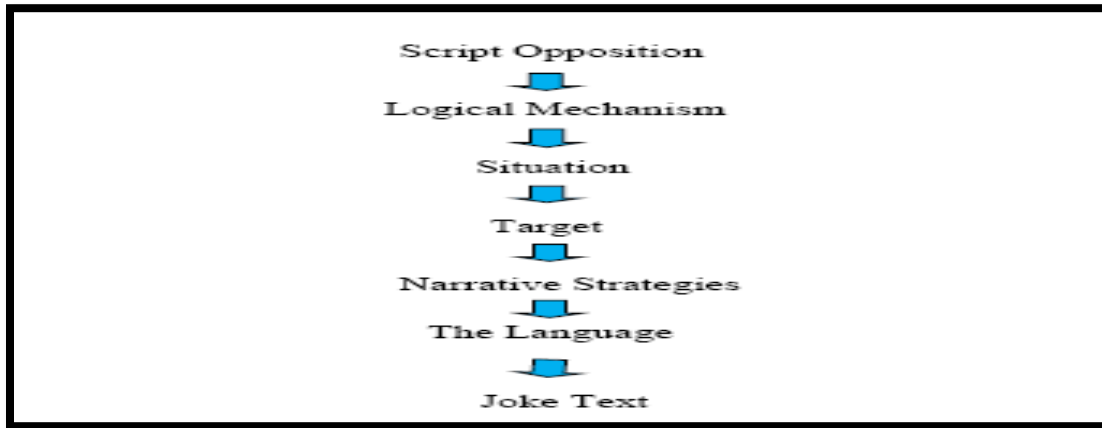
Fig. A. Attardo and Raskin (1991) model of analyzing humor

4. Data Analysis

Following are the data selected by purposive sampling, representing different COVID-19 caricatures in Pakistani context. All these caricatures appeared during COVID-19 from December 2019 to April 2020 in Pakistani newspapers; (The News, The Express Tribune, Pakistan Today, Dawn). The data has been explored and analyzed in the perspectives of incorporating verbal and visual tactics to instill humor in targeted audiences during COVID-19 pandemic.

COVID-19 pandemic is bringing social change along with linguistic change (OED, 2020). It is leading towards the use of old words but with increased frequency in addition to new words formed by coinage, blending, compounding, and words having different connotations. Language change exhibiting through caricatures in media discourse is often an innovative technique which serves as a means of attracting audience in twofold discourse attributes. Figurative devices play a significant role to convey implicit meanings which are used by caricature artists to satire, symbolize and exaggerate the existing COVID-19 pandemic situation.

Figure 1, 2, 3, 4
Data Interpretation in Term of GTVH

| Knowledge Resources	Fig.1	Fig.2	Fig.3	Fig.4
Logical Mechanism	Symbolism & Satire	Symbolism & irony	Satire	Satire via metaphorical proverb
Situation	Population response towards lockdown	lockdown confusion during COVID-19	Lack of clarity towards COVID-19	Gov irresponsible response towards WHO
Target	Pakistani population & government	Government of Pakistan	Government of Pakistan	Government of Pakistan
Narrative strategy	Newspaper caricature	Newspaper caricature	Newspaper caricature	Newspaper caricature
Language	verbal/visual	verbal/visual	verbal/visual	verbal/visual
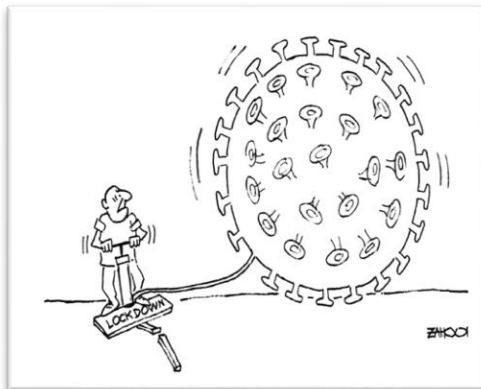
Fig.1. Dawn Newspaper

Fig.2. Dawn Newspaper

Language change: The word 'Lockdown' has several connotations with passing time. Initially in the 19th century 'Lockdown' meant for enforced isolation for security and now in COVID-19 situation it is used in the sense of staying at homes. Lockdown is frequently used in two senses in Pakistan i.e. complete lockdown (areas completely banned for any kind of movement), smart lockdown (closing of selective areas that are experiencing virus outbreak).

In **Fig.1**, a man is standing on a pump labeled with 'lockdown' and using that pump to fill up air in the balloon that is symbolical of coronavirus. Here two symbolisms are used for the meaning making process; one is lockdown 'pump' along with 'man' depicting Pakistani population response towards lockdown and the other one is coronavirus shaped 'ball' that is symbolic to the current COVID-19 situation. It is an implicit satire on the Pakistani population that are intentionally violating the lockdown and thus increasing corona cases rapidly.

The **Fig.2** represents the two thoughts prevailing in Pakistan; one who are in favor of partial lockdown and other who are in favor of complete lockdown while the Pakistan flag on a car is symbolic to the whole Pakistan. Another hidden relation is made by pointing complete lockdown towards the sides of Pakistani minorities with white side of the flag while partial lockdown is at the green side that accounts for majorities of Pakistan. This presents the irony of Pakistan in terms of dealing with COVID-19 response where minorities are poor people and middle-class population overcoming the difficulties due to complete lockdown whereas majority depicts upper middle and elite class that are experiencing partial lockdown.
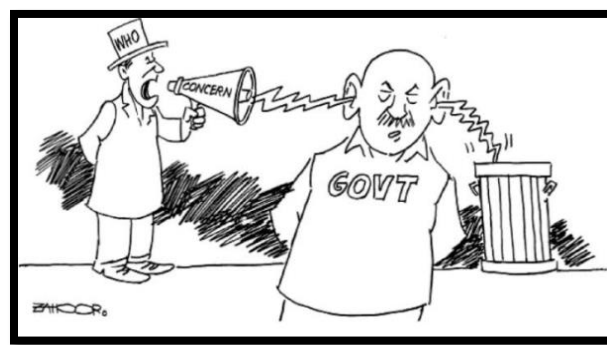

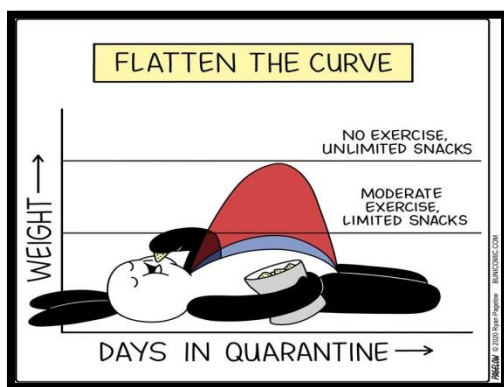**Fig.3.** The Nation

Fig.4. The Nation

Satire is a criticism wrapped in humor, employed to ridicule a person, thought or action. The colored caricature of the Pakistani Prime Minister in **Fig.3** portrays the lack of clarity in terms of dealing with coronavirus with full confidence and coolness. Blindfolded image with a thumbs-up sign expresses Pakistan's attitude towards the Corona situation. Government has no clear policies, sound initiatives and plans but still showing buoyancy that everything is alright and under control.

In **Fig.4** satire is represented using a metaphorical proverb (Go in one ear and out the other) with excellent integration of imagery with smart labels. A man symbolizes the World Health Organization (WHO) that is showing great concern for the Pakistani government while government response is just like nothing hence paying no heed towards alarming notices. Listening from one ear and excluding it from another.

Figure 5, 6, 7, 8
Data Interpretation in Term of GTVH

Knowledge Resources	Fig.5	Fig.6	Fig.7	Fig.8
Logical Mechanism	idiomatic language/Irony	Analogy/Symbolism & labeling	Satire	Symbolism
Situation	Population irresponsible response towards quarantining	Families suffering due to corona	Mishandling of situation; eating & resting	Comparing women of baby speck vs. corona speck
Target	Pakistani population	Pakistani families	Pakistani people	Pakistani females
Narrative strategy	Newspaper caricature	Newspaper caricature	Newspaper caricature	Newspaper caricature
Language	verbal/visual	verbal/visual	verbal/visual	verbal/visual

Fig.5.The Nation   **Fig.6.** The Nation

Fig.5 Flattening the curve in COVID-19 situation refers to a community isolation measure in order to keep the number of corona cases at minimal. Idiomatic language is also introduced during COVID-19 in order to produce certain effects through verbal and visual mediums. While here in the above figure Pakistani population is depicted as flattening the curve of their belly fat by eating and resting during quarantine days. This social reality is depicted in quite a humorous

way in terms of the harsh irony of the Pakistani population who are wrongly interpreting the corona situation and increasing other serious problems by their irresponsible attitude towards corona precautions.

Fig.6 *Symbolism* is an important medium of communication that helps to analyze deeper meaning of text and visuals. This figure illustrates the existing condition of Pakistani families. The artist integrated the visuals and textual tactics to create humor by utilizing symbolism. Mother with three kids crying is symbolic to prevailing tensions and situations in Pakistani families due to the enclosures of schools during COVID-19.

Labeling and Analogy: To have a humorous effect, 'Coronavirus' is labeled as an analogical term to 'Rona Virus' by making an implicit comparison in both due to similarity of impact and consequences. It has been depicted that in the world, people are more concerned about Coronavirus and its destruction while Pakistani families are more triggered due to 'RONA virus' because both are making life miserable however in different but relatable contexts.

Fig.7. Pakistan Today e-paper   **Fig.8.** Pakistan Today e-paper

Coronaspeck is a newly invented slang term during COVID-19 which has connotation of a person having increased fat during quarantine situation and its literal meaning is 'Coronavirus fat'. This word in **Fig.7** is itself satirical and ironic targeting the population of a country who are erroneously handling the quarantine situation by eating, resting and watching netflix.

In **Fig.8,** two women are being compared; one with low fat who is experiencing fat due to baby birth 'baby speck' while other women symbolizes women with increased fat during coronavirus situations due to eating and resting in the days of quarantine, lockdown and isolation.

Figure 9,10,11,12

Data Interpretation in Term of GTVH:

Knowledge Resources	Fig.9	Fig.10	Fig.11 &12
Logical Mechanism	Exaggeration, symbolism & satire	Labeling & Sarcasm	Labeling and Satire
Situation	Tiger force performing like Turtle	Reality of lockdown	Smart lockdown & economy revival as blind folded
Target	Gov Tiger force	Pakistani government	Pakistani Government
Narrative strategy	Newspaper caricature	Newspaper caricature	Newspaper caricature
Language	verbal/visual	verbal/visual	verbal/visual
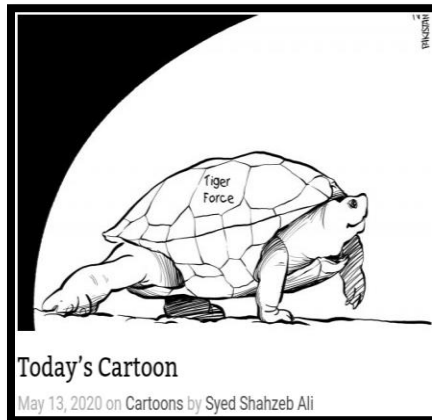
Fig.9. The Nation   **Fig.10.** The Nation

Exaggeration and satire: Humor usually embeds satire; its basic purpose is to have a punching remark on bitter realities prevailing in the country with a crisp of humor. In **Fig.9** Tiger force is symbolically related with Turtle due to its slow speed. The cartoonist exaggerated the notion of tiger force that was formulated by the Pakistani government for spreading awareness about the corona pandemic. Turtle is known for its slow speed and lazy nature and that is symbolized by labeling of 'tiger force' on it because it is assumed in Pakistani context that tiger force is of no use, and they are not performing precisely in corona situation.

Labeling and Sarcasm: The **Fig.10** depicts sarcasm expressed by different language structures adopted for creation of meaning. 'Sarcasm is sharp, bitter, cutting expression tempered by humor and largely context dependent'. Here sarcasm is employed by an ambivalence strategy that is mixing two opposite concepts. It clearly targets the government's current initiatives in terms of smart lockdown and points out the fact that when you only pretend to have lockdown but in reality no lockdown is practiced that is what smart lockdown is in Pakistan.

Fig.11. Pakistan Today e-paper   **Fig.12.** Pakistan Today e-paper

Labeling and Satire: The above comparative figures (*Fig.11* and *Fig.12*) depicts how language changes with changing situations, visuals are same but utilized in two different contexts by cartoonists. It largely contributes towards the notion of how language is shaping society. In the

right figure smart lockdown is illustrated as blindfolded people that do not know where to impose and where to lift. This image is situated in black background to have a special effect in terms of meaning of walking in the dark without knowing where to go in a stable way. All this leads to satire on government policies and initiatives in terms of smart lockdown.

Figure 13,14,15,16

Data Interpretation in Term of GTVH

Knowledge Resources	Fig.13	Fig.14	Fig.15	Fig.16
Logical Mechanism	Symbolism & Satire	Analogy/Symbolism	Metaphorical reference of proverb/Satire	Labeling, pun & Satire
Situation	Crucial situation of Pakistan against coronavirus	No social distancing leads to death	Gov verbal threats but no action	Gov calm attitude towards increasing corona cases
Target	Pakistani Gov & population	Pakistani Population	Pakistani Gov	Pakistani Gov
Narrative strategy	Newspaper caricature	Newspaper caricature	Newspaper caricature	Newspaper caricature
Language	verbal/visual	verbal	verbal/visual	verbal/visual
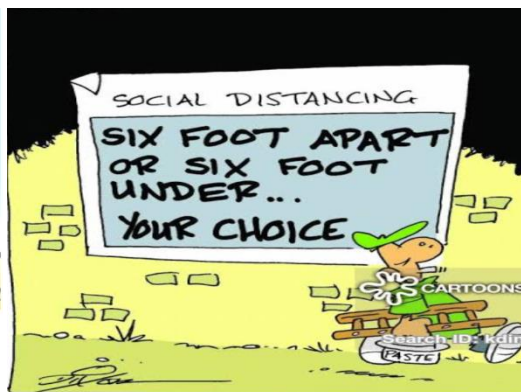
Fig.13. Dawn newspaper   **Fig.14.** Dawn newspaper

Symbolism and Satire: The above **Fig.13** depicts a satire on the situation in Pakistan due to COVID-19 pandemic that is leading its people towards death due to ill management and lack of clarity in actions and plans. A big crocodile is symbolized as Coronavirus due to its hazardous nature while Pakistan is symbolized as an ambulance due to its critical nature that is on verge of death and destruction.

Here in **Fig.14** the cartoonist employed an excellent use of analogy between social distancing and death for demanding seriousness towards the current situation in a humorous way. 'Six foot apart' is analogical to the concept of social distancing in current situation which says to have approximately six feet distance from each other and 'Six foot under' is analogical to death because in Muslim culture people are buried which measures about six foot down the earth.

Fig.15. Pakistan Today e-paper

Fig.16. Pakistan Today e-paper

Usage of Proverb for satire: "A man of words but no action" this is what represented in above **Fig.15** to convey the real essence of verbal threats by the Pakistani government. The image is in resemblance with the PM of Pakistan and used as a synecdoche to account for the whole government.

Labeling and Satire: Again, a satirical situation is depicted in the above frame **Fig.16** and Pakistani cartoonists are taking a dig at the government in terms of increased number of corona cases in the country and the government's silly attitude towards it. Here 'explosive rise' is used as Pun in order to relate the current situation with virus devastation. Visual contributes towards a great meaning making process along with text. Coronavirus is spreading quickly and is near to have an explosion, but the government is still calming the population and waiting for a huge rise.

Figure 17, 18

Data Interpretation in Term of GTVH

Knowledge Resources	Fig.17	Fig.18
Logical Mechanism	Exaggeration, irony	Ironic & Satirical
Situation	Government childish response towards adverse destruction of virus	Pretending to impose forced lockdown by confused Government
Target	Pakistani Government	Pakistani government
Narrative strategy	Newspaper caricature	Newspaper caricature
Language	verbal/visual	verbal/visual

Fig.17. Pakistan Today e-paper   **Fig.18.** Pakistan Today e-paper

Exaggeration: Sometimes the cartoonist uses the exaggeration technique to overdo the thoughts and action. Here in **Fig.17** depicts the irony of the situation existing in Pakistan by utilizing exaggeration strategy. This shows the intensity of COVID-19 pandemic and implies that huge destruction of coronavirus is causing a lot of casualties and economic crises in Pakistan while the Pakistani government response is just like a small bucket of water which is no threat for the virus at all.

The above **Fig.18** illustrates the attitude of the government towards COVID-19 situation that is ironic and satirical in its sense but embedded in humor with great use of imagery. Comics and Caricatures are largely context dependent, and it usually consists of an implicit meaning that contributes towards huge phenomena. Here the confused attitude and response of the government is represented through text and visual integration. Government is trying to practice law by force but do not have clear plans and policies on what to do and how to tackle the current situation. Government itself, caught in its ambiguity, just likes walking on a curved slide having no way to move on despite just sticking to one position and pretending the enforcement of practicing law in COVID-19 scenario.

5. Results and Discussions

An analysis of above-mentioned data, using the framework of GTVH (1991) truly reveals that media discourse is synthesizing implicit verbal and nonverbal techniques for creating humor along with absolute wit and serious awareness in destroying the situation of COVID-19 pandemic in Pakistan. The study revealed that there are immense vocabulary changes and language modifications that are exposed in the caricature genre used by Pakistani artists to convey implicit humor. The selected and analyzed images suggested that collision of verbal and nonverbal tactics are creating outright humor and one of the most frequent textual strategies is use of figurative language however images are most often adopted as visual strategy. Figurative language is significant in terms of exposing two-fold meanings and conveying hidden meaning, so the caricature genre is leading its way to impart implicit humor. The images depicted momentous impact of language like innovation of new terminologies like Coronaspeck, rona virus (c.f. Figure 6,7,8), along with usage of several idiomatic phrases 'flatten the curve' and proverbs 'go in one ear and out the other' to present unusual circumstance in unusual, comical, and witty way (c.f.

Figure 4,5). The analyzed genre explored some analogies that are been utilized for creating awareness and cautioning from destructive situation of COVID-19 pandemic by taking precautionary measures like 'six feet apart or six feet under' (c.f. Figure 14). The caricature artists ridicule the government prerogatives (like tiger force, smart lockdown) in terms of combating coronavirus situation by implicit satire, sarcasm, and humorous sarcasm (c.f. Figure 9, 18). The visuals made for showing government's ambiguous strategies like blind-folded cartoons (c.f. Figure 11,12), imprecise initiatives and static verbal dialogues for imposing smart and complete lockdown is showed in a completely new way through caricature genre (c.f. Figure 2,10,15). Comical cartoon characters and images are being produced to show deadly coronavirus and irresponsible yet humorous attitude of Pakistani population and government towards it (c.f. Figure 1, 16, 17). The data suggested the targeted audience to bring change in their non-serious attitude towards coronavirus and instead of resting, eating during quarantine and increasing 'Coronaspeck' they should adopt suggested measures of WHO like social distancing, smart lockdown, exercising and thus maintaining healthy habits. They also visualized the hilarious situation of houses due to enclosures of schools amid COVID-19 pandemic and coined a new term 'rona virus' to make it relatable. Media discourse is presenting deep moral lessons comically yet intelligently by not only exposing the situation prevailing in Pakistan amid COVID-19 pandemic like exponential rise in COVID-19 cases despite lockdown and other measures but also suggesting to adopt requisite attitude to avoid surplus destruction.

6. Conclusion

Evidently, the current research study analyzes the humoristic expression integrated with both verbal and visual elements in COVID-19 discourse through caricature genre. The selected data presents a vivid picture of the current COVID-19 situation of Pakistan along with government and population attitude/response towards it. The study concluded the fact that there exists a dialectical relationship between language and society, in a current situation changing circumstances is affecting language change by including new or modified vocabulary in addition to certain slang terms that are used in quite humorous ways. Figurative language is frequently used for textual interpretation of language while images were used as nonverbal tactic for creating humor. Caricature discourse account for two main functions by standing with notion of 'to kill two birds with one stone'; first one is being rhetoric in function i.e. attracting and persuading individuals by employing various language structures for creating humor and other function is to communicate productive information by using satire, irony, exaggeration, symbolism and analogy to bring serious attention towards Coronavirus situation. Therefore, it suggests that by the incorporation of healthy habits and serious attitude we can combat coronavirus situation in quite productive way so instead of just eating, resting and lack of practical implications of so-called smart lockdown policy, we can practice it with responsible attitude by taking preventive measures and maintaining healthy routine to decrease mortality and infection rate. The study further contributed that humor is an effective strategy for confronting a COVID-19 situation with increasing laughter and ease. It will help to achieve better results by mocking the government and population attitude towards the coronavirus situation implicitly in a humorous way thus creating an eye-opening context if not handled properly. The humor element prevalent in caricature genre is contributing to cope up with COVID-19 hard times; with sound introspection, developing a sense of responsibility, logical actions both from government and citizens. This study recommends

future researchers to explore the role of other COVID-19 discourses for creating optimistic notion of motivation for individuals in difficult times by revealing various implied meanings incorporated through linguistic and nonlinguistic linguistics features in various discourses.

References

AbdulRafay, K., & Khan, A. (2018). POLITICS OF CARICATURES: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF CARTOON COVERAGE OF 2014 ISLAMABAD SIT-INS. *JSSIR Volume 7, Number 2, December 2018* , 160-148.

Attardo, S. (1998). *Humor, 11(3), pp. 231-260.*

Attardo, S. (1998). The analysis of humorous narratives. *Humor, 11(3), pp. 231-260.*

Attardo, S., & Raskin, V. (1991). Script theory revis(it)ed: joke similarity and joke representation model. *Humor, 4 (3-4), pp. 293-348.*

BORRELLI, C. (2020). *What's your least favorite coronavirus cliche? There's a reason we make up these phrases, linguists say, and why they go viral.* CHICAGO : CHICAGO TRIBUNE .

Bremmer, J., & Roodenburg, H. (1997). Introduction: humour and history. In J. Bremmer & H.Roodenburg (Eds.). *A cultural history of humour (pp. 1-9). Cambridge: Polity Press.*

Cheung, C.-K., & Yue, X. D. (2012). Sojourn students' humor styles as buffers to achieve resilience. *Int. J. Intercult. Relat. 36, 353–364. doi: 10.1016/j.ijintrel.2011.10.001.*

Dyer, G. (1982). Advertising as communication. *London: Methuen. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203328132* .

Fairclough, N. (1992). Discourse and Social Change. *Polity Press, Cambridge.*

Fatima Zafar Baig, S. U. (2019). Humor as Monotony Breaker in Funny Ads: A Multi-Modal Discourse Analysis of Ads of Pakistani Ufone & Jazz Cellular Companies. *International Journal of English Linguistics; Vol. 10, No. 1; 2020* , 69-80.

Freud, S. (1960/1905). *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious. New York, NY: Norton.*

Freud, S. (1928). Humor. *Int. J. Psychoanal. 9, 1–6.*

Iro Sani, M. H. (2012). Linguistic analysis on the construction of satire in Nigerian political cartoons: The example of newspaper cartoons. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies Vol. 4(3), pp. 52-59, March 2012.*

Jhally, S. (1990). The codes of advertising: Fetishism and the political economy of meaning in the consumer .

Jiang, T., Li, H., & Hou, Y. (2019). Cultural Differences in Humor Perception, Usage, and Implications. *Front. Psychol., 29 January 2019 | https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00123* .

Lefcourt, H. M. (2001). Humor: The Psychology of Living Buoyantly. . *New York, NY: Kluwer Academic. doi: 10.1007/978-1-4615-4287-2* .

Liu, L., Zhang, D., & Song, W. (2018). Exploiting Syntactic Structures for Humor Recognition. *Proceedings of the 27th International Conference on Computational Linguistics, pages 1875–1883 Santa Fe, New Mexico, USA, August 20-26, 2018.*

Martin, R. A., & Ford, T. (2018). . (2018). The Psychology of Humor: An Integrative Approach. *Burlington, MA: Elsevier Academic Press.*

Niaki, S. E., & Rakhshandehnia, S. A. (2015). An analysis of humor discourse in "spring in the Ashes" by Zakaria Tamer. *WALIA journal 31(S3): 105-110, 2015.*

OED Editorial. (2020). *Corpus analysis of the language of Covid-19.* https://public.oed.com/blog/corpus-analysis-of-the-language-of-covid-19/: Oxford English Dictionary.

Offne, M. D. (1995). Communicating in English: Flexibility Within a Norm. *Bulletin of Aichi Institute of Technology Vol. 30, Part A*, 23-29.

Paolillo, J. C. (1998). Gary Larson's far side: nonsense? nonsense! *Humor, 11(3), pp. 261-290.*

Paton, B. (2020, april 9). *Social change and linguistic change: the language of Covid-19.* Retrieved August 24, 2020, from Oxford English Dictionary: https://public.oed.com/blog/the-language-of-covid-19/

Shaikh, N. Z., Tariq, R., & Saqlain, N. u. (2016). Cartoon war….. A political dilemma!A semiotic analysis of political cartoons. *Journal of Media Studies. Vol. 31(1):© 2010 ICS Publications www.jms.edu.pk* , 74- 92.

Susan, H. O. (2020). *Changing language in unprecedented times.* Edgbaston Birmingham UK: University of Birmingham.

Tsakona, V. (2009). Language and image interaction in cartoons:Towards a multimodal theory of humor. *Journal of Pragmatics 41 (2009) 1171–1188.*

Turner, M. (1986). Theories of humour and the place of humour in education. *(Unpublished MA thesis), McGill University, Montreal Canada.*

Vandaele, J. (2010). Humor in translation. In Y. Gambier & L. Doorslaer (Eds.), . *Handbook of translation studies, Volume 1 . Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins* , 147 - 152.

Williamson, J. (1978). Decoding advertisements: Ideology and meaning in advertising. *London: Boyars* .

Wilson, G. D., Kasriel, J., & Rust, J. (1977). (1977). Genetic and family origins of humor preferences: a twin study. *Psychol. Rep. 41, 659–660. doi: 10.2466/pr0.1977.41.2.659.*