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A pragma-stylistic approach of flaming in some of American political tweets

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Abstract---The current paper detects how flaming is used in the American political context in the platform of tweets. Hence, it aims at signifying the most common pragma-stylistic strategies used to represent flaming in this context. Also, it aims to show how cooperative principles are effectively used to indicate flaming with rhetorical devices as part of stylistics. To achieve its aims, this depends on developing a pragma-stylistic model of flaming to these tweets. Accordingly, the data comprises four tweets that represent the flaming in the pinpointed context. The findings reveal different pragmatic strategies to represent the phenomenon in the context of American political tweets.

Keywords---flaming, pragma-stylistics, Twitter.

Introduction

Most recently, people have been the subject of hate words all over the world either for their appearances, races, nationality or ethics. Any individual can become a victim of such severe language that urges intolerance, and discrimination. It includes various forms and types like bullies, conflicts, mockery, rebuking, rudeness, trolling, humiliation, and insults that may lead to a real fight. Therefore, it is necessary to highlight such phenomenon to make people aware of its style and its intended messages.

Literature Review

Flaming

Flaming is a term for verbal abuse that is intended to hurt someone, a group, or an organization. In other words, it constitutes profanity or personal insults. A

group of different scholars agree that "flaming" is a person's deliberate intention to ignite a feuding reaction or "flame" by using disdainful language or attacking someone's beliefs without respect or care for his/her response (Aiken & Waller, 2000). Recently and as a result of being popular in digital language, some scholars organize flaming as one of the phenomena related to online communication. For instance, (ibid:96) define flaming as "comments intended to offend others. While somewhat subjective, at the extreme flaming includes obscenities and other inappropriate comments". In the same harmony, Baruch (2005:42) finds that in email, people often reflect intimidation and insults as the most common form of flaming. Also, within this domain, flaming is best known as the expressions of hostility used against others in online communication through insulting, swearing or other forms of offensive language (Moor et al., 2010).

All forms of aggressive and impolite language trigger flaming when there is a specific context or situation where a disagreement takes place. Moreover, a discrepancy of ideas, opinions or actions between interlocutors lead to flaming discussions for specific contextual reasons (Smith & Mackie 2000: 503). Many studies have highlighted this phenomenon from pragmatic view only and in computer-mediated communication therefore the current paper highlights flaming from pragma-stylistic domain to fill a gap in literature. It tries to spot light on the form-function correlation of flaming by means of pragma-stylistics.

Pragma-stylistic Framework

Pragma-stylistics is exploited, anyway, for explaining and interpreting existed texts rather than generating new readings. Hickery (1993: 578) cited in (Sorlin, 2016: 13) condenses the core of such integration and the main aim of this field of stylistics. He confirms that 'pragma stylistics' "studies the potential power of linguistic choices that are liable to produce diverse effects in the hearer's mind, depending on the extra linguistic conditions and the communicative abilities of the speaker.

Historically speaking, the dawn of this field has its beginnings in early of 1960s when the style was one of the main issues of rhetorical studies. Later, it has become an eminent approach to analyzing texts during 1880s and beginning of 1990s specially when developments in the tools of analysis have occurred within pragmatics, conversation, and discourse analysis. Such developments support the stylisticians to analyze the style of dialogue and interaction in literary types (Norgaard, et. al. 2010: 45). Since the principal aim of pragma-stylistics is to seek the relationship between the linguistic forms or choices that made by their users and the pragmatic interpretation of these forms, i.e., functions, it applies theories, ideas and concepts from pragmatics to analyze and interpret texts (Davies, 2007: 106). That is, within this approach, both pragmatics and stylistics focus on "the speakers'\users' choices of expressions". Accordingly, Allan (2016: 217), shows that this approach seeks to apply the concepts and methodologies of pragmatics to the concept of style in language. For instance, the variations in language use whether written or spoken in different genres are analyzed in terms of pragmatic theories such as speech act theory, and Grice's theory as well as others. The current paper, however, depends on the first two theories to analyze the data.

Speech Act Theory

According to Searle (1969), there are five main categories of speech acts (henceforth SA), each of which has a wide range of additional sub-acts that can be separated from one another based on their felicity criteria. These consist of: assertives, expressives, directives, commissives and declarative which is either a statement or reprimanded. Each one represents the speaker's exchange for his ideas.

Grice's Cooperative Principle

According to Grice, there are specific elements in every conversation that help the parties communicate well. Cooperation is viewed as the key to genuine and simple understanding. His main contribution is thus referred to as the "cooperative principle," henceforth (CP) which is created with additional supporting concepts known as the "maxims." According to Grice (1975:45), these maxims are: quality, quantity, relation and manner. When a speaker violates a specific maxim, the hearer must draw further conclusions, and if the speaker may be taken to have implied these additional inferences, the CP is still in effect (Levinson 109).

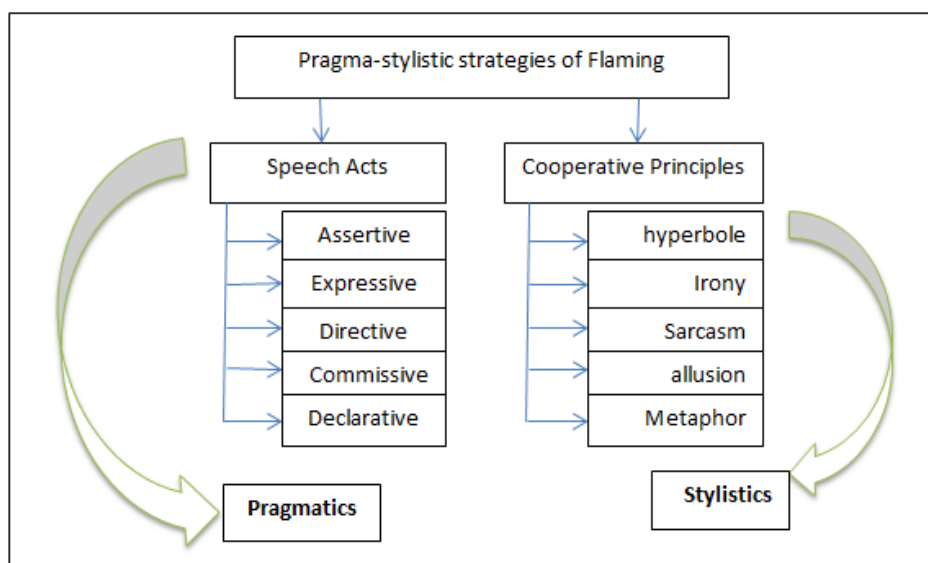
Twitter

"Twitter" is one of the prominent programs of social media that largely gained the attention of both linguists and media specialists for its importance in people's life in general and political people in particular. Their use within political domain is marked by the previous president B. Obama as he has been the first to innovate the use of social media platforms for political communication instead of only social communication (Bimber, 2014). Moreover, there are general characteristics for "twitter" that make politicians resort to use this platform in particular. Among these characteristics are:

1. It is the most popular platform used by real and famous people of a society whether the movie stars, the rich, or the politicians. Also, it is distinguished by limitations in the number of words and followers. Its property of "Retweet" which indicates agreement and fast spreading the information adds more preference to this platform by the politicians.
2. The "personalization"; that is, twitter in general used to admit peoples' personal or private issues to be expressed. Accordingly, politician have exploited this to talk about their families and their specific feelings or thoughts in order to gain the empathy and amiability of the common hence increase their publicity in getting more votes. (Bentivegna, 2015). Furthermore, twitter ,as a program, has the property of making hashtags in a simple way and these represent a kind of "contextual clues" enabling the readers to press on them and get the information.
3. The language of the tweets is simple, short and sometimes include informal words which reflects incivility and harsh language. Also, using humors, rhetorical and persuasive language are among those features of the language of the twitter. Such features help politicians achieve their goals in people and society by exploiting them.

The Model of Analysis

The model of this study is an eclectic one which amalgamates two parts and interrelated strategies, they are: the categories of speech acts, and violating the cooperative principles. The violation normally leads to the use of figures of speech that represent the stylistic part. See the figure (1) below:



Figure(1): Eclectic Model of Analysis

Data Analysis

Tweet (1)

Donald J. Trump 08 Oct. 2020

Obama, Biden, Crooked Hillary and many others got caught in a Treasonous Act of Spying and Government Overview, a Criminal Act. How is Biden now allowed to run for President?

Theoretic SA

In fact, three types of SAs are utilized within the first utterance: assertive, expressive, and declarative. It is an assertive because the speaker states to the audience an information that mirrors the world truthfully through the words. He intends to convince them about what he believes. He believes that all of his opponents are in war against him and all the country.

The second SA, expressed, here, is expressive one as it is indicated by expressing feelings of hate, anger, and annoyance. All these feelings are reflected in not only accusing those political people but also giving the assurance as if they were really caught and prosecuted. Though the speaker states in information with expressing his feeling through assertive and expressive SAs, the third SA within this same utterance is declarative. It is so since the speaker Trump has an institutional role

to declare not a real act. Moreover, since declaration is about a negative judgment, so it implies a reprimanded act. Considering the second utterance, it comprises a commissive SA where the speaker Trump offers forbidding Biden from any political nomination specially the coming elections.

CP

As far as the CP is concerned, the speaker intentionally violates the quality and quantity maxim through his first utterance and tell them what he believes to be false with extra details to exploit the audiences' pathos and attract their attention. Thus, he gives a hyperbole to convince the audience rather than just telling them that Biden and the previous political figures whom he believes are criminal. He talks with a superior power and use past tense to allude the audience that he is only the most powerful man who orders others and immediately they respond to him. That is, he tells that the old political people who support Biden are full of hypocrisy, unreliability, and betrayal. That is why they have been arrested.

It is worthy to mention also that the speaker, Trump, is mocking and publicly presents his ideology of racism against women. This is reflected when he brands her as "Crooked Hillary", that belittles women, while he is not branding Biden and call him "Sleepy Joe" as usual. He does that by violating the quality maxim to create such a metaphor that compares Hillary to a cheating stooped woman.

Then, in his last utterance, the speaker Trump intentionally continues in his violation for the quality maxim in order to generate a rhetorical question. By such a question he does not need any answer but to make the audience believe him and reach the same conclusion which is preventing Biden from the election at all.

Tweet (2)

Donald J. Trump 12 Oct. 2020

The Fake News, @CNN, MSDNC, the failing @nytimes, and the rest, are working overtime spewing every lie in the book to make sure they can demean and disparage, at the highest level possible, to try and win an election for a man who is totally unqualified to be your President, S.J.

Theoretic SA

The speaker utilizes an assertive SA to state his own beliefs from the very beginning of the sentence till the very finish. He informs the audience that some news organizations only exist to deceive the public and provide false information in an effort to undermine President Trump's salient problems and advance Vice President Biden's candidacy. When denouncing the values of these news networks, the speaker uses expressive SA to elicit sorrow from the listener. He exposes their transgressions by making it clear that they have justifications for doing so because they back and promote Biden's election. In addition to explaining the channels' nature and expressing his emotions while doing so, the speaker adds a declarative SA because he sees himself as the most powerful individual and so asserts more than just the channels' nature. In other words, he

accuses these news outlets of being unreliable and biased in favor of his rival, so he chastises them and fabricates their reporting.

CP

At the outset of the first stage, the speaker Trump purposefully breaks the quantity rule by providing a lot of details in order to call news outlets "failing" and "Fake News." This name indicates a breach of the manners maxim because it is not immediately clear, especially when he adds "and the rest." He mocks these channels and fuels them for such insults by using such flamboyant descriptions and nick names, and he denigrates their other duties and programs by projecting such an air of cynicism. He has frequently used them as a component of his campaign strategy and as part of his superior identity. Later, in the second stage of this utterance, he continues mocking them by violating the quantity and quality maxims to produce a hyperbolic details. Such as saying that they work extra time just to fabricate facts and to make sure that they are perfect and professional in their humiliating to him and his deeds.

Tweet (3)

Joe Biden 20Oct. 2020

Mr. President, the people are tired. They're tired of your lies about this virus. They're tired of watching more Americans die, and more people lose their jobs because you refuse to take this pandemic seriously.

Theoretic SA

In his first utterance, the speaker Biden uses more than one SA at the same time and in the same utterance. The first one is an assertive SA in which he assures his piece of information, using words to mirror the state of American people at the present moment where the president of U.S. is Trump to evidently be their honest tongue that expresses their complaint. The case which also reflects an expressive SA since it reveals the people's feeling of being desperate as a result of the large number of people who die every day. Similarly, it is seen as a declarative SA and a reprimanded one for the speaker judges the situation as being a catastrophe to blame and criticize the policy of the president. Such declaration and reprimanding continues evidently in his second and third utterances. Consequently he directly explains why people are tired to convince both; the president and the audience when he talks about the president in such a flamed way to prove the badness in serious issues and humiliate the latter by such a declarative reprimanded SAs.

CP

The flaming style of Grice's maxims is evident right away in the first phrase, "Mr. President, the people are tired." Due to the speaker's lack of official political position as the voice of the American people, this statement violates the relationship maxim. In other words, he wants to make fun of the referee, "Trump," by portraying him as a simple-minded fool who doesn't care what happens to his people. Due to this infringement, the speaker adopts an ironic tone in which he

addresses the president as "Mr. President" in an honorary manner before quickly launching into an aggressive insult: "The people are tired." Additionally, because the word "tired" lacks an obvious and accurate definition, the remark violates the manners maxim. The incident that supports the president Trump's insult and satirical portrayal.

In his second statement, the speaker begins by elaborating on the word "weary" to demonstrate his correctness and his capacity to disrespect the president both directly and indirectly by attacking and awaking him. Since the speaker lacks supporting evidence for his assertions and must instead rely solely on the broad world condition that is being terrorized by the virus, this is accomplished by deviating from the quality maxim and providing the meaning through rhetorical allusion.

Tweet (4)

Joe Biden 20 Oct. 2020

Yesterday, @realDonaldTrump decided to attack Dr. Fauci once again, calling him a 'disaster' and public health experts 'idiots.' Meanwhile, he still has no plan to beat this virus.

Theoretic SA

A number of different SAs are used in this tweet. The first utterance comprise an assertive SA in which the speaker confidently reveals a reaction of his rival and documents it with a date "yesterday". This is factually convince the audience more about the speaker's intended message as he talks logically with a proof. Also, it has been seen as a declarative SA that implies a reprimanding for his rival. That is , Dr. Fauci is the eminent doctor in U.S. who ordered to stop travelling with China and that people have to wear masks. Therefore, such a doctor deserves to be respected while Trump insults the publicly and that is why the speaker Biden aims to make the people aware of such an attitude. Additionally, the utterance reflects an expressive SA since the speaker speaks with a proof, so he expresses his bitterness of such a theme.

In his second utterance, on the other hand, the speaker uses assertive SA and declarative reprimanded one likewise. Assertive for he assures that the referee Trump has no plan to deal with the virus since he does not care about it. He blames him for not taking the advice of the specialist people though he has no idea to get rid of it.

CP

As for the CP, the speaker intentionally violates both the quantity and relation maxims from the very beginning of this first utterance. Since he gives more and accurate information than is required like "yesterday", "decided to attack", "once again", so he violates the quantity maxim. By this violation he attracts the pathos and logos of the audience and create the image of hyperbole for the referee's bad attitude toward the scientists.

On the other hand, the speaker violates the relation maxim since he supposed to talk about one of his achievements as he started to visit many American states and cities as part of his campaign. The matter which is indicated by the context and "yesterday" to be followed by a talk about Trump. Importantly, such violation produces an allusion for the great seriousness of the message that the speaker intends to convince the audience. Likewise, it gives a metaphor for comparing Trump to a monster who attacks the good people like doctors and scientists.

Conclusions

As a result for the qualitative analysis mentioned according to the eclectic model, the paper has concluded that both pragmatics and stylistics have an interrelated relation since pragmatics highlights the relation between form and function, so it uncovers the intended meaning of flaming by the aid of stylistic figures of speech. Regarding the pinpointed context, flaming is reflected successfully and rapidly in the tweets through certain use of speech acts as well as the violation of Grice's maxims.

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