

Empowering Women by sharing life struggles: A critical Discourse Analysis of Muniba Mazari's inspirational speech.

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Abstract

Background: The study presents the critical discourse analysis of Muniba Mazari speech (confined to one speech about her life struggles in her own words in TEDx) to unveil the concept of empowering women by sharing life struggles in Pakistani socio-cultural context. Muniba Mazari is UN representative of women of Pakistan and considered as the 'iron lady of Pakistan' that is why in this research her one speech at TEDx Malaysia in 2017, which went viral on social media. Her life story and struggle in the form of speech is analyzed by using Textual dimension of Three dimensional model of Fairclough (1989) approach to critical discourse analysis which is integrated with M.A.K. Halliday's (1985) Systematic Functional Grammar (SFG).

Methodology: This qualitative study analyzed linguistic elements used by Muniba Mazari in her speech while sharing her life struggles in order to unveil the concept of women empowerment.

Results: The finding include the excessive use of Pronoun 'I' which shows the explicit power as a woman. By using words with negative connotation like 'disable' she gave new direction to look at these words which have negative connotation. Moreover, the key findings include how she was trapped in her societal customs and at last after her tragedy she took step for herself.

Conclusion: This study will play an important role in the emerging trend of women empowerment in Pakistan by analyzing the language of an iron lady of Pakistan.

Keywords

Critical Discourse Analysis, Pakistani Society, Struggles, Women Empowerment.

Introduction

Women were being neglected in the past and still in some societies women are being degraded. Women are equally important and contribute at least as much we men does (UN, 2002). According to UN Commission on the Status of Women (2002), Women empowerment is defined as a '*Process by which women gain power and control over their own lives and acquire the ability to make strategic choices.*' Empowerment in women mean, a civil and legal achievement of more than 50% of the world's population (the other half are men) (UN, 2002). In the recent years women have managed to free themselves from oppression and the crushing male yoke in many of the countries, acquiring a greater capacity as freethinkers and decision-makers relevant to humanity.

Muniba Mazari, who was born on 3rd March 1987, belonging to the Baloch background, she is a Pakistani artist, model, activist, motivational speaker, singer, social reformers and television host. She uses a wheelchair due to injuries sustained in a car accident at the age of 21 which makes her Pakistan's first wheelchair-using model. Also serving as the National Ambassador for UN Women Pakistan.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

In order to study how language exercises its power in a society, linguists do critical discourse analysis which

is a kind of discourse analysis. However, there is no direct relation between power and critical discourse analysis but it is a theoretical arena which is concerned with the methods of how discourse structures occur together and reproduce the relation between power and dominance in a society (Van Dijk, 2001). CDA mainly deals with discourse and the people of the society to know about the identification of people and how they act, think and speak (Taiwo, 2007). CDA refers to the ways of understanding the social world drawn by critical theory (Van Dijk, 2001). Dijk (2009) describes that CDA reveals the discursive sources are maintained and reproduced within special social, political and historical context. Furthermore, 'C' in CDA stands for the critical study of hidden connections and causes between language, power and ideology (Fairclough, 2003). It is the explanation of the ways in which unequal power relations are produced and naturalized in the discourse (Fairclough, 2003). However, the link between discourse and society is not directly proportional rather it depends on the cognitive process (Fairclough, 2003). People use their cognitive abilities to analyze discourse and it is because of it the people can produce discourse.

As the term suggests, Critical Discourse Analysis is the analysis of discourse in a critical way (Fairclough, 1989). The term critical is of high importance. According to Richardson (1987), the word critical is

important because to read innocently, non-analytically, is to be manipulated and mystified. Being critical is not always synonymous with being negative. According to a study in 2007, the term critical means that-through the procedures, creating dense arrangements of power relations and ideology manifest.

Fairclough Approach towards CDA

Fairclough (1989), presented a three-dimensional model of CDA in his work "Language and Power" which was published in 1989. This model is an interdisciplinary approach to the study of discourse, as it views *'language as a form of social practice'* (Fairclough, 1989) and focuses on the ways social and political dominance is exercised in discourse by *'text and talk'* (Van Dijk, 2001). Fairclough used Halliday's approach to develop his own model (Fairclough, 1989). Whereas, building on the ideas of his tutor, M. A.K Halliday developed the theory of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) during 1960s and gave it the final shape in his book "An Introduction to Functional Grammar" (1985). Language in SFL's functional view comprises three metafunctions: ideational, interpersonal and textual metafunctions (Halliday, 1981). Halliday (1981) explains that the ideational function expresses and explains our experience of the outside world in an environment while the textual function is mainly language-oriented which deals with text production in a cohesive and coherent form by structuring and arranging the linguistic information in a clause. Moreover, interpersonal function highlights the social and power relations among the users of language. It deals with the situational roles of the participants in the discourse (Halliday, 1981).

Moreover, the making and reception of a *'discourse fragment'* is also highlighted through the three-dimensional model (Fairclough, 1989). The 3-dimensional model exhibited by Fairclough in 1989 is responsible to identify 3 dimensions of CDA. Where demission one is discourse fragment, a "Text" that could be either verbal, visual or verbal and visual texts used for analysis. Second dimension in terms of production and reception of a 'text' is *'situational context, which deals with time and place of text production while intertextual context* is related to the producers and receivers of the discourse (Fairclough, 1989). The third and the last demission of Discourse is *'power behind discourse'* or as *'social practices'* functioning behind the entire process and governing the power relations in discourse (Fairclough, 1989). Among the three dimensions of Fairclough's model, each dimension requires a different type of analysis: for the first dimension 'text analysis' or description,

for the second dimension 'processing analysis' or interpretation, and for the third dimension it is the 'social analysis' or explanation (Fairclough, 1989). All dimensions are inter-dependent and therefore it does not matter which kind of analysis one begins with as they are *"mutually explanatory"* (Janks, 2002).

Methodology

This research employs qualitative research design by applying the textual dimension of Fairclough Three-dimensional model (1989). In this study only one speech of Muniba mazari is analyzed because this speech went viral on all the social media. According to the trending list of YouTube this speech was watched on trending number one in August 2017. This speech was delivered at TEDx held in Malaysia in 2017. An analysis on the textual dimension of the speech focuses on pronoun, modality, cohesion and vocabulary. In this study thematic analysis approach is used according to which data is analyzed by using themes defined in textual dimension of Three-dimensional model of Fairclough (1989).

Analysis And Discussion

1) Cohesion

Extract 1

'it's the story of a woman who in pursuit of her dreams and aspirations made other people realize that if you think that your life is hard and you're giving up on that because you think your life is unfair think again because when you think that way you are being unfair to your own self it's the story of a woman who made people realize that sometimes problems are not too big we are too small because we cannot handle them it is the story of a woman who we time realized the real happiness doesn't lie in success money fame it lies within real happiness lies in gratitude so I am here and I'm going to share the story of that woman that is my story the story of gratitude.'

In Extract 1, Muniba mazari used anaphoric reference in the form of repeating phrase 'it is a story of a women' in order to tell the audience that she is going to her a story of a women who has proven people wrong when they say they have more problems in their lives and she ask them to think again. She also says that it is also a story of a women for whom money and fame is not important for having happiness. At the end she used cataphoric reference by first talking about 'a woman' and at the end telling that this woman is herself.

Extract 2

'they call it adversity I call it opportunity they call it weakness I call it strength they call me disabled I call

myself differently abled they see my disability they see my disability I see my ability'

In extract 2, she used anaphoric reference by repeating phrase 'they call it' and 'I call it' in order to show the difference between her thinking and her people's thinking. She tells us that people call her disable but she sees herself as differently able.

2) Pronoun

Muniba Mazari used pronouns 'I', 'They', 'those' for explaining different situations and people as well. She used pronoun 'I' excessively in order to share her story and she owned her story by using this pronoun again and again in order to empower other people that she went through all this and today she is still there in front of them. She used 'there' for life in general that there comes a time when different incidents happened. Then, she used 'those' for incidents which are hurdles or painful which help people to form a new version of themselves *'there are some incidents that happen in your life and those incidents are so strong that they change your DNA those incidents or accidents are so strong that they break you physically'*. She used pronoun 'I' while explaining her accident that what happened during that accident *'I was in the middle of nowhere in that toppled car many people came to rescue they gave me CPR that dragged me out of the car and while they were dragging me out I got the complete transection of my spinal cord and now there was this debate going on should we keep it here she's going to die where should we go there is no ambulance there was this four-wheeler Jeep standing in the corner of the street they said put her in the back of the Jeep and take her to the hospital which is three hours away from this place and I still remember that bumpy ride I was all broken they threw me at the back of the Jeep and they rushed me to the hospital that is where I realized that my half body was fractured and half was paralyzed I finally ended up in a hospital where I stayed for two and a half months'*. She also used 'I' to show her point of giving up when her whole body was broken and doctor asked her that now she won't be able to do anything in her life *'I was at the words of despair one day doctor came to me and he said well I heard that you wanted to be an artist but you ended up being a housewife I have a bad news for you you won't be able to paint again because your wrist and your arm are so deformed you won't be able to hold a pen again and I stayed quiet next day doctor came to me and said your spine injury is so bad you won't be able to walk again I took a deep breath and I said it's all right the red-state doctor came to me and said because of your spine injury and the fixation that you have in your back you won't be able to give birth to a child again that day I was devastated I still remember I*

asked my mother why me and that is where I started to question my existence that why am I even alive what's the point of living I cannot walk I cannot paint fine I cannot be your mother and we have this thing in our heads being women that we are incomplete without having children I am going to be an incomplete woman for the rest of my life what's the point people are scared they think I will get divorced what is going to happen to me why me.'

3) Vocabulary

Muniba Mazari used words with negative connotation in her speech like 'imperfect', 'disable', 'conservative', 'good daughters', 'no light', 'distress', 'grief', 'pain'. She used these words for herself but then she also used these negative meaning words in positive words like she used words 'disable' but she again used words 'differently able' for herself in order to empower herself by words. She said *'a story of a woman who's perfectly imperfect'*, here she used word 'imperfect' and 'perfect' for herself but here she used perfect in a sense that she is in every way imperfect. Later in her speech she used word 'conservative' which gives negative meaning of her family background and for them their daughters are considered good if they say yes for everything their parents ask them *'I belonged to a very conservative family a Baloch family we're good daughters never say no to their parents'*. In her speech she also connects herself with the audience by using vocabulary like 'my dear friends' in order to show the audience that she is talking to them. By connecting herself to all the people there she told them that in her life there was no 'light' at the end of the 'tunnel'. By using positive words 'light' she gave us the idea of darkness which is all around her but at the end she told us the what 'healed' her from this darkness and it was 'words'. She used the word 'power' for words which gave us the idea of words are powerful and they have the power to fix any broken soul *'my dear friends in my situation there was Tunnel but I had to roll on but there was no light and that is where I realized that the words have the power to heal the soul in all that distress and grief somehow or the other those words were so magical that they kept me going I was trying to put that smile on my face all the time was hiding it was so hard to hide the pain'*. She also used word 'magical' for words in order to show that words are so powerful that they can play the role of magic. She explained her dark time with words like 'pain', 'hiding smile'. She used words like 'rebirth day' to show her come back from darkness to light and called that day as the rebirth day *'there was a rebirth day'*. She showed her desire to be like all other normal people by saying *'I wanted to feel perfect'*.

4) Modality

Muniba Mazari while delivering her speech used many modal verbs in order to explain possibility of any future event that she expected to come in future. In her speech she said *'my mother said to me this too shall pass'* in order to tell her how her mother empowered her by her words by using modal verb 'shall'. In another point she told us about that point in her tragedy where she decided to give up but then she thought about the consequences of giving up by using modal verb 'will' *'I will give up my mother and my brothers will give up too'*. Again she used modal verb in order to show us the possibility of an event but this time she used 'could' in order to show possibility of an event which is possibility of her wish of doing paint and telling people her story *'I could paint my heart out I could share my story people used to come'*. She used 'should' to show us her negative point which was because of the society she was living in that she should not do something as it will be considered as wrong as she is a wheelchair person *'a person on a wheelchair should not do this'*. At the end of her speech she used 'will' to show hope that in future there will be something big for her for which God has prepared her by this accident *'God has a bigger plan and one day you will say that oh my god that is why God has chosen me she never cried in front of me she has always said that there will be haters there will be naysayers there will be disbelievers and then there will be you proving them wrong'*. By using phrase *'there will be you proving them wrong'* empowers her and by sharing these words she empowered other women as well.

Conclusion

It is concluded from the finding that Muniba Mazari shared her life story to share her struggles with other people and empower them especially women. She used pronoun 'I' and 'They' for herself and the people as well as they for hurdles of life in order to set an example that all these are part of life but what matters is to never give up. She used all the feelings which are considered as weak which she also felt in her words like 'why me', 'devastation', 'cry', 'scared' to show that she feels like others as well but the difference is she never gave up. Everything is okay but giving up is not okay. This message empowers other women also in order to give them support and hope.

Conflicts of interest

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