Metaphors We Live By: A Critical and Corpus Based Analysis of 21st Century Pakistani English Poetry

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Abstract

This study focuses on the critical evaluation of the most frequent metaphors in the Pakistani English poetry (PakEP) of 21st century. The poetic corpus includes the works of the maximum number of the poets from the whole of the country (sixty in number). They all belong to the post 9/11 time period. The corpus has thus two prime concerns as recency and representativeness. The researcher sets three objectives; first, which are the most frequent metaphors in the 21st C Pakistani English poetry; second, what the particular mood do these metaphors exhibit; third, to which school of poetry do these poets show their affiliation. With the use of AntConc3.2.1, the frequency, the concordance and the collocation of the most frequent metaphors have been discovered. Parallel to these, the description, interpretation and explanation of the metaphors have been conducted with the help of Fairclough's (2000) model. The present study indicates that the recent English poetry of Pakistani young lot is thematically overwhelmed by love, heart and life. Secondly, despair and frustration are the moods of such poets in general. Thirdly, Pakistani English poetry is more akin to classicism and romanticism than modernism.

Key Words: Metaphors, Pakistani English Poets, Corpus, Themes, Mood, School of Poetry

Introduction

Pakistani English Poetry (PakEP) grew in Pakistan by a number of poets who wrote in English. English is Pakistan's official languages and its history goes back to the British colonial period on the Sub-Continent. Anyhow, the national dialect that is spoken in the country is known as Pakistani English (PakE). It makes an important part of modern Pakistani literature written in English. Alamgir Hashmi (1978) introduced the term "Pakistani Literature in English" and since that time the term has been in vogue to indicate the poets of Pakistan who write in English language. Now it is an academic discipline and an accepted area of study. The poet TaufiqRafat (1927 –1998) also passed the statement that a large number of Pakistani writers, in general, prefer to write in English and same is the case with PakEP. Anyhow in the recent years, with the growth of education and literary rate, the ratio of PakEP has grown many times. Moreover, the youth which settles abroad is more prone to write poetry in English. Though they write in English language, they have unmistaken imprints of native culture on their verses. Such expatriate poets make Pakistani diasporas.

Besides, after the incident of 9/11, the identity issue of Pakistani nation got at stake at global level and there came a sudden boom in writing poetry on the part of youth. They seem raising voices for the identity retention at national and geographical levels. Claire Chambers (2011) states, "Pakistani and other writers of Muslim background draw upon, return to, and build on a canon of largely Muslim writing and art from the subcontinent and Middle East". But along with such daring colors, we find, love, heart and life as general and the most frequent metaphors shadowed by fear and despair perhaps because of the looming shadows of the proxy war of terror.

One more thing that can be observed is that they,Corpus Based Analysis of Pakistani English Poetry consciously or unconsciously, shows their affiliation to Classicism and Romanticism more than any other school. The affiliation to these schools may also be justified by the historical phenomenon as PakEP is still at the level of metamorphosis.

In addition to the published works of *Alamgir Hashmi, Taufiq Riffat, Zulifqar Ghose, Moniza Alvi, KamilaShamsie*, we have so many young poets who posted their poems online such as *Raja Abbass, Hamza Abid, Irum Afzal, Ijaz Ahmad, Madiha Ahmad, Muhammad Ahmad, Myra Ahmad* and so on. The present study focuses on such lot of Pakistani English Poets whose works are unpublished but they are available online. The researcher collected such works in the form of a corpus so that the dominant themes and moods of such young unpublished poets may be captured and investigated critically.

Specialized poetic corpus has been generated because there was no publicly available corpus of PakE poetry for the purpose of research.For this purpose a long time has been taken to collect data from all the regions of Pakistan with the help of libraries, internet archives and personal effortshowever it found to be an interesting job to meet different thematic and metrical experiments in PakEP. The 60 poets (all belonging to post 9/11 time period) were taken and their works were collected in the form of a single file. It was saved in Plain Text format to make a corpus. The AntConc 3.2.1 software was employed to handle and manipulate the data. The list of the sixty poets is as attached as Appendix-A.

Literature Review

Yob (2003) describes that metaphor is a powerful mental instrument which can be used by the individuals for understanding and explaining a high level abstract, complex or theoretical phenomenon. In this way the metaphors help us to understand the difficult concepts and terms more clearly. They make the abstractions concrete and visible.

The metaphors exercise power on individuals. They help in starting a cognitive process in the mind of the reader. Individuals define their or the others' feelings, experiences and ideas through metaphors. In this way metaphors help individuals recognize the world and the things around them.

St. Clair (2002) argues that metaphors define different cultures. Each culture has its own particular set of metaphors which may help the readers (from some alien culture) understand history, norms, rituals and ceremonies of that particular culture. These metaphors act as semiotic symbols for that culture. Levi Strauss (1995) studies the primitive cultures and takes natural objects metaphors. Those metaphors used to the myths and icons for them and their lives used to be influenced by them. St. Clair (2002) again states that the cultural metaphors in Indo-European English Literature are the part and parcel of that language. Metaphors represent how people think in that language. The reason for this deep connection between metaphor and thought has to do and act in some particular area or culture. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) opine that metaphors are used to develop linguistic categories. Fauconnier and Turner (2002) give new direction to cognitive linguistics by demonstrating how conceptual blending takes place in metaphorical thought. For example, in the metaphor

"The tree is breath of life," the idea is that trees are the source of oxygen which is ultimately sign of life.

Gibbs (1994) explains the role of metaphors in the poetic language by claiming that the metaphors provide figurative sense to the literal language. Many literal terms become figurative as they are loaded with additional meanings. These additional meanings may be historical, cultural, political, religious or autobiographical. It intends to create a strong statement that no literal text can accomplish. He further differentiates Metaphor from idioms by saying that we can understand a metaphor even with no prior knowledge but for an idiom it is vice versa.

According to Ritchie D. (2004), a literary metaphor functions to find out local as well as broader contexts simultaneously. The broader context is cultural one. In this way, a metaphor functions in two directions. The literary metaphor, in this way, is generally thought to be more stylistically colorful. In poetry the most common and literal expressions can be strongly metaphorical by means of the symbolic color of one word or even entire poem. Thus a metaphor refers an implicit concept to a verse or to a poem.

McIntyre, D. and Walker, B., (2010) made metaphorical analysis of William Blake's 'Songs of Innocence and of Experience'. They separated the metaphors of innocence and hostility. They used the software Wmatrix and carried out the computer-based analysis of the songs. They created automatic semantic annotation through Wmatrix.

A far as the mood of a poem is concerned, it is the atmosphere that the poet creates in the poem. In poetry and other literary works, the mood is the prevailing impression or emotional atmosphere evoked by the text. W. Harmon and H. Holman (1996) suggest that mood is "the emotional-intellectual attitude of the author toward the subject".

Through the metaphorical expressions we can trace out thematic nuances and mood of the poets. We may also find the literary affiliation of the poets through the diagnosis of the technical and thematic traits. A specialized corpus of poetry can be used to find out all the literary, thematic and historical constructs of the poets.

Method, Theory and Data

Research Method

This is a quantitative cum qualitative study. Data has been collected in the form of corpus. The most frequent words/ metaphors which are *love, heart and life*have been traced out to carry out this study. These metaphors are analyzed further through concordance and collocation. The frequency, the concordance and the collocation have been put parallel to Fairclough's (2000) stages of CDA such as description, interpretation and explanation.

Fairclough's Framework

Fairclough (2000) presents three-dimensional framework for studying discourse. These three interrelated levels of analysis are referred as the physical text, the discursive practices related to the production, distribution and consumption of text, and thirdly the social practice, which explains how the data in the text are used within social environments.

For Fairclough, *Text* is only a section of the social process, because there are three elements for discourse, namely *text, interaction,* and *social context*. In addition

to text itself, the process of social interaction involves the process of text production and text interpretation. Hence, text analysis is a part of discourse analysis.

The following Figure may help to understand the three levels and the relationship among them as;

Corpus Based Analysis of Pakistani English Poetry
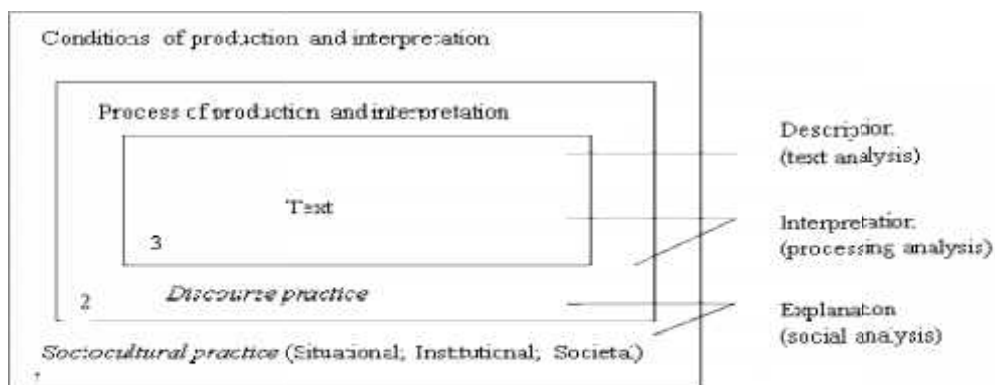

Figure 1. Fairclough's Dimensions of Discourse and Discourse Analysis. (From Locke, 2004, p. 42)

Figure 1 Fairclough (2000): Three Dimensions for CDA

In this way these three levels may be named as description, interpretation and explanation where

1. **Description** is the stage which deals with formal properties of the text or the text in itself.
2. **Interpretation** deals with the relationship between text and the process of production of the text.
3. **Explanation** sets the relationship between text and social context, with the social factors that determine the role of text in socio-cultural environments.

All these stages are concerned with analysis, but the nature and level of it is different in each stage. Analysis in the **first stage** describes the formal properties of the text and regards text as an object. Here the frequency of the particular metaphors has been discovered through the corpus. The **second phase** is related to the analysis of the co-text of the given text. The collocation patterns of the particular metaphors are pointed out. Finally in the **third stage**, the aim is to explain the context of the metaphors to explain how the relationship exists between social events and the construction of the particular metaphors.

Data Discussion

Description

List of the most frequent Metaphors in the Corpus of PakE poets of 21st c

Rank	Freq	Word
23	*712*	Love
32	570	Life

45	432	Heart

Normalization of Data. Only the first twenty concordance lines of each metaphor and its File View option have been focused for sampling.

Interpretation

Love

> *Love is a sweet song, love is a holy passion, love has spiritual shades, love is a sweet touch, love is cheap, love is to be worshipped, love is a new brand, love is a weak point, love is spring, love is colorful, love is pain, love is life, etc.*

So we can see that the metaphor of *love* presents two moods as;

Optimistic mood	Pessimistic mood
A sweet song, a holy passion, has spiritual shades, a sweet touch, to be worshipped, a new brand, is spring, is colorful, is life	**love** is cheap a weak point **love** is pain,

Numerically we can say that,

Total metaphors=12

Related to optimism=09 (75%)

Related to pessimism=09 (25%)

Life

> *Life is beautiful, life is like a rabbit, life is like a cat's mew, life is like scattered cards, life is failure, life is failure, life is in flowers, life is in ashes, life is in sorrows, life is in the success, life is like a day, life falls apart, life is path to death, life is short, life is a pain, life is a flow, life's last chapter is like a bulky novel.*

Optimistic mood	*Pessimistic mood*
Life is beautiful, **life** is like a rabbit, **life** is like a cat's mew, **life** is like scattered cards, **life** is in flowers, **life** is in the success, **life is like a day,** **life** is a flow,	**life** is failure, **life** is failure **life** is in ashes, **life** is in sorrows, **life** falls apart **life** is path to death, **life** is short, life is a pain **life's** last chapter is like a bulky novel

Numerically we can say that,

Total metaphors=16

Related to optimism=08 (50%)

Related to pessimism=08 (50%)

Heart

      Heart causes a blast, heart is to fall down, heart is under the burden, heart is cruel, heart is like a rhyme, heart gives courage, heart is shattered, heart is to split, heart is bleeding, heart is brave, heart gleams like torch, heart is brown/ugly, heart gives light, heart is light, heart has gone to the beloved, etc.

Optimistic mood	Pessimistic mood
heart *is like a rhyme,*	**Heart** *causes a blast,*
heart *gives courage,*	**heart** *is to fall down,*
heart *is brave,*	**heart** *is under the burden*
heart *gleams like torch,*	**heart** *is cruel,*
heart *gives light,*	**heart** *is shattered,*
heart *is light,*	**heart** *is to split*
heart *has gone to the beloved,*	**heart** *is bleeding,*
	heart *is brown/ugly,*

Numerically we can say that,

Total metaphors=15

Related to optimism=07 (47%)

Related to pessimism=08 (53%)

Explanation: The metaphors under discussion that are;*love, life, heart,* show that the PakE poets manifest the themes of romance, philosophy of life and the mysteries of heart as the most prominent ones.

      The highest frequency of *love* and its concordance (KWIC) shows that these poets are overwhelmed by romantic colors and for them love is the spice of life. It means there is nostalgia or imagination regarding love. Though the years during which such poets wrote, was the age of fear and terror and especially there were the looming shadows of war on the horizon. The political scenario was also in doldrums. So we see a sense of escapism from the socio-political realities on the part of the young lot of PakE poets.

      The idea of a fruitful love shows their affiliation with the Romantic school of Poetry which remained in vogue in England during the first half of the 19th c. Romanticism was there as a by-product of the French Revolution. Here in Pakistan, we find the same sort of escapism and idealism in the first two decades of the 21st century.

      Numerically talking, we find that the 75% of the selected data are related to the mood of optimism while just 25% are related to pessimism (as shown through Fig.1). This ration indicates that the PakE poets are quite hopeful for the fulfillment of their love. This thing again alludes to romantic fervor on the part of our youth. On

the contrary we find Pakistani Urdu poetry a step forward as Faruqi, S.R. (1992) states,

"*The Progressives have provided the valuable service of keeping Urdu writers sensitive to their socio-political environment and its injustices. ... [T]hey shifted the centre of literary experience from afaq (the universe in the abstract) to anfus (people and things). In the Islamic and Indo-Muslim traditions, the stress was on afaq. That is why our classical literature has so little nature poetry of the 'concrete' type, and our traditional narrative so little 'characterization'.*"

But our English poets are still spellbound by the glamour of romance and love. They still seem entangled in *afaq* (the universe in the abstract). They prefer to stay away from *anfus* which is the hallmark of realism and modernism.

As far as the metaphor of *life* is concerned, we again find the dominance of *afaq* (the universe in the abstract) as compared to *anfus* (people and things) as *life* is a conceptual metaphor/ noun. Here the frequency is almost same in both the moods; optimism and pessimism (as shown in Fig.2) which shows that the poets are lingering somewhere between hope and despair. They are uncertain about life being as a blessing or a bane.

We find the treatment of life sometimes like the Classics-life as predestined (*life is path to death, life is short, life is a pain*); sometimes we find life like the Romantics-life to be enjoyed as we wish (*Life is beautiful, life is in flowers*); and even sometimes life like the Moderns- life influenced by the sociopolitical norms (*life is a flow, life is like scattered card*). Moniza Shamsie (2007) aptly comments, "*The universal nature of Islamic philosophy has meant that many Pakistani English writers have perceived themselves in international terms, yet identified with Pakistan... They are linked to trends in Anglo-American literature too, and that of Commonwealth countries where English was acquired due to the colonial encounter. So you have a body of work, created by a myriad of influences. Perhaps that cultural synthesis, the blurring of definition, is identity.*" In this way these poets don't seem to show their affiliation to some particular school of thought regarding their treatment of *life*; they rather mix all the major trends and hence cannot be defined in a single term in this connection.

The metaphor of *heart* may be, at the same time, a physical referent as well as an abstraction/concept. But in the poetic domain *heart* is more an idea than a physical organ. It shows that the abstractness or *afaq* is again prominent in PakE poetry.

If we talk about the mood related to the metaphor of *heart*, we see that pessimism is somewhat greater than optimism (as we see in Fig.3). Heart is in heavens but a little one and it is dejected most of the time as (*heart is shattered, heart is to split, heart is bleeding*). In line with this following extract from Wyatt's (1503-1542) poem '*My heart I gave thee'*, can be considered,

My heart I gave thee, not to do it pain;
But to preserve, it was to thee taken.
I served thee, not to be forsaken,
But that I should be rewarded again.
I was content thy servant to remain
But not to be paid under this fashion

In this extract we find *heart*, if in any way dejected, is because of the indifference of the beloved. Such type of cynical moods are very typical in Petrarch

(Italian Poet of Medieval ages) and in Wyatt and Surrey (Elizabethean age). In this way Pak E poets show their thematic affiliations to Italian and Elizabethean traditions regarding the treatment of *heart* as a metaphor.

Conclusion

"Aristotle, on the other hand, saw poetry as having a positive value: "It is a great thing, indeed, to make proper use of the poetic forms, . . . But the greatest thing by far is to be a master of metaphor" (Poetics 1459a); "ordinary words convey only what we know already; it is from metaphor that we can best get hold of something fresh" (Rhetoric 1410b)."

George Lakoff, Metaphors We Live By

In a social setting, poetry being an expression of thought is always appeared to be influenced by prevalent socio-cultural, socio-political, socio-economic and socio-historical factors. 21st century Pakistani poetry in English especially in the aftermath of nine-elevenism has been found to portray interesting system of conceptual metaphors. The most frequent metaphors used by the young lot of Pakistani English poets have been considered for the corpus based critical analysis. Specialized poetic corpus has been generated to gather quantitative data (frequently occurring metaphors). Afterwards, quantitative data (the most frequent metaphors) have been analyzed using corpus tools mainly; concordance and collocation. The results have been put parallel to Fairclough's (2000) three stages of CDA interconnected with three levels of process for qualitative evaluation. This helped identify the most frequent metaphors used in 21st C. PakEP in post nine-elevenism context. In addition, the present study also facilitated to unveil the specific mood of Pakistani English poets along with their inclination towards particular school of poetry.

Findings

The overall discussion reveals the following facts;

1. The PakE poets of the 21st C. have the metaphors of *love, life* and *heart* as the most frequent ones.
2. All these metaphors are conceptual in nature showing their trend more towards abstractions than towards objects and persons. In other words they are more inclined towards rationalism than empiricism; living more in the world of idealism than in the world of reality.
3. Their treatment of the abstract metaphors as the most frequent ones and then the thematic contents attached to these metaphors help to find out that these poets are more akin to classical and romantic schools than modern or postmodern one. Though it was the age of despair and terror (post 9/11), yet they do not seem to be influenced by their socio-political surroundings. They seem to be away from their age and from the main current of the era. They are more prone to be idealists than realists.

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