News Pragmatics

Prof. Dr. Fareed H. Al-Hindawi
Lecturer Dr. Nesaem M. Al-Aadili

News Pragmatics

Prof. Dr. Fareed H. Al-Hindawi
University of Babylon/ College of Education for Human Sciences/ Department of English

Lecturer Dr. Nesaem M. Al-Aadili
University of Babylon/ College of Education for Human Sciences/ Department of English

fareedhameed3@gmail.com
nasaem_rose_i@yahoo.com

Received: 26/11/2019
Accepted :15/12/2019

Turnitin - passed research

Abstract

The current study is an attempt to establish a pure pragmatic perspective of the different pragmatic issues manifested in news reports and how news reporters exploit these issues to fulfill their goals of reporting news and presenting their reports in a tiptop manner. In other words, the study highlights the most prevalent pragmatic aspects that characterize news reports.

Key words: news reports, speech acts, Grice maxims, presupposition, pragma-rhetorical tropes, hedges.

Introduction

It is claimed that journalism is the most important textual system of modernity because of its continuous and ubiquitous reach and because of the depth of its daily presentation into popular consciousness. Due to its sheer prevalence as a textual or discursive system, it can be considered, as Montgomery (2007: 1) argues, a knowledge-producing institution as important as science or religion. The central output of the journalistic system is news. The present study, then, seeks to provide a comprehensive pragmatic account of news. It brings to bear those pragmatic theories and issues that are relevant to news reports and are resorted to by news reporters in their attempt to report news.

1. Defining News

Fowler (1991: 13) argues that news "is not simply that which happens, but that which can be regarded and presented as newsworthy" where "newsworthy" means attractive or important enough to be reported as news. Reah (1998: 8; 2002: 1) defines news as "the details or information about a happening that interests a certain community or has an impact on the lives of its members". Reah (ibid.) assures that there is no press which is really free from constraints. This is due to the fact that news publication is a business with the ultimate goal of getting profit (ibid.). Moreover, newspapers, news channels, and news sites are owned by corporations with different interests having the power to control and direct the content of the reports (ibid.). Thus, they present ideas and beliefs in accordance with the interests of their owners.

Usually what gets broadcast as news, Ekstrom (2002: 274) argues, is assumed to be reliable, neutral, current, and factual information that is important and valuable for citizens. Thus, news, in some respects, is a form of reality maintenance. It is what news organizations have selected for inclusion within the pre-determined slot and

what gets broadcast within it (Montgomery, 2007: 4). Moreover, news can be defined as "information about current events (which) may be provided through many different media: word of mouth, printing, postal systems, and broadcasting" (Web source 1). As its name implies, "news typically connotes the presentation of new information what gives it an uncertain quality which distinguishes it from the more careful investigations of history or other scholarly disciplines" (ibid.).

Among the different types of news are international news, regional news, entertainment and celebrity news, business and financial news, economy news, art and culture news, science and technology news, and fashion news (Web source 2). Common topics for news reports are war, government, politics, education, economy, art, as well as quirky or unusual events (Web source 1).

Richardson (2007: 37) states that reporting news is a circular process in which news reporters shape the context and mode in which news reports are presented, and, in turn, these reports help influence readers/ listeners via shaping their viewpoints. This means that news reports can have specific effects on their readers/ listeners. The whole process of news reporting, thus, can be figuratively represented by the following scheme which is adopted from Richardson (ibid. 39):

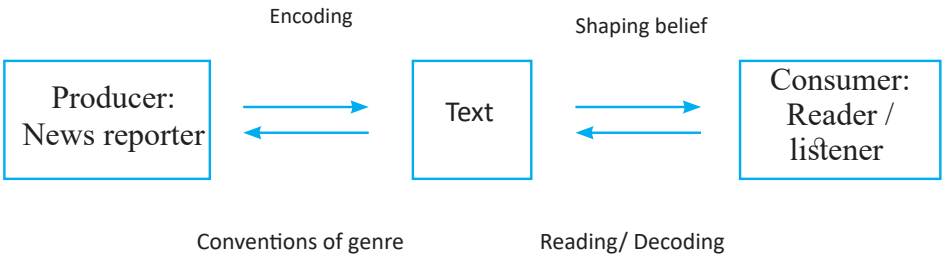

Figure (1): The Process of News Reporting

1.1 **News Values**

Montgomery (2007: 5) argues that not every event or piece of information counts as news. Rather, news has to be notable according to particular principles of selection, paradigms of relevance, and frames for including and excluding material. These principles may be summed up under the heading of "news values" (ibid.). Many news values seem to be common across cultures since people are generally interested in news which has a big impact and news which describes conflicts, happens nearby, involves well-known people, and deviates from the norms of everyday happenings (Web source 1). War, for instance, is a common news topic, partly because it involves unknown events that could pose personal danger.

According to Montgomery (2007: 5), events become news if they satisfy the following criteria:

- Recency/ timeliness: news deals by definition with the new (i.e., new information of recent events) (ibid.).
- Conflict: news about conflict between opposing parties is newsworthy. Moreover, strikes, breakdowns in negotiations, divorce, war, and election campaigns are all high in news value (ibid. 7).
- Power: the salience of news material is enhanced if it involves people with power. Thus, the actions of presidents, princes, prime ministers, and well-known players attract more notice than those of others (ibid.). Besides, powerful organizations and powerful nations attract attention in the news media (ibid. 8).
- Negativity: bad news, such as wars, crimes, earthquakes, executions, and disasters make good news. Examples of bad news are: war in Iraq, 9/11, and the Indian Ocean Tsunami (ibid. 8).
- Unexpectedness: the atypical, unusual events are likely to

assimilate to the news. Thus, "man bites dog" is more likely news item than "dog bites man" (ibid.).

1.3 News as a Type of Propaganda

Jowett and O'Donnell (1992: 4) argue that news reports, which are considered as a powerful genre of communication helping organize people's understanding of the world, are a type of propaganda. They (ibid.) define propaganda as a "deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent [of the ruling authority]". For Welch (1993: 9) and Taylor (1995: 3), propaganda plays on the fears or desires of the target audience; it is about converting public opinion through employing certain tools. As Knightly (2000: 478) puts it, propaganda is directly controlled by governments through repression, nullification and concealment of undesirable news, lying, distraction, and the like. This means that journalism, as Richardson (2007: 186) mentions, particularly during wartime, is reduced to "being a conduit for the views of the powerful".

In a similar direction, Walton (2007: 93) argues that the word propaganda has negative connotations and the use of the word suggests that the message referred to is intentionally manipulative and deceptive in the sense that it involves lying or dishonesty of some sort. Preceding Walton, Marlin (2002: 18-22) has mentioned that the word propaganda is defined negatively with various definitions; the most notable ones are the following:

- Propaganda is an attempt to promote the interests of those who contrive it instead of benefiting the audience to whom it is addressed,
- Propaganda is a systematic effort to manipulate other people's beliefs and attitudes or actions,
- Propaganda is the dissemination of ideas, information, and

hoaxes to achieve certain purposes, and

- Propaganda is any attempt by means of persuasion to enlist people into the service of one party against any dispute.

1.4 The Structure of News Reports

Fairclough (2003: 77) observes that any discourse, with respect to communication technologies, can be categorized in terms of two distinctions: "one-way versus two-way communication, and mediated versus non-mediated communication". Schematically, this leads to the following four possibilities of communication:

1. One-way mediated: print, radio, television, and internet.
2. One-way non-mediated: lecture.
3. Two-way mediated: telephone, e-mail, video conferencing.
4. Two-way non-mediated: face-to-face conversation.

Within Fairclough's terminology, news reports are a type of one-way mediated discourse.

Following Bednarek and Caple (2012: 96), most news reports can be structurally composed of three parts: (1) headline, (2) lead, and (3) body/ lead development. A fourth part represented by the conclusion can be added by the present study. These parts which form the structure of news reports are illustrated below:

a. Headline

A headline, Bednarek and Caple (2012: 100-1) point out, is an integral part of each news report that can be ascribed the following functions:

(a) An informative function in terms of summarizing or abstracting the news report,

(b) An interpersonal function in relation to attracting readers'/ listeners' attention,

(c) A news value function concerning initiating and maximizing the newsworthiness of events, and

(d) A framing function with respect to providing a lens on, a stance toward, or an angle on the rest of the news report.

Headlines, Bednarek and Caple (ibid. 101) add, are characterized by the following distinguishing features which serve the previous functions:

(a) Strong, intense, emotional/ evaluative words,

(b) Rhetorical devices and foregrounding techniques such as punning, allusion, metaphor, idioms, pseudo-direct quotes,

(c) Omission of functional/ grammatical words (e.g. determiners, auxiliaries, etc.), and

In the same direction, Abba and Musa (2015: 64) remark that headlines function as precursors to news reports so that they are usually constructed manipulatively to influence the readership. Further, they serve the function of arousing the curiosity of the readers/ listeners as well as monitoring their attention (ibid. 65). In (2003: 45), Van Dijk has stated that headlines represent the gist or most important information of the news report, serving a cognitive function through controlling and changing the public mind. This may be crystallized by having recourse to different strategies and sub-strategies.

b. Lead

Bednarek and Caple (2012: 97) mention that leads frame the events, summarize news reports, construe newsworthiness, and allure readers' attention; they also set forth the newsworthy element(s) of the news report and simultaneously work as the be-

ginning of the report. Before that, Cotter (2010: 162) has mentioned that typical leads are short but informative and include "the most important news element of the story". Besides, the lead paragraph describes the newsworthy aspects of the event "the who, the what, the where" (ibid.).

c. Body/ lead development

Bednarek and Caple (2012: 97) state that body/ lead development represents the paragraphs that follow the lead paragraph, adding different types of information to the report. In other words, they detail the news report by adding feature attribution of information including direct quotes to develop the main points raised in the previous parts (ibid.).

d. Conclusion

The conclusion represents the end-point of the news report where the reporter finishes the report by giving final remarks, recommendations, confirmations, and the like. It should be taken into consideration that this part is optional due to the fact that not all reports involve it

2. The Pragmatics of News Reports

According to Leech (1983: 5), meaning is "derived not from the formal properties of words and constructions, but from the way in which utterances are used and how they relate to the context in which they are uttered". Investigating such a kind of relationship is the concern of pragmatics which is a theory of appropriateness. For Levinson (1983: 5), pragmatics is not directly interested in language, but in what people do with language, its uses, and users. Thus, the simplest definition of pragmatics is that it is "the study of language use" (ibid.). Speakers/ writers try by language to change either the world (e.g., by getting another person to do something) or the state of mind or knowledge of others (for instance, by telling them something new). Pragmatics, as such, investigates what language users mean, what they do and how they do it in real situations.

News reporters make use of all the potentialities of language including those which are pragmatic in nature in order to express themselves, influence others, and achieve certain goals. Thus, the following sub-sections are a summary of the pragmatic issues resorted to in news reports:

2.1 News Reports as Rhetorical Argumentative Discourse

Walton (2007: 7) differentiates between dialectical argumentation and rhetorical argumentation as such. In dialectical argumentation, two participants take turns: first the proponent makes a move and then the respondent makes a move responding to the prior one (ibid.). This means that a dialectical argumentation takes as its framework a connected sequence of moves in which the parties take turns (ibid.). In rhetorical argumentation, per contra, a speaker/ writer is seen as making a presentation to an audience, typically a mass audience, who listen to and/or watch or read the performance. The speaker/ writer is an active arguer who makes claims and supports them with arguments, but the audience is relatively passive with respect to advancing argumentation (ibid.). In an earlier study, Leff (2000: 247) has recognized the difference between

dialectical argumentation and rhetorical argumentation stating that the former proceeds by question and answer, while the latter proceeds through uninterrupted discourse.

Walton (2007: 18) argues that news reports fall in the arena of rhetorical argumentation rather than dialectical argumentation because they proceed through uninterrupted discourse in which speakers/ writers are making arguments to an audience to affect, influence, and persuade them. Rhetorical argumentation, then, has to do with the effectiveness of arguments to achieve the foregoing aims including those of changing the beliefs of the audience (ibid.).

Any argument, Walton (ibid. 28) confirms, is advanced with the aim of influencing the audience to accept the argued standpoint, thus, arguments are designed in the form of argumentation schemes that help speakers/ writers persuade their audience. Argumentation schemes, Walton (ibid.) mentions, refer to the common forms or topics of argumentation; they are premise-conclusion inference structures that represent common types of arguments used in everyday discourse.

Common forms of arguments, Walton (ibid. 28-30) states, include: arguments from: example, analogy, expert opinion, ignorance, threat, popular opinion, practical reasoning, verbal classification, and arguments from positive or negative consequences. The most common of which are the following:

(a) Arguments from expert opinion: Walton (ibid. 29) states that such arguments carry a probative weight if the arguer puts an argument based on a credible authority and the premises are based on good evidence. In this case, the audience is obliged to provisionally accept the conclusion of the argument (ibid.). News reporters usually resort to such types of arguments, particularly in political news reports, in order to avoid responsibility by indicating the source of information.

(b) Arguments from practical reasoning: Such arguments are un-

derpinned by logic that has the aim of rational persuasion as its goal (ibid. 30). Such arguments, as Walton (2007: 31) argues, are not to prove whether a designated proposition is true or false, but to select a prudent course of action by looking at the reasons for or against this action compared with the alternative actions available in a given situation.

An argument from practical reasoning is carried out by an agent (or group of agents) with certain goals (ibid.). The simpler kind of practical reasoning is instrumental, in that it does not take values into account (ibid.). Walton (ibid. 34) lists another type of arguments from reasoning called value-based practical reasoning which is called so because it takes values into consideration.

For Atkinson et al. (2004: 88), values are social interests that support goals by explaining why goals are desirable (ibid.). For example, in political deliberations, Walton (2007: 34) observes, an arguer may be trying to persuade an audience to see a course of action as practically reasonable for the group to adopt, based on their presumed values. In such an instance, it is important to take values into account, even if they are implicit premises as opposed to clearly articulated goals (ibid.).

Value-based practical reasoning can be split into two types of arguments: arguments from positive values and arguments from negative values (ibid.). An example of these two types of arguments is the following news report, cited by Walton (ibid. 35), in which the reporter says that mission in Afghanistan is based on the Canadian positive values of protecting human rights and free elections:

> (1) "There is fear that if the international effort fails, Afghanistan will fall back into the hands of extremist Taliban forces. Canada's troops are there to protect human rights and free elections"

(c) Arguments from fear and pity: These arguments are widely used in political and war news reports wherein news reporters take hu-

man emotions, particularly fear and pity, into consideration in order to be effective (Johnson, 2000: 269). According to Walton (2007: 127), these two types of rhetorical argumentation can have a tremendous emotional impact on a mass audience when presented in the right way.

An example of an argument from pity in mass media argumentation is the following where the ABC reporter employs the argument of appeal to pity to convince the public of the invented story:

> (2) "Now is the time to check the aggression of this ruthless dictator, whose troops have bayoneted pregnant women and have ripped babies from their incubators in Kuwait".

Likewise, arguments from fear are recognized as a distinctive type of arguments used by those in the business of changing public opinions and attitudes through the mass media (ibid. 131). An argument from fear, Walton (ibid. 148) appends, has two basic premises: the first premise presents a state of affairs that is dangerous to the audience and is often called "threatening"; the second premise cites a recommended course of action which, if taken into consideration, will be a ground for avoiding a disastrous outcome; the conclusion is that the audience should take the recommended course of action.

2.2 Fallacy in News Reports

Ward and Holther (2005: 11) argue that fallacies are brilliant tricks for getting people accept all sorts of false premises as true. For Walton (2007: 21), fallacies are arguments that are logically incorrect, but appear to be correct because they look reasonable; they tend to be erroneous arguments which are deceptive because they look rationally persuasive. Accordingly, the concept of fallacy has a rhetorical element, meaning that fallacies are kinds of arguments that appear to be reasonable to persuade a target audience who can be persuaded even by the most fallacious arguments (ibid.). In fallacies of mass media argumentation, Walton (ibid.) mentions, fallacious arguments are ones that appear reasonable and are persuasive to a mass audience.

Ward and Holther (2005: 6) have previously mentioned that there are three types of fallacies: material, logical, and psychological. The latter type, which is the most common of all fallacies, is intended to conjure the sympathy of the audience, cozen and beguile them through emotional embellishments and with the help of various psychological appeals which are practiced for distraction and diversion (ibid. 57-8). This playing upon emotion to colour the case and distract from a close scrutiny of the issue is called emotional coloration.

Psychological fallacies, according to Ward and Holther (ibid.), include the following fallacies which are mostly resorted to by news reporters:

a. Glittering generality

Words have a great emotive power of endlessly exasperating a captive audience. Plato and many since his time have seen the systematic exploitation of the emotive function of language as an attempt to obscure sound judgement and pervert truth (ibid. 59). The glittering generality fallacy lies in the abuse of words to evoke actions as in the following extract: “Governor Jones stands for free-

dom, integrity, and efficiency in government" arouses pleasurable responses on the part of the audience (ibid.). In the same direction, Abba and Musa (2015: 64) argue that words not only reflect our reality but also create it; they are never neutral because they usually reflect the interests of those who speak or write.

b. Appeal to authority (Ipse dixit or He says so)

In arguments, as in everyday matters, it is entirely proper that authorities be called on for information because source materials are given weight due to an authority (Ward and Holther, 2005: 64). Yet, this authority should be reliable and qualified as experts in the field in which they are cited (ibid.). Put differently, the authority should neither be swayed by bias because a biased or partisan report would convince no one who recognized it as such, nor it should be a habitual liar (ibid 65). Moreover, the authority should: (1) be clearly identified; for example, the assertion "a leading expert says…." is a device of slovenly journalism, (2) have professional standing, (3) hold representative views in the field in which they are cited (ibid.).

Ward and Holther (ibid. 67) argue that appeals to authority are fallacious because they are attempts to persuade the audience of the authenticity of the text that an authority is on its side. An example of appeals to authority is the following headline followed by the lead:

(3) "North Korea 'a bigger threat to world peace' than crisis in Syria, British voters say".

> "British voters view North Korea as a bigger threat to world peace than the crisis in Syria, a poll has found amid fears of a new nuclear test….North Korea showed off what appeared to be new inter-continental ballistic missiles at a huge military parade to mark its founder's birthday on Saturday. A senior officer told thousands of soldiers and civilians that Pyonyang was ready to launch a nuclear attack, warning that Donald Trump's 'reckless provocation' could be met with an

'annihilating strike'" (Web source 3).

c. Bandwagon fallacy (Impressing by large numbers)

Sometimes, arguers bolster their position by pointing out that there are many who hold and support their beliefs; this type of fallacy is called the fallacy of mere numbers (Ward and Holther, 2005: 71). Obviously, this type of argument is fallacious because what everybody knows is not necessarily true; it may be mere fabrication. An example is the following one presented by Ward and Holther (ibid.):

> (4) An editorial presents this argument: "All the world knows that whenever people are free to choose between the life they have experienced under Communist rule and the life offered by free institutions, then great numbers leave Communism, even at high personal cost.

d. Hasty generalization

The fallacy of hasty generalization, Hurley (2008: 134) states, is the fallacy of making conclusions and assumptions based on insufficient and inadequate samples. The following is an example of hasty generalization because two persons' experiences are not enough to base a conclusion on:

e. Circular reasoning

The fallacious argument of circular reasoning, sometimes called "assuming the conclusion fallacy", is an argument in which the arguer begins with what he is trying to end up with (ibid.).

2.3 Speech Acts in News Reports

According to Cutting (2002: 16) and Archer et al. (2012: 35), speech act theory is one of the cornerstones in pragmatics; the interest in which can be traced back to the idea that people use language, whether orally or in writing to do things. Searle, Archer et al. (ibid. 39) mention, continued the work initiated by Austin suggesting a number of dimensions to classify speech acts into five categories. The proposed dimensions are based on the fit between words and world, psychological state of the speaker/ writer, and the purpose of the illocution (ibid.). These five categories, according to Searle (1969: 65), are the following:

1. Representatives: These are illustrated by acts expressing the speaker's/ writer's belief that something is true. They show word-to-world fit since the speaker/ writer, in using them, makes a belief fit an already existing state of affairs in the world. The illocutionary point of these acts is to provide faithful representation of facts. Examples are speech acts of stating, suggesting, claiming concluding, insisting, describing, hypothesizing, predicting, announcing, attributing, affirming, alleging, classifying, denying, disclosing, disputing, identifying, informing, insisting, reporting, predicting, ranking, stipulating, and deducing.

2. Commissives: By using a commissive, the speaker/ writer commits himself to do some future act showing world-to-word fit since the speaker/ writer undertakes to make the world fit the words. Examples of such acts are promising, pledging, threatening, refusing, volunteering, and vowing.

3. Directives: They are speech acts in which the words are aimed at making the hearer/ reader do something. They show word-to-world fit because the hearer/ reader is supposed to carry out an action. Examples include entreating, asking, advising, permitting, forbidding, excusing, instructing, urging, warning, requiring, and inviting.

4. Expressives: These are acts in which the words state what the speaker/ writer feels. Thus, the illocutionary point of these acts is to communicate attitudes of their performers about certain facts and events. Examples of such acts are deploring, welcoming, praising, regretting, apologizing, and thanking.

5. Declarations: These speech acts, such as acquitting, disqualifying, declaring, and the like, change the world by their very utterance. Thus, their illocutionary point is to create facts and events.

Searle, Archer et al. (2012: 37) state, proposed a number of felicity conditions governing the successful production of speech acts. These conditions, as Galasinski (2000: 81) has antecedently observed, have to obtain for a speech act to be appropriate; they can be presented as a set of propositions whose truth is normally assumed by the participants in the communicative situation when a particular speech act is performed. Following Galasinski (ibid.), these conditions can be introduced as follows:

1- Propositional content conditions concerning the propositional act,

2- Preparatory conditions about background circumstances and knowledge about speakers/ writers and hearers/ readers that must hold prior to the performance of the act,

3- Sincerity conditions concerning speakers'/ writers' intentions, beliefs, and desires, and whether the speech act under quest is being performed seriously and sincerely, and

4- Essential conditions related to the illocutionary point of an act, namely, "what the utterance counts as".

A wide range of speech acts can be exploited as tools in news reports in order to achieve intended perlocutionary effects on their

receivers. In most cases, speech acts serve the goals of the reporters in garbling the vision of the world in the minds of the audience by providing them with statements, whether true or false. Thus, in reporting news, different types of speech acts are utilized by news reporters in their attempt to (mis)represent reality and persuade the audience to accept what they report as true. Searle's (1969) taxonomy and nomenclature of speech acts (as discussed above) is adopted as it is considered more exhaustive than other taxonomies. In the scope of news reports, the following speech acts are expected to be resorted to:

1. Representative speech acts of asserting, claiming, confirming, insisting, and accusing are expected to be used insincerely in order to fabricate facts and events. Such acts, Archer et al (2012: 39-40) assert, are used to form a belief, which may be insincere when they are used infelicitously, and to get the audience form the same belief. The following excerpt printed in the Independent is an example of the representative speech act of asserting:

> (5) "Syria's president Bashar al-Assad deceived United Nations inspectors and still has "hundreds of tons" of lethal chemicals stockpiled. In 2014, Syria said it had handed over all of its chemical weapons to the UN's Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). At the time, Barrack Obama said the stockpile had been '100 per cent eliminated'" (Web source 3).

Another example is the following extract printed in the Guardian, where the representative speech act of accusing is evident:

> (6) "Asma al-Assad is a cheerleader for evil. Her UK citizenship should be revoked…. The Assad regime has a seemingly infinite

capacity for evil, and an inability to be touched by compassion. At the very best he is dangerously deluded about what is happening, and the atrocities he has ordered…. His regime has rightly been criticized across the world, except by his backers in Russia and Iran" (Web source 4).

Another example of the speech act of accusing is the following one reported in the Guardian. The reporter, here, accuses Assad of being a monster):

(7) "But most likely he is a monster" (Web source 4).

2. Directive speech acts of warning and recommending can be used to get the audience carry out a certain course of conduct. In the coming next report, for example, the speech act of warning is used by the reporter John Bell to warn the public of the expected relationship between ISIL and Assad so that they will act in accordance with this fact:

(8) "ISIL and Assad may be linked, not in the conspiratorial sense, but in that they are both tragic representatives of a culture of violence and authoritarianism….Syrians who suffer from both these twin plagues may shudder; that they are damned to a choice between tyranny and extremism" (Web source 5).

4. Expressive speech acts of criticizing and praising may also be used in news reports to achieve certain purposes. As Olamide and Segun (2014: 3) argue, these acts express "an inner state of the speaker; the expression is essentially subjective and tells us nothing about the world". An example of expressive speech acts is the following italicized utterances printed in the Independent, where the reporter praises Trump with the aim of changing people's impression about him:

(9) "Donald Trump is full of heart. Now many people who suggested he was a narcissistic, bigoted maniac have realized they

misunderstood him and he is a tender emotional sort because his order to bomb Syria proves he was moved by the pictures of children attacked by President Assad" (Web source 3).

News reporters can dissociate themselves from the responsibility of what they write by transferring the avowal to others. Usually, the use of speech acts attributed to others vindicates the reporters and gives authority to the report as in the following report where the reporter dissociates himself from accusing Iran of being the "world's leading state-sponsor of terrorism" by attributing this accusation to Rex Tillerson who represents authority as he is the Secretary of State of US. Resorting to authority is considered as a persuasive strategy.

(10) "Trump orders review into whether sanctions against Tehran should be reinstated. US Secretary of State Rex Tillesonr called Tehran the world's 'leading state-sponsor of terrorism'" (Web source 5).

1.4 Conversational Maxims Non-observance in News Reports

News reports can be studied in relation to Grice's conversational maxims. News reporters sometimes adhere to the maxims and other times they infringe them. According to Grice (1975: 45), conversational maxims support the Cooperative Principle which reads: "Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged". These maxims, Grice (1989: 26-7) states, are as follows: (1) the maxim of quantity (be informative: "Make your contribution as informative as is required", and "Don't make your contribution more informative than is required"), (2) the maxim of quality (Try to make your contribution one that is true: "Don't say what you believe to be false", and "Don't say that for which you lack adequate evidence"), (3) the maxim of relation (be relevant), and (4) the maxim of manner (be perspicuous: "Avoid obscurity of expression", "Avoid ambiguity", "Be brief"

(avoid unnecessary prolixity), and "Be orderly".

Grice (ibid.) manifests that there are four ways in which speakers/ writers can behave with respect to the aforementioned maxims. More specifically, they can: (1) "Observe the maxims", "Violate a maxim", "Flout a maxim", or "Opt out of the maxims".

To illustrate the previous options even more, Birner (2013: 43) states that:

1. Observing a maxim means obeying it (i.e. being informative, truthful, relevant, and perspicuous) (ibid.).

2. Violating a maxim is to fail to observe it with the assumption that hearers/ readers will not realize that the maxim is being violated. A straightforward example is a lie, where the speakers/ writers make an utterance while knowing it to be false and assume that the hearers/ readers will not know the difference (ibid.). Violation of maxims, in general, is intended to mislead.

3. Flouting a maxim is also violating it, but in this case the violation is so intentionally blatant that the hearers/ readers are expected to be aware of the violation as in telling a friend "That exam was a breeze", while, in fact, an exam and a (literal) breeze are two completely distinct things (Birner, 2013: 43).

4. Opting out of the maxims altogether is to refuse to play the game at all as when a wife attempts to have an argument with her husband and he responds by opening a newspaper and beginning to read (ibid.).

News reporters either adhere to the maxims or violate them. They, generally, show a high tendency to maxims violation so as to express their messages implicitly and to avoid being judged for what they report. Thus, they may conceal information by violating the maxim of quantity; issue lies or falsehoods by violating the max-

im of quality; divert from the real topic by violating the maxim of relevance; or prevaricate and obfuscate by violating the maxim of manner. Yet, this violation may not be apparent to the targets on the basis that news reporters are adhering to the maxims. Accordingly, news reporters, apparently, have a high threshold of tolerance for maxims violation which is considered as an act of dishonesty.

The violation of quality maxim involves a distorted version of reality. This is evident in the following news report wherein the reporter attributes killings, massacres, and other human rights abuses and war crimes in Syria to Hezbollah and other Shia militias, which is, in fact, not the case:

(11) "No similar reference was made to the role of the Shia militias or Hezbollah, both of which have a well-established record of carrying out killings, massacres, and other human rights abuses and war crimes" (Web source 5).

Another example of maxim violation is the following headline where the reporter violates the maxim of quality by saying something he lacks evidence for (that is, attributing the crime of killing 85 with chemical weapons in Khan Sheikhoun to Assad) :

(12) "Assad kills at least 85 with chemical weapons" (Web source 6).

2.5 Presupposition in News Reports

Richardson (2007: 63) notices that not all meanings are immediately there in a text to be simply read from the manifest content. He emphasizes that there are hidden or presupposed meanings in texts and these meanings can sometimes be used to mislead and fraud because they presume false information or information that may not be true (ibid.). In this respect, a presupposed meaning is a taken-for-granted, implicit claim which is embedded within the explicit meaning of a text or utterance (ibid.).

In a work that has been done before, Reah (2002: 106) has stated that presuppositions could be marked by what is called presupposition triggers (i.e., constructions or items that signal the existence of a presupposition in an utterance). Reah (ibid.) has listed three presupposition triggers which may be commonly employed by news reporters:

1. Certain words, such as change of state verbs, invoking presupposed meaning in their use; the verb 'begin', for example, presupposes a movement or an action (ibid.). The question "Do you think military attack is the best way of ending Iraqi belligerence?"-aired on the BBC's flagship News night programme in the build up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq-presumes (presupposes) that Iraq is being belligerent (ibid.). Another example is when a news reporter says/ write (They attacked civilians again) to presuppose that they have attacked them before. The use of 'again' here forces hearers/ readers to search for the relevance of the presupposed prior event.

2. The definite article "the" and the possessive pronouns "his/ her" trigger presuppositions as in "The threat of Iraq" which presupposes that a threat exists (Reah, 2002: 106). News reports are not empty of such presuppositions. For instance, in referring to "The revelation that Britain went to war on the basis of one page of legal advice", the reporter presupposes that this is a revelation not a fact (ibid.).

3. Wh-questions represent a technique that is frequently used in journalism to presuppose as in "Why do Islamist terrorist groups like al-Qaeda and Hamas want to crush the West and destroy Israel? Michael Scott Doran unravels the historical roots of their extremism" (ibid.). In the preceding question, the reporter presupposes the existence of an intention to crush the West; he also presupposes that Hamas is categorized as an Islamist terrorist group (which is not, in fact, the case). This means that the reporter, by using the presupposition trigger wh-question, presupposes that Hamas is an Islamist terrorist group intending to destroy the west.

Richardson (2007: 64) adds another type of presupposition which he calls "nominal presupposition". This type is triggered by nouns and adjectives used to qualify or modify noun phrases as in the following headline printed in the Daily Express (25 February 2005) "Britain's asylum takes new hammering", where the adjective "new" presupposes that Britain's asylum system has experienced old or past '"hammering" (ibid.).

2.6 Hedges in News Reports

Following Brown and Levinson (1987: 172), the use of hedges is intended to redress targets' negative face wants by avoiding coercion or minimizing it through clarifying the speakers'/ writers' views of certain values. Hedges, they (ibid. 147) add, are divided into strengtheners acting as emphatic hedges such as "exactly", "precisely", or "emphatically" and weakeners that soften or "tentativize" what they modify (ibid.).

According to Ariel (2008: 22-5), hedges are used to make what is reported less direct. Ariel (ibid.) manifests that modal expressions (whether verbs or adverbs) are the most widespread form of hedging. In the same direction, Loberger and Shoup (2009: 56) argue that certain verbs, other than modal verbs, such as "feel" and "suppose" can be used as hedges to make personal statements less direct. Moreover, passive constructions such as "It is argued that" and "It has been agreed that" are used to hedge by minifying speakers'/ writers' commitment to what they are saying/ writing so that statements do not seem to rely simply on personal opinions (ibid.). As for news reports, Ariel (2008: 66) observes that reporters, putting in mind the possible legal repercussions regarding what they report, "cushion" their reports with hedge words to hedge on the meaning or force of their statements and thus protect themselves and their organizations.

In (1992: 67), Evelyn has stated that hedges are considered as insurance devices because in using them people try to insure themselves against anything negative. For example, evidence hedges such as "according to", "based on" and "as indicated by" are used to avoid responsibility by indicating the source of information. They are sometimes similar to "weasel words" because they temper the directness of a statement, and in using them, speakers/ writers "weasel out" of responsibility for their claims (ibid.).

In line with Evelyn, Fraser (2010: 201), later on, asserts that hedging is an attenuation of the full value which the utterance would

have without hedging words. He appends that hedging serves a variety of discourse uses such as: providing some degree of protection through avoiding responsibility for a fact or an act, concealing the truth, and dwindling the directness of interaction (ibid. 207-8). All these effects are relevant in news reports.

For instance, the hedge made use of in the following headline is the weakener modal expression "may" which is used to weaken the reporter's commitment to what he issues:

(13) "Cargo ships may contain Iraqi weapons" (web source 4).

Another example is the following lead where the reporter employs the hedge represented by the passive construction "it has been reported".

(14) US Forces may have found Iraqi weapons of mass destruction, it has been reported.

2.7 Pragma-rhetorical Tropes in News Reports

Following Kieran (1998: 27), news reports should aim at persuading the audience that the description and the interpretation of the news reporters are rational and appropriate. In other words, news reporters try to persuade their audience of the credibility of what they report through the employment of pragma-rhetorical tropes. These tropes aim at persuading others to adopt the viewpoints of the reporters. This does not mean that journalism, as van Dijk (1991: 217; 1996: 24) has previously put it, is mere rhetoric; rather, journalism represents "opinion statements (…) embedded in argumentation that makes them more or less defensible, reasonable, justifiable or legitimate as conclusions".

Van Dijk (ibid.) has also assured that the success of journalism, as a kind of argumentation, depends on the use of pragma-rhetorical tropes which are once defined by Corbett (1990: 426) as "a deviation from the ordinary and principal signification of a word". Tropes, thus, are employed strategically to emphasize specific meanings (Van Dijk, 1996: 24). According to McQuarrie and Mick (1996: 426), pragma-rhetorical tropes involve an implication on the part of the speakers/ writers in addition to what is literally conveyed. Tropes, which are commonly employed by news reporters, are the following:

a. Hyperbole

Leech (1983: 33) defines hyperbole as "a case where the speaker's description is stronger than the actual situation". It involves exaggerating or choosing a point on a scale which is higher than the actual state of affairs (ibid.). Here, the implicatures often lie far beyond what is said, thus, "There were a million people in the Co-op tonight", for instance, could convey an excuse for being late, whereas "You never do the washing up" and "Why are you always smoking?" could convey a criticism (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 219).

Moreover, hyperbole can be defined as an extravagant overstate-

ment which can be used either positively or negatively. For example, Donald Trump, according to "The Philosophers' Magazine Blog" (Web source 7), is reported as being a brilliant master of rhetoric, whether positive or negative, in the 2016 fight for presidency. Thus, when he describes himself and his future plans, he makes extensive use of positive hyperbole, as when he depicts himself as the best and all his plans are the best, but he makes extensive use of negative hyperbole to the degree of fabrication when he describes his rivals.

According to the aforementioned magazine, hyperbole is used as a pragma-rhetorical trope to spread lies and deflect (divert) the attention of the audience from reality (web source 7).

With regard to news reports, hyperbole is the act of exaggerating something (an event, a fact, or a description) with the aim of making it more serious and important and to lay emphasis on it. An example of hyperbole is the use of the expression "hundreds of tons" in the following lead:

> (15) Bashar al-Assad still has 'hundreds of tones' of chemicals stockpiled, former Syrian weapons research chief claims (web source 8).

b. Metaphor

A trope which hinges upon a relationship of similarity; it involves using a word or a phrase to stand for something else (Phillips, 2003: 179). According to McGlone (2007: 2), using a metaphor involves a deliberate violation of the conventions of truthfulness. Hence, a metaphor is considered as an influential device in changing minds and attitudes.

A metaphor involves perceiving one thing in terms of another. Certain types of metaphor, Richardson (2007: 65) states, are associated with specific genres of journalism. For example, "bubble bursting", "peaks", "stagnating", and "troughs" are metaphors which

are employed in economic news (ibid.). Metaphors of war include "attack", "defense", "under siege", "shoot for goal", "slaughtered", and the like. Such metaphors can be used to shape people's understanding of war as an "emergency in which sacrifice is excessive" (ibid. 67).

To elaborate, Richardson (ibid.) argues that war is always reported using metaphorical frameworks. As an example, Lule (2004: 184), preceding Richardson, has showed that during the prelude to the US/ UK invasion of Iraq in 2003, most news reports were dominated by the following metaphors: "the Timetable", "the Games of Saddam", "the Patience of the White House", and "Making a Case/ Selling the Plan". For Lule (ibid.), other prominent metaphors frequently employed to make war understandable are "war is politics", "war is business", and "war is a freedom". Each of these, as well as the metaphorical frameworks employed to promote the invasion of Iraq, are used to hide the true consequences of violent conflict (blood, bones, and bodies) (ibid.).

c. Allusion

It is an instance of purposive ambiguity through which one can covertly or indirectly refer to someone or something (Lennon, 2004: 39). Allusions, thus, can be used strategically to affect the overall meaning through communicating a particular meaning or emotion that would impact the audience.

Through allusions one can suggest and address negative associations and connotations without being held responsible for them.

3. Conclusion

Pragmatics always has a role in the process of news reporting. This is due to the fact that various pragmatic issues including speech acts, conversational maxims non-observance, fallacies, presuppositions, hedges, argumentative appeals, and pragma-rhetorical tropes are manifested in the process of issuing and presenting news. Thus, pragmatic tools are resorted to by news reporters to influence the audience via shaping their viewpoints. Moreover, news reporters try, through the exploitation of pragmatics, to change the world by getting the audience do something or change their state of mind by reporting something new. Doing all this falls under the rubric of pragmatics which mainly investigates what language users mean, what they do, and how they do it.

References

* Abba, T. S. and Musa, N. (2015). "Speech Act Analysis of Daily Trust and The Nation Newspapers Headline Reports on "Boko Haram" Attacks. Journal of Communication and Culture, Vol 6, No. 1, pp. 63-72.

* Archer, D., Aijmer, K., and Wichmann, A. (2012). Pragmatics: An Advanced Resource Book for Students. London: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group.

* Ariel, M. (2008). Pragmatics and Grammar. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

* Atkinson, K, Katie, Trevor, B., and Peter, M. (2004). "A Dialogue Game Protocol for Multi-agent Argument over Proposals for Action". In I. Rahwan, P. Moraitis, and C. Reed (ed.) Argumentation in Multi-Agent Systems. Berlin: Springer, 149-161.

* Bednarek, M. and Caple, H. (2012). News Discourse. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

* Berinsky, A. J. (2012). Rumors, Truths, and Reality: A Study of Political Misinformation. Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

* Black, E. (2006). Pragmatic Stylistics. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

* Brown, P. and Levinson, S. (1978). "Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomenon". In E. N. Goody (ed.) Questions and Politeness: Strategies in Social Interaction. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

* Brown, P. and Levinson, S. (1987). Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

* Corbett, E. P. J. (1990). Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student

(3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

* Cotter, C. (2010). News Talk: Investigating the Language of Journalism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cutting, J. (2002). Pragmatics and Discourse. London: Routledge.

* Ekstrom, M. (2002). "Epistemologies of TV Journalism: A Theoretical Framework". Journalism, 3(3), 259-282.

* Evelyn, H. (1992). Discourse and Language Education. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

* Fairclough, N. (2003). Analyzing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research. London: Taylor and Francis Routledge.

Fowler, R. (1991). Language in the News. Discourse and Ideology in the Press. London: Routledge.

* Fraser, B. (2010). Hedging in Political Discourse. In Okulska and Cap (eds.) Perspectives in Political Discourse. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.

* Galasinski, D. (2000). The Language of Deception: A Discourse Analytical Study. London: Sage Publications, Inc.

* Grice, H. P. (1975). "Logic and Conversation". In P. Cole and J. Morgan (eds) Syntax and Semantics: 3 Speech Acts. Academic Press, pp. 41-58.

* Grice, H. P. (1989). Studies in the Way of Words. Harvard: Harvard University Press.

* Hurley, P. J. (2008). A Concise Introduction to Logic. San Diego: Thomas Wadsworth.

* Johnson, R. H. (2000). Manifest Rationality: A Pragmatic Theory of Argument. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

* Jowett, G. S. and O'Donnell, V. (1992). Propaganda and Persuasion. London: Sage.

* Kieran, M. (1998). "Objectivity, Impartiality and Good Journalism". In M. Kieran (ed.) Media Ethics, pp. 23-36. London: Routledge.

* Knightly, P. (2000). The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth-maker from the Crimea to Kosovo. London: Prion.

* Leech, G. (1983). Principles of Pragmatics. London: Longman Group Limited.

* Leff, M. (2000). "Rhetoric and Dialectic in the Twenty-first Century". Argumentation, Vol. 14, pp. 241-254.

* Lennon, P. (2004). Allusions in the Press: An Applied Linguistic Study. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

* Loberger, G. and Shoup, K. (2009). Webster's New World English Grammar Handbook. Canada: Wiley.

* Lule, J. (2004). "War and its Metaphors: News Language and the Prelude to War in Iraq, 2003". Journalism Studies, 5(2) pp. 179-190.

* Marlin, R. (2002). Propaganda and the Ethics of Persuasion. Ontario: Broadview Press.

* McGlone, M. (2007). "What is the Explanatory Value of a Conceptual Metaphor". In T. Taylor and J. Joseph (eds.) Language and Communication. New York: Elsevier.

* McQuarrie, E and Mick, D. (1996). "Figures of Rhetoric in Advertising Language". The Journal of Consumer Research, Vol. 22, No. 4. The University of Chicago Press, pp. 242-38.

* Montgomery, M. (2007). The Discourse of Broadcast News. Lon-

don and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.

* Olamide, I. and Segun, A. (2014). "A Speech Act Analysis of Editorial Comments of TELL Magazine'. Research on Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol. 4, No. 9.

* Phillips, M. J. (2003). Understanding Visual Metaphor. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

* Reah, D. (1998). The Language of Newspapers. London: Routledge.

* Reah, D. (2002). The Language of Newspapers. London and New York: Routledge.

* Richardson, J. E. (2007). Analysing Newspapers. An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

* Searle, J. R. (1969). Speech Acts. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

* Taylor, P. M. (1995). Munitions of the Mind. A History of Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Present Era. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

* Van Dijk, T. A. (1991). Racism and the Press. London: Routledge.

* Van Dijk, T. A. (1996). "Discourse, Opinions and Ideologies". In C. Schaffner and H. Kelly-Holmes (eds.) Discourse and Ideologies, pp. 7-37. Clevendon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.

* Van Dijk, T. A. (2003). Ideology and Discourse. A Multidisciplinary Introduction. Barcelona: Pompeu Fabra University.

* Walton, D. (2007). Media Argumentation: Dialectics, Persuasion, and Rhetoric. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

* Wang, X. (2014). "A Cognitive Pragmatic Study of Rhetorical Ques-

tions". English Language and Literature Studies, Vol. 4, No. 1.

* Ward, W. and Fearnside, W. B. H. (2005). Fallacy; the Counterfeit of Argument. Canada: Canada University Press. Retrieved at: m.bookfi.net/book/1211526.

* Welch, D. (1993). The Third Reich: Politics and Propaganda. London: Routledge.

(1) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/News

(2) http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2015/interest-in-different-types-of-new

(3) https://www.independent.co.uk.

(4) https://www.theguardian.com/

(5) https://www.aljazeera.com/

(6) https://www.economist.com/

(7) http://blog.talkingphilosophy.com/?p=9080.

(8) https://www.telegraph.co.uk/