

REPRESENTATION OF DISASTER IN NEWSPAPER DISCOURSE – KERALA

FLOODS 2018

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Abstract

The premier focus of this article is to analyse and to throw light on the representations of newspaper about the calamity. The perspective of the print media on the disaster inculcates the reflection of the critical situation faced by the people of Kerala. This paper focus on journalistic communication and the language utilised to record the risks faced by society during those critical days.

Keywords: Journalism, Newspaper, Catastrophe, The Hindu, Kerala Floods, Communication

Introduction

The world of nature is occupied by human ideologies. The aftermath of disasters cannot be expressed only through the words where images act as the additional agent. Newspapers play an important role in providing the missing words and events with linguistic representation. Mass media is an emerging field with various new dimensions on issues like disasters where the newspaper is a primary source of information. People feel anxious and depressed due to the risks and the impacts caused due to disasters which are accomplished by

the print media. Discursive representation of calamities provides certain ideological perspectives that influence the activities of the society. The social construction of meaning through the linguistic structures of the newspapers are investigated to examine the ideological aspects of people where natural phenomenon lies in the primary position.

Analysis of newspaper texts

The newspaper articles utilised for analysis are taken from the online archives. The total number of articles is fifteen where the initial day's of catastrophic representations arouse stronger emotions and later reduced with the rational thoughts about the floods. Newspaper articles consist of photographs that are not utilised for analytical purposes. It is limited to verbal communication. The other semiotic modes of newspapers are not considered for the analysis.

Blame on nature and culture

Newspaper projects the disaster as a social factor where nature is considered as an inferior element over nature. The emotional impacts of the disaster are portrayed dramatically. In the newspaper text, the journalists put their blame on various aspects like change of lifestyle and other factors like climate change and so on. Those factors are unavoidable when a calamity is described in the print media such as newspaper or a weekly journal.

Multiple perspectives of discourse

There is a general shift from the phase of entertainment towards the phase of awareness where the commercial pressures of media industries are unavoidable. The emotional responses could be studied in newspaper discourse research. The interpretative nature of research creatively constructs meaning. The multiple perspectives on disaster representation by mass media cover sociology, media studies and communication studies. In communication studies, linguistic representation is significant in newspaper discourse.

The multifaceted and interdisciplinary research is essential to extract the complex relationship between the language of the media and society. Discourse is considered as a social practice where the textual features such as structures, strategies and its functions are analysed in the social setting and social context.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis is an important discipline of critical linguistics. It is essential for the analysis of newspaper discourse which relates language, thought and culture. In this research, Halliday's systemic functional grammar is utilised for textual analysis. The study of language in the social context is the major emphasis of critical discourse studies. The significance of ideology, social values and beliefs are exhibited.

The macro analysis of the social structure and the microanalysis of discourse as a social practice are combined in this critical discourse studies. It connects language, ideology and power. Several parameters such as cohesion, coherence, presupposition and argumentation are to be examined to view the various aspects of meaning. There are several advancements in the field of critical discourse analysis. The present society uses different modes of representations such as verbal, visual and gestures. The different modes possess a different potential for meaning-making. These are due to access to technology and its advancements in several sectors.

Examination of genres and the discourse types are possible in critical discourse analysis which contributes to the social change. According to Norman Fairclough, texts are produced and consumed that involves the knowledge of language, beliefs and assumptions of the society. But, Van Dijk proposed the concept of mental models that deals with text production and interpretation. It is a socio-cognitive process that consists of shared knowledge, ideologies and attitudes. The semantic macrostructures that help in exploring

meaning through the main topic, vocabulary of disasters, grammar and narrative structures of victim stories are the main factors utilised for the analysis.

Articles utilised for analysis

“Keeping dry: On Kerala Floods” (The Hindu)

It is an editorial of *The Hindu* where the language is simple and analytical. The language is fact-based in which few ornamental words are found. The words like inundating, havoc, landslips denoted the impacts of disaster. Shower is the word that denotes the heavy downpour. In the headline, two opposite words ‘dry’ and ‘floods’ are found which is an antithesis.

“Kerala Trauma” (The Hindu)

It is an editorial of *The Hindu*. The word ‘trauma’ denoted the sufferings of the people of Kerala due to floods. The words like ‘Overflowing rivers, Brimming dams and massive dams’ denotes the increase in the amount of water or landslips which is not a positive factor. Though the act of increasing possesses a positive meaning in its words they carry negative meaning based on the context of crisis.

“Heavy Flooding puts Kerala in crisis” (The Hindu)

It is an article by *The Hindu*. There is a pictorial representation of the Idukki dam which opened after two decades. There were words like ‘grappling’ which denotes the struggle against the crisis i.e., Kerala Floods.

Conclusion

Through the analysis of newspaper discourse, the newspaper articles reveal the actual sufferings during the calamity i.e., Kerala floods. So, newspaper discourse is the reflection of destruction and deluges. Pictorial representation in the articles assists the readers for a better understanding of context and the content. The analysis of words and sentences in the articles exhibits the value of linguistic representation in the print medium.

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