

Deconstructing Ethnic Humor: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Jokes about Pathans in English Language Teaching

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Abstract

This study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to look at how ELT pertains to Pathans, a minority ethnic group, and how they connect to comedy. Cultural standards, social hierarchies, and society ideas are all reflected in jokes. Their insights on prejudice and cross-cultural communication are priceless. Investigating the linguistic, sociological, and ideological aspects of jokes about Pathans is the goal of this qualitative research methodology that employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) methodologies. A methodology is a set of procedures for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data in a way that is both thorough and ethical. In this study, we look at how jokes about Pathans are structured linguistically and discursively, what ideologies and power dynamics are at work, how they contribute to the spread of stereotypes, and what ethical considerations arise when we analyze humor that pertains to oppressed groups in ELT. In order to promote inclusiveness, social justice, and meaningful discourse in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) and beyond, this study seeks to examine the effects of comedy on language and society.

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Introduction

Cultural norms, power structures, and dominant viewpoints are frequently mirrored and reinforced through humor. Jokes provide insight into how social hierarchies, prejudices, and identity are constructed through language. Examining ELT jokes that target certain racial or ethnic groups can teach us a lot about the challenges of cross-cultural communication and the power of preconceptions.

Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a framework, this study will examine and critique jokes that target Pathans, a marginalized ethnic minority in particular cultural settings. Using a qualitative research approach based on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) principles, this study seeks to investigate the linguistic, social, and ideological aspects of these jokes.

Data collection, analysis, and evaluation are all part of the study's methodology, which follows a systematic approach. By carefully analyzing the texts and examining the ideology behind them, this study aims to reveal the hidden discourses, power dynamics, and social consequences that are present in jokes about Pathans.

In addition, the study recognizes that there are ethical considerations while studying comedy, especially when it pertains to underprivileged people. Researchers must use reflexivity and positionality throughout their work to assist them deal with delicate topics and recognize their own prejudices and points of view.

Research Questions

To what extent do jokes about Pathans adhere to a certain linguistic and conceptual framework?

When people make jokes about Pathans, what underlying assumptions and power structures do they reflect?

Does the use of Pathan jokes contribute to the formation and reinforcement of preconceived notions and social stratification?

When studying comedy that pertains to oppressed people within the context of ELT, what ethical considerations should be kept in mind?

By dissecting the vocabulary, power dynamics, and ideological importance of jokes about Pathans, this study seeks to enhance comprehension of how humor influences and mirrors society views, perceptions, and relationships between diverse groups. The project's overarching goal is to provide light on ways that ELT professionals could improve their critical discourse practices. In both

linguistic and cultural settings, we aim to advance equality, inclusiveness, and social justice.

Literature Review

Historical Background of the Pathan Ethnicity

The Pathans have a long history of being revered for their valor, military prowess, and dedication to respect, according to Taylor (1976), Banerjea (2004), and Ahmad (2009). The majority of India's Pathans, according to Tylor (1976), are descended from the Afghan people who conquered the subcontinent and set up a number of kingdoms. As a result of Afghan rule in India, the Pathan people were accepted by the locals and eventually settled in the lush Himalayan regions. Their valor and hunger for revenge earned them military service, and they were duly acknowledged for it (Tylor, 1976). During Alla-u-din's 1310 journey to the Deccan, the Pathan army guided him and was instrumental in establishing the first kingdom in the region. These individuals formed the backbone of the army and had influence all across the area (Tylor, 1976).

The term "Pathan" is heavily linked to Indian history, according to Safia (2013), who uses it to describe those who have made a significant impact on the subcontinent. The epithet "Pathan" gained significant clout and significance due to its link with the Pathan invasion of India.

The Pathans were stereotyped as either brave and fearless or aggressive and crafty throughout the British Colonial era (Lindholm, 1980). Literary representations of Pathans have been influenced by the discourse surrounding their essence.

The concept of race and the issue of racism

According to Blumer and Solomos (2004), critical discourse studies devotes a great deal of attention to the sociological concepts of race and racism. The word "race" came from the Portuguese "raca" and the Italian and Spanish "razza" in the sixteenth century. Its original use was to outline the lineage of a family, including its inherited traits and social rank (Goldberg and Solomos 2002, p.97). In spite of this, "racism" was a commonly used word in the 1930s to emphasize the significance of race (Goldberg and Solomos, 2002, p.98).

The nuanced and complicated nature of racism makes elucidating it a daunting undertaking. According to Goldberg and Solomos (2002) and Wodak and Reisigl (2005), the idea of race is more of a social construction than a biological one. Racism is defined by Wodak and Reisigl (2005, p.) as a derogatory term used to incite political strife. According to Memmi, as described in Wodak and Reisigl (2005), racism is a form of victim exploitation that involves dividing people without a basis and passing negative judgments on them. Slavery, racism, prejudice, and apartheid are all concepts that van Dijk associates with racism. Goldberg and Solomos cite his view that powerful people in today's society—

including politicians, media figures, and government officials—are to blame for the worst forms of racist speech because racism is a complex social structure. Racism is a social phenomena, according to Van Dijk (2005, p.1). In addition, he argues that the historical, cultural, and economic dimensions of racism are difficult to separate from racist speech. According to Essed (quoted in Wodak and Reisigl, 2005, p.6), racism is an ideology and systemic problem that maintains racialized socioeconomic inequalities. Racism, according to Essed, has both theoretical and practical components. Racism, according to Miles (quoted in Wodak and Reisigl, 2005), is both an ideology and a set of ideas that gives its victims particular meaning. Racist attitudes nowadays are different from those of yesteryear, according to Guillaumin (2003, p.29). He asserts that although racial categorization is now thought of as a genetic one, it was formerly regarded as a legal one. Additionally, rather than diachronicity, the current racist structure is defined by synchronicity (Guillaumin, 2003, p. 29). Guillaumin further notes that "aggressivity" and "stereotyping" are essential characteristics of racism (2003, pp.30–31).

Racist speech is a clear manifestation of racism. According to Cashmore (2004, p. 351), racist discourse is the use of language in a biased social manner that aims to exert dominance over a particular racial or ethnic group. In their discussion of racism, Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard (2003, p.112) refer to Taguieff's (1991) three-part model, which they state as follows: "ideological racism" involves racist ideas and principles, "prejudice-based racism" is defined by racist traits and attitudes, and "behavioral racism" includes discriminatory actions and persecution (p.112).

An extensive analysis of the concept of "Racism" from multiple perspectives has been offered by numerous writers. This necessitates coming up with a plethora of concepts to shed light on racial speech as well as analyzing its various manifestations.

Various Manifestations of Racism/Racist Communication

There are six primary types of racist discourse that Van Dijk (2005) identifies.

a) Racism is a power dynamic in which one racial group exerts social dominance and influence over another. an other definition of racism is the unfair treatment of individuals or groups because of their race. b) Racism might seem like an organized and systematic social practice. d) Racism is substantiated by the fact that people have prejudiced and discriminatory views. The way people talk to one another and the words they choose to express themselves might be seen as a form of racism.

Racism is characterized by the establishment of social hierarchies and the use of dominant influence on victims or other social groups, according to Van Dijk

(2005). A language that distinguishes between "us" and "them"—where "us" is considered distinct from "them"—is necessary to achieve this goal (p.2). Not only does the dominance of one race or group lead to economic, political, and social discrimination, but it also shapes people's ideas and how they perceive the world in the socio-cognitive domain. Those from privileged backgrounds mistreat members of minority groups, perpetuate negative stereotypes in the media, and encounter prejudice in the workplace. Discrimination is characterized by Van Dijk (2005, pp.3–4) as a criminal act rather than merely a moral failing. Nevertheless, powerful people in positions of authority, such as politicians, bureaucrats, and members of the media, frequently use their personal connections and the power dynamics inside their organizations to perpetuate racial domination. The way they achieve this is through the dissemination of racist ideology in textbooks and other educational resources, the promotion of racist ideas and practices in public discourse, the passage of discriminatory legislation, and the reinforcement of racist narratives and stereotypes in the media (Van Dijk, 2005, p4-6).

Discriminatory ideas and preconceptions that act as manifestations of racist beliefs make up the socio-cognitive aspect of racism. Rather than focusing on the person, these concepts are part of a societal framework (Van Dijk, 2005). There are psychological and intellectual components to the discriminatory notions of "us" and "them," or in-groups and out-groups, respectively (Van Dijk, 2005, p.8). Racism, along with racist beliefs, prejudice, stereotyping, and other related aspects, is thus formed and propagated through communication.

Racist speech can be broadly defined as either "discourse that discusses or targets persons of a different race" or "discourse that targets individuals of a different race," according to Cashmore (2004, p. 351).

Direct action is the hallmark of racist discourse; it manifests most obviously when powerful people openly treat people differently because of their race through rudeness, insults, and disparaging comments (Cashmore, 2004, p.351-352).

Thanks to their democratic affirmations, the privileged class no longer supports overt racism. So, racist communication is becoming more common in subtle ways, such being uninterested, avoiding eye contact, talking too loudly, and showing less attention than usual (Cashmore, 2004, p.352). Therefore, modern race communication is marked by a higher level of indirection, leading to more noticeable negative consequences.

The dynamics of commonplace racism and privileged racism in daily life Essed contends that racism takes many different forms, however not all of them fall under the category of commonplace racism. The term "everyday racism"

refers to the recognition of racist organizations and ideologies in the ordinary course of daily affairs. In short, it means that racial ideas and beliefs are deeply ingrained in people's minds and are either directly or indirectly reflected in their daily lives. According to Reena, Mirza, and Meeto (2005, p. 35),... Essed argues that a variety of written works, including literary works, memoirs, stories, poetry, and personal narratives, exhibit overt racism on a daily basis. Both overt and covert racist viewpoints and ideas are effectively communicated by the cited materials (Goldberg and Solomos, 2002, p.202).

Racism in daily life can take on two distinct forms: overt and obvious and covert.

Essed claims that racism and race are the two components of daily racism. This comprises prejudices, racial jokes, stereotypes, and the regular manifestation of racist ideas in people's day-to-day lives (as cited in Goldberg and Solomos, 2002, p.204).

Beyond chance meetings, systemic racism extends beyond individual experiences and takes on a systematic form inside institutional entities. This is where racism, both ordinary and elite, converges.

Racist speech produced by the media, bureaucracy, politicians, and upper classes of society is frequently more subtle and potent, and it is commonly accepted (Cashmore, 2004, Reena, Mirza, and Meeto, 2005). Racialized language is frequently used against minorities in everyday interactions. Rather than focusing on behavior, this racism targets individuals based on their identity. In particular, the practice of elite racism in daily life uses democratic justification to deny people their rights in a way that is less obvious and more accepted in society (Cashmore, 2004).

Methodology

Research Design:

Qualitative Methodology: Employ qualitative techniques to investigate the discursive formation of jokes pertaining to Pathans.

Utilize Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as the theoretical framework to examine the linguistic and social aspects of the jokes.

Data Collection:

Gathering of Hilarious Tales: Go through literature, social media, and oral traditions to compile a diverse collection of amusing tales about Pathans.

Participants' count: If you want your analysis to be full and comprehensive, pick jokes that are typical of the whole.

Concerns with ethics: Avoid doing damage or reinforcing stereotypes by making sure the analysis respects the subject matter's dignity and sensitivity.

Data Analysis:

Perform a detailed analysis of the jokes to discover the language characteristics, rhetorical techniques, and discursive methods used.

Ideological Inquiry: Examine the hidden ideologies, power relations, and societal ramifications that are present in the jokes.

Contextual Comprehension: Place the jokes into their social, historical, and cultural settings to clarify their importance and influence.

CDA Framework:

Examine Prevalent Narratives: Look at the dominant narratives that form Punjabi and Pathan identities, with an emphasis on how humor is used to build and reinforce these identities.

Investigate the connection between language and power dynamics, looking closely at how words can reinforce or challenge existing hierarchies.

Ideological Importance: Think critically about the core ideas and values expressed in the jokes, such as how they normalize prejudice and stereotypes.

Examine the social implications of the jokes by thinking about how they impact people's attitudes, beliefs, and actions.

Results and Discussion

Joke Sample	Structure	Hypothesis	Script	Purpose
A. Pathan Joke	Punjabi speaker and listener, Pathan target	Based on superiority theory, portraying Pathans as ignorant	Contains elements of dumbness and incongruity, aimed at ridiculing Pathans	Self-glorification of Punjabis and denigration of Pathans
B. Another Sample Joke	Punjabi speaker and listener, Pathan target	Superiority theory at play, portraying Pathans as incapable in language comprehension	Incongruous elements of language distortion, aimed at showing Pathans as inferior	Reinforce racial stereotypes, promote Punjabi superiority
C. Further Joke	Punjabi speaker and listener, Pathan target	Superiority theory, depicting Pathans as less modern and incapable of understanding technology	Elements of perplexedness and inability to tackle technology, ridiculing Pathans	Highlight superiority of Punjabis over Pathans
D. Pseudo-Ethnic Joke	Punjabi speaker and listener, Pathan target	Superiority theory combined with sexual innuendo, portraying Pathans as sexually ignorant	Contains incongruent elements of love and foolishness, aimed at ridiculing Pathans	Reinforce stereotypes, promote Punjabi superiority

E. Another Sample Joke Punjabi speaker and listener, Pathan target

Superiority theory, showing Punjabis as rational and progressive compared to Pathans Elements of irrationality and pushing national progress, portraying Pathans as unreasonable Promote sense of Punjabi superiority

F. Yet Another Joke Punjabi speaker and listener, Pathan target

Superiority theory, depicting Pathans as intellectually inferior and incapable of handling important positions Contains elements of dumbness and language distortion, aimed at ridiculing Pathans Reinforce stereotypes, promote Punjabi self-glorification

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Pathan humor shows social meanings, ideological frameworks, and power dynamics:

1. Prevalent Dialogues:

Why Punjabis Are Better: A prevalent rhetoric of cultural and intellectual supremacy is reflected in the jokes, which repeatedly portray Punjabis as superior to Pathans.

The Pathans are repeatedly portrayed as uneducated, stupid, and unable, which only serves to further marginalize them in the debate.

2. Language and Power: Language Distortion: The jokes frequently use distorted language to make Pathans look stupid for not understanding simple language differences, which only serves to highlight the power imbalances that exist.

Hegemony of the Punjabi Language: Speakers of the Punjabi language use language to make fun of and marginalize the Pathan people, so asserting their linguistic superiority.

3. Ideological Significance: Racially Stereotypes: The jokes reinforce power systems by perpetuating racial stereotypes about Pathans, who are portrayed as illogical, technologically incapable, and backward.

Jokes help normalize discriminatory attitudes and actions by making fun of Pathans, which normalizes ridicule of Pathans.

Reproduction of Power in Social Hierarchies: The jokes perpetuate the status quo of power hierarchies, with Punjabis at the top and Pathans at the bottom.

Inequality and Marginalization: The humor perpetuates social disparities by further marginalizing and reducing Pathans to a lower social status.

5. Possibility of Resistance and Subversion: The jokes not only provide credence to the existing quo but also encourage critical thinking about the power structures that are in place, which can lead to acts of resistance and subversion.

Analyzing the jokes critically can help people become more empowered to fight for social justice and equality by exposing oppressive ideologies.

6. It is imperative that we interact critically with humor and conversation, especially in situations where oppressed groups are being attacked and insulted. An inclusive, respectful, and empathetic society is possible when people work to dismantle prejudice and discrimination in public discourse.

In conclusion, by applying a critical discourse analysis (CDA) lens to jokes about Pathans, we can see how humor is a powerful tool for social transformation and how we must reflect critically and take action to combat racist discourses if we are to achieve social justice.

Conclusion

The complex dynamics of jokes about Pathans were investigated in this study using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) within the context of English Language Teaching (ELT). By carefully examining language patterns, social circumstances, and underlying ideologies, the investigation uncovered the complex and varied features of humor and its function in maintaining power imbalances and stereotypes.

Reflecting larger power dynamics and the exclusion of certain ethnic groups, the results highlighted the significant impact of cultural hegemony and social conventions on comedic expression. The oppressed Pathan people frequently suffered as a result of the use of humor to perpetuate preexisting ideas of superiority and inferiority. In order to understand how language contributes to the establishment and maintenance of social hierarchies, this research examined the linguistic and discursive features of these jokes.

Furthermore, the ethical considerations surrounding the evaluation of humor, especially its ability to perpetuate prejudices and perpetuate discrimination, have been brought to light by the examination of Pathan jokes within the framework of English Language Teaching (ELT). It is crucial for us to analyze humor as language teachers and practitioners, to question its assumptions, and to promote inclusive language practices that promote equity and social justice.

Based on the tenets of critical inquiry and self-awareness, this study emphasizes the need for an enhanced comprehension of comedy in ELT. By delving into the deeper social meanings of funny language, educators may create classroom environments that encourage diversity, confront toxic speech, and equip students to understand and navigate many cultural situations.

By arguing for a more inclusive and socially conscious approach to language teaching and analysis, this research adds to the ongoing dialog in the fields of English Language Teaching (ELT) and critical discourse studies. By acknowledging the power of language to shape viewpoints and social interactions, educators may greatly impact the fight against prejudice, the

promotion of intercultural understanding, and the advancement of a more equal society.

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