

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 7 : 10 October 2007

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LANGUAGE OF HEADLINES IN KANNADA DAILIES

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Chapter 6

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CHAPTER 6

RHETORIC EXPRESSIONS IN HEADLINES

Rhetoric expressions, which are characteristic of a departure from the ordinary form of expression or the ordinary course of ideas are occasionally used in headlines. Figuratives like personification, simile, metaphor, metonymy, euphemism, antithesis, oxymoron, irony, pun, structural ambiguity, transferred epithet, hyperbole and litotes are found to be commonly used. Epigram / proverb, idiom, imperative, interrogation, exclamation, focus, reduplication, ellipsis, onomotopeia and rhyme are a few formal devices also used to bring in rhetoric effect. Rhetoric expressions in general make a headline sensational, eye-catching and attractive through the connotative or emotional contents involved in them. They form a part of the free-style headlines as opposed to the news-style headlines, which are purely informative. The use of the different kinds of rhetoric expressions mentioned above in headlines is discussed in detail in this chapter.

6.1 Personification

In personification inanimate objects and abstract notions are spoken of as having life and intelligence.

Example:

1. munidu maariyaada kaaveeri

get fury-pp Maari-become-pst.rp Cauvery

'the Cauvery who got furious and became Mari (a deity)'

The river Cauvery is here personified as the deity Mari, who is popular for fury and destruction. The reference is to the context when Cauvery overflowed and caused destruction.

6.2 Simile

In a simile, a comparison is made between two objects of different kinds which have however at least one point in common. The simile is usually introduced by the comparative particle ante 'like' in Kannada.

Example:

2. tirupati kSavaradante kuuDadu

Tirupati shave- like should not

'it should not be like Tirupati shave'

The phrase tirupati kSavara 'Tirupati shave' refers to 'incomplete performance' and is brought in comparison to the government projects and schemes, which are usually left incomplete. The object compared, that is, 'the government projects and schemes' is not mentioned in the headline and it is recoverable from the news story.

6.3 Metaphor

Metaphor involves a comparison of two things X and Y, where X is totally identified with Y as if X is Y itself. This is different from simile, where X is considered to be like Y. Metaphor, which is an implied simile, is more preferred in headlines.

Examples:

3. bisilalla, benkiya baanMale

scorching heat not, fire-gen frying pan

bisilu 'scorching heat' in its extreme degree is here compared and identified with benkiya baaNale 'frying pan of fire'. The implied meaning is that the scorching heat is unbearable to the extent that our body may get roasted.

4. niddeyinda meeLeLu
 sleep-ins getup-imp.s
 'get up from the sleep'

'inactiveness' is here identified with 'sleep'. The implied meaning is that the people should get out of 'inactiveness' and become 'active'.

6.4 Metonymy

Metonymy involves change of name. An object is designated by the name of something which is generally associated with it. It is a 'whole' and 'part' relationship, where 'whole' may refer to 'part' or the vice versa.

Example:

5. sTefi graafge gaaya : jarmanige talenoovu
 Steffi Graf-dat wound : Germany-dat headache
 'Steffi Graf wounded: Germany worried'

The word jarmani 'Germany' here refers to 'the people of Germany' in general or 'the tennis authorities of Germany' in specific. The container is used for the contained.

The term talenoovu 'headache' is a common idiom referring to 'mental torture'. Idiom is dealt with under 6.15.

6.5 Euphemism

Euphemism consists in the description of a disagreeable thing by an agreeable name.

Example:

6. itihaasakke nuutan ledidderuu justice wallige huu
 history-dat Nutan +be neg pp concess hair-dat jasmine flower
 'Nutan to the history' is no food for the stomach (someone)

The word itihasa, which normally means 'history', here refers to the sad demise of the famous film actress Nutan. It also amounts to the fact that the actress is such a reputed person, who will never be forgotten by people and who finds a place in the Indian film scenario. The exact word saavu 'death' or sattaru 'died' is not agreeable and instead a more meaningful word itihasa 'history' is preferred.

6.6 Antithesis is a mode of speech in which the real meaning is

Antithesis reveals a striking opposition or contrast of words or sentiments made in the same statement. It results in emphasis.

Example: ayila apana aastiyee?

7. i Talige aatanka : naarvege jaya

Italy-dat apprehension : Norway-dat victory

'apprehension to Italy.: victory to Norway' is headline through

The world cup football match has resulted in opposite sentiments for Italy and Norway. Italy has suffered aatanka 'apprehension' and Norway has experienced 'happiness' through jaya 'victory'

6.7 Oxymoron is a mode of speech in which the real meaning is

Oxymoron is a special form of antithesis, whereby two contradictory qualities are predicted at once of the something.

Example: *hoTTege hiTTilladiddaruu juttige mallige huu*

8. hoTTege hiTTilladiddaruu juttige mallige huu
 stomach-dat food-be.neg.pp-concess hair-dat jasmine flower
 'eventhough there is no food for the stomach (someone
 desires) jasmine flower for the plaited hair'

The above headline represents an epigram which reveals oxymoron. The contradiction here is that a person having no food for the stomach, the basic need, desires to have jasmine flower for the hair, an extravagance. The implication is that one should care for the essential.

6.8 Irony

Irony is a mode of speech in which the real meaning is exactly the opposite of that which is really conveyed or is of a different tendency.

Example: *raajya moyli appana aastiyee?*

9. raajya moyli appana aastiyee?
 state Moily father-gen property Q
 'is the state (Karnataka) Moily's father's property?'

Irony has been introduced in this headline through interrogation. The implied meaning is that raajya moyli appana aastiyalla 'the state is not Moily's father's property'. This is just that opposite of what is conveyed in the headline.

10. vidhana savdhadalli gaaLige avakaasha koDi
 Vidhana Soudha-loc air-dat chance give-imp.pl
 'please give chance for air in Vidhana Soudha'

The implied meaning in the above headline is that 'too much of crowd in the assembly should be avoided'. This is

which means 'give chance for the air'. What is conveyed through this expression and what is implied are different.

6.9 Pun

A Pun consists in the use of a word in two different meanings leading to two different interpretations of a statement.

Example:

11. nagarasabeyalli kaaveeri: gondala, ghooSaNe

Municipality-loc Cauvery : confusion, noise

'Cauvery issue in the municipality: confusion and noise'

The word kaaveeri 'Cauvery' in the above headline involves pun. Though in its real sense it refers to the 'Cauvery' river dispute', it can also refer to the female personal name kaaveri 'Kaveri'.

6.10 Structural ambiguity

Structural ambiguity is similar to pun in yielding two different interpretations of a statement. But, what is responsible here for two different interpretations is two different grammatical interpretations of a word or between two words.

Example:

12. kuDiyuvudu kalita gaNapa

drink-npst.ger learn-pst.rp Ganesha

(a) 'God Ganesha who learnt drinking'

(b) 'God Ganesha learnt drinking'

Here, the word kalita can be interpreted as a finite verb or a relative participle. When it is a finite verb, the headline is a verbal one involving topicalization giving the meaning 'the God Ganesha learnt drinking'. When it is a relative participle, the headline is a nominal one involving topicalization giving the meaning 'God Ganesha who learnt drinking'.

is a relative participle, it leads to a nominal headline with the meaning 'the god Ganesha who learnt drinking (milk)'.

13. premajaaladalli jayalalita, em.gi. aar

Prema-entanglement-loc Jayalalita, MGR

'Jayalalita and MGR in Prema's entanglement'

When the term preemajaala is considered as a single unit, the interpretation is that 'Jayalalita and M.G.R are in love with each other'. The other possible interpretation is that 'the names of Jayalalita and M.G.R are entangled in the cheating by the woman by name Prema', when preemajaala is interpreted as a genitive noun phrase preemana jaala 'Prema's cheating'.

6.11 Transferred epithet

When an epithet is transferred from its proper word to another that is closely associated with it, it is called as transferred epithet.

Example:

14. kempu neepala

red Nepal

'communist Nepal'

The word kempu 'red' is associated with the word 'communism' / 'communist rule'. In the above headline, it is found to be transferred to the name of the country, Nepal, where communist rule has been introduced.

Example:

6.12 Hyperbole

In hyperbole, a statement is made emphatic by overstatement.

Example: The epigram used in the above heading hints at the
 15. bele gaganakeeriddu heege? price sky-dat rise-pst.ger how
 'how has the price gone so high?'

While referring to 'price rise/hike', it is exaggerated by the term gaganakeeriddu 'rose to the sky' implying that 'the prices of things have gone up exorbitantly high.'

6.13 Litotes

In litotes, an affirmative is conveyed by negation of the opposite, the effect being to suggest a strong expression by means of a weaker.

Example:

16. karedare barabaaradee.....?
 call-cond come-proh-Q.....

'shouldn't you come, if called.....?'

The negative modal verb barabaaradee 'shouldn't you come?' combined with interrogation gives rise to the strong positive expression kaNDita barabeekittu 'you should have definitely come'.

6.14 Epigram/Proverb

An epigram is a proverbial statement. It is a brief-pointed saying introducing antithetical ideas which excite surprise and arrest attention.

Example:

17. beTTa agedu ili hiDidaru

hill dig-pp rat catch-pst-3pl

'having dug the hill, (some people) caught rat'

The epigram used in the above headline hints at the contrast between 'serious attempt' and 'insignificant outcome'. The first meaning is expressed in the clause beTTa agedu 'having dug the hill' and the second meaning in the clause ili hiDidaru '(some people) caught the rat'. This is a case of oxymoron, a special kind of antithesis. A similar epigram has already been discussed under oxymoron (6.7)

6.15 Idiom

Idioms are expressions peculiar to a language. An idiom has a meaning different from the meanings of its constituents and it is often used in other figures of speech like metaphor.

Examples:

18. naayipaaDu

dog suffering

The idiom naayipaaDu, the literal sense of which is 'dog's wandering in vain', here metaphorically refers to 'the hard work and suffering of a person without the goal being achieved'.

19. sheekhar, rajiv opppanda

Shekhar, Rajiv understanding

Di,em,ke sar kaarakke ardhachandra

DMK government-dat dismissal

'understanding between Shekhar and Rajiv: dismissal of DMK government'

The word ardhachandra 'half moon' is here idiomatically used to refer to 'neck out'.

20. dharma biidige barabaaradu: nabi

Dharma street-dat come-proh : Nabi

'Dharma should not come to the streets: Nabi'

The idiom biidige baa, whose literal sense is, 'come to the streets' here refers to 'get downgraded'. The total implied meaning is that 'Dharma should not be made cheap and misused for one's own advantage'.

6.16 Imperative

Imperative form of expressions are sometimes used with implied sense.

Example:

21. mahiLaa caalakaree eccara

women drivers-voc beware

'O, woman drivers, beware'

The expression, mahiLaa caalakaree 'O women autoriksha drivers', is vocative. While cautioning the women autoriksha drivers of their security, their courage to take up this profession is appreciated.

22. 'janataadaLa sarkaraaravannu saridaarige tanni'

Janata Dal government-acc right track-dat bring-imp.pl

'please bring the Janata Dal government to the right track'

The above headline involves the presupposition that 'Janata Dal government is in the wrong path'.

6.17 Interrogation

Interrogation is more frequently used in implied meanings. Besides negative implication, it is also associated

with meanings like 'speculation', 'doubt' 'uncertainty' and 'confirmation'.

Negative implication

Negative implication often leads to figures of speech like irony.

Examples:

23. raaSTra raaja kaaraNadalli naanu yaavuura daasayya?
national politics -loc I which place mendicant
'who am I in national politics?'

The question expression naanu yaavuura daasayya 'I, a mendicant of which place' here implies naaneenuu alla 'I am nothing (and insignificant) in national politics'.

24. raajakiiya seeridare tappeenu : ambariish
politics join-cond wrong what: Ambarish
'what is wrong if (I) join politics: Ambarish'

The question expression in the above headline tappeenu 'what is wrong?' implies tappeenuu illa 'there is nothing wrong'.

Speculation

Example:

25. riimeek hejje?
remake step
'remake trend?'

The question mark here implies that the old trend of remaking(cinemas) is again stepping in'.

Doubt

Example:

26. amerikaadalli vignaani kini aatmahatyeye?
America-loc scientist Kini suicide-Q

'is the scientist Kini's death in America a suicide?'

The tag question here raises the doubt whether the scientist, Kini committed suicide or was murdered.

Uncertainty

Example:

27. marukaLisiruva ayoodhya prashne: parihaara yaavudu?

recur-npst.rp Ayodhya issue : solution what?

'Ayodhya issue, which is recurring: What is the solution?'

The wh-question here implies that it is not clear as to what the solution for the Ayodhya issue is.

6.18 Exclamation

Exclamation is used in headlines to express emotionally loaded implied meanings associated with contexts like 'rarity', 'unusual event', 'emphasis', 'rejoice' and 'ridicule'.

Pride associated with rarity of a thing

Example:

28. vishva iiju spardhege bhaaratada baalaka!

world swimming competition-dat India-gen boy

'a young boy from India to world swimming competition!'

An Indian boy participating in international swimming contest is a rare incident and it gives 'pride' to all Indians.

Pathos associated with an unusual event

29. tumbu garbhiNiya ranning rees!

fully pregnant woman-gen running race!

'running race of a fully pregnant woman'

It is pathetic that the circumstances were such that a fully pregnant woman had to participate in the running race.

Rejoice

30. bhale laara!

bravo Lara!

'well done Lara!'

It is an expression of rejoice over the West Indies cricket player Brian Lara's hitting a spectacular century.

Ridicule

31. yuddhaanantara iraa-kuveeT sahoodararante!

war-after Iraq-Kuwait brothers - q

'it is claimed that Iraq and Kuwait would become brothers after the war'

It is ridiculous that Iraq and Kuwait claim to become brothers after the war, when there is a war between them.

6.19 Focus

A focussed statement always involves a presupposition along with the implied meaning.

Example:

32. 'aaDaLita naDesoodu nanage gottu'

administration conduct-npst.ger me know

'I know how to do administration'

Focussing here has been effected through single quote. The presupposition involved is that someone has critically commented on the administrative capacity of the speaker of the utterance. The implication is that 'there is no need for the speaker to get any advice from any corner'.

6.20 Reduplication

In reduplication, the same word gets repeated conveying the intensity of the fact or emotion contained

Examples:

33. meTTuuru jalaashaya

Mettur dam

'baridoo baridu':

empty-emp empty:

Tivi kaicalaka

TV trick

'Mettur dam is absolutely empty: a TV trick'

The word baridu 'empty', when gets reduplicated in the above headline as baridoo baridu, gives the meaning 'totally empty'. The particle oo adds further emphasis to the meaning of emptiness. This reduplicated phrase enclosed in single quote involves irony implying that the Mettur dam is not really empty as supported by the fact that it is only a trick by T.V. camera.

34. 'che che', illavee illa; hoogtaane ava

'tut-tut' be.neg-emp be.neg; go-npst-3sm he

'tut-tut', not at all; he will go'

The reduplicated phrase illavee illa along with the emphatic particle ee in it ascertains the fact that 'he will definitely go' and it denies the presupposition that 'the opinion given by others that he will not go'. The interjection 'che che' also adds to the denial attached with emotion.

35. malagada mahaanagaradalliiga gaDibiDiyoo gaDibiDi!

sleep-neg.rp mega city-loc now confusion-emp confusion

'chaos and confusion now in the mega city which never

sleeps'

The reduplicated phrase gaDibiDiyoo gaDibiDi refers to the intensity of chaos prevailing in the context. The above headline also consists of transferred epithet in the phrase malagada mahaanagara, which means 'the mega city which does not sleep'

6.21 Ellipsis

Ellipsis involves omission of a few words from sentence which is needed to complete the sentence construction or sense. It is based on the presupposition that the readers are aware of and can easily recover the expression or idea omitted. It is one of the most effective and commonly used rhetoric devices in creative writings like poetry, fiction, etc. The omission is usually denoted by dots.

Examples:

36. eekalavya hebberalu niiDadiddare.....

Ekalavya thumb give-neg.cond.....

'If Ekalavya had not given his thumb....

In the above headline, the information is given in the negative conditional clause, the main clause of which containing the consequence has been omitted. The consequence is that 'there would have been no Mahabharata at all'. This information is obviously a part of readers' previous knowledge of the context.

6.22 onomotopoeia

In onomotopoeia, names or words are formed out of sounds that resemble those associated with the object or action to be named, or that seem naturally suggestive of its qualities.

Onomotopoeia is also an effective rhetoric device.

Examples:

37. kaTTaDa bhavya ; oLage toTa toTa
 building magnificent: inside leaky leaky
 'building is magnificent: leaking very much inside'

The onomatopoeic expression toTa toTa here refers to the seepage of water i.e., the sound of water falling drop by drop from the roof of the building. The statement contained by the headline is antithetical.

38. gunDigeeyee goTak
 heart-emp last gulp
 'heart failure'

The onomatopoeic word goTak here refers to the heart beat coming to a halt, which implies 'death due to heart failure'.

6.23 Rhyme

Rhyme is a pattern of identity of sound between words or verse-lines. This is a part of the conventions of versification.

Examples;

39. maneyalli taayi : jillege daLavaayi
 house-loc mother: district-dat army general
 'mother in the house: army general for the district'

Rhyme has been maintained in the words taayi 'mother' and daLavaayi 'army general'. The statement is antithetical.

40. fuTbaal daaha : maaLige mooha
 footbal thirst: multi storeyed building fascination

Rhyme is in the words daaha 'thirst' and mooha 'fascination'

41. cukki kangaLa taare; niinu nijavaagiyuu yaree?
 star eyes-gen actress: you really-emp who-Q
 'actress with twinkling eyes; who are you really?'

Rhyme is in the words taare 'actress' and yaare 'who you are?'

42. uNDuu hooda koNDuu hooda
 eat-pp-also go-pst-3sm take away-pp-also go-pst-3sm
 '(some one) ate nicely and stole away (something) also'

Rhyme is in the words uNDuu 'having eaten' and koNDuu 'having stolen'.

The different rhetoric expressions and their literary effects discussed above make such headlines poetry like and the resultant sensational effect immensely contributes to the indexing function of the headlines.