

The Implications of Kinship Terms in Newspaper Accident Reports

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Abstract : The linguistic choices accident news reporters make when reporting killing cases within family circles aid in augmenting the wrath readers feel towards the perpetrators. Undoubtedly, when killers or murderers are labelled with particular words, prospective readers will associate them with the cultural connotations and emotions, whether positive or negative, attached to those words. One of these strategies is the use of kinship terms to anaphorically or cataphorically refer to the defendants. While some articles opt for using the killer's name, others make use of other kinship labels such as "the mother," "the father," "the step-father, and "the step-mother." The preference for proper nouns over kinship terms and vice versa can be indicative of some of the underlying implications that the article writer may be trying to make about either the status of the killer or the overall incident circumstances. This research examines how the use of referential kinship labels could point to hidden and shared connotations between writers and their prospective readers. This study examined seventy newspaper articles from English-medium publications based in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the USA, and several other countries. Some of these articles make use of proper nouns referring to the individual directly by name, whereas others refer to individuals based on their kinship relation with the victim or by their occupational status. Furthermore, information was collected from two hundred fifty-one students at several UAE-based universities by asking them what certain kinship words meant to them. The survey questions allowed for real insight into some of the most prevalent interpretations attached to kinship labels and the possible implications for preferring kinship terms over occupational labels and persons' proper names. Results indicate that newspaper writers employ kinship labels to inspire an emotion in their future readers' reactions that may not be achieved through the use of the person's proper name(s). Additionally, respondents to the survey believe that the use of kinship nouns like "mother," "father," "step-mother," and "step-father" tends to inspire a stronger emotional response, as they are almost always associated with particular behavioral cultural codes and conventions. The study concludes with recommendations for teaching the grammar of English words to EFL and mass communication students and with suggestions for translation theorists and further research.

Keywords : kinship terms, accident reports, cultural connotations, translation of kinship terms

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