

Topic Specific Differences and Lexical Variations in the Use of Violence Metaphors: A cognitive linguistic study of YouTube Breast Cancer Discourse in New Zealand and Pakistan

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Abstract : This paper explores how speakers from New Zealand and Pakistan with breast cancer use violence metaphors to communicate the intensity of their experiences during various stages of illness. With the theoretical foundation in Conceptual Metaphor Theory and the use of Metaphor Identification Procedure for metaphor analysis, this study investigates how speakers with breast cancer use violence metaphors in different cultural contexts. It collected a corpus of forty-six personal narratives from New Zealand and thirty-six from Pakistan, posted between 2011 and 2023 on YouTube by breast cancer organisations, such as 'NZ Breast Cancer Foundation' and 'Pink Ribbon Pakistan'. The data was transcribed using the Whisper AI tool and then curated to include only patients' discourse, further organised into eight narrative topics: testing phase, treatment phase, remission phase, family support, campaigns and awareness efforts, government support and funding, general information and religious discourse. In this talk, it discusses two aspects of the use of violence metaphors, a) differences in the use of violence metaphors across various narrative topics, and b) lexical variations in the choice of such metaphors. The findings suggest that violence metaphors were used differently across various stages of illness experience. For instance, during the 'testing phase,' violence metaphors were employed to convey a sense of punishment as reflected in statements like, 'Feeling like it was a death sentence, an immediate death sentence' (NZ Example) and 'Jese hi aap ko na breast cancer ka pata chalta hai logon ko yeh hona shuru ho jata hai ke oh bas ab to moat ka parwana mil gaya hai' (Because as soon as you find out you have breast cancer people start to feel that you have received a death warrant) (PK Example). On the other hand, violence metaphor during the 'treatment phase' highlighted negative experiences related to chemotherapy as seen in statements like 'The first lot of chemo I had was disastrous' (NZ Example) and '...chemotherapy ke to, it's the worst of all, it's like a healing poison' (chemotherapy, it's the worst of all, it's like a healing poison) (PK Example). Second, lexical variations revealed how 'sunburn' (a common phenomenon in the NZ) was used as a metaphor to describe the effects of radiotherapy, whereas in the discourse from Pakistan, a more general term, 'burn,' was used instead. In this talk, we will explore the possible reasons behind the different word choices made by speakers from both countries to describe the same process. This study contributes to understanding the use of violence metaphors across various narrative topics of the illness experience and explains how and why speakers from two different countries use lexical variations to describe the same process.

Keywords : metaphors, breast cancer discourse, cognitive linguistics, lexical variations, New Zealand English, Pakistani Urdu

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