Persuasion and Political Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Imran Khan's Election Speech (2013)

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Abstract

This study aims to explore how a political leader can propagate his ideology through the tactful use of language. This paper critically analyzes the speech of Imran Khan - Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e- Insaaf (PTI), a major political party in Pakistan - which he delivered from Shoukat Khanam hospital two days prior to the general elections (2013) in Pakistan. The researchers have attempted to uncover the ideologies which worked behind the given speech. It has been investigated how different linguistic tools have been used to project or achieve political power/objectives. The selected speech has been analyzed qualitatively using the analytical framework of Fairclough which he proposed in 1995 and with the help of other tools, e.g. referential strategies, repetition, word choice, positive self-representation and negative other representation, to study how specific words and phrases carry power to transform the perception and political views of the people. It was found that political discourse is often deliberately crafted to project specific ideologies, which are always located in the discourse in an implicit way. Moreover, politicians employ certain linguistic strategies to persuade people to follow their hidden agendas. It may be suggested that the codes and symbols of political discourse must be explored to make it easy for the common people.

Introduction

Language is a multi-layered mode of communication. It is believed that words or their combinations are always socially, politically, economically and racially loaded. To understand various hidden agendas carried by the language, critical discourse analysis offers best analytical tools. It helps us interpret and

analyze the production of new realities.[1] It also enables us to understand the hidden meanings which reside in discourse or language.[2]

This research paper seeks to analyze Imran Khan's speech, which he delivered during the election campaign on May 9, 2013. This speech seems to carry his ideology and the stated manifesto of "Tabdeeli" (change) and "Naya Pakistan" (New Pakistan)". In this way, the aim is to analyze the manners in which a political leader tries to propagate his ideology using language. It will also investigate whether the politicians tactfully employ persuasive strategies to indoctrinate their ideology or it happens spontaneously under genuine impulse. Martin and White[3] postulated that most of the studies in the field of the CDA have been conducted in the developed countries. Therefore, the present study will investigate the ways in which language can be used as a tool to influence social change in a developing country - Pakistan.

Fairclough analyzes the association between discourse and power from a political point of view. He emphasizes that power relations between the people who control the state and the rest of the population are "partly discursive" (p. 4). Literature on CDA reveals that it is frequently applied on political discourse, to assess how politicians exercise their power, authority and tend to inject their thoughts and ideologies through the powerful weapon of language. Politicians often instrumentalize language to exercise power; that is why this study will seek an insight into an effective use of language which can provoke people to change the existing reality by breaking the conventions of hegemony.

Hence, with the help of CDA, it will be observed how and to what extent language could be meticulously used by a politician to mediate a specific ideology.

Literature Review

Critical discourse analysis has become an important academic discipline across the globe. CDA may be considered as a specific research method, or vision, which has its own analytical tools[4] and strategies to unveil ideological structures, hidden in the discourse within a social, cultural or political context.[5] CDA deals specifically with the reproduction of political power, power abuse or domination through political discourse. Van Dijk contended that discourse may include various forms of resistance or counter power against such forms of discursive dominance.[6] There are some important frameworks, which may be used for analyzing discourse or political discourse like Wodak's Discourse Historical Approach proposed in 1995. Similarly, Van Dijk proposed Socio-cognitive theory in 1991 and Gee gave seven building blocks of language in 2005 and 2011 respectively.

Wodak and Reisigl[7] gave Discourse Historical Approach in the field of the CDA. The distinctive feature of this approach was its attempt to integrate systematically all available background information in an analysis or interpretation of discourse, especially in prejudiced utterances. The socio-cognitive theory of Van Dijk presents that mental representations are often articulated along "Us" versus "Them" dimension. In this theory, speakers of one group generally tend to present themselves in positive terms, whereas, they present themselves to other opposing groups in negative terms. [8]

In this regard, Fairclough[9] differentiates CDA from other conventional approaches of discourse analysis because of its dialectical relations with other elements of social life (social relations, power, beliefs and values, institutions and rituals, material practice). It is known as Dialectical-Relational Approach, which asserts that language internalizes and is internalized by these elements of social life. Fairclough presented a three-layered framework wherein he identified the relationship between three interrelated dimensions of discourse (sociocultural practice, discourse practice, text) and three interrelated processes of analysis (description, interpretation, explanation). Ideology and domination may be seen as the main aspects of investigation within his framework. Following Fairclough's framework proposed in 1999 and analytical strategies, which he put forth in 1992, the language, especially of mass media and politics, can be scrutinized as a site of power and struggle. His framework advocates the idea that the dialectic relation between language and social reality can be realized through social events, social practices, and social structure. [10]

According to Fairclough, discourse has become perhaps the primary medium of social control and power. He proposed nine strategies 'politeness', 'modality', 'interactional control', 'transitivity and theme' and 'ethos', etc. to analyse socio-political discourse critically. These properties can be applied to analyze how politicians structure their discourse to persuade the people in order to fulfill their specific goals or political agendas.[11]

The two-dimensional framework of Anabela, primarily meant for journalistic writings, can be considered an advanced and comprehensive approach as it integrates different dimensions of analysis: textual and contextual. Furthermore, it also includes the issues of time-plane and discursive strategies by different social actors and the modes of social operation of discourse. [12]

Recently, many CDA studies have been conducted to analyze political discourse, including speeches and manifestos of political leaders and parties across the world. Wang analyzed "Victory Speech' (2008) and 'Inaugural Address (2009) delivered by Barack Obama through the application of Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar purported in the 1960's and transitivity analysis. She analyzed as to how ideology, power and authority are exercised through language

and how the interplay of different linguistic tools can make people accept the political and ideological agendas. [13]

Alvi and Baseer carried out an analysis of Barack Obama's speech "The Great need of the hour" (2008) and revealed how the elements of 'Ethos' and 'Pathos' can contribute to establish the integrity and reliability of a politician's speech. [14] Moreover, the extensive analysis of George Bush and Barack Obama's speeches by Sarfo and Crampa, through the application of Van Dijk's concept of Discourse analysis, reveals that emotionally charged vocabulary and expressions can portray a certain phenomenon negatively or positively. [15]

Ehineni's work, based on Nigerian political manifestoes undertaken (2014), reveals that even modal verbs can be used for manipulating people's political views in order to demonstrate political commitments as well as to win public support. [16]

The research of Aslani and Salmani further discussed the idea as to how ideologies and political views are represented in translation. Based on Fairclough's (1992) assumptions that texts are always open to diverse interpretations, it has been analyzed how the news providers project the underlying ideological standpoints of their own news agencies. It has been illustrated that the translation of the news in Keyhan (a Persian newspaper) is totally different from the English version of the news in the Guardian, Reuters, and The Independent. [17] Similarly, Islam et al. revealed how pro and anti-government discourse was generated in various sections of Pakistani print media through the linguistic manipulation of the same news event. [18]

Van Dijk contented that CDA studies the language of powerful elites as well as the people who are responsible for social injustice, corruption and inequality. This makes their message and hidden agendas understandable for common people. [19] In this regard, Wodak observes the language of those people who are willing to change the existing situation, and are struggling to come into power. [20] In this study, this aspect of CDA is more relevant as it seeks to analyze how the selection of words and phrases can have a strong tendency to change the perceptions of people in order to transform the current political situation.

With a desire to contribute to CDA studies in Pakistan, this study examines how a popular Pakistani political leader, Imran Khan exploits various linguistic techniques and strategies to represent his ideology as fair and democratic. The research has been conducted using Fairclough's three-dimensional framework along with an array of analytical strategies 'referential strategies', 'repetition', 'word choice', 'modality', 'positive self and negative other representation', etc.

Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature, techniques and procedures which were based on the approach of critical discourse analysis. With the help of tools offered by CDA, a rigorous methodological process has been followed to analyze Khan's final election speech, which he delivered from the hospital bed after getting injured during his election campaign in 2013. This study seeks to uncover hidden ideologies and meanings of this speech by looking into various linguistic strategies used by Khan to persuade people for believing into his political manifesto. For analysis, the researchers have integrated Fairclough's three-dimensional analysis approach 'description, interpretation and explanation'[21] with other tools offered by CDA, e.g. word choice[22], repetition[23], persuasive strategies[24], referential strategies[25] and positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation[26]. With the help of these strategies, the researchers have observed how political and ideological agendas are embedded in discourse which may play a significant role in shaping the views of people.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Background and Description of the text

Since the day of the independence, the Pakistani political system has been confronting several problems and issues. As a matter of fact, economic development, prevalence of peace and progress of any country largely depends on its political leadership. According to Khan (2013), since the last two or three decades, Pakistan's political system has been in the hands of corrupt politicians, and people are still looking for a change or an opportunity for a better life. Due to the ineffective political system, Pakistan is lagging behind in many fields of life and is still considered to be a developing country.

According to Imran Khan (2013), during the reign of Pakistan People's Party (PPP), under the presidency of Asif Ali Zardari (2008-2013), Pakistan faced its worst period ever in the history. Pakistan, due to the all-round poor performance of PPP, became politically unstable, socially traumatized and economically ruined. Poverty prevailed over the country. No remarkable progress was seen in reducing poverty and economic crisis. In this national context, Imran Khan appeared on the canvas of Pakistani politics and kept on reiterating his radical ideology of "change" and "New Pakistan" (1996- to date).

As mentioned earlier, this research paper is analyzing the speech which was delivered by Imran Khan on May 09, 2013 from Shaukat Khanam Hospital during election campaign 2013. In this speech, he encourages people to raise their critical consciousness by identifying the hidden objectives of other politicians and

break the convention of hegemony, which has been prevailing in Pakistan for a long time. Through this speech, he tries to persuade people not to be taken in any more by the fake ideologies of other politicians, and come out to support his movement of change. His last speech before election 2013, was in fact, the last battle, in which, he had to inspire the people as much as possible to vote for change, and emancipate themselves from the unjust rule of political actors ruling previously.

Interpretation and Explanation

The whole speech is enriched with different persuasive strategies and techniques, which can be analyzed to look into the Khan's claim as a positive agent of change in Pakistani politics. This may also allow us to see how he presents his ideology as more fair and the only source of national progress. The analysis of the speech can be categorized into the following points.

Predicational Strategy

Khan associated certain stereotypes with PML-N and PPP and these stereotypes are realized using language. He stated "we have observed two turns of both parties in the province and in the center, and it was found that if we had to go with them, then the country has no future". With the use of predicational strategy, Khan renders that if Pakistan will choose these parties one more time, it is not going to have any future. This is a common stereotype, which is propagated by politicians in which they present other political parties/leaders incompetent to achieve their agendas. Reisigl and Wodak contended that such strategies are used to attribute various qualities, usually negative or discriminatory, to social actors in political discourse.[27]

Positive Self-presentation and Negative Other-presentation

Khan's indirect reference to the "two turns of the both parties" is also very significant as he mentions in the next lines of the same paragraph that he wanted "change" since 1996, so it bears a stamp that the phrase "both parties "refers to the PMLN and PPP as these parties were ruling at that time. It may be inferred that he wants to create an image of a pro-public voice having the dream of "change." The manifestation of his objective to come into politics can be taken as an attempt to create his positive self-image among the audience as he expressed humanitarian reasons for it. Then, in the next lines, he gives an account of his personal life, which has been full of hardships and obstacles. This can be taken as a strategy for gaining the sympathy of people[28]. It is noteworthy that, in these lines, positive self-representation is followed by a negative representation of

others. Even while referring to his personal troubles he held Pakistani opponents and British Press responsible for the break up with his wife as she was accused of being a Jew by his opponents in Pakistan and United Kingdom. By doing so, he seemed to follow a strategy of winning people's favor by presenting others as oppressors and himself as a victim.

His direct reference to Quaid-e-Azam may also have a political function as people have an emotional attachment with Quaid-e-Azam, the founder of Pakistan. Khan mentions that the country, by now, should have become "Quaid-e-Azam's Pakistan." Here the use of "should have" (modality) plays an important ideological function implying indirectly that today's Pakistan is not the one Quaid-e-Azam had dreamt of.

Khan's confession of his mistakes, towards the close of his speech (see appendix), and assurance to people not to repeat these mistakes in the future can be seen as having twofold importance. On one hand, it creates a possibility for social acceptance and absolution, presenting him as the meek, humble and righteous person. On the other hand, it may convince people about the transparent and fair nature of his party and its workers. Therefore, with the tactful use of language, he mitigates the effect of his mistakes in the past and infuses a hope for a better future within people.

While addressing the people of Karachi, his assertion that lawlessness and terrorism cannot be abolished by the parties "who have armed forces" may be taken as a hidden reference to MQM and its allied parties as these parties were ruling at that time in Karachi. The use of "cannot" conveys an impression of incapability of other political parties to address the issues of people. Moreover, Khan tactfully associated the most sensitive issues of the corruption in the police forces and terrorism existing in Karachi with MQM (another political party). The strategy of associating negative attributes to the opponents has also been employed when he referred to PPP. He argued that their (leaders of PPP) personal prosperity will reach "the heights of sky" and contrasted it with "poor little on earth". Positive self and negative other representation may be an important technique for stereotyping people as suggested by Baker and Ellece and Wodak and Reisigl [29] in order to achieve political objectives. Khan's use of this strategy seems to be motivated by his desire to persuade people to follow his political ideology and seek their approval (vote) for the election 2013.

Use of Personal Pronoun

Khan's presentation of positive self-image is also obvious from his excessive use of the personal pronoun "I." For example, he says 'I did whatever I could. God is my witness that I struggled hard to do whatever I could for this country' (see Appendix). Here, he also makes an emotional appeal to people by declaring

God as a witness to his political struggle. Further, he openly declares that 'I' and 'Tehreek-e-Insaf' (his party) are the only "alternative" political option for the people. His direct reference to himself as the provider of an alternative option clearly shows his conscious intention of seeking people's approval.

Building a Relationship with the Audience

Khan, at the very beginning of the speech, tries to develop a close relationship with his addressees by using the phrase "My Pakistanis." The possessive pronoun 'my' helps him build the impression of being very close to the whole Pakistani nation. He thanks all those communities such as Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, Christians and foreigner Pakistanis who had been concerned about his health.

Word Choice

The vocabulary used in this speech seems to be very close to the concept of "Local semantics" as proposed by Van Dijk[30]; the use of words which are easily understandable to the people of a particular setting. Khan has used a variety of pronouns like "I", "we", "they", "them" etc. More significantly, whenever he talks about his own self, he uses the phrases such as "God's sake", "country's sake", "alternative", and "I struggled hard.", while talking about other political parties, he uses the phrases such as "poverty", "lawlessness", "status-quo", "destroyed" and "personal fulfillment." The lexicon and collocations used in this speech, not only reflect Khan's political ideology but also represent his positive self-image. This also helps us understand his discrimination of 'Us' and 'them' as put forth by Van Dijk[31] in Pakistani politics.

Repetition of Words and Phrases

The most repeatedly used word is of "change" which has been used twelve times throughout the speech. He frequently repeats the phrase "It was a difficult time" and "difficult journey" while referring to his political struggle. Other repeatedly used phrases are "I did whatever I could", used for four times and "It is your responsibility" used for three times. A significant rhetorical question "Are you ready?" can also be viewed throughout the speech used as many as four times. He uses this question "Are you ready" by attaching the phrase "to change your destiny" with it for three times. This repetition of phrases and words indicates that Khan is urging/persuading people to play their role for a political change in the country.

The Significance of the Words "Change" and "New Pakistan"

Imran Khan's ideology has always been about "change" and a "new Pakistan." It is not an exaggeration to state that behind the construction of his political discourse, the ideology of "change", directly or indirectly, can frequently be seen at work. He uttered the word "change" as many as 12 times in this speech, which reveals his strict adherence to his resonant ideology of change. He urges people to cooperate with him in order to bring a 'change' which would guarantee prosperity in the county. He also convinced people that only a genuine change can make a "new Pakistan." His use of the word "new" implies that the present system is not working for the betterment of masses and, therefore, needs to be replaced by a new one. The ideas of 'change' and 'new Pakistan' accentuate the strategies of 'us and them' and 'negative other representation' prevalent in khan's political ideology.

Conclusions and Recommendations of the Study

The study has revealed that hidden ideologies and perspectives of politicians can be unveiled by looking deep into the words and phrases used by them in their political discourse. The analysis of Khan's speech shows that he uses ideologically loaded discourse in order to change the perceptions of the people not only about himself, but also about others (his political opponents) and the prevailing political system in the country. Through a tactful use of persuasive linguistic strategies, he clearly attempts to project positive self-representation and negative other representation. In this way, the politicians may even promise to construct an ideal world for the people. Further, the analysis shows that Khan's discourse about the ideology of "change" and "new Pakistan" aims at changing the political views of people and persuading them to support him in his political struggle. He intends to lead people towards his own specific ideological direction.

The study highlights the need to interpret the discourse of Pakistani politicians more critically as it may include hidden ideologies. This may make Pakistani political discourse more understandable for common people. This study has also revealed how language can be used to spread awareness among people about the existing political system which has failed to deliver so far. This research can help future researchers who aim to explore linguistic tools used in Pakistani political speeches and may provide them with a design to analyze the discourse of politicians who claim to bring change in the country.

Notes and References

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Appendix

First of all My Pakistanis! Am I audible?

Am I audible to all?

Faisal, am I audible to all?

Faisal, speak Faisal: am I audible to the people?

Am I audible to the people?

Ok! Ah….my Pakistanis!

> First of all, I want to say thanks to all from the core of my heart, for receiving such a great amount of prayers; for the consolation I received from the people, the leaders, every community: Christian community came, or Hindus, Sikh, Pakistanis came, all! foreigner Pakistanis; first of all, I want to say thanks from the core of my heart to all of you.

> After that, I just want to say one thing to them, who were worried about me; that God will never take me away from this world until a new Pakistan is formed. So, do not worry.

> Ah……….. I, today, do not want to make a speech for my Pakistanis. I just….whatever in my life…. I just want to say whatever is there in my heart. I came into politics seventeen years ago; Why did I come? What was my need to come into politics? Tell

me all! Is there any politician, whom God has given fame, money and he is respected in all over the world? What was my need to come into politics, when a person has already been given everything by God?

I came into politics, when God enlightened me with belief, and that came when I was in the last days of my cricket. So, I reached a conclusion that the more God gives…. and that is our belief, the aim of our life, that the more God gives us, the more he imposes responsibility on us, that what we do with it for other people. So God had given me a lot. I thought then, that we had observed two turns of both parties in province and centre, and right then; it was found that if we had to go with them, then the country has no future. So I reached a conclusion, that if we want change, there is no other way without politics. This dream of change, I had in 1996. Since 1996, I have been thinking that one day Pakistani nation will stand for the change. It was a very difficult journey, in which my home was destroyed, my poor little wife, who was a Christian, was accused of being Jew, when she came to Pakistan. She was called Jew's lobby. There, she was attacked by the British Press too, who are racists, as to how she became Muslim, here she was made Jew's lobby. Then in 1998, a case was made on her; a fake case of tiles. So, she, poor little, could not live; and at last, my home was broken, I lost my kids. Ah…. it was really a difficult time, but…… I repeat again, that all this, I was doing for Allah's sake and country's sake.; and I was waiting that one day Pakistani nation will wake up and come out for change, as you have come out today for change. And it was a journey since then; ah… in which ups and downs were seen, a very difficult time was seen. I pay my homage today, to all who kept on standing with me; my old companions, and those who held me guest and backed me when no one could do it.

Today, I am very happy that the dream which I used to have that one day, our country will be ready to make that Pakistan which should have become Quaid-e- Azam's Pakistan. I am very happy, that today, our nation is standing there.

Today, all of you, who have come out in Islamabad, and those of you who are watching on T.V: this is a message for you; that the opportunities which you have now do not let this opportunity go. But, I, again, as I said two days before, that I did whatever I could. God is my witness that I struggled hard to do whatever I could for

this country. Now it is your responsibility. It is your responsibility to make your own future, a better one.

I start with you, Karachi's people!

Now the people of Karachi! tell me! are you ready to change your destiny? You all have reached a conclusion from the circumstances which you all have been facing from the last five years; that the parties, who have armed groups, can never abolish terrorism or lawlessness until the police is impartial. And now are you ready to stand against these groups? Are you ready to overcome your fear? And will you come out on the day after tomorrow to change your destiny? This is now your responsibility. If you do not come out, whatever will happen; you, yourself will be responsible. Because, it is clear now that the people who will never let the police remain impartial as they have armed groups cannot solve your problems.

Now it is Sindh!

I have never seen poverty on such a large scale, which i saw in interior Sindh. People of Sindh! Tell me one thing! For how long you will keep on selling on the name of Bhutto? On his name, people will grab votes and will leap their personal prosperity to the heights of sky, and poor little you on earth………. The world is stepping forward and you are going backward. And you have either those or great landlords, who move sometimes here and sometimes there. So, are you ready?

I, Tehreek-e-Insaf, has given you an alternative. We have formed youth leadership in Sindh. Are you ready to change your destiny? This challenge is now up to you.

People of Balochistan!

In Pushton areas, there has been politics on the name of nationality, and religion so far! In Pushton areas. And on the other side, they are caught by sardars, in Baloch areas.

I want to say to you, people of Baloch! It is a good opportunity for you as well. Let a party come, give a chance to a party who will let the money come to you, from the hold of sardarsor the professional politicians, who do not let the money reach you. Give a chance to a party, which can establish local government system, to bring out a new system, may build a new relation between you and Pakistan!

Relation between you and Pakistan, and your relation with your people, with the public of Balochistan.

Now I come to Pakhtunkhawa and FATA!

It seems that you have taken a decision. There is no need to say much more to you. There is only one request to you that do a favour; make every one come out, make your women come out too; because the more people will come out, InshaAllah, the peace, which is the need of the hour, in FATA and Pakhtunkhawa, we will bring that peace inshaAllah.

Now I come to Punjab's people! Punjab decides because it is the largest province of Pakistan.

Punjab's people!

I have a very straight question from you! Your's rulers, I say, are very much experienced. In 25 years; five times ruled Punjab, have spent five years. If you think that police system that was under them, improved, hospital system improves, school system improved, why did not bring local government system, also ask this, because none of good government exists in the world; in whose foundation, there is no baldiyati system exists. It is like an impossible thing. Switzerland, Sweden, America, anyone whose government is good, that is local government system. They never ever let the local government system come; they could produce electricity at their own…never made. So point is that, who in five years could not do, if you think in sixth turn will do, you… vote for them! But then you will be the responsible.

I, in the last, to all of you, I say, I say to all Pakistanis, I say to my minorities, to my Hindus, Christians, Sikhs,Kalash Community; to all the nation; I say to all of you!

God has given a golden chance. Do not let this chance go. It is that kind of chance that, we, how much old it is, what is called status quo,who together ruled this country; and the country has moved backward; circumstances have turned into their favour and the condition of country has gone worst.

Give us a chance for change. I, in the last, I know, that, I know that there is only a day after tomorrow……the day after tomorrow before you: and the day after tomorrow means, I want all change

volunteers of Tehreek-e- Insaf to stand on polling booths early in the morning, before these open.

I, ah, ah…..what would happen to me on the day after tomorrow, this is what god knows better, I do not know. Ah, but I request to you that whoever are the representatives of our PTI, vote for them.

I accept that we committed mistakes; I accept that there would be some candidates who do not come up to our standards; but I, I promise you from my heart that any person, any MNA or MPA, either he will bring himself up to the standard of Tehreek-e- Insaf, otherwise, we will never let him remain in the party. This is what I guarantee you.

You, just first time, after coming out, neither see friendship, community, nor relations; vote for ideology, vote for change, vote for tabdeeli. Do not waste this opportunity.

I, again I say, I do not know what would happen; God knows better, but my heart…… I do not know why….I do not know why my heart is saying, that we, at this time, in the evening of the day after tomorrow, will be offering the nawafils of thanks, and the whole Pakistan will be celebrating the Jashn of new Pakistan.

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