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" A Critical Discourse Analysis of Tweets by Pakistani Politician's During 2018 General Election "

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Abstract

In the field of Political discourse analysis, numerous researchers from various disciplines have shown significant interest in studying political communication. Previous studies have focused on political discourses in diverse contexts. Therefore, this study aims to examine how Pakistani political leaders use language in their tweets to influence and address the Pakistani public, particularly during 2018 general election. The analysis includes tweets from the official twitter accounts of the heads of PTI and PML-N, specifically; Imran Khan and Shahbaz Sharif. This research employs a Mixed-Method Research; including qualitative (descriptive) and quantitative approach, focusing on content analysis of tweets to uncover the discursive strategies utilized by these leaders. Emphasizing Van Dijk Socio Cognitive Model, the study seeks to understand the significance of these strategies in political discourse. The findings reveal that the tweets related to the election employed a variety of rhetorical, discursive, and lexical devices, such as personal anecdotes, statistical data, emotional appeals, and logical argument. The results indicate that both political leaders employed similar discursive strategies in their tweets, and although there were notable differences in their approaches. Shahbaz Sharif focused on infrastructure and developmental works, while Imran Khan focused on corruption and on the basic system of Pakistan and wanted to bring change in the country. Twitter has become a perception in the political discourse in recent times. It has become a source of controversies regarding misinformation. This study conducts a critical discourse analysis (CDA) of tweets by Pakistani politicians during the 2018 general elections, (PTI head) and (PML-N head). The researcher has observed to identify the significance of using Twitter by Pakistani politicians to propagate their manifesto during 2018 general election and to know the strategies used by Pakistani politicians on Twitter to spread their political narratives. By applying Teun A. van Dijk's socio-cognitive model. Finally, this study suggests that future research should explore other tweets by Shahbaz Sharif and Imran Khan in different political context to further understand the political discursive strategies and practices.

Keyword: Pakistani Politics, Role of Hashtags. Digital World, Twitter Trends, Van Dijk, Socio-cognitive mode.

Introduction

Language is a fundamental tool for human communication, shaping our thoughts, interactions, and social realities (Ojha, 2022 and Gul et al.,2024). However, it is far from neutral, often carrying social, political and cultural implication (Nigatu & Admasu, 2023). Language is deeply intertwined with ideology, expressing and disseminating beliefs and worldwide (Simpson, 2013). Language plays a pivotal role in shaping political discourse, particularly during election campaigns where politicians strive to influence public opinion and garner support (Mason & Platt, 2026 and Ali et al.,2022).

Indeed, in political discourse, language plays an essential role as a powerful tool for communication and persuasion. Furthermore, political discourse is the communication and speech-making around political matters used by those involved in politics. It includes debate, persuasion, and conveying messages through several forms of communication. Thus, politicians try to convince public opinion, to support their policies, views, and agendas through persuasive speech and discursive strategies (van Dijk, 1993). Furthermore, Tweets writing is the art of effectively using language in written communication (Herrick, 2020 and Gul et al., 2023(a)). It entails using persuasive communication strategies to persuade people to a particular opinion or argument.

Twitter is one of the most popular social media platforms worldwide since social media first gained popularity in 2006. (Fairclough, 1992). Political communication represents a battleground for various power groups vying for public support, often at the expense of their opponents' reputations. Political elites, aware of their ideological positions, employ diverse structures, strategies, and rhetorical tactics to oppose other powerful groups when their interests are threatened (van Dijk, 2006). Given the increasing use of Twitter by politicians to further their political aims (Hsu et al., 2013; Ross & Rivers, 2018; Smith, 2011); it is imperative to focus research on the ideological content and discursive strategies employed in this medium. Twitter has great impact to turn over the views of common people towards political leaders (A.K et al, 2024).

The study employs a qualitative analysis of the tweets, examining the use of linguistic features such as pronouns, metaphors, and rhetorical devices, alongside discursive strategies such as positive self-presentation, negative other-presentation, and the construction of in-group and out-group identities (van Dijk, 1997; Chilton, 2004). Additionally, the research incorporates quantitative data gathered through questionnaires to assess the impact of these tweets on public opinion and voter behavior (Gul et al., 2023(b); Hsu et al., 2013; Ross & Rivers, 2018). This study

aims to examine the discursive strategies used by Pakistan's politicians named as Imran Khan and Shahbaz Sharif in their tweets during the general election in Pakistan which were held in July 25th, 2018, based on Van Dijk Socio Cognitive model. In addition, this research examines the significance of the discursive strategies used by Pakistani political leaders during their addresses before the public of Pakistan. The study also analyzes the similarities and differences in the discursive strategies used by both of the leaders.

Problem Statement

Politicians use language as a means of communication. However, their words are evaluated not just based on grammatical correctness but also on their persuasive effects on their readers (Febriana & Fajariah, 2018). Understanding the linguistic and discursive strategies employed by these politicians on Twitter is essential for several reasons. Firstly, it provides insights into how political leaders construct their identities, project their party's vision, and position themselves against their rivals Ali, et al, 2024). Secondly, it reveals how language is used to appeal to voters, reinforce ideological positions, and legitimize political actions (Abbas, 2013 & *Sabih-Ul-Hassan et al.*, 2023).

Finally, it contributes to a broader understanding of the role of social media in modern electoral politics and its impact on democratic processes. The researcher examines the tweets given by Shehbaz Sharif and Imran Khan from April 10th, 2018 to August 10th, 2018. Shehbaz Sharif and Imran Khan. Moreover, the main focus of this study is to examine the similarities and differences in the strategies used by Pakistani leaders in their tweets. Furthermore, a thorough examination focuses on the discursive strategies frequently employed in tweets. In addition, this analysis aims to enhance comprehension of the precise strategies and underlying reasons for using these instruments to influence public opinion.

Research Objectives

The study aims to achieve the following research objectives:

1. To identify the significance of using Twitter by Pakistani politicians to propagate their manifesto during 2018 general election.
2. To know the strategies used by Pakistani politicians on Twitter to spread their political narratives.

Research Questions

The study attempts to address the following research questions:

1. What is the significance of using Twitter by Pakistani Politicians to propagate their manifesto during 2018 general election?
2. Which strategies are used by Pakistani politicians, on Twitter to spread their political narratives?

ISignificance of the Study

This study holds significant value in the field of linguistics and political communication, particularly through the lens of Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model.

This research holds significant importance in various dimensions. Firstly, it contributes to political communication and the language of political leaders used via twitters by offering an in-depth examination of the discursive strategies employed by Pakistani two political leaders as PTI and PML-N during general election 2018. This study can enhance understanding of the diplomatic communication strategies employed by Pakistani leaders on the national stage, shedding light on the nuances of language, persuasion, and diplomatic language.

Secondly, by analyzing the speeches via tweets delivered during general election campaign, the research can reveal recurring themes, strategic emphases, and changes in language that align with shifts in political manifesto and policies or geopolitical dynamics. This study deepens our comprehension of Pakistan's political engagement. It provides a valuable resource for policymakers, scholars, and practitioners seeking to navigate the complexities of political, national and international relations in the context of South Asia.

Limitations

While conducting this research, the researcher faced some limitations. A significant limitation is the limited extent of the research, which only focuses on the official twitter accounts of the two Pakistanis political parties heads.

Additionally, the accessibility and reliability of data, particularly data are videos shared via twitter regarding the party's narrative and textual documents, might affect the thoroughness and precision of the research.

Research Gap

Previous studies show the usage of language in the tweets of the two political leaders of Pakistan Therefore, the study aims to rectify this insufficiency by comprehensively examining the language used in the tweets delivered by Pakistani leaders. This study is a valuable contribution to the wider area of understanding political discourse.

Literature Review

Van Dijk's Socio-cognitive Model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) offers a systematic framework for examining how language shapes social cognition and power relations within discourse. This model is particularly valuable for analyzing political discourse, such as the tweets of politicians during election campaigns, as it focuses on the interplay between discourse structures, cognitive processes, and social contexts (Van Dijk, 1998). This, further, offers an opportunity to explain how the discourse changes the meaning, what changes are made in any specific situation and why are these changes made (Fairclough, et al 2006& Sajjad et al., 2023). However, CDA is not only a description and interpretation of discourses in social context but also offers an explanation of why and how discourses work (Fairclough, 2003).

The focus of Fowler (1991) was on the linguistic analysis of media representations. His studies, along with the works of Hodge and Kress (1993), examine the way media “mystifies” and obscures certain aspects of reality by employing certain features and resources of grammar, such as, transitivity, nominalization, and agentless passive. A critical analysis of such representations can reveal encoded ideology. Ideology, a significant concept in the discourse, is defined by Machin and Mayr (2012) as an individual's beliefs about the working of the world. It defines for them what is common sense and natural. The use of social media for political gain has developed and evolved in the last decade. All social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snap chat, and the rest, were created for socializing (Jeon et al. 2013).

Discourse Strategies

This theory looks at the specific linguistic and discursive strategies used in discourse to achieve political goals. For example, tweets may use emotive language, statistical claims, or appeals to authority to persuade followers and sway public opinion van Dijk (2006). In studying tweets by PTI and PML-N leaders during the 2018 elections, a CDA approach would analyze not just the content of the tweets but also the context, the intended readers, and the broader societal implications of the language used (Hayat, et al.2015). This analysis helps uncover how political discourse, shapes public opinion and influences electoral outcomes (Van Dijk, 2001 & *Sabih-Ul-Hassan et al.*, 2023). The analysis of ideologies requires not only close linguistic scrutiny but also an understanding of social identity theory which focuses on positive *self* and negatives *other* presentation and analysis of text from this perspective assists in exposing ideologically based

contextual strategies Fowler's (1991). These perspectives also referred to as ideologies are explicitly or implicitly formulated or communicated through discourses.

Van Dijk's Sociocognitive Approach

Teun A. van Dijk emphasizes the cognitive aspects of discourse comprehension and production, as well as the social structures and power relations that shape discourse. His approach includes:

Ideological Square: Analyzing how discourse reflects and reinforces ideological positions.

Context models: Investigating mental representations of social situations that influence discourse comprehension.

Macrostructures: Examining larger social and cultural structures that shape discourse.

Political Communication and Social Media

Political communication via social media, particularly during elections, has become increasingly pivotal in shaping public opinion and influencing voter behavior (Chadwick, 2013). Moreover, social media facilitates the construction of political identities and the dissemination of ideological viewpoints (Graham & Jackson, 2017). The language used in political tweets often employs rhetorical strategies aimed at enhancing credibility, rallying support, and framing political narratives (Jackson & Lilleker, 2011)

Critical Discourse Analysis and Social Media

In the context of social media, CDA investigates how platforms like Twitter are used by politicians to construct and disseminate messages that influence public opinion and political outcomes (Fairclough, 2013).

CDA in Political Context

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) in the Pakistani political context examines how language is used strategically by politicians to shape public opinion, reinforce power dynamics, and influence social change. According to Fairclough (2001), CDA focuses on uncovering hidden ideologies embedded within discourse, revealing how language constructs and perpetuates social inequalities and power relations.

Pakistani Political Discourse

According to a study by Tufail and Khurshid (2018), Twitter in Pakistan has emerged as a significant platform for political discourse, allowing politicians to directly engage with voters and shape public opinion in real-time (Tufail & Khurshid, 2018). This platform facilitates rapid

dissemination of political messages, enables politicians to bypass traditional media filters, and encourages interactive communication with constituents (Tufail & Khurshid, 2018).

Theoretical Framework:

A critical aspect in discourse analysis understands how language is used to shape and convey ideologies and power relations within societal contexts (Fairclough, 2015). Language, as a tool of social practice, reflects and reinforces dominant discourses and power dynamics (Van Dijk, 1993). The theoretical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) posits that language is not neutral but serves to maintain or challenge social hierarchies and ideologies (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This approach involves examining both linguistic structures and discursive strategies employed by speakers to understand how they construct meanings and identities (Chilton, 2004). CDA draws on various linguistic theories, including systemic functional linguistics (Halliday, 1994) and pragmatics, to analyze how texts, including tweets, function within broader socio-political contexts (Wodak & Meyer, 2009 and Gul et al., 2023(c)).

Case Studies:

PTI and PML-N Leaders on Twitter During the 2018 general election in Pakistan, the use of Twitter by PTI's Imran Khan and PML-N's Shahbaz Sharif provided a rich corpus for examining political discourse. Imran Khan's tweets often employed inclusive and visionary language, emphasizing themes of change and collective action ("Naya Pakistan"). His discourse aimed to galvanize support by projecting a future-oriented vision and contrasting it with the status quo. Conversely, Shahbaz Sharif's tweets were more defensive and justificatory, highlighting the achievements and stability provided by PML-N's governance. His use of detailed examples and formal language aimed to reinforce the party's competence and reliability. The contrast in rhetorical strategies between the two leaders underscores the different ideological positions and campaign strategies of their respective parties.

Empirical Studies of the Research

Empirical studies focusing on the critical discourse analysis (CDA) of tweets by Pakistani politicians during the 2018 general election are relatively sparse. The way politicians use language to shape public opinion has captivated numerous linguistic researchers across various contexts (Chilton, 2004; Fairclough, 1998; Geis, 1987; Glendon, 2008; Harris, 1991; R. T. Lakoff, 1990; Schaffner, 1997; Wodak, 1989). The profound eloquence of political discourse has prompted researchers to examine the most commonly employed strategies of rhetoric and persuasion, particularly in political speeches. Persuasion is often used by politicians as an indirect method to

induce certain presuppositions and attract more followers (Cohen, 1995). Van Dijk (1998) explores the concept of ideological discourse and how it functions to maintain social hierarchies and power differentials.

According to Van Dijk, politicians use discourse not only to persuade but also to shape public perceptions of reality, often through strategies of polarization and identity construction. Farooq, A., & Raja, M. H. (2018) has also studied the same topic as the researcher as "Language and Power: A CDA of Imran Khan's Post-election Speech", aseem, Z., & Hovy, D. (2016) has conducted the research study and has predicted and has provided a broader context of how hate speech and polarizing language are used on Twitter. Shah, B., & Rana, K. M. (2019) also has studied the same topic "Critical Discourse Analysis of Political Tweets: A Case Study of PTI's Use of Twitter During the 2018 Elections" and has analyzed that the discursive strategies employed by PTI's official Twitter account during the 2018 elections. Javed, U., & Mahmoud, M. (2020) has conducted a research study and analyzed the tweets of Imran Khan using Van Dijk's CDA framework, highlighting the rhetorical strategies and linguistic features used to construct his political identity. The research emphasizes the use of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation as key discursive strategies (Javed & Mahmood, 2020).

Research Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative and quantitative type of approach to thoroughly comprehend the language and discursive strategies used by the Pakistani political leaders as Shehbaz Sharif, Imran Khan, via twitter during the general election in Pakistan in 2018. Collecting a representative sample of tweets from PTI and PML-N politicians during the election period and qualitative analysis of tweets has done via questionnaires distributed among the thirty participants of the city of Kohat via random sampling. Use tools like Twitter TAGS, NodeXL, and Twarc, web scraping software, or manual collection to gather tweets from the specified period. This study aims to explore discursive strategies used by Pakistan's politicians during general election via Van Dijk Socio Cognitive Model. The researcher has scrapped fifteen (15) tweets from the official pages or accounts of the both leaders by using the above tools or software and analyzed it through pie graph (Creswell & Poth, 2017 and Gul et al., 2022(a)). In qualitative studies, a person (the researcher) is the primary tool for collecting and studying information. Qualitative research examines human experiences and situations. It is believed that only humans, as instruments, can do this task (Ary et al., 2010 and Gul et al., 2022(b)). In this study, the primary variables are the discursive strategies of Van Dijk Model used by Pakistani political leaders in their speeches during

general election in Pakistan in 2018. These discursive and persuasive strategies are independent variables categorized into three main elements: discursive, lexical and public engagement. One primary variable is discursive strategies, which involves analyzing how politicians construct their messages to promote positive self-presentation, solidarity, and an "us vs. them" dichotomy (Van Dijk, 2006 and Gul et al.,2022(c)).

Findings and Discussion

The present research chapter provides a comprehensive analysis and discussion of the discursive strategies of the former prime ministers of Pakistan and again the candidates of the said seat, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, and Imran Khan, during general election in Pakistan in 2018. The analysis of these discursive strategies in the selected tweets is based on the theoretical framework of latest Van Dijk Socio Cognitive model. These tweets were closely related to the election campaign which was posted or shared pre, mid and post-election period. The data collected via questionnaire were justify in the form of pie graphs individually and explained each question by the researcher and justify the data in the form of total agree, disagree etc.

Tweets from Imran Khan (PTI)

April 11, 2018 Tweet:

'Our struggle is for a Naya Pakistan, where justice, meritocracy, and transparency are the guiding principles. #PTI #NayaPakistan'

Positive Self-Presentation: The tweet emphasizes the positive attributes of PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) by advocating for justice, meritocracy, and transparency.

Us vs. Them Dichotomy: While not explicitly mentioned, the tweet implicitly contrasts PTI's vision with the status quo or other political parties. By highlighting their commitment to justice, meritocracy, and transparency, it indirectly suggests that other parties lack these principles.

May 1, 2018 Tweet:

"Saluting the hard work of laborers across Pakistan on #LabourDay. PTI is committed to protecting your rights."

Positive Self-Presentation: The tweet presents PTI as a party that values and recognizes the contributions of laborers. By acknowledging and saluting their hard work, PTI aligns itself with the interests and struggles of a significant demographic.

July 20, 2018 Tweet:

'Our manifesto is a promise to the people of Pakistan. We are ready to transform this nation. #PTIManifesto #NayaPakistan'

Positive Self-Presentation: The tweet presents PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) in a positive light by portraying their manifesto as a promise to the people of Pakistan. This suggests a commitment to addressing the needs and desires of the electorate.

Future-oriented Vision: By stating "we are ready to transform this nation," the tweet projects confidence and readiness for governance. It implies a sense of urgency and determination to initiate reforms.

Appeal to the People: The reference to "promise to the people of Pakistan" emphasizes accountability and responsiveness to public expectations. It seeks to build trust and resonate with voters looking for credible leadership.

June 15, 2018 Tweet:

"Congratulations to the KP team for delivering on our promise of health reforms. We will replicate this success nationwide. #HealthReforms #PTI"

Positive Self-Presentation: The tweet highlights a successful achievement ("delivering on our promise of health reforms"), showcasing the PTI party in a positive light. The phrase "Congratulations to the KP team" emphasizes the party's effective governance and success in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), reinforcing a positive image of competence and fulfillment of promises.

May 15, 2018 Tweet:

Education is the cornerstone of our policy. We will ensure every child has access to quality education. #EducationForAll #PTI"

Positive Self-Presentation: The tweet emphasizes PTI's commitment to education, a universally valued issue. This positive self-presentation suggests that PTI prioritizes the well-being and future of children. By highlighting "quality education," the party presents itself as forward-thinking and dedicated to high standards. Emphasis on Universal Values

Education is depicted as a fundamental right, aligning with global values and making the policy appealing to a wide audience. The phrase "Education is the cornerstone of our policy" suggests that education is foundational to PTI's broader political agenda, reinforcing its importance.

July 20, 2018 Tweet:

"A historic moment awaits us. Together, we can make history on August 10th. #VoteForChange #PTI"

Framing as Historic and Momentous: The tweet frames the upcoming event (August 10th) as a "historic moment," suggesting significance and importance. This framing aims to mobilize and motivate followers by emphasizing the potential impact of their actions.

Tweets of Shahbaz Sharif's

April 12, 2018 Tweet:

"PML-N is dedicated to the progress and prosperity of Pakistan. Our track record speaks for itself. #PMLN# Progress"

Positive Self-Presentation: The tweet presents PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz) in a positive light by asserting dedication to the progress and prosperity of Pakistan. This frames the party as forward-thinking and committed to national development.

May 18, 2018 Tweet:

"Healthcare is a right, not a privilege. PML-N will ensure accessible healthcare for all. #Healthcare #PMLN"

Value Assertion: The tweet asserts that healthcare is a right, not a privilege. This positions PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz) as advocating for social justice and equality, contrasting healthcare as a fundamental entitlement versus a luxury and he made promise and commitment by stating "PML-N's will ensure accessible healthcare for all," the tweet makes a commitment to action. This frames the party as proactive in addressing healthcare accessibility issues, potentially appealing to voters concerned about healthcare access.

June 18, 2018 Tweet:

"Our youth are the future of this nation. We will ensure they have the opportunities to succeed."

Positive Self-Presentation: The tweet positions the speaker (presumably PTI or its representative) as supportive and concerned about the youth of the nation. It suggests a commitment to ensuring opportunities for their success, aligning with positive values of caring and responsibility.

Appeal to Shared Values: The tweet appeals to the shared societal value of investing in youth, portraying them as crucial to the future of the nation. This resonates with the audience's aspirations for a prosperous and thriving future.

July 25, 2018 Tweet:

"Today is the day to decide the future of Pakistan. Make your vote count. #VoteForPMLN #ElectionDay"

Rhetorical Appeal: The tweet employs a rhetorical appeal by framing the day as crucial for deciding Pakistan's future. This appeals to urgency and emphasizes the importance of civic duty.

Inclusivity and Mobilization: "Make your vote count": This phrase mobilizes the audience by directly appealing to their agency in influencing the future through voting. It encourages participation and engagement in the democratic process.

Imperative Sentences: "Make your vote count": The use of imperatives imparts a direct command, urging the audience to take specific action (voting) to exert influence.

Inclusive Pronouns: "Your vote": The use of "your" creates a personal connection with the audience, emphasizing individual responsibility and empowerment in shaping the outcome.

Slogan-like Language: "Make your vote count": This phrase is concise and memorable, akin to a slogan. It reinforces the message and encourages repetition and dissemination among supporters.

Emotive Language: "Decide the future": The word "decide" carries a sense of agency and importance, while "future" evokes a sense of potential and significance, appealing to voters' aspirations for a better tomorrow.

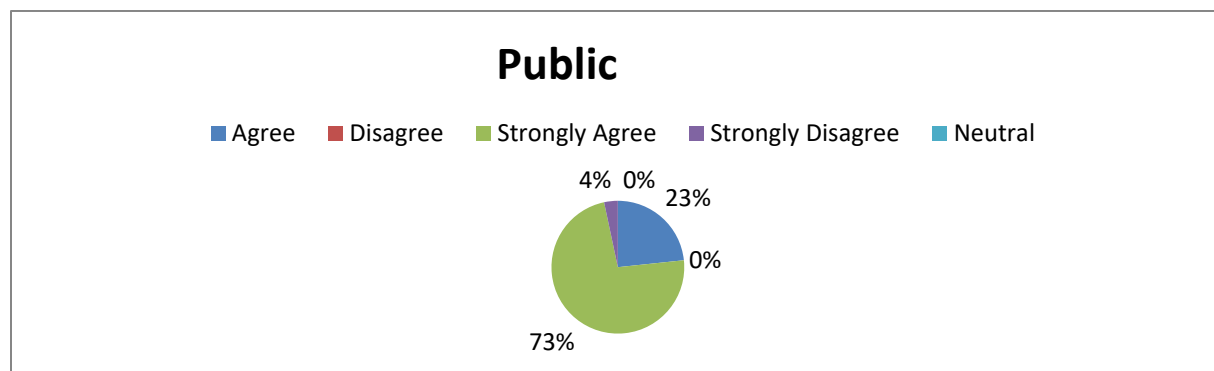
August 1, 2018 Tweet:

"Thank you to all our supporters. Together, we will continue to work for prosperous Pakistan. #ThankYou #PMLN"

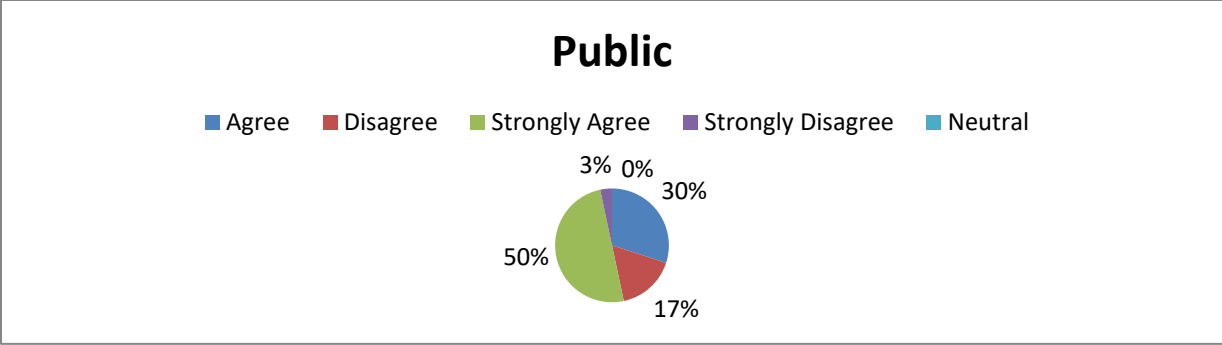
Inclusive Address: The tweet begins with "Thank you to all supporters," which directly addresses and acknowledges the audience. This fosters a sense of inclusivity and appreciation among supporters and "Together, we will continue to work for prosperous Pakistan": This phrase emphasizes collective action and solidarity, reinforcing a shared identity among supporters and the party. The tweet focuses on future actions ("we will continue to work"), suggesting ongoing commitment and dedication to a common goal (prosperity for Pakistan).

Quantitative Analysis of Questionnaires

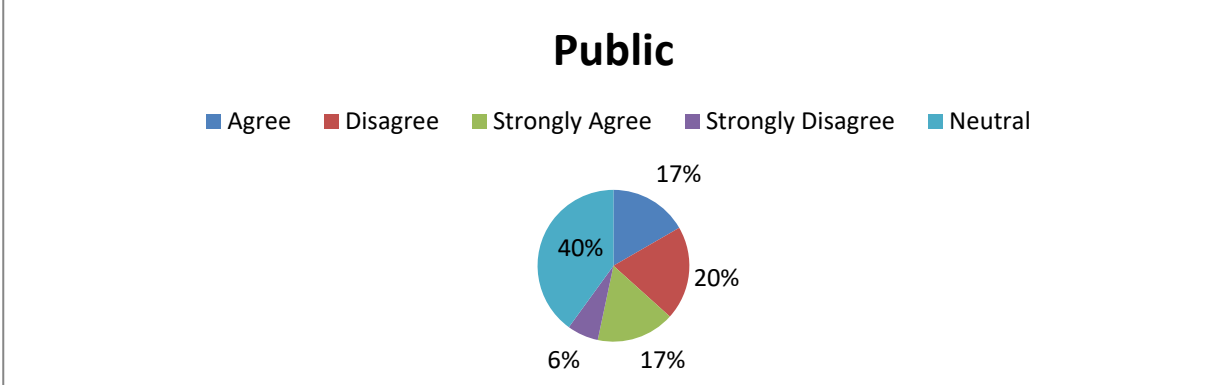
The tweets by PTI's head during the 2018 general election used a positive tone to motivate voters.



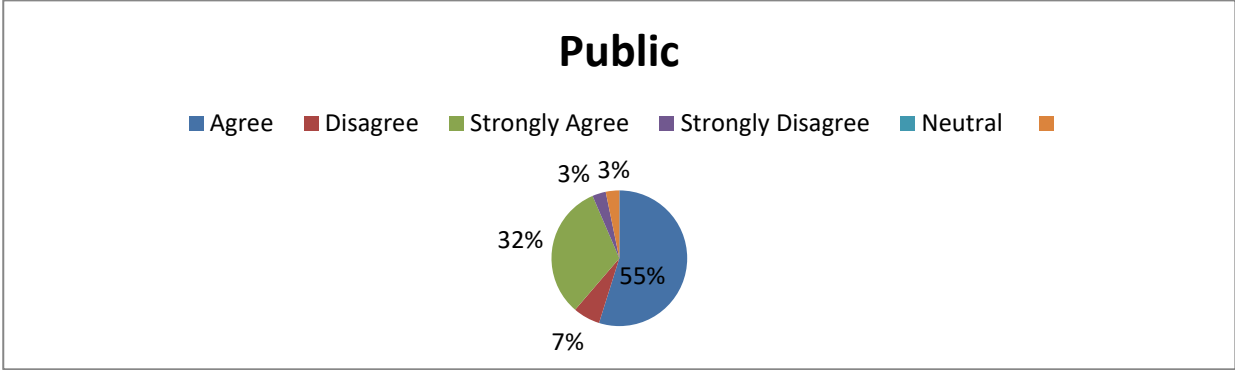
The language used by PTI's head in tweets was primarily focused on change and progress.



The tone of the tweets from PML-N's head was generally more defensive than offensive.



PML-N's head used formal and respectful language in their tweets.



Findings

Interpretation of the Results in Light of Research Questions and Objectives

The analysis of tweets from Imran Khan and Shahbaz Sharif during the 2018 general election reveals the critical role of Twitter as a platform for political communication. The significance of using Twitter by Pakistani politicians to propagate their manifesto is underscored by its ability to directly engage with a broad audience, circumvent traditional media gatekeepers, and rapidly disseminate information. In terms of strategies, Pakistani politicians employed various discursive techniques to spread their political narratives. Positive self-presentation was a common strategy, where politicians showcased their achievements and virtues to build a favorable public image.

Moreover, the language used in these tweets was often emotive and persuasive, designed to evoke strong feelings among the electorate. Terms like "struggle," "sacrifice," and "hope" were employed to foster a sense of urgency and moral duty among supporters.

Qualitative Analysis in the Context of Language

The qualitative analysis focuses on the linguistic and discursive strategies employed by Pakistani politicians during the 2018 general election. By examining the tweets of the heads of PTI and PML-N, the analysis reveals how language is used to construct political identities, influence public perception, and mobilize support. The use of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation is a common strategy in political discourse. The politicians often highlight their own achievements, values, and commitment to the nation's progress while subtly or overtly criticizing their opponents. Overall, the qualitative analysis of the tweets highlights the sophisticated use of language and discursive strategies by Pakistani politicians to construct identities, influence public perception, and mobilize support.

Identification of recurring patterns and discursive strategies

Politicians present themselves positively by emphasizing their achievements, plans, and commitment to the nation's welfare. This strategy serves to legitimize their position and garner trust from the public. A common discursive strategy is to create a dichotomy between "us" (the party and its supporters) and "them" (opponents or the previous government). This strategy is used to highlight the contrast between the party's vision and the perceived failures of others.

Discussion

The discursive strategies used by these politicians were aimed at constructing a favorable image of their parties while discrediting their opponents. Van Dijk's model of Critical Discourse Analysis highlights how language can be used to exercise power and control in social contexts (Van Dijk, 1993). Imran Khan's tweets often emphasized themes of corruption and accountability, targeting the PML-N government's alleged misdeeds and positioning PTI as the party of reform and integrity. This negative other-presentation strategy served to undermine the credibility of PML-N while enhancing PTI's image as a clean and competent alternative. On the other hand, Shahbaz Sharif's tweets frequently focused on the accomplishments of the PML-N government, highlighting infrastructure projects, economic progress, and social development. Imran Khan's tweet, "Our struggle is for a Naye Pakistan, where justice, meritocracy, and transparency are the guiding principles," exemplifies positive self-presentation and visionary language. The term "Naye

Pakistan" (New Pakistan) evokes a sense of renewal and optimism, suggesting a break from past political practices, while Shahbaz Sharif focused on infrastructure and developmental works.

Identification of Dominant Discourses, Themes, and Strategies in Tweets

Dominant Discourses:

One of the prevailing discourses in the tweets is the discourse of change and progress. This is particularly evident in the tweets from PTI, which frequently use terms like "Naye Pakistan" (New Pakistan) to symbolize a break from past governance and the promise of a better future. This discourse aims to create a narrative of transformation and hope, appealing to voters' desires for improvement and reform.

Conversely, the PML-N tweets often emphasize continuity and stability. By highlighting their past achievements and ongoing projects, the discourse here centers on the theme of experienced leadership and reliable governance. This is intended to reassure voters of the party's capability and track record in managing the country's affairs.

Themes

Several recurring themes emerge from the analysis. Justice, meritocracy, and transparency are central themes in PTI's tweets. These themes are articulated through promises of fair governance and the elimination of corruption, positioning PTI as a party committed to ethical and equitable administration. The language used here often includes strong, affirmative statements and action-oriented verbs, such as "we will eradicate corruption" and "we ensure justice."

For PML-N, themes of development and economic progress are predominant. Tweets from this party frequently mention infrastructure projects, economic policies, and social welfare programs. The language is often descriptive, providing specific examples of achievements to substantiate claims of progress and efficiency. Words like "development," "growth," and "progress" are commonly used to reinforce this theme.

Strategies

A key strategy employed by both parties is the use of inclusive language to build a sense of solidarity and collective identity among their supporters. Phrases like "our struggle" and "we will work together" are designed to create an emotional bond with the audience, making them feel part of a larger movement. This use of first-person plural pronouns (we, our) serves to foster unity and shared purpose. Another notable strategy is the contrasting of self with others, particularly opponents. PTI tweets often contain implicit or explicit contrasts between their vision of "Naye

Pakistan" and the alleged failures of other parties. This strategy of positive self-presentation versus negative other-presentation is aimed at highlighting the deficiencies of competitors while emphasizing PTI's strengths. Similarly, PML-N employs a strategy of emphasizing their achievements while casting doubt on the capabilities of PTI. This is done through tweets that not only showcase their own successes but also question the feasibility and sincerity of PTI's promises. The language here often includes comparative phrases and rhetorical questions designed to prompt the audience to reflect on the reliability of the opposing party

Comparison between PTI and PML-N Tweets during the 2018 General Election

Imran Khan of PTI often employed an inclusive and visionary language, aiming to inspire and mobilize his supporters. His tweets frequently included phrases such as "Naya Pakistan" (New Pakistan), which symbolized a promise of change and a break from the status quo. The rhetoric was forward-looking, focusing on the future and the transformative potential of PTI's governance. Khan's language emphasized collective action and unity, using pronouns like "we" and "our" to create a sense of shared purpose and community among his followers. In contrast, Shahbaz Sharif of PML-N often utilized a more defensive and justificatory tone in his tweets.

His language aimed to reinforce the achievements of the PML-N government and highlight their experience and competency in governance. Sharif's tweets frequently referenced past accomplishments and ongoing projects, emphasizing stability and continuity. In summary, the linguistic analysis of tweets by Imran Khan and Shahbaz Sharif during the 2018 General Election reveals distinct differences in rhetorical strategies, emotional appeals, and stylistic choices. Khan's tweets were inclusive, visionary, and emotionally charged, aimed at mobilizing support and advocating for change. Sharif's tweets were more defensive, justificatory, and information-dense, focusing on stability, continuity, and proven governance. These differences reflect the broader strategic approaches of PTI and PML-N in their electoral campaigns Van Dijk, 1997.

Conclusion

This chapter summarizes the findings related to the analysis of the discursive strategies used by the Pakistani Ex-Prime Ministers as Imran Khan and Shahbaz Sharif in their tweets during general election campaign in 2018. In analyzing the tweets of the PTI and PML-N party heads during the 2018 General Election, it is evident that language played a pivotal role in shaping political narratives, mobilizing support, and constructing party identities. Both parties utilized Twitter as a strategic platform to engage with the electorate, disseminate their political agendas,

and respond to the dynamic political landscape. From a linguistic perspective, several key themes and strategies emerged that highlight the intricacies of their discourse. Firstly, both PTI and PML-N leaders leveraged lexical choices that emphasized their core values and campaign promises. Words such as "change," "justice," and "meritocracy" were central to PTI's messaging, reflecting their commitment to reform and anti-corruption. Conversely, PML-N's discourse frequently included terms like "development," "progress," and "stability," underscoring their focus on continuity and infrastructure achievements. These lexical choices were instrumental in constructing distinct political identities and appealing to different segments of the electorate. Secondly, the syntax and structure of the tweets were tailored to maximize impact and engagement. Both parties often employed short, declarative sentences and imperatives to convey urgency and action.

This approach not only made the messages clear and direct but also facilitated quick comprehension and resonance with a broad audience. Additionally, the use of hashtags such as #NayaPakistan, #VoteForPTI, and #Progress, served to unify the discourse and enhance visibility, making it easier for supporters to rally around specific themes and campaign slogans. Thirdly, rhetorical devices were a critical component of the discourse strategies employed by both parties. PTI frequently used metaphors and analogies to frame their vision of a "new Pakistan," positioning themselves as agents of change and renewal. PML-N, on the other hand, relied on appeals to authority and evidence-based arguments to highlight their track record and experience in governance. Ideological Polarization during the 2018 general election, the tweets from the heads of PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) and PML-N (Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz) exhibited clear ideological polarization.

Utilizing Van Dijk's model, we observe that these politicians employed a dichotomous us-versus-them narrative, often highlighting the moral superiority of their own group while delegitimizing the opposition. This research contributes to political discourse in Pakistani Political context by identifying and explaining the discursive and persuasive patterns employed by Pakistani Ex- Prime Ministers during general election in 2018 in Pakistan. The findings of the study show that how Van Dijk socio Cognitive Model could be used in contemporary political discourse and his methods could shape political narratives and sway Pakistani voters and public.

Recommendations and Directions for Future Research

In the same field, research in future could be conducted:

To analyze the discursive strategies of political leaders from other developing countries to provide a comparative perspective on how different cultural and political contexts influence Critical Discourse approaches.

To examine the impact of these discursive strategies on political relations and policy outcomes to offer a deeper understanding of their effectiveness.

To explore the role of digital media in enhancing or diminishing the linguistic and discursive impact of political speeches, considering the increasing influence of social media and online platforms in shaping public opinion.

To conduct longitudinal studies to track the evolution of discursive strategies over time, assessing how shifts in Pakistani political dynamics and technological advancements influence the rhetoric of political leaders.

To Identify emerging trends and best practices in political communication by analyzing how leaders adapt their discursive strategies to address contemporary Pakistani Political challenges and technological changes.

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