

Linguistic Analysis of Political Speeches in Pakistan: A Case Study of Imran Khan speeches (2013-2023)



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Abstract: This study explores the linguistic and rhetorical strategies used by Imran Khan in his political speeches from 2013 to 2023. By analyzing a selection of his speeches, the research aims to understand how he uses language to persuade and connect with different audiences in Pakistan. The study focuses on identifying common themes, rhetorical devices like metaphors and repetition, and linguistic patterns that help construct his political identity. The analysis includes a qualitative content review and discourse analysis to uncover how Imran Khan tailors his speeches to appeal to various demographic groups, such as urban and rural populations, youth, and women. Additionally, the study evaluates the effectiveness of his rhetorical strategies by examining audience reactions, media coverage, and public opinion surveys. By comparing his speeches with those of other political leaders in Pakistan, the research provides a broader context for understanding his unique communication style. The findings reveal that Imran Khan skillfully uses rhetorical devices and adjusts his language to resonate with different segments of the population. His speeches often employ emotional appeals and strategic code-switching between Urdu, English, and regional languages to strengthen his message. This study contributes to the field of political communication by highlighting the power of language in shaping public opinion and political behavior. It also offers practical insights for political analysts, campaign strategists, and policymakers on effective communication strategies in a diverse and dynamic political landscape.

Keywords: Imran Khan, Politics, metaphors, languages, PTI, Speeches

Introduction

Imran Khan is a prominent ex-cricketer and leader of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), a highly accomplished and rising political party in Pakistan. On November 25, 1952, he was born into a Pashtun family of the Niazi tribe. Imran attended Aitchison College in Lahore before enrolling at Keble College, Oxford University. At Oxford, he pursued a degree in philosophy, politics, and economics and successfully

completed his studies in 1975.

Politics is the pursuit of power with the aim of implementing specific political, economic, and social views in a realistic manner. Language is crucial in this process, as it prepares, accompanies, influences, and delivers every political action. This research analyses the linguistic discourse employed by Imran Khan in his political speeches. Given the immense economic and political importance of Imran's

political speeches in Pakistan's current state, it is crucial to decode the ideological characteristics commonly seen in them. This research seeks to analyse and uncover the underlying beliefs, future plans, and other linguistic elements of his discourse.

Ideologies are significantly influenced by language. People perceive language as a passive and neutral phenomenon that solely represents and communicates the events within a society. Hymes (1972) challenged this value-free perspective on language by emphasising 'communicative competence'. In 1972, Hymes emphasised the "social aspect" of language, which challenged the value-free aspect. According to Siddiqui (2014), who cited Sapir and Whorf's (1929) hypothesis, language is a constitutive force that plays a significant role in building and perpetuating social validity.

"Languages are inextricably linked with ideologies, as language is the most prevalent form of social behaviour and the form of social behaviour that is predicated on 'common-sense' assumptions." Norman Fairclough (2001, p. 19). Consequently, the language is not passive; rather, Khalil et al. (2013) noted that words or their combinations consistently exert a significant influence on politics, society, economics, and race. Fairclough (2001, p. 5) introduced two terms, *langue* and *parole*, that are valuable for describing additional aspects of language. The term "*langue*" denotes the norms and regulations, whereas "*parole*" denotes the actual use of language. The comprehension of usage and use illustrates that language is in a close relationship with its speaker. The way a particular group of speakers employs a language determines its inherent strength and power (Siddiqui, 2014, p. 9).

Literature Review

Jones and Peccei (2004) argue that politicians frequently acquire power by employing clever linguistic tactics; they are adept at using language to persuade individuals to support specific political goals. Politics is the practice of persuasion, as per Zetter (2011). In other words, the primary instrument for acquiring political influence is the application of robust rhetorical

abilities. A clever politician is always an expert at manipulating language.

Fairclough (1995, 1996, and 2006) contended that language has the potential to both misrepresent and represent reality, despite the fact that the debate postulated that speech plays a crucial role in politics. It has the potential to generate visions and imaginaries that can transform reality and improve human well-being. However, it can also obscure reality and interpret it ideologically to perpetuate unjust power relations (Fairclough, 2006, p. 1). As a result, language constructs and deconstructs social realities, particularly in the context of ideological representation.

Wareing (2004) proposed that words significantly shape our attitudes and behaviours, thereby shaping our perception of the world and the realities we encounter. This implies that words shape our understanding of the world we inhabit, offering a viewpoint on diverse social realities shaped by a range of social actors, including individuals, institutions, and organisations. Jones and Peccei (2004) offered an alternative viewpoint on the significance of language use, characterizing language as a tool capable of transforming ideologies and beliefs, as well as shaping individuals' thoughts and perceptions.

Since our early years, language has been significant in politics; it has also had a great influence on our society as well as on cognitive growth and identity building. Our language reveals a lot about our background and identities. Similar to how our circumstances shape us, our language can help those around us influence us. Whether in the hotel business or even at one's own house, these kinds of hosts satisfy the need to entertain visitors by using courteous and respectful language (Blue & Harun, 2003). In politics too, leaders use language to achieve their intended objectives.

Thus, the paper (Sung, 2013) sought to investigate through the first season of a US reality TV show the problems of language, gender, and leadership. The researcher especially conducted single-sex interactions with two male and two female project managers

to investigate their leadership discourses. The book also noted how media shapes gender stereotypes. According to the study, the project managers reflected leadership styles based on gender stereotypes and expectations. Men and women exhibit slightly different leadership styles, which are not entirely positive. While female managers' opinions about leadership are mostly negative, male managers receive both positive and negative comments.

Bayram (2010) also analyzed the leadership speeches given by politicians. The researcher claims that politicians deftly employ language to establish authority and win their audience over (Bayram, 2010). Aiming to examine politicians' deft use of language to convince or influence others, the 2010 paper "Ideology and Political Discourse: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Erdogan's Political Speech" (Bayram, 2010) To achieve this, the researcher qualitatively examined "Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's speech" using Fairclough's critical discourse analysis. According to Bayram (2010), the Turkish Prime Minister effectively illustrated his ideas using language. Regarding business ethics and culture, the researcher (Amernic & Craig, 2012) also attempted to examine "Leadership Discourse."

Research Questions

How does Imran Khan use rhetorical devices in his speeches to persuade his audience?

What linguistic strategies does Imran Khan employ to construct his political identity and appeal to different demographics in Pakistan?

Research Objectives

To identify and analyze the specific rhetorical devices

To analyze how these linguistic strategies are tailored to appeal to various demographic groups

Significance of the study

This research is significant in understanding political communication and rhetorical strategies in Pakistan, specifically through the analysis of Imran Khan's speeches. By identifying the rhetorical devices and linguistic

techniques he employs, the study contributes to both rhetorical studies and sociolinguistics, offering insights into effective political discourse. It highlights the power of language in shaping public opinion and political behavior, providing practical implications for campaign strategies and public engagement. Additionally, the research sheds light on the cultural and social dynamics of Pakistani demographics, enhancing our understanding of how political leaders connect with diverse audiences. Overall, this study enriches academic knowledge and has practical value for political analysts, policymakers, and educators.

Research Methodology

This study used a mix of methods to analyze Imran Khan's political speeches. First, it selected and transcribed a sample of his speeches. These transcripts were then examined to identify common themes, rhetorical devices, and linguistic patterns using qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis. The study looked at how he constructed his political identity and appealed to different groups. It also assessed the effectiveness of his rhetorical strategies by considering audience reactions and media coverage. By comparing his speeches with those of other leaders and considering multiple data sources, the study aimed to provide a thorough understanding of his communication style.

Discussion and Analysis

This section delves into the linguistic and rhetorical strategies employed by Imran Khan in his political speeches from 2013 to 2023. By breaking down his use of language and examining the impact on various audiences, we aim to understand how he constructs his political identity and persuades his listeners. We will also compare his speeches to those of other political leaders in Pakistan to highlight unique aspects of his communication style.

Rhetorical Devices in Imran Khan's Speeches

Imran Khan frequently employs the three classical rhetorical appeals: ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos refers to the credibility and character of the speaker. Imran Khan often

highlights his background as a successful cricketer and philanthropist to build his credibility. By referencing his achievements and commitment to social causes, he establishes himself as a trustworthy and ethical leader. Pathos, or emotional appeal, is another cornerstone of Khan's rhetoric. He uses vivid language and personal anecdotes to evoke emotions among his audience. For instance, he often speaks about the struggles of ordinary Pakistanis, tapping into their frustrations and aspirations. This emotional connection helps him gain their support and trust.

Logos, the appeal to logic and reason, is evident in Khan's use of facts, statistics, and logical arguments. He frequently discusses policy details and presents data to support his claims, making his arguments more convincing. By combining these three appeals, Khan crafts speeches that are credible, emotionally engaging, and logically sound.

Metaphors and Imagery

Khan uses metaphors and imagery to make his speeches more relatable and impactful. For example, he often refers to Pakistan as a "sleeping giant" that needs to be awakened. This metaphor not only conveys a sense of potential but also inspires hope and action among listeners. Similarly, he uses imagery related to cricket, a sport deeply ingrained in Pakistani culture, to draw parallels between leadership and teamwork.

Repetition and Parallelism

Repetition and parallelism are other key rhetorical devices in Khan's speeches. By repeating key phrases and structuring sentences in a parallel manner, he reinforces his message and makes it more memorable. For example, phrases like "Naya Pakistan" (New Pakistan) and "tabdeeli" (change) are repeated throughout his speeches to emphasize his vision for the country.

Linguistic Strategies

One of the notable linguistic strategies Khan employs is code-switching. He seamlessly switches between Urdu, English, and regional languages depending on the audience. This

ability to code-switch allows him to connect with a broader demographic. For instance, he uses Urdu to address the general population, English to appeal to the educated elite and international audience, and regional languages to resonate with specific ethnic groups.

Language Simplicity and Directness

Khan's speeches are characterized by their simplicity and directness. He avoids overly complex language and technical jargon, making his speeches accessible to a wide audience. This straightforward approach helps him communicate his ideas clearly and effectively. It also enhances his image as a leader who understands and speaks for the common people.

Inclusive Language

Imran Khan often uses inclusive language to foster a sense of unity and collective identity. Phrases like "humara Pakistan" (our Pakistan) and "hum sab" (all of us) are common in his speeches. This inclusive language helps create a sense of belonging and shared purpose among his listeners, strengthening their support for his vision.

Tailoring Speeches to Different Demographics

Urban vs. Rural Populations

Khan tailors his speeches to address the concerns and aspirations of both urban and rural populations. In urban areas, he focuses on issues like corruption, economic development, and education. He uses data and logical arguments to appeal to the more educated urban audience. In contrast, his speeches in rural areas emphasize agricultural development, poverty alleviation, and basic amenities. He uses more emotional appeals and personal anecdotes to connect with rural voters.

Youth Engagement

The youth constitute a significant portion of Khan's target audience. He often speaks about opportunities for young people, emphasizing education, employment, and entrepreneurship. By addressing their aspirations and frustrations, he positions himself as a leader who understands and champions the cause of the younger generation. His language is often energetic and

aspirational, aiming to inspire and mobilize young voters.

Appeal to Women

Khan also makes specific efforts to appeal to women, who have historically been underrepresented in Pakistani politics. He speaks about women's rights, education, and healthcare, highlighting his commitment to gender equality. By addressing issues that directly affect women and using inclusive language, he aims to garner their support.

Effectiveness of Rhetorical Strategies

The effectiveness of Khan's rhetorical strategies can be gauged through audience reactions and media coverage. His speeches often draw large crowds, indicating strong public engagement. The emotional and logical appeals resonate with listeners, as evidenced by their enthusiastic responses and participation in his rallies.

Media coverage also reflects the impact of his speeches. Positive coverage highlights his persuasive skills and ability to connect with diverse audiences, while critical coverage often focuses on the content and promises of his speeches. By analyzing both positive and negative media reactions, we can gain a balanced understanding of the effectiveness of his rhetorical strategies.

Public Opinion Surveys

Public opinion surveys provide further insights into the effectiveness of Khan's speeches. Surveys conducted after major speeches or rallies often show a boost in his popularity and support. These surveys indicate that his rhetorical strategies successfully influence public opinion and mobilize support for his political agenda.

Comparative Analysis with Other Leaders

To understand the uniqueness of Imran Khan's communication style, it is essential to compare his speeches with those of other political leaders in Pakistan. Leaders like Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari also use rhetorical devices and linguistic strategies, but with distinct differences.

Nawaz Sharif

Nawaz Sharif's speeches tend to be more formal and reserved. He relies heavily on logical appeals and data to support his arguments. While he uses emotional appeals, they are often less intense compared to Khan's. Sharif's speeches also lack the energetic and aspirational tone that characterizes Khan's rhetoric.

Asif Ali Zardari

Asif Ali Zardari's speeches are known for their focus on historical references and party ideology. He often draws on the legacy of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and its founders to build his credibility. While Zardari uses emotional appeals, his speeches are more ideologically driven and less focused on direct engagement with the audience.

By comparing these leaders, it becomes evident that Imran Khan's unique blend of emotional and logical appeals, combined with his use of simple and direct language, sets him apart. His ability to connect with diverse audiences and tailor his messages to different demographics gives him a distinctive edge in political communication.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Imran Khan's political speeches from 2013 to 2023 demonstrate a sophisticated use of linguistic and rhetorical strategies. By employing ethos, pathos, and logos, along with metaphors, repetition, and code-switching, he effectively persuades and connects with a broad audience. His ability to tailor his speeches to different demographic groups, coupled with his inclusive and straightforward language, enhances his appeal and effectiveness as a communicator.

The analysis of audience reactions, media coverage, and public opinion surveys highlights the impact of his rhetorical strategies on public opinion and political behavior. Compared to other political leaders in Pakistan, Khan's unique communication style, characterized by emotional engagement and simplicity, stands out.

This study contributes to the field of political communication by providing insights into the

power of language in shaping political identities and influencing public opinion. It offers practical implications for political analysts, campaign strategists, and policymakers on effective communication strategies in a diverse and dynamic political landscape. Understanding the linguistic and rhetorical techniques used by leaders like Imran Khan can help improve political engagement and foster a more informed and participatory democracy.

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