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Ideology, (Mis)perceptions and (Re)construction of Political Identities: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Imran Khan's Political Speeches

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Abstract *This study examines the persuasive strategies of Imran Khan's political discourse. It also highlights the covert ideological practices as they are embedded in his political speeches. The analysis is based on the theoretical perspective of Fairclough and Van Dijk. This study analyses the linguistic elements and contextual facets to find hidden ideologies. The findings suggest Khan use of multiple strategies to get the political power, and promote his ideology by urging the urban youth and less-privileged part of society to play a role. Moreover linguistic analysis prove Khan's claim to be (un)conventional as he frequently addresses and acknowledges women support for political activism.*

Key Words
Ideology, (Mis) Perception, Political Identities, CDA

Introduction

Politics is a struggle for power that can further be exercised to put certain social, cultural, economic and political ideas into practice (Kapur, 1997). To perform these practices a vital role is played by the language rather language is the basic tool that transforms political and social ideas into practice. Politics is the art of persuasion (Zetter, 2011) and political actors convey their ideologies to the audiences (Triadafilopoulos, 1999) through certain persuasive discourse strategies. Within similar connotation the core agenda of political actors is to manipulate language in particular social and political context to construct, develop, maintain and thus sustain power structures and power hierarchies (Fowler, 1991).

Discourse is a broad term with multiple definitions. Titscher, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter (2000) stated that discoruse basically "integrates a whole palette of meanings". It means that discourse is not a simple term rather it has variety of definitions and variety of meanings depending upon the interpretations and perspectives. According to Fairclough (Fairclough, 1995, 1999) discourse refers to an organized pattern of interactions and text is just a part of that whole interactional process. Moreover discourse can be taken as a way of exhibiting power and power resistance depending upon the contextual conditions in which it takes place (Van Dijk, 2008). It also reflects the ideological perspective of the discourse makers, central to the discourse is language (Fairclough, 1995) that primarily serves all functions as stated above.

According to Edward (2006), people do not react to the world on the basis of sensory output rather perception makes a vital role. It is due to the reason that language primarily defines the social status and institutional realities which are the product of the language use and a part of the power hierarchies. As language is central to all social processes so it might be viewed as a main constituent of the social hierarchies and societal organizations. This stance can be further elaborated through examples such as simple labels (assigned by verbal text i.e. language) educe certain stereotypes and ultimate prejudices about certain communities for whom these labels are tagged. According to Wareing the so-called actual function of language is primarily linked with who says what to whom and for what purpose? i.e. "deeply tied up with the power and social status" (Wareing, 2004).

In the similar connotation a very common assumption about politics is linked with the notion of power in multiple forms ranging from power gain to power control and power resistance. Moreover the power to make decision, to alter situations, to control mind-sets, to access and thus distribute resources, to challenge existing realities, to make and thus implement policies and ultimately to change people's behaviors are the core functions of power. Power is termed as a complex idea and it has a great significance in political context.

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According to Edelman power remains central to many political activities and political processes. (Edelman M., 1988). Moreover the power-holder is a person who can "exercise influence outside the context of formal proceedings [thus wielding] real power" (Edelman M. J., 1977) . While discussing about the political discourse it is too significant to analyze the discourse to see how political actors perform certain actions to gain and thus exercise power, sometimes it is power resistance and sometimes it is power dominance etc. (Warburtonn, Pike, & Matravers, 2000). So it is rightly stated that political processes are primarily performed for a predefined political agendas with a number of variant motives and inspirations and mostly these political objectives remain opaque for an external viewer.

Literature Review

According to Jones and Peccei (2004) politicians often achieve power through their skillful rhetorical techniques, they know it well how to use language to persuade people for certain political objectives (Jones & Peccei, 2004). According to Zetter (2011) politics is the art of persuasion. In other words the main tool for attainment of political power is the use of powerful rhetorical skills, a smart politician knows well how to twist language. The debate presented the notion that language is one of the most important element of politics but Fairclough (1995, 1996 & 2006) stated that it can "misrepresent as well as represent realities, it can weave visions and imaginaries which can be implemented to change realities and in some cases improve human well-being, but it can also rhetorically obfuscate realities, and construe them ideologically to serve unjust power relations" (Fairclough, 2006, p.1). So language constructs and simultaneously deconstructs the social realities particularly in the context of ideology representation. Wareing (2004) postulated that words have a powerful impact upon our behaviors and attitudes that later on construct our perception of the world we are living in and the realities that we are experiencing. It means that words build our perceptions about the world in which we exist and thus they provide us a lens to observe multiple social realities as they are framed through different social stakeholders such as people, institutions, organizations etc. similarly Jones and Peccei (2004) presented another version of language use and its significance, they term language as a tool not just to influence people's thoughts and perceptions but also a mean of changing ideologies and beliefs.

While talking about the significant role of language in the construction of social realities it is to inevitable to highlight its significance in political processes and political acts in this particular study. While discussing about political discourse as a type of discourse practice that is created and thus utilized by political actors for certain political processes and functions. According to Van Dijk (1999) political discourse reflects the political cognitions, perceptions, power hierarchies' etc. in particular social, political and cultural setting. One of the main purpose of political actors is to persuade their audiences through multiple strategies, mostly political actors want to persuade their audiences to project their ideologies positively and to control the behaviors and thoughts of others. Commonly used resources for these purposes are expert talks, hegemonistic voices, selective information's and filtered vocabulary filled with 'political flag words', futuristic propositions, sympathetic notes etc. according to Edelman (1977) smart politicians become successful by "using his or her knowledge of informal influence" (Edelman, 1977, p.123).VanDijk (1999) (Fairclough N. , 1989)

Van Dijk (2006) postulated that there is always a need of collaboration between the situations, text and context. Moreover these contexts provide a solid foundation for the explanation of certain text as uttered by political actors. These contextual propositions define the ways in which political actors experience and project different political situations. So van Dijk (1999, 2002 & 2006) gave equal significance to text and context for interpretation of any particular communicative event in political settings. Fairclough's idea of intertextuality also supports the same notion that a text contain more references in it, a text is never an independent category it contains traces of other texts also and mostly it reflects the ideological beliefs (1995, 19956, 2006). To continue with the same discussion a linguistic analysis of a political discourse in general and political speeches in specific can be performed at various levels from two main perspectives. Either it can be done at micro level from analyzing the word order, syntactic structures, linguistic patterns, vocabulary choices or it can be done at macro level by analyzing the contextual elements etc. Linguistic elements, verbal interactions, syntactical structures are categories of micro-level while power dominance, hegemony etc. are analyzed through macro analysis.

CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) is termed as a theory and as a method also because CDA practioners offer a wide range of techniques and tools for the analysis of discursive practices (Weiss & Wodak, 2003). CDA has been used by different practioners and researchers in multiple linguistic-based studies primarily to represent the discourse within discourse as they are resulted from various social and political issues of inequality and dominance (Duszak & House, 2010). As debated above that CDA is a multidisciplinary approach that is evolved in last three decade and thus emerged as one the most effective and modern approach for linguistic researches. The leading approaches of CDA are introduced by Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995 & 1999), Van Dijk (1988, 1991, 1993, 1995,

1998 & 2002), Wodak (1996, 1999 & 2001) and Van Leeuwen (1996). A brief overview of these approaches is given below.

Theoretical and Methodological Framework

Theory of ideology that forms the analysis method of this particular study is multidisciplinary. The research study has used Van Dijk's socio cognitive model (Van Dijk T. , 1998)along with Fairclough's construct of intertextuality (1995) for data analysis.

Socio- cognitive model has the following features:

- An analysis of the discourse context i.e. social, political and historical background of a particular discourse event
- Examination and analysis of groups, power relations, hegemony and conflicts involved in particular discourse practice
- Analysis of Us Vs Them dichotomy i.e. positive representation of self and negative representation of others
- Analysis of formal structures, syntax and linguistic choices

These categories are linked with the ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings as they are implicitly embedded in the text practices. In this particular study the researcher has attempted to get an insight into the ideologies as they are embedded in the text. Moreover the study has also focused upon how discourse patterns manifest the (mis)perceptions of the discourse makers about certain political and societal issues. For the current study the model is adapted and these following categories are analysed.

Intertextuality, us vs them Dichotomy, Topics, Polarization, Personal Pronouns & Contextual Propositions

The researchers has tried to analyse these categories to find out the ideological structures and how they are conveyed by the discourse maker for the attainment of specific political agenda. As mentioned earlier the researcher has attempted to deeply scrutinize the contextual structures along with linguistic elements so that the analysis may become comprehensive.

Data Analysis

The data is analyzed here.

In this p0articular text practice the political actor have used verb 'awakened' for the nation and the focus is explicitly given upon youth and women The way the youth, the elders, and especially the ladies have come out in huge numbers here, it is clear the nation has awakened. (17th October 2014). The text provides an insight into the ideology of the political actor as the political actor has appreciated the participation of youth and women in political process so it projects his political identity as a liberal and democratic leader. Simultaneously the adverb 'especially' is also used for women in more specific way to highlight the significance of women in political procession, it also depicts the identity of the political actor as a supporter of women in political activities. "I am extremely pleased to see the youth and the elders here. The Youth keep proving to me that Naya Pakistan is on the horizon." (24th October 2014), "Most heartening feature is how the females of Pakistan have shown political awareness in the last forty-five days!" (28th September 2014),"I thank especially the ladies and the kids who have been coming in droves for 72 days to support the world record breaking dharna." (24 October'2014). In the above narrated discourse events the political actor has demonstrated gratitude for women and youth particularly for their political mobilisation and participation, the discourse maker has linked political participation of women with unconventional political tends of Pakistan. According to Mittra and Kumar (2004) women are less privileged part of society as they have less representation in social, political and economic fields so in such conditions if a political actor supports or highlights the participation of women that is termed as an unconventional strategic move. Contextually analysing the text is related to the prolong sit-in session staged by PTI against the alleged rigging in general elections 2013.Overall approach of political actor has appeared very optimistic as he has praised women role in politics besides appreciating youth for the same cause. Another significant analytical feature is about the pronouns, in the first and last text the political actor has used personal pronoun 'I' in positive connotation. According to socio-cogniive model of Van Dijk (1991, 1995, 1998) political actors construct us vs them dichotomy through linguistic devices. "I worked hard for eighteen years trying to rouse the nation, but it was asleep (24 October 2014)."In the above mentioned text the political actor has provided an intertextual reference, here the discourse maker narrated about the struggle of eighteen years to awake the nation. Indirectly the text means that the political actor has treid to challenge the ideologies of Pakistani people about political structures and political culture of Pakistan by introducing some unconventional trends but he did not receive a solid feedback. Contextually narrating PTI was founded by cricketer –turned politician Imran Khan in 1996 (Sonn, 2015) and in the first three elections of 1997,

2002 and 2008 the party didn't get any solid victory (Sardar & Kassab, 2012) so here the discourse makers mean that earlier Pakistani people had no political cognition so the nation was asleep without realizing the significance of political participation and mobilisation. Moreover as the party got a credible victory in 2013 elections and established provincial government in KPK so the political actor implicitly praised their efforts to build political cognition among Pakistani people. According to socio-cognitive model of Van Dijk (1995, 1997, 1998, 1999 & 2002) political actors construct and represent their positive images through positive linguistic choices and the same phenomenon is observed in the above quoted text as here the discourse maker has projected his positive ideology by highlighting his efforts for Pakistani people. The next text can also be analyzed in the similar way here the discourse makers have once again projected their positive ideology by vowing to bring great revolution in the country. Here personal pronoun is used to highlight the aspirations of the political actors about Pakistani people, moreover the text states that education would be used as a strong tool to change the conditions of the country. By focusing upon the education sector and labelling it as a stimulus for revolution the political actor has portrayed his political insight in optimistic manner. According to Iqbal (2015) politicians like to make big promises with the masses for their political agendas and objectives, so it is one of the most common strategies of political leaders that they persuade their audiences with big vows and future promises. "We will revolutionize state governance, and make Pakistan a land of the educated ones!", "We have to set right two things - the state institutions have to be strengthened, especially the police." (24 October 2014), in these text practices it is reflected that the political actors have a positive ideology to transform Pakistan by upgrading the main institutions like police and governance. The personal pronoun 'we' is used in positive connotation as the political actor is determined to work upon the gaps in the ascribed institutions for the welfare of nation. Moreover the usage of linguistic choices also reflect the same note as discussed above. In the next discourse practice the political actor have provided an intertextual reference to a controversial case of Dr Afia Siddiqi, "I can never forget when Aafia Siddiqui's uncle met me and told me her little children had been handed over to USA! (24 October 2014)," contextually narrating the discourse maker have highlighted the misery of the victimized Muslim scientist who got accused of terrorist activities in US and because of such allegations she remained under investigations for many years. According to Hunter (2012) Affia was not charged with any serious act of terrorism till 2012 but still she had to go under hard investigative trials by American investigation department. In the similar connotation Khan narrated about his meeting with the father of victimized figure and the tragic situation of the family. Primarily text raises sympathies for the victimized group besides projecting a positive image of the discourse maker as Khan has reflected his solidarity with the victimized woman and family.

"Zardari returned from Dubai to save Nawaz, and remember how Nawaz came to PPP man's rescue some years ago!", "Nawaz Sharif! I did not grow up in the lap of General Jilani and General ZiaulHaq - you did!" (28th September' 2014), in the above mentioned text practices the political actors have raised severe criticism on opponent political leaders and alleged them for taking unfair supports from military personnel. There are many intertextual references in the above quoted textual practices as the political actors have quoted the historical reference of political alliance between two major political parties i.e. PPP and PML-N and indirectly termed these alliances as political deals aimed to earn political powers etc. Many critics have termed Nawaz Sharif as a political successor (Shah, 1997)and right hand of ex general Zia (Musharraf, 2008)and frequently mentioned the alliance between two in political context of post-Bhutto era i.e. after assassination of Zulifaqar Bhutto. Within similar context Imran Khan alleged Nawaz for taking military support to uplift his political career and termed him as unfair and unjust. It is common strategy of political actors that to justify their political rivalries they like to put allegations and severe criticism on opposite political leaders and groups as debated by Van Dijk that our good and others bad aspects are magnified (Van Dijk, 1998a).

Discussion and conclusion

Through overall linguistic and textual analysis it is found that Khan has created and projected a positive political identity of his political group simultaneously he put a lot of allegations on opposite political groups and thus exhibited other's political image as biased, unfair and corrupt political groups. As mentioned earlier that us vs them dichotomy 'negative attribution of others and positive attribution of themselves' is a common trade of politics so political actors frequently use it to attain their political agendas, to persuade ideologies of masses and to (de)construct political images and political identities of their opponent political forces. In this particular study in a number of instances the political actors have alleged other political rivals for injustice, rigging and prejudice, moreover they indirectly de-shaped the political image of other political groups by de-emphasizing their all positive attributes. So it can be stated that the political actors have perceived their own political identity as righteous, loyal and fair political group apt to the conventional political practices but one unique aspect of Khan's discourse is the strong emphasis on political participation and political activism of women and a strong urge to promote women rights.

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