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Author(s):	Summaya Afzal[1], Ahmed Hassan[2]
Affiliation:	[1]Department of English, University of Sargodha, Sargodha, Pakistan [2]Department of English, Forman Christian University, Lahore, Pakistan
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Using Rhetorical and Persuasive Techniques: A Political Discourse Analysis of the Victory Speech by Imran Khan

Summaya Afzal[1*] and Ahmed Hassan[2]

[1]Department of English, University of Sargodha, Sargodha. Pakistan
[2]Department of English, Forman Christian University, Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract

This paper endeavors to shed light on the rhetorical and persuasive techniques used by the current Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan in his victory speech. It also explores the expression of ideology by Imran Khan after his victory in the general election of 2018. The study identified different elements of political power in the said speech. This study is qualitative and utilizes the rhetoric of Aristotle, that is, pathos, ethos, and logos. It also explored the prediction strategy, positive self-portrayal and negative depiction of other politicians as manifested by the choice of personal pronouns by Imran Khan to change the political views and perception of the masses. The study revealed the intentional crafting of victory speech using the model of Aristotelian rhetoric and the application of the strategies of positive predication and self-appraisal, as well as the negative portrayal of opponent parties to persuade the public to support Imran Khan's political agenda.

Keywords: Aristotle, ideology, negative, persuasive and rhetorical techniques, positive, rhetoric

Introduction

Political speeches are designed to capture the attention of the masses in order to win their political support and votes. Hence, politicians tend to the use of such rhetorical features which can convince the public to actively support their ideologies and political agendas. An effective public speaker successfully exploits rhetorical tools in his speeches to convince people (Baig et al., 2019). It is a hard task to demarcate the art of persuasion from politics. According to Baig et al. (2019), language is the chief constructive tool of various ideologies. So, politicians are prone to use language to

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*Corresponding Author: summayaafzal1433@gmail.com

construct political discourse in order to make people believe in their political agendas.

Baig et al. (2019) defined language as a system with a huge number of words that are loaded with meanings. The use of the connotational meanings of words to convey their message in a persuasive manner in their political speeches has made Biden, Obama, Widodo and Imran Khan famous across the world. Imran Khan enjoys fame among the masses, both inside and outside the country, due to his influential speeches. This paper aims to identify the features of power in his victory speech of 2018. Johnson et al. (2000) posited the involvement of the audience in political discourse as a source of decision-making, whereas the speaker remains a medium of passing on logical messages and information. Therefore, the speeches of politicians are impregnated with the strategies of persuasion.

Language is a source of communication that is inherently loaded with many layers of meanings which are used as persuasive devices to convince the audience. There are many social, economic, political, and cultural dimensions of meanings in words (Khalil et al., 2017). Often, words are impregnated with hidden political or personal agendas and critical discourse analysis is the key towards uncovering these agendas. Cook (1992) described discourse as language used for the sake of communication. Fairclough (2003) explained it as a part of the society and as a social practice.

Atkins and Brown (2002) claimed that discourse is not neutral because it is enriched with various economic, social, cultural, and political factors. The current study utilizes discourse as text in the sense that it is observed as information that is examined empirically. The concepts of power, ideology, and discourse are interwoven. Politics, in this sense, can be described as power exerted through social, political, economic, or cultural discourse. Power relations can be considered as discursive means to establish the social relations of power can be achieved through negotiations in political discourse. This is why every political action is prepared, influenced, and delivered through the use of language. Jalilifar and Alavi (2017) suggested that although the politicians have the power to exert physical force to influence people, most of the people are convinced through the use of persuasive techniques in language.

According to Aristotle, the nature of pathos is based on emotions and it is intended to address the feelings of the audience in order to develop an emotional bond with them. Emotions, such as fear, pity, and anger, play a significant role in decision-making. Political leaders are well aware of the play with emotions and they tend to drive the emotions of the masses in order to influence them. Ethos is defined as a way to describe the character of the speaker. If a speaker has a good character, good sense and goodwill, the audience is prone to believe his intentions more than others.

Rhetoric includes many strategies and techniques that are used to be more effective and influential. According to Kennedy (2007), rhetoric is the skill used to influence people and to convince them. The current study endeavors to figure out the persuasive techniques used by the Prime Minister Imran Khan in his victory speech to convince the public to adhere to his party's manifesto and ideology. Language possesses the power to manipulate people. The speech under study was delivered by Imran Khan after becoming the Prime Minister on July 26, 2018 (Sibtain et al., 2020).

According to News Desk (2018), this speech is one of the most mature speeches in the history of Pakistan. It was balanced and full of encouraging words.

Significance of the Research

The significance of this study lies in the fact that it is a multi-layered attempt to explore both the micro and macro elements of political speeches, which can influence the common public. Aristotle's views predominantly influence the speeches of people and his principles are followed by influential speakers. This study is intended to discover how manners and means of language are utilizing the theoretical constructs given by Aristotle.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the current study are as follows:

1) To explore the strategies and techniques used by Prime Minister Imran Khan to influence people.

2) To analyze the different persuasive strategies utilized in the victory speech of Prime Minister Imran Khan to influence the political views of the people.

Research Questions

The victory speech of Imran Khan delivered on July 26, 2018 was found to contain the features of Aristotelian rhetoric. The current researchers have strived to answer the following research questions:

1) What are the strategies and techniques used by Prime Minister Imran Khan to influence and persuade masses?
2) Which strategies of Aristotelian rhetoric are found in his speech and are reflective of his political ideology?

Literature Review

According to Shakeel Ahmed (2014), CDA is a helpful tool for understanding the indirect messages encoded in any statement generally and particularly in politics. Generally, CDA deals with social issues and particularly, it deals with political matters. /It is used to critically analyze any chunk of speech (oral or written) to inform us about the intensions of the speaker behind the selection of particular words. Whenever the term "critical" is used, it implies that there is an existence of unequal agendas. CDA not only deals with shrouded ideologies but also reveals how a particular selection of words is utilized for expressing these ideologies. Context plays a vital role behind the selection of words which marks the diction of speakers used in a particular way to convey their message (Ahmed, 2014).

Sharififar and Rahimi (2015) studied the speeches of Obama and Rouhani which they conveyed at the UN in 2013. The primary objective of their study was to investigate how each political actor displayed force in his speech. The theory of Halliday's systemic functional linguistics was applied by the researchers. Secondly, their research was directed through the transitivity and modality system of how language is used to shape ideology and consolidate power in speeches. Quantitative approach was utilized by the researchers to make a factual comparison between the two leaders' language utilization. The researchers analyzed the utilization of personal pronouns to make an experience with the audience (Sharififar & Rahimi, 2015).

Muhammad Munir (2014) expressed the view that CDA analyzes discourse as a social practice. The idea of social practice denotes that language, first and foremost, is a social phenomenon, that is, it is born socially (from society), it grows socially, and it dies socially (when a society becomes extinct). It can involve a good deal of sociolinguistic elaborations. The relationship between society and language is cultural and dialectical and also of a parasitic type (Munir, 2014).

Maya Alaeli and Saeideh Ahangari from the Islamic Azad College, Tabriz, Iran (2016) analyzed the text *"Heart of Darkness"* by Joseph Conrad. The aim of their research was to trace the ideology as well as the lexico-grammatical techniques used by the writer. Furthermore, they researched the deep structures in literature to reveal the theoretical constructs in terms of language means. For all intents and purposes, the analysis was done using the quantitative methodology (Alaei & Ahangari, 2016).

Hafiz Muhammad Bilal from the University of Sargodha (2012) dissected the text *"Thank You Ma'am"* using Halliday's systemic functional linguistics approach. The content was translated using three meta-functions of language, that is, ideational capacity, interpersonal relation, and textual function. A subjective methodology was used by the researcher to examine the content, while sharing his viewpoint towards the completion of the research. The author prescribed that phonetic features help to find the deliberate implications behind the declaration of the speakers. In any case, it would be extra useful to essentially study the content for its better expertise (Bilal, 2012).

According to Rezaei and Nourali (2016), it is essential that the listener should have a political background to understand a political discourse, to comprehend its situational context, and especially to find out the meaning of allusion that may be used in. One cannot understand political speeches without adequate knowledge of metaphors. Keeping in view their use, it is presumed that language users know a prior how they are used in communication and what is intended to be understood (Rezaei & Nourali, 2016).

Amna Iqbal from the University of Lahore analyzed prominent politicians' speeches given in 2015. The purpose of her research was to discover the rhetorical devices used in the pre- and post-elections speeches of a well-known political figure. Qualitative approach was utilized by the researcher to discover the frequency of the persuasive devices used and their implications before and after elections. Towards the end of the research, the researcher uncovered how politicians misuse expository rhetorical devices to explicate their hidden agenda (Iqbal, 2015).

According to Wilson (1990), the use of pronouns gives a glimpse of the speaker's view of himself as well as how he views other people. Solidarity can be reflected by the use of inclusive pronouns, such as 'us' (such pronouns include both the speaker and the listeners). Exclusive pronouns, such as 'we' (which include the speaker but exclude others) can be used to express a shared sense of responsibility which depicts that the actions are not merely the responsibility of a single human being (Wilson, 1990).

According to Alan Partington (2003), since social institutions are always defined and supported by particular texts, hence there is a natural link between institutional analysis and textual analysis. Nowhere is this relationship clearer than in these texts –briefly, discourse is the institution and the use of language is the whole point of the enterprise (Partington, 2003).

According to Dijk (2016), socio-cognitive theory can be used to identify the persuasive elements in any political discourse. The current researcher used this theory to find out such persuasive elements in the selected speech. This approach is close to social constructivism which claims that the social and political reality is constructed by the members of a society. These constructions are serious mental representations of the speakers that should be analyzed and deciphered to disclose their hidden motto. According to this theory, these mental representations focus more on presenting a positive picture of 'us' and a relatively negative image of 'others' (Dijk, 2016).

Dijk (1997) claimed that political discourse can be defined as the political talk of presidents, prime ministers, political institutions, members of government, politicians, or members of parliament, delivered in an international or national atmosphere. Political discourse involves the

speeches of politicians and debates in the parliament and can be either written or conversational (Dijk, 1997).

According to Peng (2007), a political speech involves the basic elements of politics, such as conflict of power, domination, and control of the public. Politics can be defined as the struggle for achieving power to employ particular social, cultural, or political ideas and political discourse refers to the attainment of such ideas through the use of language. Therefore, politicians utilize persuasive techniques in their speeches to convince people to affirm their ideologies via the use of language rhetoric (Peng, 2007).

Simon (1976) defined persuasion as a technique used to exploit language in order to interact with the listeners and make them perform certain actions according to the will of the speaker. This study makes the use of Aristotle's rhetorical theory to dig out the hidden ideology of Imran Khan, depicted by the choice of personal pronouns, socio-cognitive theory, and strategies of prediction, along with the negative portrayal of the 'other' and positive representation of the 'self' (Simon, 1976).

Sehrish Naz (2012) did the transitivity examination of the political discourse of Benazir Bhutto. To reveal the diction of her discursive practices, quantitative methodology was utilized. The research revealed that Benazir understood the ideal way to play with words and foregrounded their use in the prevailing circumstance. Her diction immediately convinced the Pakistani society towards believing in her ideology (Naz et al, 2012).

Research Methodology

This is a qualitative study aimed to analyze the persuasive and rhetorical strategies used by PM Imran Khan in his victory speech to convince the public. This study highlights knowledge about the values, opinions, reasons, and meanings of the social problems. This research emphasizes metaphors, characteristics, descriptions of things, meanings, and concepts rather than measures and counts.

This research is based on an exploratory research design that aims to provide a deep knowledge of any phenomenon without the addition or reduction of any nature in the given data. Therefore, this design was utilized to identify and explore the features and strategies of rhetoric and persuasion

in the first speech of PM Imran Khan after taking oath on July 26, 2018. Moreover, the data was transcribed and translated into English for analysis. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the chunks of text related to the study.

Theoretical Framework

According to Wilson (1990), politicians may utilize first-person pronouns to persuade people to support their ideologies and to believe that the decisions made by them are completely right. The application of exclusive pronouns is done to demarcate 'us' from 'them', in case of giving power to 'us' over 'others'. So, this study explored the personal pronouns used by Imran Khan to influence people in his speech using Wilson's (1990) concept of discourse analysis. Van Dijk (2005), in his socio-cognitive theory, claimed that ideologies are hidden in both written and spoken discourses. Moreover, this study analyzed the techniques used by Imran Khan to associate negative qualities with his opponents and good qualities with himself to win the support of the public.

According to Sharif (2015), the strategy of prediction is exploited by the politicians to associate negative and positive attributes and stereotypes to individuals belonging to both out-group and in-group. It resembles the nomination strategy in which the 'self' is connoted with positive attributes, whereas the 'other' is represented as negative and stereotypical. The current study investigated how Imran Khan exploited the prediction strategy in his speech. According to Aristotle, a speaker can employ three different strategies to influence and convince the people. These involve pathos (audience's emotions), ethos (the character of the speaker), and logos (the rationality of the arguments of the speaker). Similarly, according to Ting (2018), logos is a persuasive technique that grants power to the speaker by the use of reason, logic, and fact to achieve power over the public. This theory was utilized in this study to analyze rationally the persuasive elements in the selected speech of PM Imran Khan.

Analysis of Data

Positive Presentation of 'Self' and Negative Representation of 'Other'

PM Imran Khan attempted to convince people to accept his positive image of 'self' and his party (as having good attributes) and a negative

image of other politicians and parties to make people vote against them. He addressed small businesses owners and entrepreneurs in the following words:

> *"The cost of starting any sort of business is so high and so difficult that it does not encourage any minimal opportunities. In sha Allah, we will 'try to ease up this for them to do investment and encourage more people to get employment."*

Here, the use of pronoun "we" for his party reflects his positive portrayal of his party as the only reliable source for the people who intend to kick start any sort of new business. He presents a positive image of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf as an only boon of hope for people who aspire to be great businessmen in the future. He uses the term Insha'Allah while talking about his party and claims that they will ensure easy means of investment for the newbie businessmen so that they can invest and start-up huge businesses. In the above statement, he presents a positive picture of his party and depicts it as a dependable source. Furthermore, he talks about the situation of FBR in the following words:

> *"Today, I promise to you people that I am going to fix FBR first of all. Our first aim will be to confront the extension in corruption in FBR."*

FBR is the abbreviation of the Federal Board of Revenue which is concerned with investigating financial crimes, money laundering, and taxation. Imran Khan uses the term "fix" to depict that the system was devastated by the previous governments and is not working properly. The pronoun "I" and "we'' are used by him to present himself and his party in a positive way and fix represents a negative image of the devastations caused by the previous governments. Talking about the mess that the previous government created he states:

> *"And this all is due to the increased foreign debts and the biggest challenge is that we have no way out to pay these debts. I will come back to this point again and tell you how to solve this issue."*

He makes this statement after he talks about the ills of the two previous governments of PML N and PPP, who kept on taking aid and debt from foreign nations without any thought of paying them back. He uses the term

"biggest challenge" to show the gravity of the ills committed by them and their devastating consequences. He uses the pronoun "I" to positively portray himself in front of the people and a negative image of the other parties.

Predication Strategy

Imran Khan talks about the debts that the country owes due to the neglect and recklessness of the previous governments in his victory speech. He said,

> *"Today, I am depicting all these things in front of all of you. The reason is that I want you all to realize the fact that if we continue the same trend, we are going to encounter a huge disaster."*

In these lines, Imran Khan refers to one of the major issues faced by Pakistan, that is, foreign debt. PML N took a debt of 95 billion dollars, whereas PPP took a foreign debt of 60 billion dollars. The expression "going to encounter a huge disaster" is used as a prediction strategy to stop the people from following the ideologies and agendas of the previous governments and to trust his vision.

Appeal to Pathos (Emotions)

Imran Khan strives to appeal to the audience by connecting with them emotionally and developing an emotional bond with them by evoking their emotions. He convinces the public to be vigilant in paying taxes in the following words

> *"Therefore, we have to ponder on the tax that we pay as we are paying it for Allah's sake, just as we give Zakat."*

Zakat is one of the pillars of Islam and Imran Khan strives to compare paying taxes with paying Zakat. He advises the people of Pakistan to consider the payment of tax as similar to the payment of Zakat. In Islam, paying Zakat is regarded as a good deed and a source of reward in the hereafter. Therefore, the audience are driven emotionally by the PM when he uses the term "For Allah's sake" and "as we give Zakat" to evoke their emotions. He also talks about the corrupt people in the following words,

"Therefore, you need to stand up with me because either this country can be secured from devastation or these corrupt people can be secured."

He attempts to persuade people that they need to support him and his party to save the country. He refers to PPP and PMLN when he talks about corruption. He makes an effort to convince his audience to take action against corrupt people by saying *"Either this country can be secured from devastation or these corrupt people can be secured"*. It means that the decision lies with the people of Pakistan, whether they want to save their nation or to secure the future of corrupt politicians of other parties. This skillful choice of words increases his chances of being backed by the nation and reduces the support system for his opponents, that is, "others".

Appealed to Ethos (One's Character)

Imran Khan strives to present himself in an organized manner which makes it possible for the audience to respect him and pay heed to what he is saying. He exploits the strategy of ethos to make people trust him, both as a leader and as a savior. He talks about his aim in the following words,

"I joined politics almost 22 years ago and I aimed to build our country whatever it was originally meant to be. It means the dream that Allama Iqbal had of establishing a prosperous Islamic state in which we all can lead as an example in front of the entire world."

Imran Khan presents himself as a trustworthy person for the whole nation by stating his intention to join politics. It is acceptable to the nation because everybody wants a prosperous state. He talks about the Islamic state and the dream of Iqbal and revokes the ideological beliefs that most Pakistanis share.

Imran Khan speaks of the dream of Iqbal about an Islamic state to develop a positive picture of himself as a scholarly person who knows the history of Pakistan and is serious about the said dream of Iqbal. Since Pakistani people have a strong emotional bond with Iqbal; therefore, they are prone to be influenced by his reference. At another point he says,

"Today I would be pleased to pay gratitude to all my fellow workers who started this movement with me 22 years ago in this struggle."

In these lines, Khan pays his regard to all those people who have joined his cause and are working with him. It helps him in developing a picture of a person who is loyal and is not oblivious to the efforts of others. He uses this chronological reference to establish himself as a good and reliable person who has worked hard and remained determined. This strategy helps him to portray a character that is appealing to the audience and the audience feel comfortable in trusting him.

Appeal to Logos (Logic)

Imran Khan also makes a logical appeal along with exploiting pathos and ethos. He presents various proofs along with discussion to appeal to the logic. When he ponders on the foreign debt of Pakistan, he presents detailed numerical data and explains how the issues gradually developed. Imran Khan refers to a report issued by the US State Department in his speech,

> *"A report by US State Department tells that money laundering worth 10 billion dollars is done in Pakistan annually."*

He claims that money laundering is prevalent in Pakistan and provides the reference of the US State Department to prove his point. He gives the figure of 10 billion dollars to provide a solid snippet of data to persuade his audience to trust him. He provides evidence to make people look towards him with respect and support him in his cause.

Discussion

Imran Khan utilizes the pronoun "we" for his party, mirroring his positive depiction as the primary potential source for individuals who expect to launch relevant new prospect. He presents a positive picture of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf to instigate the managerial skills of interested individuals. He utilizes the term Insha'Allah while discussing the future agendas of his party especially about independent being with very low cost effect. Imran Khan uses the expression "fix" to portray that the previous administrative parties ruin the system and still hindering the smooth functioning of it. The pronouns "I" and "we" are utilized to introduce himself and his party decidedly which emphatically illustrate a negative picture of obliterations caused by the past legislatures.

He uses the expression "greatest challenge" to show the seriousness of the ills caused by his competitive personnel. Here, he again uses the pronoun "I" to give a positive image of himself before individuals and contrarily a negative picture of opponents. This skillful selection of words expands the possibility of country to upheld and lessens the emotionally supportive network for his rival's "Others". The expression "going to experience a gigantic debacle" mirrors the utilization of forecast as a strategy to prevent individuals from following past states' belief systems and plans and trusting their vision.

Imran Khan introduces himself as a reliable individual for the entire country by presenting his aim based on governmental issues. He discusses the Islamic state in the line of Iqbal's dream as well-known perspective of each Pakistani knows and renounces the philosophical convictions that most Pakistani desire to see. Here he alludes to a scholarly mastermind of Pakistan, "Allama Iqbal", who longed for a prosperous Islamic state wherein Muslims could reside with harmony and autonomy. He was the individual who persuaded Quaid-e-Azam to battle for a separate country for Muslims, so they could live independently and practice their religion. His enthusiasm and deep passions made him dear Pakistani public.

In Islam, paying Zakat is a noble deed and it will be a continued source of wellbeing not only in this world but next after it. Moreover, this noble cause driven sincerely by the PM when he utilizes the expression "For the wellbeing of Allah" and "as we give Zakat" to arouse their feelings and develop a strong association between system and people. His act of charity is an explicit action to foreground his agenda to promote this act of kindness among public. He reference of the US State Department is another mean to validate his theoretical construct because being superpower world do consider what US state.

Conclusion

Imran Khan makes the use of rhetorical strategies of Aristotle including pathos, ethos, and logos in his speech. He also uses other techniques such as positive portrayal of 'self' and negative presentation of 'others' in his speech along with prediction strategy to convince people to support his political agenda and believe in his ideology. Language is one of the most

influential tools of persuasion and Imran Khan skillfully exploits language by making the correct choice of words and eloquent speech to achieve his political objectives. Therefore, his political victory speech is determined encompass the features of Aristotelian rhetoric, i.e. tactful use of lexicons for image formation, and strategy of prediction. Language is an influential vehicle of politics because every political move is initially devised, strengthen, and scaffold via language.s Imran Khan's speech is impregnated with a lot of persuasive strategies that play a vital role in convincing and influencing the opinions of the audience.

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