

# Rhetoric of Violence in Political Discourses: A Comparative Study of Pakistani Politicians' Speeches

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## ABSTRACT:

Language plays a significant role in determining what goes on in an individual's mind. Politicians use language insidiously and persuasively to impart their ideologies and to win the consent of the general masses. Moreover, they also use certain lexicons to otherize the others. Speeches are delivered by politicians for positive self-representation and negative others representation. The aim of this study is to provide a comprehensive analysis of political discourses. For this purpose, the speeches of three Pakistani politicians, namely Imran Khan, Maryam Nawaz and Bilawal Bhutto, have been analysed from Sept. 2021 to May 2023. It is analysed how they exercise political rhetoric using different linguistic spins. The theoretical framework, including Paul Chilton (2004) Discourse Space Theory, is employed for this study. The data is taken from the YouTube channel of Pakistani news channels, namely ARY and SAMMA TV. The findings reveal that politicians make use of various discursive spins and rhetorical strategies to others.

## KEY WORDS:

Rhetoric, Political Discourse, Persuasion, Ideology, CDA, Violence, Politicians

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## Introduction

Language serves as a significant factor in shaping the view of speakers and making things common. Derrida opines that language is not simply a tool for communication but is also the source of meaning and reality itself. Language is a system of signs and symbols that are used to create meaning and construct reality, which makes it performative. This meaning and reality are not fixed or stable but are constantly shifting and changing. The way in which language is used can also be a means of ideological investment. This refers to the process by which language is used to legitimize and reinforce particular ideologies or power structures. It is through language that various ideologies are constructed and disseminated, including religion, politics...etc. Through this tool, we can not only express but also explain our thought process. Language helps assign identities and roles to people in society and creates hierarchies.

Language is utilized by individuals as well as groups of people in society to achieve their goals. That is, the language user achieves a specific goal by consciously selecting specific linguistic or ideological moves, including the use of certain lexical items or a specific way of unveiling things to produce a specific meaning (semantics). Minds are set, changed or shaped by using the discursive power of language, and specific ideologies are instilled in people's minds. With the help of discourse, minds can be shaped negatively or positively.

Besides, language serves as an important factor in persuading others, and politicians use language to achieve their target through their speeches, which are designed carefully. Deliberate selection of theme, linguistic moves and peculiar style makes political speech an effective and persuasive tool.

## Politics and Language

Politics is both a science and art that plays a role in suasion and influencing others. It involves the exercise of judgment, persuasion, and leadership. Political actors propagate social and political ideologies and communicate effectively to achieve their goals. The art of politics involves the ability to persuade others to achieve desired outcomes. It is a struggle for power to put certain political, economic, and social ideas practically. Politicians use particular kinds of language to communicate with one another, shape public opinion, and exercise political power.

Politics and language are closely interrelated because language is a fundamental tool for political communication and to exercise political power. Language also plays a role in the formation and propagation of political identities and interests. For example, political groups often use language to distinguish themselves from others and articulate their interests and goals. The language used in political discourse can also reflect and reinforce social and political hierarchies, as some languages may be considered more or less legitimate or authoritative than others. They use rhetoric and persuasive language to shape public opinion, frame policy debates, and win elections (Khalil, [2017](#)).

Politicians use different linguistic devices as linguistic weapons to control the minds of people. They do so by changing the deep ideological basis in the minds of people by emphasizing on their ideology. The poly-tricks include presenting opinions as facts, otherization and in-grouping that are mostly self-styled. Political leaders and institutions may use language to legitimize their power and authority, often by framing their actions as necessary for the greater good or as representing the will of the people.

## Political Rhetoric as Genre

Political rhetoric contributes to the effectiveness of language use while trying to influence the target audience about a particular political issue. The language of politics typically aims to manipulate or control people's minds. (Van Dijk, [1995](#); Van Dijk, [2006](#)). To win general consent and to disseminate ideology on many levels is a form of linguistic hegemony. It is distinguished by the speakers' deliberate choice of using highly ideological language. The use of rhetorical elements in speeches is not something new in politics. Studying political language, according to Beard ([2000](#)), helps us "understand how language is used by those who want to gain power, those who wish to exercise power, and those who wish to keep power." Politically structured rhetoric is seen by Van Dijk ([1995](#), [2006](#)) as an instrument to control the mind by constructing and propagating ideology. The speeches in politics lie under the category of Aristotle's deliberate rhetoric, which propagates ideology.

## Linguistic Othering

Othering refers to the process of identifying and excluding individuals or groups who are perceived as different from the norms of a particular society. It involves constructing a binary opposition between "us" and "them" based on factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, or nationality. Otherization involves the use of language or rhetoric to create a sense of division between groups. The 'Other, Otherness, Otherization and Othering' are different but interdisciplinary concepts that indicate negative effects on the subject.

One of the types of otherization is in and through linguistic choices that speakers encode their semantic stance. Consequently, it is in and through these very linguistic choices that politicians engage in the representation or exclusion of groups. Discursive stances are linguistic choices which reflect and sustain critical stances. Consequently, the two strands of structure and semantics—lexico-syntax (i.e., the othering strategies utilized) and meaning (i.e., the consequent critical stance evoked) are cyclically linked. Berlin ([1992](#)) states that language is a

pluralistic and complex system of signifying practices that construct realities rather than simply presenting or representing them.

The present research analyses the speeches delivered by politicians to explore how certain linguistic spins are employed by the speakers to propagate their ideology. For this purpose, the researchers employed Chilton's (2004) discourse space theory. The proposed study investigates the intricate relationship between language, speech, and politics and how speakers utilize this triad to achieve their desired results. Through an analysis of speeches delivered by politicians at various levels, the study attempts to uncover the ways in which these three elements are interwoven and utilized to disseminate certain ideologies, both explicit and implicit, to their audiences. By examining the ways in which these strategies are employed, the study analyses the speeches delivered by the politicians, namely Imran Khan, Maryam Nawaz, and Bilawal Bhutto, at the level of word, clause, sentence, and discourse.

### Research Questions

The study attempts to answer the following questions.

1. How is linguistic othering exercised in the political discourse of Pakistani politicians Imran Khan, Bilawal Bhutto, and Maryam Nawaz?
2. What linguistic moves are used by these politicians to disseminate ideologies?
3. How do these politicians vary in their ideological moves to exercise linguistic othering?

### Literature Review

This section discusses a critical review of existing but most relevant literature and similar studies conducted in the area.

### Works Already Done

The section that follows critically reviews the relevant previously conducted research in a similar domain to generate a gap for the present research. The following previous research has been discussed chronologically.

Latupeirissa et al. (2019) carried out research on the language used by the first president of Indonesia. It investigated the ideology embedded in political language. For this purpose, the corpus of speeches was collected from the office of the Indonesian Republic National Archives (IRNA). Fairclough's (1995) three-dimensional model was employed, and analysis was done on three levels, i.e., text, interpretation and explanation. The findings revealed that language was used to disseminate three ideologies that positively represented Indonesia. The domains in this regard include 'unity', 'revolution' and 'imperialism'.

Inayat (2019) carried out research to analyse Khan's speeches delivered during election campaign. The research focused on exploring embedded ideologies that how linguistic spins were used persuasively to disseminate intended message to the masses. For this purpose, data was collected from the archive of ARY TV and was transcribed into Roman Language as well. Van Dijk's (1998) framework of CDA was employed to analyze the data. The findings revealed that various linguistic techniques were used for positive self-image and negative representation of others.

Nusrat et al. (2020) conducted research on Khan's speeches that were delivered during the sit-in. The research focused on investigating the exercise of power through language in the framework of social and political settings. It analysed data by employing Fairclough's framework of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995). The mentioned model includes levels, namely text, interpretation and explanation. The research concluded that the speaker made excessive use of these linguistic devices, i.e. "I" and "we", and ideological moves to disseminate his ideology related to Islamism and Pakistan.

Khajavi. Rasti (2020) carried out research in which the use of ideological moves and rhetoric by politicians was investigated. The research focused on investigating ways in which politicians represent themselves to win general consent in the U.S. election campaign of 2012. The data for this purpose was collected from the [internet archive](#), and 30 speeches were analysed at the mentioned levels. Van Leeuwen's (2006) framework was employed for the analysis and included categories, i.e., actor description, passivization, identification, and individualization. Besides, Reyes (2011) employed delegitimizing discursive strategies to find discursive spins. The categories of analysis included authorization, moral legitimation, rationalization, etc. The research finds that Obama's main concern was to evoke the myth of the American Dream, while Romney used the strategy of negative othering. It was found that Obama used ideological moves more strategically.

Khan et al. (2021) research on the rhetoric of Trump revealed that anti-Islamic feelings were common among the masses. The data for the study was collected from Trump's tweets. The study highlighted that Trump's use of Islamophobic language and discourse has been a defining characteristic of his political career. It was analysed critically using the macro-strategies of discourse provided by Wodak and Meyer (2001) and van Dijk's (1998) referential strategies of political discourse. The analytical categories that were focused on included constructive strategy, perpetuation strategy, and dismantling strategy. Moreover, Van Dijk's Ideological Square Model was also employed, which includes discursive strategies, e.g., actor description, hyperbole, implication, irony, etc. The results revealed that Trump used demagogic language targeting Islam (Khan, 2021).

Shafiq (2021) investigated e-political discourse. The study focused on understanding hate speech used by politicians on social media. The data for this purpose was collected from the tweets of three Pakistani political parties before and after the 2018 elections (held on July 25, 2018). The approach employed was the Political Discourse Analysis approach to interpret the selected texts. The research highlighted that the prominent emerging themes were anti-deliberation, prejudice, and dehumanization. Besides, it contends that political rhetoric is used to position certain groups positively or negatively.

## Theoretical Framework

This section deals with the theoretical/conceptual framework used in the study. Chilton's research approach about CDA has been discussed in this section.

### Chilton's model of Critical Discourse analysis

Chilton (2005) believes that CDA focuses less on the mental process than its predecessors. It is of the utmost importance to take this into consideration because discourse, as a form of social practice, is capable of exercising influence over the mind and provoking action in any society. The human mind is involved in the construction and interpretation of language; therefore, the mental process involved must be taken into consideration. Hence, he proposed that in order to evaluate discourse in a social and political context, a combination of cognitive approaches, cognitive psychology, and cognitive linguistics must be focused. This model can serve as a foundation for extending the scope of critical discourse analysis to further psychological and cognitive domains.

The layout of Chilton's model is as follows.

### Spatial Axis

The deictic space that Chilton talks about is not physical rather a conceptual space that language uses to represent various conceptualisations by grammatical constructions, parts of words or way of words. The origin of geometry, the experiential self, or S, is the I, which conceptually depicts the world in three dimensions.

### Temporal Axis

The subjective bi-directionality of time is what the t-axis is meant to represent. Similar to the a-axis, depending on whether S is "looking back" into the past or "forwards" into the future from the deictic centre t0, occurrences on t

are subjectively "closer" to S or more "remote." The t-axis metaphorically depicts how human minds conceptualize time as extending in two directions: into the future (as determined by the brain's planning and anticipation processes) and into the past (abstracted from memory systems).

### Modal Axis

The m-axis, or modal axis, is unique and significant. It symbolizes our perception of what is most real (true), typically what is nearest to us, "present" and "here," both metaphorically and literally.

### Research Methodology

In the present study, the technique employed for sampling is purposive sampling. The speeches have been purposely sampled as they address extremely important topics at significant forums, so their linguistic content is particularly beneficial for research. The speeches' content has been analyzed from the lens of a neutral observer. The emerging themes from the speeches have been located. After collecting the data and interpreting it, the researchers have added some newly emerging categories to the existing model, which is a contribution on the part of the researchers.

The research model used in the present study is devised after drawing upon the theory of Paul Chilton (2004). The researchers go through the process of inclusion/exclusion after the critical reading of the data.

### Paradigm

This research uses a mixed-method approach, i.e., qualitative and quantitative data. A content analysis technique has been employed to validate the qualitative data quantitatively. The researchers have conducted a qualitative analysis of chosen politicians' speeches using the critical discourse analysis approach, which has already been discussed in depth. The present study employs content analysis to document the frequency of occurrence of several distinct themes in the selected data.

### Data Collection Tools

The data for this research was collected from news channels on YouTube. All the speeches used in this study are downloaded from the YouTube channels ARY NEWS and SAMMA TV.

### Sources:

Imran Khan: [YouTube Link](#)

Maryam Nawaz: [YouTube Link](#)

Bilawal Bhutto: [YouTube Link](#)

The speeches were first downloaded from YouTube and then translated into English using Google Translator. For in-depth analysis of the data, the researchers draw upon the theory of Chilton to modify them in accordance with the requirements of the existing data. The analysis focuses on the discursive spins used by politicians and how they otherize the others through their language.

Feltham-King and Macleod (2016) opine that validating the qualitative findings quantitatively is a significant research technique. According to them, it is nearly impossible to analyse all the data qualitatively. Therefore, the quantitative research method can help in the analysis of certain data and the generalization of others.

### Data Analysis and Discussions

The selected chunks of speeches carrying the theme of otherization have been analysed in the section that follows by employing the research model of Chilton.

### Quantitative Analysis of Data

The frequency of the occurrence of pronouns in speeches is presented here in the form of a table.

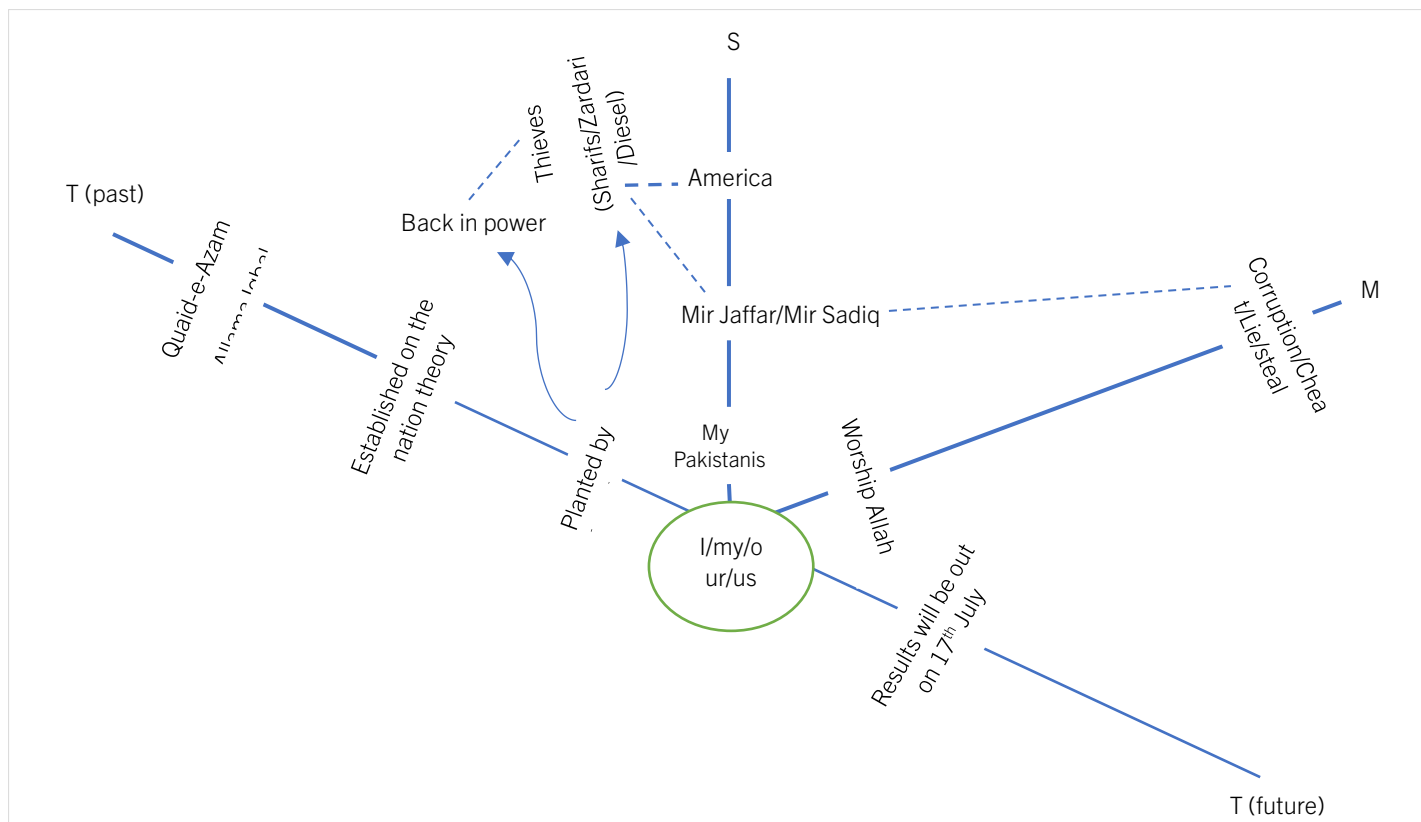
**Table 1**

*Deictic Analysis*

Personal Deixis	Pronouns	Percentage	d/1000
1 <sup>st</sup> Person Pronoun	Singular: I/Me	0.017	17
	Plural: Inclusive "We"/"us"/"our"	0.029	29
2 <sup>nd</sup> Person Pronoun	You/Your	0.015	15
	Singular	0.003	3
3 <sup>rd</sup> Person Pronoun	He/His	0.03	30
	Plural They/their/them		

The content analysis of the usage of <sup>first</sup> person pronoun illustrates that the speaker has made use of <sup>first</sup> person pronoun 'I' 17 times. The <sup>first</sup> person 'I' is used to highlight the degree of individuality and certainty. It is used to lay stress on the issue under discussion. It is also a technique of proceeding from self to universal. It makes the speaker's stance more persuasive. Here, in this particular case, it implies that whatever the speaker is saying to the public is based on facts. At the same time, the speaker uses the technique of otherization with the highest frequency of occurrence, i.e., 30 times. This has been done for others' negative representation because the third person pronoun 'they' is most often used to distance someone at the linguistic and social levels.

**Figure 1**



Thieves and corruption have been correlated. According to Chilton, something that is morally or legally wrong is distanced from the self. Hence, corruption/lie/steal are then located at the remote end of M. The use of "thieves" prompts for Sharifs/Zardari. It is obvious that the speaker has represented himself and his party positively by



associating himself and his party with good qualities like patriotism, and the other has been positioned as a deviation from the norm, and the attributes assigned to them carry negative social connotations such as robbery, lust of wealth, and theft. Similarly, the speaker gives references from the past, saying that Allama Iqbal and Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah struggled hard to liberate the people from colonial masters so they could live peaceful lives. Now again, the thieves (Sharif/Zardari) are planted by West, who are the colonials, and the people have become slaves again. Here, the speaker wants to imply that only he and his party can liberate people again as Quaid and Jinnah did in the past. Moreover, the speaker is hopeful and trying to persuade the people that if they vote for his party in the upcoming elections, they will be free from slavery again, and there will be no inflation.

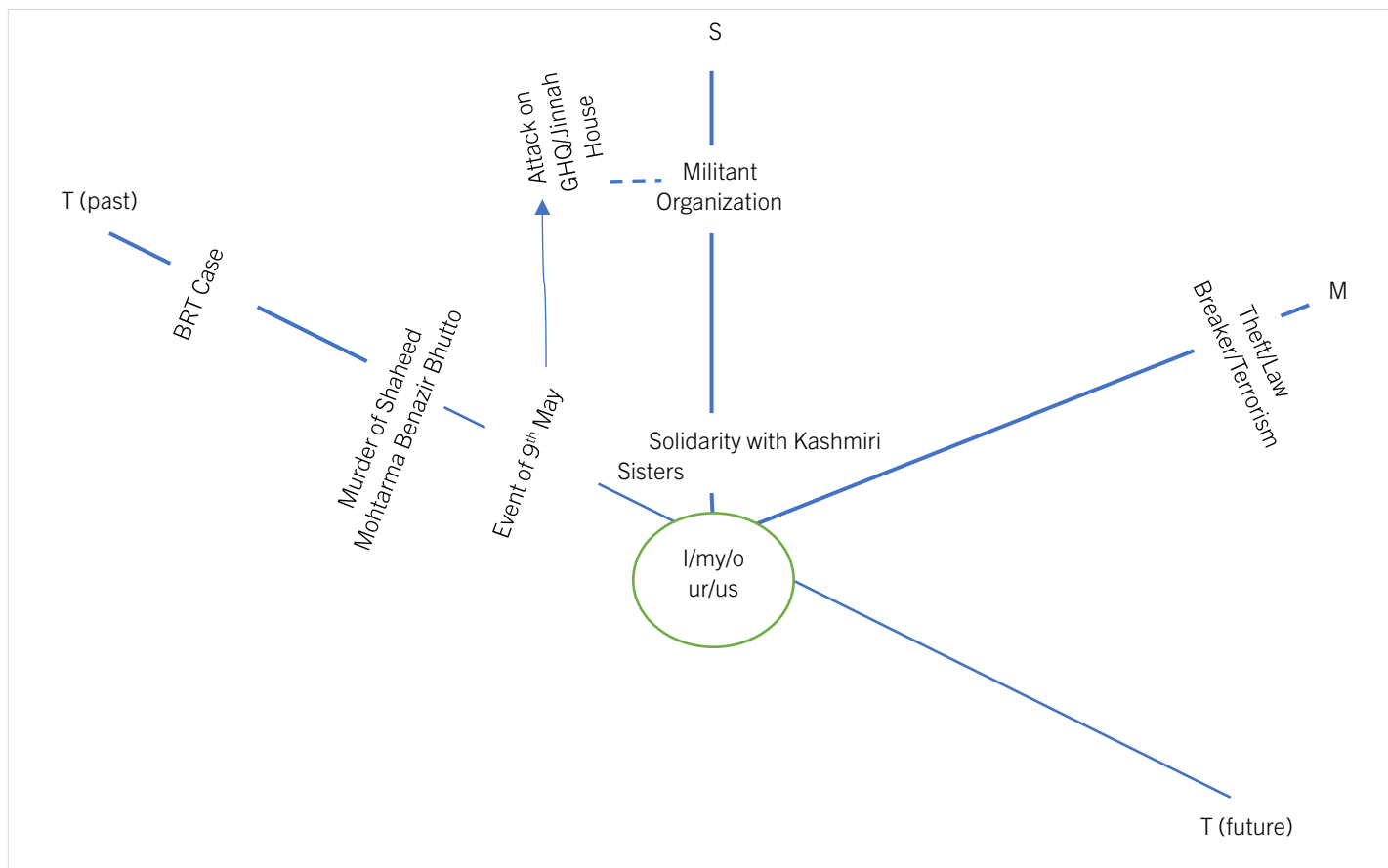
### Bilawal Bhutto

The frequency of the occurrence of pronouns in the speech is presented here in the form of a table.

Table 2

Personal Deixis	Pronouns	Percentage	d/1000
1 <sup>st</sup> Person Pronoun	Singular: I/Me	0.007	7
	Plural: Inclusive "We"/"us"/"our"	0.20	20
2 <sup>nd</sup> Person Pronoun	You/Your	0.005	5
	Singular	0.24	24
3 <sup>rd</sup> Person Pronoun	He/His	0.015	15
	Plural They/their/them		

Figure 2

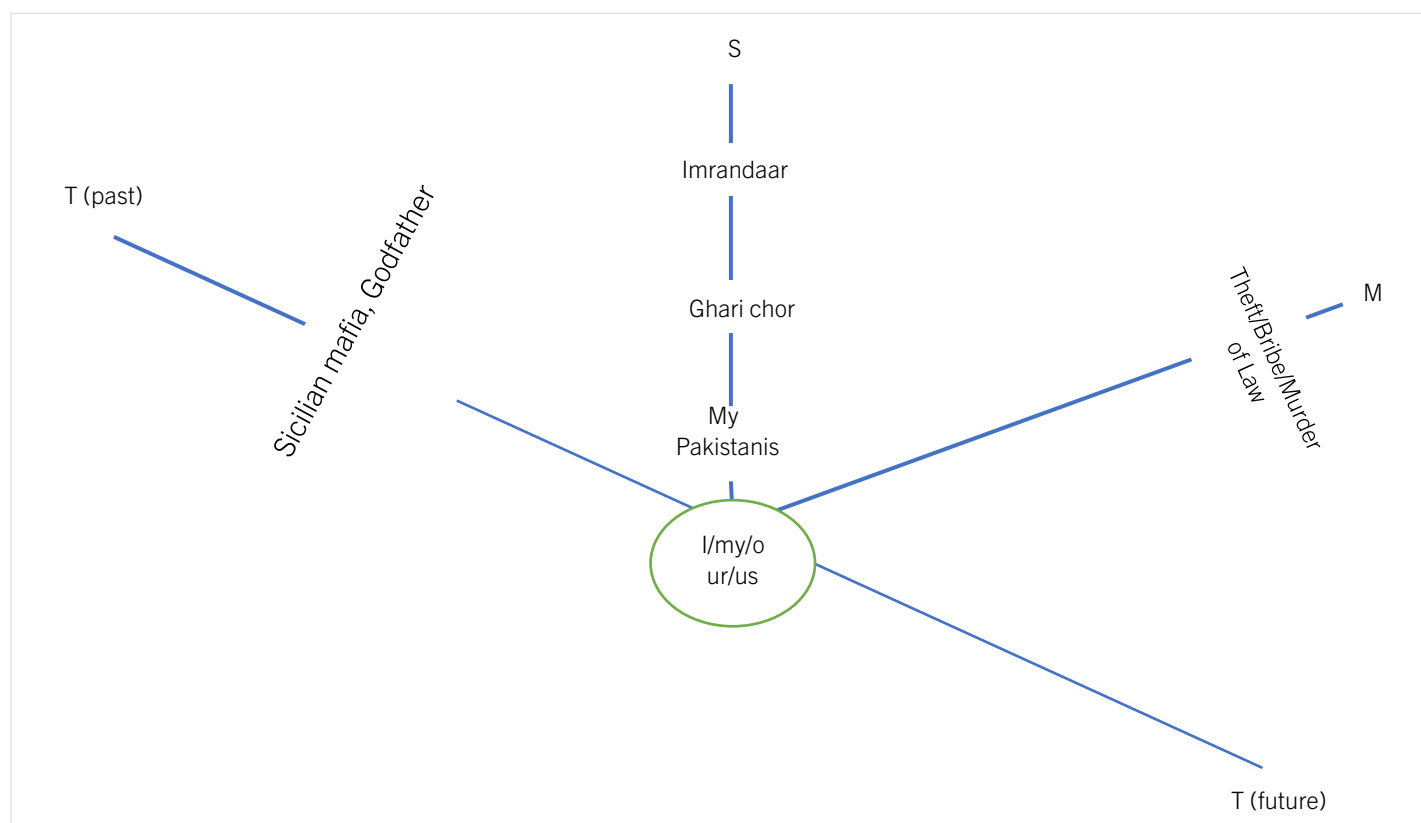


### Maryam Nawaz

The frequency of the occurrence of pronouns in the speeches is presented here in the form of a table.

Personal Deixis	Pronouns	Percentage	d/1000
1 <sup>st</sup> Person Pronoun	Singular: I/Me	0.012	12
	Plural: Inclusive "We"/"us"/"our"	0.009	9
2 <sup>nd</sup> Person Pronoun	You/Your	0.034	34
3 <sup>rd</sup> Person Pronoun	Singular He/His	0.012	12
	Plural They/their/them	0.021	21

Figure 3



### Findings/Conclusion

The present study was initiated to analyse the political discourse of three Pakistani politicians, Maryam Nawaz, Imran Khan, and Bilawal Bhutto. For this purpose, data was collected from the mentioned source. The analysis of the data reveals that the speakers have tactfully used politically groomed language. Every one of them has manipulated the insidious weapon of language to sell his/her ideology. Every one of them has represented himself/herself positively, and the same has been done for the people belonging to the ingroup and vice versa.

The frequency of using <sup>first</sup> person pronouns is comparatively high as far as Mr Khan is concerned. It implies that he has laid more stress on his factual representation of others negatively than his counterparts. As far as the use of <sup>third</sup> person pronoun "they" is concerned, its percentage varies from 21 times to 15 times and 30 times. Here again, it is obvious that Mr. Khan has used <sup>third</sup> person pronoun 'they' 30 times in his speech. At the same time, it was used 21 times by Maryam and 15 times by Bilawal. It implies that Mr. Khan is more inclined to represent his political rivals negatively. The same has been observed with the use of <sup>first</sup> person pronoun we. Here, it is obvious that it has



been used 29 times by Mr. Khan, 20 times by Mr. Bilawal and 9 times by Maryam. It connotes that Mr. Khan accedes in expressing his solidarity with the people as compared to his counterparts. The overall impression of the present study is that political discourses are never neutral and are used very tactfully to represent 'us' positively and others negatively. Besides, the study contends that political rhetoric is one of the best sites to win general consent and invest in ideology for long-term interests.

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