

Framing the Future: A Corpus-Assisted Analysis of Stance Markers and Evaluation in Pakistani English Newspaper Coverage of Generative AI

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ABSTRACT: This study investigates how Pakistani English-language newspapers construct and evaluate generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) through stance markers and evaluative language. Drawing on a specialized Pakistani GenAI Newspaper Corpus (PGNC) comprising 347 articles and 378,456 words from Dawn, The Express Tribune, and The News International, the study adopts a corpus-linguistic approach informed by Conrad (2002), Egbert, Larsson et al. (2020), and Hunston and Thompson (2000). Articles published between 2022 and 2025 were analyzed using AntConc through frequency, keyword, collocation, concordance, and semantic-prosody analyses, followed by contextual interpretation. The findings reveal a predominantly developmental representation of GenAI. Positive appreciation constitutes 65% of 18,765 evaluative instances, while negative judgment accounts for 28% and neutral or ambivalent evaluation for 7%. Stance resources occur at 32.9 instances per 1,000 words, with hedges (12.9) outnumbering boosters (8.5) and positive attitude markers (7.9). Diachronic analysis indicates a shift from booster-heavy optimism in the early period toward increased hedging and negative judgment by 2025. Cross-newspaper differences are also evident: The Express Tribune exhibits the highest overall stance density (35.6 per 1,000 words), Dawn records the highest hedge density (14.3), and The News International demonstrates the highest negative-attitude density (6.7). Semantic-prosody findings show that “revolutionary” predominantly evokes positive developmental meanings, risk is frequently mitigated through hedging, and “Pakistan” appears in deontic constructions emphasizing national urgency. Overall, Pakistani English-language newspapers localize global GenAI discourse by balancing developmental aspirations with increasing caution, reflecting evolving perceptions of technological opportunity, uncertainty, and national priorities.

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Introduction

The public launch of ChatGPT in November 2022 helped shift the conversation about generative AI (GenAI) from specialist technological discussions to mainstream media, education, employment, governance, and public debate.

In Pakistan's communications landscape, English-language newspapers play an important role in elite and policy-oriented discourse. The Express Tribune and Dawn regularly report on national development, employment, education, regulation, and the risks and opportunities of AI. At the same time, The News International reports frequently on AI applications. This coverage offers a strong basis for analyzing how Pakistan's rapidly changing technology is linguistically constructed in this article's thesis.

The challenge is not only the frequency of GenAI mentions, but also how newspapers position it. Writers may use stance markers to signal levels of certainty, possibility, obligation, and attitude, and apply evaluative resources to value technologies, outcomes, actors, and policies. These resources may convey inevitability, promise, risk, manageability, disruption, and/or regulation in emerging-technology reporting. In light of the above, this thesis poses two focused questions: What patterns of stance markers emerge in coverage of GenAI in Pakistani English newspapers, and what evaluative patterns and framing strategies do they accompany?

The study has topical relevance. The thesis review notes that while corpus-based studies of Pakistani English have examined topics such as political discourse, gender representation, meta-discourse, and others, limited research has used corpus-assisted linguistic analysis of GenAI newspaper discourse. This study therefore does not treat framing as a thematic category but instead focuses on its micro-linguistic realization.

Overall, the texts suggest that Pakistani newspapers mainly use a development frame when covering GenAI, with optimism that is not absolute. Positive evaluative language links to learning, innovation, employment and economic opportunities, progress, and national development. In contrast, hedging and negative evaluation are linked to misinformation, deepfakes, ethical issues, and technological dependency. The thesis summarizes its results in an empirical narrative style, like a journal article. It also includes tables and visualizations based on the corpus results.

Literature Review and Analytical Framework

Media Framing and GenAI

Media framing is a process in which news outlets present specific salience to news consumers by selectively reporting to help make sense of an issue, define the problem, interpret its causes, evaluate its moral implications, or recommend its treatment (Entman, 1993). As the thesis shows, AI reporting has so far mostly centered on business and economic effects, scientific and technological developments, societal impacts, job disruption, misinformation, bias, and privacy concerns. Pre-ChatGPT reporting focused on innovation and productivity, whereas post-ChatGPT reporting has broadened to include social impacts, governance, and even conflicting opportunity/threat narratives.

Generative AI is increasingly involved in newsrooms, and research on its implications for framing, sourcing, and trust remains limited (Saeed et al., 2025). This is a developmental aspect of the Pakistani situation. The thesis literature review can identify these recurring intersections across economic development, education reform, youth employment, digital access, sovereignty, and disinformation. For this reason, stance and evaluation are particularly relevant: developmental language can realize GenAI's potential for 'leapfrogging.' In contrast, risk-oriented language can emphasize infrastructural inequality and the need for regulation.

Early studies found that conversations about AI were not uniform but evolved in response to new technologies and their social implications. For instance, Fast and Horvitz (2017) analyzed the New York Times' reporting on AI over about 30 years and found that public debate on AI had grown significantly. They found that overall attitudes were positive, but issues such as employment, ethics, and the loss of human control became increasingly prominent. (Chuan, 2023) employed the framing analysis method to analyze changes in the coverage of artificial intelligence in five top newspapers from the United States from 2009 to 2018. Sun et al. (2021) took this research a step further by analyzing a large sample of 1,776 artificial intelligence-related articles from The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Guardian, and USA Today. Garvey and Maskal (2020) questioned negative assumptions about the news

media and AI. Related research has focused on the ethical depiction of AI. Waddell (2018) also investigated perceptions of machine authorship and news credibility. Two experiments found machine-attributed news less credible than human-attributed news, partly because machine authorship violated expectations about journalism and source credibility. Thurman (2018) studied journalists’ encounters with automated journalism and found that professionals noted potential benefits, such as rapidity, breadth, specificity, and timeliness of information, but also disadvantages related to source material and journalistic judgment.

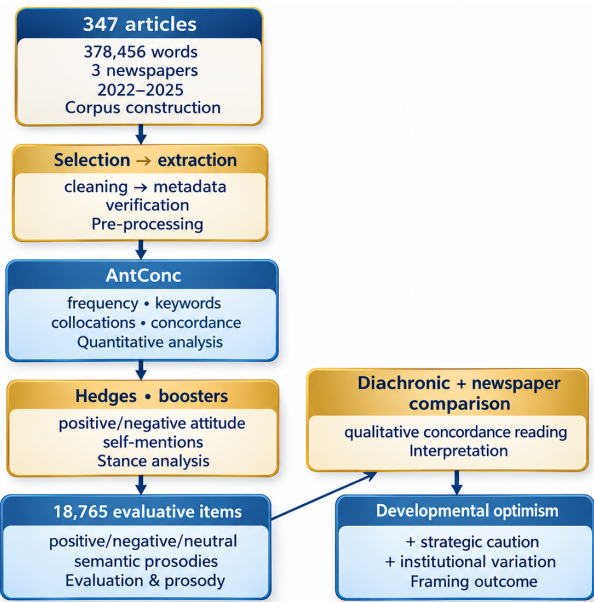
Corpus Linguistics, Stance, and Evaluation

The study follows only one methodological tradition: the corpus-linguistic approach presented by Reppen and Simpson-Vlach (2019). The primary focus is on the language data, quantitative analysis, comparative study across sub-corpora, and qualitative interpretation of patterns in context. In the thesis, I present this as a unified corpus-based design, not a mixture of unrelated methodologies. Biber (2006) investigated the linguistic expression of stance and evaluation in university registers, focusing especially on academic research writing and, to a lesser extent, classroom teaching.

With this in mind, I will use Biber (2012) account of stance as the main categories for determining epistemic and attitudinal positioning in this context. Hedges may express commitment or uncertainty, boosters may express commitment, attitude markers may express evaluation, and self-mentions may express institutional and/or authorial presence. From this viewpoint, Hunston and Thompson (2000) discussion of evaluation also adds value, offers common interpretations, and places the reader in the scene through evaluative language. The thesis builds on these ideas and interprets the pattern of lexical and phraseological units found in the corpus.

Thus, the analytical logic is sequential but linked to each other: the authentic newspaper texts are compiled into the creation of a specialized corpus; then, frequencies, keywords, collocations, and concordances are identified with the help of AntConc; afterward, the stance and the evaluative resources are counted and normalized; then, recurring collocational environments are explored, and the representative concordances are interpreted in the context of the entire discourse. This design draws on corpus analysis and the contextual sensitivity essential to discourse interpretation.

Figure 1
Corpus-assisted Analytical Workflow Used in the Study. The Figure Condenses the Methodological Sequence Reported in the Thesis



Method

Corpus and Data Sources

Total number of articles in the Pakistani GenAI Newspaper Corpus (PGNC): 347 articles, 378,456 words from three English newspapers of Pakistan, namely Dawn (142 articles; 148,920 words), The Express Tribune (112 articles; 119,340 words), and The News International (93 articles; 110,196 words). The corpus covers January 2022 to December 2025. Although the thesis methodology includes general references to a 2026 collection window, the dataset and reported results focus on 2022–2025; therefore, this article refers only to the 2022–2025 results, not the 2026 period.

We selected articles by systematically searching newspaper websites and accessible archives using the keywords generative AI, ChatGPT, Gemini, Claude, AI tools, large language model, GenAI, and artificial intelligence in appropriate technology contexts. We manually screened retrieved items to identify substantive discussion of GenAI, and excluded items with non-substantive mentions, such as advertisements. We retrieved the texts as plain-text documents, cleaned them to remove non-article information, and annotated them with metadata including newspaper, date, article type, and word count.

Table 1
Composition of the Pakistani GenAI Newspaper Corpus (PGNC).

Newspaper	Articles	Words	Share of articles
Dawn	142	148,920	40.9%
The Express Tribune	112	119,340	32.3%
The News International	93	110,196	26.8%
Total	347	378,456	100%

Analytical Procedure

We carried out the analysis in AntConc, including frequency lists, keyword analysis, collocation, concordance analysis, and semantic-prosody analysis. The minimum frequency for collocational analysis was 5, and the MI threshold was>6. We then examined extended concordance lines manually to identify epistemic, attitudinal, evaluative, and deontic functions. We used the quantitative results only to support, rather than supersede, the qualitative interpretation.

We operationalized stance using a custom search list based on Biber et al. (2012) and Biber (2006). The main types found in the thesis were: hedges, boosters, positive attitude markers, negative attitude markers, self-mentions, and style stance. The evaluation discussed positive appreciation, negative judgment, and neutral or ambivalent resources, focusing on the semantic prosodies around the concepts of revolution, risk, and Pakistan.

Reliability, Validity, and Delimitations

The methodology involves pilot testing, random corpus checking, transparent reporting of coding decisions, and an inter-coder agreement rate of over 80% in qualitative coding. The corpus comprises only English Mainstream newspapers, not Urdu or regional-language newspapers, television, radio, social networks, or digital natives. The thesis also recognizes that, even with systematic procedures, researcher judgment may still influence the interpretation of qualitative concordance.

Results

Corpus Distribution And Lexical Salience

Distribution is very skewed towards 2023 and 2024, when we were collecting most of the data. The year 2022 contributes only 18 articles (5.2%), while 2023 contributes 142 (40.9%), 2024 contributes 121 (34.9%), and 2025 contributes 66 (19.0%). The coverage distribution reflects this, and it is huge both immediately after ChatGPT's release and now that media coverage of GenAI is the norm. The distribution is the same for the three newspapers, as given in Table 1 of the thesis.

Figure 2

Distribution of PGNC articles by year (values reproduced from the thesis's reported corpus table).

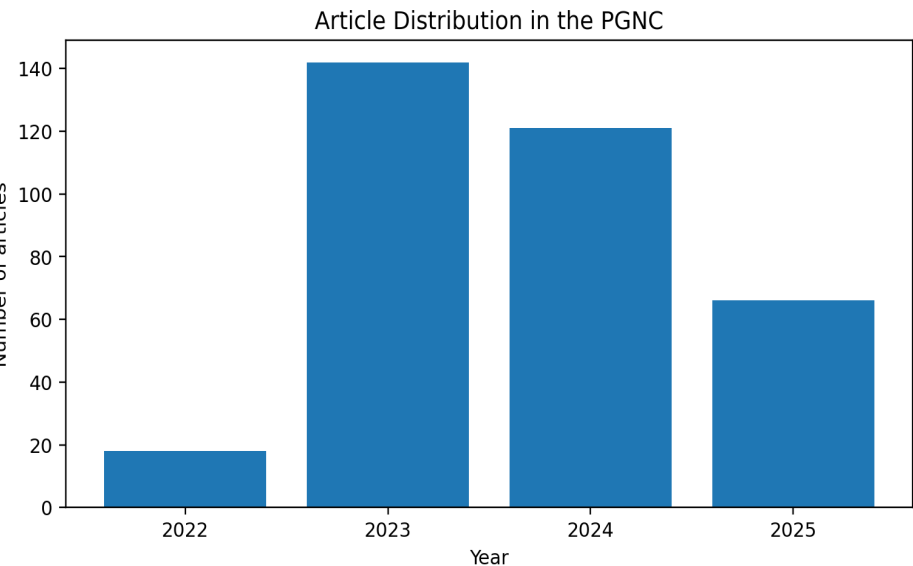


Table 2

Selected High-Frequency Keywords and Evaluative Terms Reported in the Thesis

Keyword	Frequency	Interpretive relevance
AI	4,892	Core technology reference
ChatGPT	2,156	Post-2022 focal technology
generative	1,784	GenAI identification
future	1,452	Future-oriented framing
technology	1,289	Technology discourse
risk	987	Risk and caution discourse
education	876	Educational applications
job	743	Employment implications
Pakistan	712	National localization
opportunity	654	Positive developmental evaluation
revolutionary	412	Strong positive evaluation
transformative	389	Positive developmental evaluation
threat	298	Negative/risk framing
displacement	267	Employment risk

Keywords and collocations extracted from the corpus also further reflect the developmental orientation of the text. In addition, the developmental orientation of the text is reflected further by the keywords and collocations extracted from the corpus. The generative AI concept is seen to be linked with other concepts like potential, adoption, and Pakistan in strong associations. ChatGPT is often found in contexts related to tools, education and misinformation. The Express Tribune focuses more on opportunities and revolutionary potential, while The News International emphasizes Pakistan and government-related issues at the newspaper level. Combined, these patterns indicate that GenAI isn't just a technological or technical innovation; it is also portrayed as a development-oriented factor within the context of wider conversations about national development, social opportunities, and newly identified risks.

Stance Markers

In total, the thesis has been indicated as having 12,456 stances (32.9/1000 words). Hedges constitute the largest category (4,872 instances; 12.9 per 1,000), followed by boosters (3,214; 8.5 per 1,000) and attitude markers (2,987; 7.9 per 1,000). Self-mentions total 1,383 (3.7 per 1,000) while style stance is relatively infrequent.

Table 3
Stance-marker Frequencies and Normalized Densities

Stance category	Instances	Per 1,000 words	Key forms/functions
Hedges	4,872	12.9	may, could, possibly, might, likely; uncertainty/caution
Boosters	3,214	8.5	will, certainly, clearly, undoubtedly, must; commitment/urgency
Attitude markers	2,987	7.9	remarkable, innovative, promising; alarming, risky, dangerous
Self-mentions	1,383	3.7	we, I; institutional/authorial presence
Style stance	312	0.8	frankly, interestingly, surprisingly
Total reported stance instances	12,456	32.9	—

Hedges especially mark discourse of risk. The thesis often addresses the following conjunctions: may/could, job displacement, educational inequalities, deepfakes, and cultural homogenization. Hedge density rises from 10.4 per 1,000 words in 2023 to 15.7 in 2025. Talking about uncertainty is more evident in opinion-oriented genres than in hard news genres: the former has 15.2 hedges per 1,000 words, while the latter has 10.8 hedges per 1,000 words.

Boosters work differently. The most common booster is “predictive will” (1,678 times), followed by “certainly” (432), “clearly” (389), “undoubtedly” (156), and “must” (298). Most boosters are development- and benefits-oriented statements and are future-oriented. The resulting distribution is skewed: benefits are more likely linked to certainty, while risks are more likely linked to uncertainty. This is the reason for the thesis statement 'optimistic but cautious'.

This is supported by the use of attitude markers. Words of value, remarkable, innovative, promising, exciting, powerful, and groundbreaking, create value and transform GenAI. In negative phrases, like alarming, concerning, risky, dangerous, threatening, and problematic, the words point to potential dangers or limitations. Overall, there are more positive evaluations than negative ones, and the ratio is approximately 2.1:1 (positive to negative). But the balance tips in the opposite direction and becomes increasingly negative over the years, particularly in 2025 when

the negative ratings become more prevalent. The same trend is evident in the discussion around the Dawn incident, as there is increasing focus on the implications for journalistic practice and the responsible use of AI.

Figure 3
Stance-marker Density by Newspaper, Normalized per 1,000 words. Values Reproduce the Thesis’s Table 2

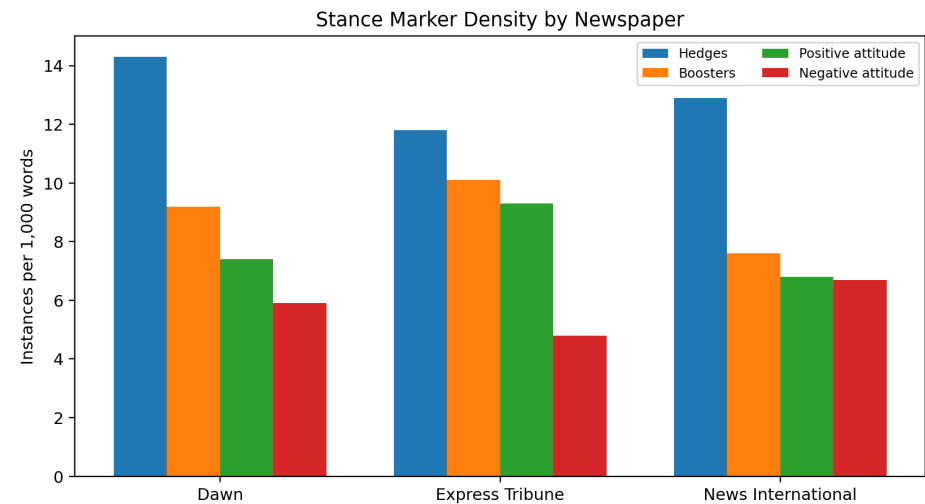


Table 4
Stance-marker Density per 1,000 Words by Newspaper

Newspaper	Hedges	Boosters	Positive attitude	Negative attitude	Overall stance
Dawn	14.3	9.2	7.4	5.9	33.8
The Express Tribune	11.8	10.1	9.3	4.8	35.6
The News International	12.9	7.6	6.8	6.7	29.8
Corpus average	12.9	8.5	7.9	5.8	32.9

The cross-newspaper profile is not a uniform institutional voice but a differentiated one. Dawn has the highest hedge density, while The Express Tribune has the highest overall stance density and booster/positive-attitude densities; The News International has the highest negative-attitude density. The thesis explains these differences through institutional orientations (measured, reflexive discourse, Dawn; assertive, developmental, and business-oriented discourse, The Express Tribune; political/security judgment, The News International).

Evaluative Language and Semantic Prosody

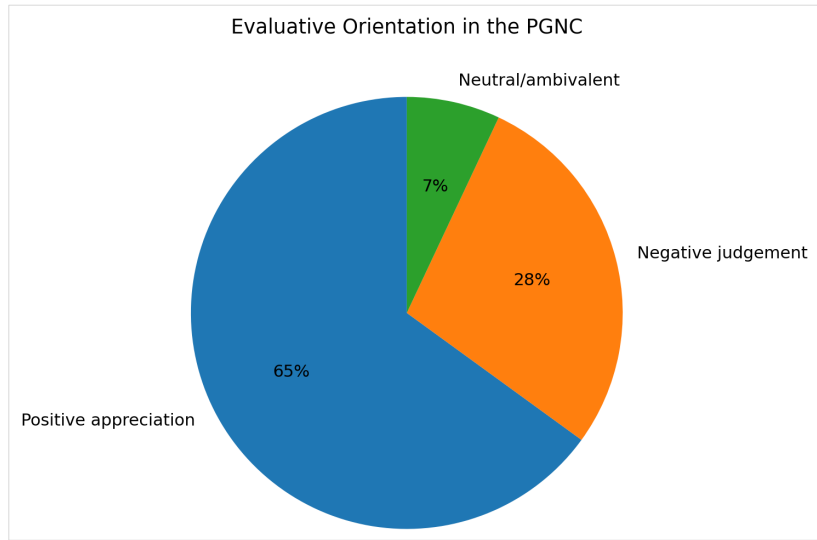
There are 18,765 evaluative instances and 49.6 evaluative items per 1,000 words in the corpus. Of these, 12,197 cases were judged positive (65%), 5,254 negative (28%), and 1,314 neutral or ambivalent (7%). Positive evaluation is particularly strong in education-related articles (72%) and business/technology features (68%).

Table 5
Overall Evaluative Orientation in the PGNC

Evaluative category	Instances	Percentage	Dominant orientation
Positive appreciation	12,197	65.0%	Optimistic/developmental
Negative judgement	5,254	28.0%	Cautious / risk-focused
Neutral/ambivalent	1,314	7.0%	Balanced
Total	18,765	100%	—

Figure 4

Overall Evaluative Orientation in the PGNC



Positive appreciation is seeing GenAI as valuable, transformative, a tool, an opportunity, a solution, an advancement, and/or an enabler. The terms that occur include "game-changing" (156), "empowering" (198), "beneficial" (234), "promising" (276), "powerful" (298), "transformative" (389), "revolutionary" (412), and "innovative" (387). Negative judgment is less broadly correlated with problems such as job loss, encounters with misinformation and deepfakes, lack of moral values, or dependence on technology. It should be emphasized that the corpus does not represent an equal negative judgment. Instead, concerns about GenAI are concentrated in certain areas of risk, suggesting that they only emerge in contexts in which the potential social, ethical, and employment-related impacts of GenAI are specifically discussed.

Semantic Prosodies

Table 6

Principal Semantic Prosodies Reported in the PGNC

Node	Reported pattern	Functional interpretation
revolutionary	Positive in 89% of concordance lines; collocates include tool, potential, future, impact, change, advancement.	Constructs GenAI as transformative and development-oriented
risk	Frequently paired with potential risk, may pose risk, could create risk, alarming risk	Acknowledges danger while maintaining epistemic caution
Pakistan	Occurs with must, need, embrace, national priority	Constructs Pakistan as an active agent with deontic urgency

The results on semantic-prosody link frequency and framing. The evaluative tone of Revolutionaries' broadcasts tends to be quite positive, frequently associating GenAI with instruments, future prospects, and advances for the nation. Risk is presented negatively but with hedges, so it is framed as mitigated, not categorical, risk. The country is connected to deontic expressions (must, need, embrace), thus making Pakistan an agent responsible for responding to technological change.

Diachronic Development

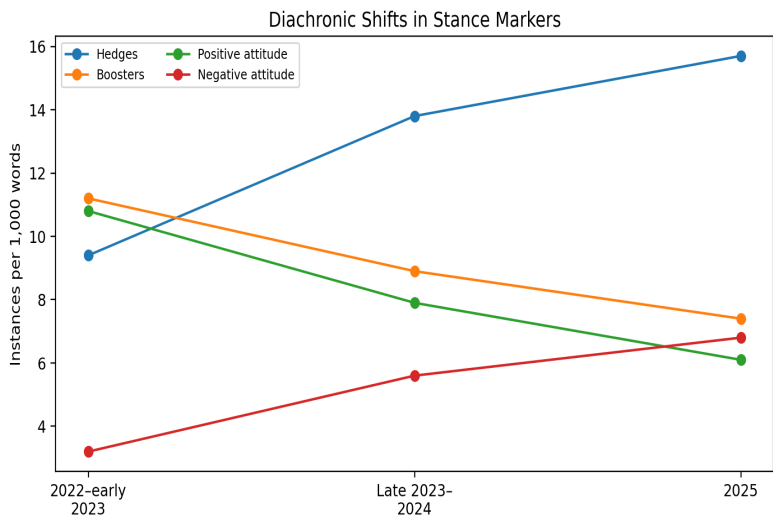
The sense in the word 'temporal' indicates a move from early enthusiasm to greater clarity of concern. The hedges, boosters, positive-attitude markers, and negative-attitude markers are 9.4, 11.2, 10.8, and 3.2 per 1,000 words,

respectively, from 2022 to early 2023. There is a more even pattern in late 2023- 2024, with hedges up to 13.8, boosters down to 8.9, positive attitude down to 7.9, and negative attitude up to 5.6. As for hedges, boosters, positive attitude, and negative attitude, their 2025 scores are 15.7, 7.4, 6.1, and 6.8, respectively. In parallel, there was an increase in misinformation/deepfake keywords from 0.4 per 1,000 words to 4.2 per 1,000 words in the same time frame.

Table 7
Diachronic Shifts in Key Stance and Topic Indicators Per 1,000 Words

Period	Hedges	Boosters	Positive attitude	Negative attitude	Education	Misinformation/ Deepfake
2022–early 2023	9.4	11.2	10.8	3.2	1.8	0.4
Late 2023–2024	13.8	8.9	7.9	5.6	3.4	1.9
2025	15.7	7.4	6.1	6.8	2.7	4.2

Figure 5
Reported Change in Densities of Stance Markers Over Time. The Values Shown in this figure are those shown in Table 3 of the Thesis



The development is a step away from the novelty and towards a more typical contested reporting of technology. While the domain of education remains strong and positive, so do the misinformation and deepfake references in 2025. The thesis connects this to the growing experience of practical use of GenAI, the moral dilemmas, and the Dawn Incident in November 2025.

A New Movement: The Metamaths Revolution

The corpus contains 28 articles and opinion pieces relating to the incident that took place in November 2025, in which an unedited ChatGPT response was discovered in a Dawn business article. For the obvious reason that the cluster gathers around the thesis' meta-evaluation, the newspaper itself was both the object and subject of AI scrutiny. This includes negative judgments (embarrassment, lapse, violation) and institutional self-mention and hedging in explanations and apologies. This cluster has the most attitude markers per thousand words (thesis), with 14.2.

The qualitative concordances distinguish responses in institutions. The Express Tribune suggests that the problem could be an industry problem, Dawn's report is reflective, and the News' report is more on national guidelines and the deficiencies of the regulatory regime.

Discussion

The first research question concerned the patterns and functions of stance markers. This analysis shows that stance is common in the Pakistani GenAI newspaper discourse, with 32.9 instances per 1000 words. Hedges dominate here, and emerging technology discourse is one in which uncertainty about future impacts exists. Journalists need not be exposed to the dangers of employment and inequality, misinformation, and cultural impact, etc., all in a hedge. Boosters, by contrast, focus on developmental benefits: they give rhetorical weight to development claims that imply transformation, the need to be competitive, and the prospect of future opportunities.

The second research question concerned framing and evaluative language. It is a significant percentage of positive appreciation (65%), and good evidence of this is available from the corpus for developmental orientation. GenAI is often referred to as a tool, opportunity, solution, and a transformative resource in education and business/technology. However, the negative-judgment rate is not insignificant (28%), and the proportion of negative markers in the corpus has increased over the years, warranting reading the corpus as a technological frenzy. The talk is optimistic in terms of development, but prudent with regards to risk management.

The results are consistent with the overall literature review in the thesis. While there has been some polarization-related research since the arrival of ChatGPT, there has been far more on societal impacts and governance. Previous studies of AI news have discussed themes of innovation, economic impacts, and risks. The Pakistani corpus often reads opportunity and education, youth, businesses, competitiveness, and technological sovereignty through the lens of the Global South developmental view. This aligns with the thesis theme of the Global South's coverage and engagement, as discussed by Ittefaq et al. (2025).

There are potential differences between the cross-newspapers. This is consistent with the institutions' locations and follows a typical story arc. The more boosters and positive attitudes in the Express Tribune, the more assertive the opportunity-oriented profile is. The more hedges there are, the more evident the epistemic caution profile is, and the more negative attitudes there are, the more evident the political/security/sovereignty profile is with Dawn. Examples show that different types of commitment, caution, and evaluation can be used to illustrate general sentiment.

The most interesting findings from the diachronic analysis are observed as the discourse has evolved from novelty to the actual technology as GenAI advances. Consequences and limitations become more salient, as the number of boosters decreases and the number of hedges and negative judgments increases. It's interesting to note that the term "misinformation" or "deepfake" is new in the context of 2025 vocabulary, and it's a paradigm shift: GenAI can disrupt, not just do, as they change the conversation. The Dawn incident also plays a part in this change, where journalism practices are part of the assessment. Altogether, the results indicate a model of Pakistani GenAI media discourse that can be described as developmental aspiration moderated by epistemic caution. The newspapers do not reflect only a binary opportunity-versus-threat frame. Instead, they mix in high-value positive descriptions and hedged risk claims, institutional attribution, and deontic calls for national preparedness. This is reflected in the semantic prosody of the words "revolutionary," "risk," and "Pakistan."

Figure 6

Conceptual Synthesis of the Article's Main Finding: Developmental Aspiration is Linguistically Moderated through Stance and Evaluation



Implications

The study confirms the usefulness of combining normalized frequency, collocation, semantic prosody, and concordance interpretation in a special national corpus for corpus linguistics. The findings also indicate that stance categories may contain nuances missing in broad thematic coding; for example, certainty about benefits and caution about risk are not synonymous with positive or negative.

The thesis suggests that AI use guidelines must be made more explicit, that training on responsible use of AI should be rolled out, that it is better to disclose the use of AI in journalism content, to include more social groups affected by AI in the practice, and to provide more investigative reporting on the risks. The Dawn incident highlights the need for editorial protection and review processes for news organizations that adopt generative tools.

The study suggests that policy and education should focus on AI literacy, ethics, local capacity building, data sovereignty, misinformation and deepfakes, and support for AI resources in Urdu and local languages. The recommendations reflect the thesis's importance of institutional and social protections to accompany developmental optimism.

Limitations and Future Research

The corpus samples mainstream English-language newspaper discourse, not Pakistan's media discourse. The data exclude Urdu and regional-language media, TV or radio, social media platforms, and digital-native outlets. The study also does not measure the audience reception or newsroom production practices. Last but not least, the qualitative interpretation of concordances remains partially subjective. Keep this limitation in mind when interpreting the results, as they reflect the discourse of elite English-language newspapers in Pakistan, not public opinion.

The study suggests developing parallel Urdu language corpora, covering a longer period of time (up to 2026 and beyond), to include multimodal content, to analyze audience response, to compare the analysis of Pakistani content with the content of other contexts in the Global South, and to study AI-generated text versus human-generated text, in the context of journalism. The directions are directly in the thesis recommendations.

Conclusion

The study suggests that Pakistani English newspapers view GenAI as a development opportunity, which is clear at first, but awareness of its risks and institutional implications gradually grows. The evaluation is mostly positive, with appreciation as the dominant form. Stance resources are more complex in the discourse structure: boosters support development claims, and hedges manage uncertainty about risks. Negative judgment becomes more salient as technology becomes more normalized. Differences in editorial style across Dawn, The Express Tribune, and The News International further show how a common national development narrative can be expressed in different ways.

The most important element is not to be a simple statement of “positive” or “negative” about Pakistani media’s sentiment towards GenAI. By contrast, the corpus reveals a tendency toward language negotiation, with both aspiration and caution. GenAI is framed as a technology Pakistan should adopt, as the country faces new challenges of joblessness, misinformation, ethics, sovereignty, and journalistic integrity. Here, it is a discourse in a given context and an addition to the larger investigation of how media language creates technological futures from a Global South context.

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