

**Politics of Representation: Positive Self-Presentation and Negative Other in Maryam Nawaz's Speeches**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The present study employed Van Dijk's Sociocognitive model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine the discourse of Maryam Nawaz from Muslim League Nawaz, a prominent woman politician of Pakistan. Through Van Dijkian lens, the study focuses on specifically two strategies of positive self-presentation and negative other-representation. The analysis revolves around two events; one is the nuclear tests conducted during the government of Nawaz Sharif on May 28, 1998, and other one is the political unrest that occurred on May 9. We employed qualitative research methodology. The study includes six transcribed political speeches delivered by Nawaz to study the discursive, ideological and cognitive structures grounded in her discourse. The findings of this research highlight that Nawaz uses the techniques of emphasizing good things and de-emphasizing bad things to positively represent herself and her party. Meanwhile, she negatively presents opponents by emphasizing their bad things and de-emphasizing their good things. Nawaz uses language effectively to prove that her party is party is patriotic while the opponent party is subversive in its approach.*

**Keywords:** Political Discourse, Critical Discourse Analysis, Negative Other-Representation

**INTRODUCTION**

Discourse is not only a tool for communication but also a source of constructing ideologies, disseminating power and influencing public perception. In political realm, politicians often use different language strategies to create a polarized discourse in which they highlight the positive traits of themselves and their party while on the other hand, negatively represent their opponents. This discursive strategy is widely employed by political leaders from different cultural backgrounds. It leads to the formation of polarized narratives that strongly influence media, public forums and audience cognition. Discourse plays an important role in shaping the opinions and viewpoints of audiences, legitimizes authority, and constructs ideological narratives and boundaries in political domain of Pakistan (Hafeez, et. al., 2021). Hence, the political leaders of Pakistan employ language to communicate policies and agendas with the public and adjust themselves within the narratives of identity and power. Maryam Nawaz, prominent female political leader of Pakistan, also use discourse to negotiate, and construct narratives in a male-dominated political arena. This paper studies the discourse of Maryam Nawaz, to examine the strategic use of language to create dichotomy of positive self presentation and negative other-representation.

The political events of May 28 and May 09 are specifically used as reference points in this analysis. Nawaz positively portrays the historical achievements of PMLN under the leadership of her father on the memorable day of May 28. This day Pakistan became a nuclear state by successfully conducting nuclear tests under Nawaz Sharif's guidance. While on the other hand, delegitimizing her opponents by mentioning May 09, which is considered a day of attack on Pakistan by labeling PTI as anarchic and anti-state party. Hence, she positively highlights her party's accomplishments and achievements in comparison to the terrorist behavior done by opposing party.

This paper investigates the analysis of polarized discourse constructed by Nawaz by applying Van Dijk's sociocognitive model of Critical Discourse Analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis highlights gender influences lexical devices and rhetorical strategies in a political discourse. Female politicians emphasize inclusivity and engage audience, while male political leaders emphasize authority and energize audience.

### **Maryam Nawaz**

Maryam Nawaz is a Pakistani based female politician, the first female Chief Minister of Punjab. She is the daughter of former Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif. However, her political career began in 2012 when she took charge of the election campaign for the 2013 election campaign. She has been a subject of praise as well as criticism on media and social media since (Ahmad, et. al., 2020).

### **Research Objectives**

1. To analyze how Nawaz positively represent her party and negatively represent opponents in her political speeches in accordance to May 28 and May 9 respectively
2. To examine the discursive techniques used by Nawaz for positive self-presentation and negative other-representation

### **Research Questions**

1. How does Nawaz linguistically and ideologically construct a positive and negative image of her party and opponents in public talks, in relation to May 28 and May 9?
2. What discursive strategies helped Nawaz to positively present her own portrayal and political opponents negatively?

### **Statement of the Problem**

Discourse is a tool not only for shaping public perception but also for constructing political narratives of audiences. In political speeches, politicians often use certain lexical choices and discursive devices for positively presenting themselves and negatively representing their opponents.

There is a lot of research on political discourse in Pakistan, but there is a significant gap on how specifically women politicians control public perception by positively representing themselves and negatively portraying rivals. Moreover, Van Dijk's sociocognitive model provides a framework for the analysis of the intersection of discourse, cognition and society. This research fills the gap by primarily focusing on the use of two discursive strategies for controlling public cognition in relation to two national events; May 28 and May 9.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is highly relevant in the fields of political discourse analysis, media studies, and sociolinguistics, particularly within Pakistani context and culture.

- Firstly, it aims to explore the hidden areas of female political discourse in Pakistan that how they employ different strategies in their discourse.
- Secondly, it gives insight that how female politicians strategically employ language to positively represent themselves and negatively represent their opponents.
- Thirdly, it is significant from methodological viewpoint that. The qualitative discourse analysis is helpful to uncover the linguistic and dimensions of political realm.

The study is also significant for its contextual focus on two pivotal national events:

1. May 28, Nawaz portrays her party positively by mentioning the historical achievements and nationalistic credentials
2. May 9, negatively frames her opponents as its a black day of moral and a moment of moral and institutional crisis inflicted by opposition

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Critical Discourse Analysis is an interdisciplinary approach to study discourse that focuses on the relationship between language, power, ideology, and society. It is a framework emphasizes that discourse is both a social practice and a form of power reproduction, shaping and being shaped by social structures, cognitive processes, and historical contexts. (Van Dijk, 2015).

Language is a major source of constructing power, forming ideologies, and influencing voters. This paper examines the application of language strategy in the 2016 presidential campaign in the United States by Donald Trump. The study will utilize Critical Discourses Analysis to study the rhetorical patterns, ideological framework, and power relations in the speech of Trump (Mohammadi and Javadi, 2017). The results of this research revealed that there are various linguistic approaches applied to influence power relations and mislead the population.

Politics is also associated with language, and discourse also helps shape political opinion, rights, and perceptions of citizenship (Wodak and Forchtner 2017). The study illuminates the role of the political leaders in regard to persuading, legitimizing power and discourse of ideological message through language in a strategic way.

The discours is a political instrument of power and ideology, constructing the mass perception and dominating the thinking of the masses. Khalil et al. (2017) evaluate the pre-election political speeches made by Imran Khan through Critical Discourse Analysis. It examined the way in which political leaders spread their ideologies using language. The paper utilizes the three-dimensional model by Fairclough and sociocognitive model provided by Van Dijk. The results demonstrate that the speeches by Khan present a convincing story to the voters, by showing himself as a beacon of change in a positive way.

Nasih and Abboud (2020) explored that the main aim of political rhetoric is to control the perception of people, define the masses and strengthen the balance of power. This paper was written using the Van Dijk

Socio-Cognitive Model to examine the political speeches of two politicians Prime Minister Allawi and President Salih of Iraq. This study aims to understand how these politicians are able to express their ideas, persuade people, and build ideological discourses through their discourse. The results show that Allawi has a higher number of discursive strategies including positive self-representation, negative other-representation, lexicalization, and victimization than Salih.

Political discourse is a power and ideology tool. Critical Discourse Analysis, especially that of Fairclough and Van Dijk, ideological discourse analysis was used by Almawala (2021) on the 2018 speech of Donald Trump. The study brings into light the creation of us versus them discourse in order to place emphasis on the positive self-representation and negative representation of opponents and discourse significance in the process of forming political power and ideology construction.

The strategies of speech used in political discourse are manipulative in nature to influence and shape the perceptions of people, arouse emotions and build ideological frames. Shigapova et al. (2021) employed the speech of Donald Trump in 2018 at the UN General Assembly in a case study. The research determines that political leaders use various linguistic strategies in their speeches to impact the masses, delude masses or build their positive image. It emphasizes the fact that such manipulative behavior is directed at influencing the general consciousness and eliciting emotional reactions and creating a polarized vision of the world.

In the research by Almahasees and Mahmoud (2022), the researchers analyze the application of persuasive techniques in seven political speeches by King Abdullah II of Jordan. The paper explores how King Abdullah II used creativity, metaphors, intertextuality, circumlocution and references to build persuasive political discourse using Critical Discourse Analysis as a theoretical and analysis tool.

Balla (2023) addresses the issue of the use of Critical Discourse Analysis in female political speeches. It is concerned with the role played by linguistic strategies in determining power, ideology, and identity. Conducting the research, the findings indicate that female politicians build power using different tactics which may be storytelling, inclusivity, and emotional appeal in their political speech by applying the model of Fairclough and the sociocognitive approach developed by Van Dijk.

Othman and Salih (2024) follows the sociocognitive approach in the analysis of lexical choices and discursive patterns in both the gendered speeches; male and female politicians. This research examines speeches to examine how language can be used to form ideologies, support views, and convince people based on the socio-cognitive framework proposed by Van Dijk. According to the research findings, politicians use rhetorical devices to portray themselves in a good light and other devices of burden, comparison, and implication to portray their opponents in a negative light. Conversely, female and male politicians employ the tactics of actor description, metaphor, and populism and authority, disclaimers, and euphemism respectively. The research revealed gender disparity in political discourse and how socio-cognitive strategy influences the inclination and mindset of the people.

The political leaders in Pakistan manipulate language to influence the perception of the masses, to exercise power, and to manipulate ideologies. Adapting Norman Fairclough and three-dimensional model, Nawaz et al. (2024) point out that the most popular themes used by politicians are nationalism, religion, democracy, and social issues that they incorporate into their narration and motivate people to discuss.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The research design refers to the overall plan or structure of the study. It is a framework that guides researcher and helps them in investigating scientific problems.

The study uses Qualitative research design for the analysis of linguistic and discursive strategies along with the cognitive dimensions. Moreover, researcher employed Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model of CDA to identify and analyze the discursive strategies used by Nawaz and to uncover the ideological and power relation that influences and shape public perception. In Qualitative Critical Discourse Analysis, validity is achieved by connecting language to not only with social structures but also with the cognitive contexts, while reliability is achieved by employing Van Dijk's socio-cognitive framework in the same way for all selected texts.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This paper employed Van Dijk's sociocognitive model of Critical Discourse Analysis as a theoretical framework. It highlights the interrelationship of discourse, cognition and society. The speeches focus specifically on two discursive strategies given by Van Dijk; Positive self-presentation, there is a strategic use of language to positively highlight or emphasize on self or party's achievements and negative other-representation, delegitimize, criticize, or marginalize and negative portrayal of opponents and rivals.

### **Sampling Technique**

This study uses a technique of non-probability sampling which is a purposive sampling, the researcher purposively selects the speeches delivered by Nawaz which primarily focuses on the events of May 28 and May 09. Purposive sampling helps the researcher to focus on speeches that are directly related and linked to the two important national events of May 28 and May 9, that is why this sampling technique is chosen.

### **Data Collection**

This study is limited to the six political speeches delivered by Nawaz that may not fully capture the diversity of her overall political discourse. The primary source of data collection for this study consists of full text transcripts of the political speeches delivered by Maryam Nawaz. The secondary source of data collection are news reports, media coverage and social media discussion. The process of data collection focused on comprehensive transcripts to ensure that all linguistic and discursive elements were captured. This approach helped the researcher to examine the words and sentences uttered by the speaker and the tone and style in which they were delivered. The researcher used different sources of data collection and chose those speeches of Nawaz which are particularly relevant to the events of May 28 and May 09.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is done under the light of Van Dijk's sociocognitive model. This model shows complex relationship between language, society and cognition. It is used as an analytical framework to test the discourse at production, comprehension and reception levels. This model combines discourse, social and cognitive analyses. This framework is suitable to uncover hidden ideologies, power relations and political narratives. In this paper, data analysis is done on two levels of Positive Self-Presentation and Negative-Other Representation in relevance to May 28 and May 09. The analysis helps us to know how Nawaz

positively portrays her party's achievements while delegitimizing opponents thus creating a "us versus them" dichotomy.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

The people of May 28 made Pakistan a nuclear power... laid the network of roads... reduced inflation.

This statement glorifies the party's legacy by linking it to national milestones. The repeated reference to "May 28" creates a symbolic identity for PML-N as builders and protectors of Pakistan, reinforcing their patriotic and developmental credentials.

The people of May 9 are the ones who attack the state... used motorways to set the country on fire.

This stark contrast vilifies the opposition by associating them with violence and chaos. The metaphor of "setting the country on fire" evokes emotional fear and moral condemnation, reinforcing out-group's illegitimacy.

The person who gives you petrol bombs... encourages you to attack memorials... can never be your well-wisher. This statement criminalizes the opposition's tactics and questions their moral intent. By positioning them as corrupting youth and dishonoring martyrs, Maryam deepens the moral divide and appeals to nationalistic sentiment.

"People of May 28" and "People of May 9" are repeated to emphasize faith, historical continuity and political dichotomy.

"We are the people of May 28... not the people of May 9".

May 28 and May 9 dichotomy

May 28 and May 29 serves as a contrastive metaphor between builders and patriots versus destroys and traitors of Pakistan.

"The people of May 28 are the ones who provided bread for two rupees... the people of May 9 stayed for four years and brought a storm of inflation".

Her references to "People of May 28" versus "People of May 9" create a dichotomy between patriots and traitors.

She mentioned concrete examples such as nuclear tests on may 28.

The speech uses direct address and rhetorical questions "Tell me, people of Hafizabad, are you witnessed? Are you standing with the people of May 28 or May 9?" It positions opponents as not public well-wisher.

"The people of May 28 made Pakistan a nuclear power, the people of May 28 are the ones who beautify Pakistan, and the people of May 9 are the ones who attack the state of Pakistan. There is a history of building and beautifying Pakistan, and there is a history of those who tried to destroy it. So, people of Hafizabad, raise your hands and tell me, are you standing with the people of May 28 or with the people of May 9?"

Do political parties attack their own country? The speaker uses rhetorical question to engage the audience by negative representation of the opponent party.

“Do political parties attack their own country? Answer me the people of Haroonabad. Do political parties set fire to metro bus stations? Do political parties attack memorials of martyrs? Do political parties throw petrol bombs at police officers?”

May 28, May 9

Significant dates in Pakistani history May 28 (1998 nuclear tests) and May 9 (2023 political unrest) to evoke collective memory and frame political struggles within national-istic narrative This shows “builders versus destroyers” dichotomy taps into cultural narratives of patriotism, loyalty and resilience.

“He said, we are the people of May 28, we are not the people of May 9. Who has heard this? And do you know what happened on May 28? What happened? Nuclear tests were conducted and by the grace of Allah. The people of May 28 made Pakistan a nuclear power, the people of May 28 are the ones who beautify Pakistan, and the people of May 9 are the ones who attack the state of Pakistan”.

The repeated references to “May 28 vs. May 9” create a binary political identity, positioning one group as nation builders and other as destructive forces.

“May 9 and May 28 are not just two events. There is a whole tale behind these two dates, a history of seventy six years. The people of May 28 made Pakistan a nuclear power, the people of May 28 are the ones who beautify Pakistan, and the people of May 9 are the ones who attack the state of Pakistan. There is a history of building and beautifying Pakistan, and there is a history of those who tried to destroy it”.

References to martyrs and soldiers create a shared reality of sacrifice and loyalty, urging public to see Nawaz Sharif as their defender. Framing May 9 as a shameful event constructs a national wound, urging the audience to see loyalty as moral duty.

Contrastive framing of May 9 as destruction, May 28 as progress. This framing implies opposition leaders are destabilizers and traitors while Nawaz Sharif is a nation builder and Pakistan saviour.

“The people of May 28 are the ones who laid the network of roads in the country, the ones who built motorways, and the people of May 9 are the ones who used those motorways and roads to set the country on fire. The people of May 28 are the ones who provided bread for two rupees and reduced inflation, and the people of May 9 stayed for four years and brought a storm of inflation”.

The reference to defense installations and attack on martyrs memorials reinforces patriotic sentiments and delegitimizing opponents.

“Tell me, can those who dishonor the martyrs be one of us? Can those who set fire to the symbols and memories of the martyrs be one of us? Can those who shot down the fighter jets used to defeat the enemy be one of us? Can those who lifted and broke the statues of the martyrs by throwing them to the ground be one of us?”

Contrast of May 28 vs. May 9 (nation-builders vs. state destabilizers) to reinforce historical legitimacy.

“There is a history of building and beautifying Pakistan, and there is a history of those who tried to destroy it. So, people of Hafizabad, raise your hands and tell me, are you standing with the people of May 28 or with the people of May 9? The people of May 28 are the ones who laid the network of roads in the country, the ones who built motorways, and the people of May 9 are the ones who used those motorways and roads

to set the country on fire. The people of May 28 are the ones who provided bread for two rupees and reduced inflation, and the people of May 9 stayed for four years and brought a storm of inflation”.

## CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore the strategic use of language in the political discourse of Nawaz, focusing specifically on the discursive strategies of positive self-presentation and negative other-representation as conceptualized in Van Dijk’s socio-cognitive model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The research highlights and uncover the ideological narratives and power relations that are constructed and communicated through discourse. For this purpose, Qualitative analysis is done on the selected political speeches and statements delivered by Nawaz in accordance to the two historical events of May 28 i.e, Youm-e-Takbeer and May 09 i.e, political unrest.

The findings highlights that Nawaz consistently employs lexical devices and rhetorical strategies to emphasize good image by positively portraying her party achievements by mentioning themes of patriotism, historical achievement, and moral integrity in her speeches. Her political speeches about May 28 achievements strategically aligns the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) with national pride, a legacy of strength and a responsible leadership. This reflects Van Dijk’s model of positive self-presentation, where language is used to activate favorable mental models and shape public perception and cognition.

On the other hand, Nawaz speeches that are related to May 09 riots highlights that she deliberately use language in such a way to negatively portray the opposing party by delegitimizing them. In these speeches and political statements uttered by her, she frames the opposing as the one who is a threat to the national stability and those who disrespect institutional values and defense installations by labeling them as anarchic and terrorist political party. Hence, she constructs us versus them dichotomy by positively representing PMLN and negatively portraying the opposition.

The findings of this research highlights that language plays its role not only a tool for communication but also a source of constructing ideologies, disseminating power and influencing public perception (Tabassum & Hafeez, 2023). This research has its significant contribution in future academic research and its implications by encouraging researchers to do the comparative analysis of the discourse of Nawaz with other politicians in Pakistani political arena. This comparative analysis highlights the influence of gender on the language choice, lexical devices and rhetorical strategies employed by both male and female political leaders that mainly influence and shape public cognition. The analysis further shows that political speeches delivered by Pakistani politicians creates a dichotomy of us versus them. Moreover, the analysis of female political discourse in Pakistan sheds light on how women political leaders assert authority and disseminate power in male dominated political landscape.

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