

THE POLITICS OF LANGUAGE USE AND POWER DYNAMICS IN PAKISTAN

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Abstract

This study explores the politics of language use and its impact on power dynamics in Pakistan, with a focus on the contrasting linguistic strategies of two prominent political figures, Bilawal Bhutto and Imran Khan. The analysis reveals that Bilawal Bhutto employs a dual-language approach, using English to appeal to the urban elite and Sindhi to connect with his provincial base in Sindh. This strategy underscores his elite background while emphasizing his commitment to regional identity and autonomy. Conversely, Imran Khan's consistent use of Urdu positions him as a populist leader, appealing to a broad national audience and challenging the traditional elite. His emphasis on national unity through the use of Urdu promotes a collective identity but may marginalize non-Urdu-speaking communities. The study finds that these language choices are not just communicative tools but are deeply intertwined with broader political strategies aimed at reinforcing or disrupting existing power structures. Bilawal's multilingual approach reflects the complex interplay between regionalism, class, and centralization, while Imran Khan's focus on Urdu seeks to unify the nation but may inadvertently marginalize regional identities. The findings highlight the significant socio-political implications of language politics in Pakistan, demonstrating how language serves as a powerful instrument in shaping political identities and influencing power dynamics in the country's diverse society. Understanding these dynamics is essential for analyzing the broader implications of language politics in Pakistan's evolving political landscape.

Keywords: Language and Power, Ideology, persuasion, leadership act, Identity

Introduction

In Pakistan, language use is deeply intertwined with the country's power dynamics, reflecting the complex socio-political landscape (Umber et al., 2024). The nation's linguistic diversity, with Urdu as the national language and English as the official language, symbolizes more than just communication tools; they are markers of identity, class, and power. The dominance of English, often associated with the elite and access to better opportunities, creates a divide between different social strata. Meanwhile, Urdu, while widely spoken, carries its own set of power implications, often sidelining regional languages and cultures. These linguistic hierarchies not only shape educational and professional opportunities but also influence cultural representation and political discourse, making language a potent tool in the struggle for power and identity in Pakistan.

Language, in its most fundamental form, serves as a tool for communication, a medium through which individuals express thoughts, share ideas, and connect with one another (Bukhari et al., 2024; Baig, 2024). However, in the context of nation-states, language takes on a far more complex role, becoming a powerful symbol of identity, culture, and even political authority. Nowhere is this more evident than in Pakistan, a country where the politics of language use are deeply intertwined with the power dynamics that have shaped its history and continue to influence its present. Pakistan's linguistic landscape is as diverse as its cultural and ethnic composition, with over 70 languages spoken across the country. However, this diversity also gives rise to tensions, as the struggle over which languages are promoted, marginalized, or suppressed is closely linked to issues of power, identity, and social stratification. At the heart of Pakistan's linguistic politics is the relationship between Urdu and English, the two dominant languages that have come to symbolize different aspects of the country's socio-political reality. Urdu, designated as the national language at the time of Pakistan's creation in 1947, was intended to serve as a unifying force in a nation that was, and remains, highly diverse in terms of ethnicity, culture, and language.

The choice of Urdu was influenced by a desire to forge a national identity distinct from that of India, with which Pakistan shares deep historical and cultural ties (Fatima et al., 2024). However, this decision

also sowed the seeds of discord, particularly in regions where other languages, such as Bengali, Sindhi, Punjabi, and Pashto, were predominant. The imposition of Urdu as the national language was seen by many as an attempt to marginalize regional languages and cultures, leading to resentment and, in some cases, resistance. The most significant example of this linguistic conflict is the struggle over the status of Bengali in what was then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. Bengali was the mother tongue of the majority of the population in East Pakistan, yet the government's insistence on Urdu as the sole national language led to widespread protests and eventually contributed to the secession of East Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. This event is a stark reminder of how language, far from being a neutral medium, can become a flashpoint for broader political and social tensions. English, on the other hand, occupies a unique position in Pakistan's linguistic hierarchy. As the language of the former colonial rulers, English was retained as the official language of Pakistan after independence, a decision that has had far-reaching implications for the country's social and political fabric. English is the language of government, law, education, and business in Pakistan, and proficiency in English is often associated with social status, power, and access to opportunities. The dominance of English has created a linguistic divide between the elite, who are fluent in English and have access to the best educational and professional opportunities, and the vast majority of the population, who are either not proficient in English or do not have access to the resources needed to learn it (Shah et al., 2024).

This linguistic divide is closely linked to issues of class and power in Pakistan. English is often perceived as the language of the elite, and fluency in English is seen as a marker of social status and privilege. This perception is reinforced by the fact that the best schools, universities, and job opportunities in Pakistan are often only accessible to those who are proficient in English. As a result, English serves as a gatekeeper, perpetuating existing social inequalities and creating barriers to upward mobility for those who are not fluent in the language. This dynamic is particularly evident in the education system, where English-medium schools, which are often private and cater to the elite, offer a higher standard of education compared to the majority of Urdu-medium schools, which are often underfunded and provide a lower quality of education. The dominance of English in Pakistan also has implications for cultural identity and representation. While Urdu is promoted as the national language and a symbol of Pakistani identity, English is often seen as a symbol of modernity, progress, and global integration. This has led to a situation where English is not only a marker of social status but also a symbol of cultural aspiration. The use of English in education, media, and government reinforces the perception that English is the language of the future, while Urdu and other regional languages are associated with tradition and the past.

This dynamic creates tension between the desire to preserve and promote indigenous languages and cultures, and the pressure to adopt English as a means of achieving social and economic success. The marginalization of regional languages in Pakistan is another key aspect of the politics of language use in the country. Pakistan's linguistic diversity is reflected in the fact that over 70 languages are spoken across the country, with Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi being the most widely spoken regional languages. However, despite their widespread use, these languages are often marginalized in official discourse, with Urdu and English dominating in government, education, and the media. This marginalization is particularly pronounced in the case of languages spoken by smaller ethnic groups, such as the Brahui and Shina languages, which are at risk of becoming extinct due to a lack of official recognition and support. The marginalization of regional languages has significant implications for cultural identity and political representation in Pakistan. For many ethnic groups, language is a key marker of identity, and the suppression or neglect of their languages is seen as an attack on their cultural and political rights. This has led to demands for greater recognition and promotion of regional languages, particularly in the education system, where the use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction is seen as crucial for preserving linguistic and cultural diversity. The failure to address these demands has contributed to feelings of alienation and resentment among some ethnic groups, which in

turn has fueled separatist movements and calls for greater autonomy. In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the need to promote linguistic diversity and address the power imbalances created by the dominance of Urdu and English in Pakistan. Efforts have been made to introduce regional languages into the education system, and there have been calls for greater representation of these languages in the media and government (Aslam, 2024).

However, these efforts have been met with resistance, particularly from those who see the promotion of regional languages as a threat to national unity and the status of Urdu as the national language. This tension between the desire to promote linguistic diversity and the need to maintain national unity is a key challenge for Pakistan as it seeks to navigate the complex politics of language use in the country. The politics of language use in Pakistan is also shaped by the global context, particularly the role of English as a global lingua franca. The spread of English as a global language has reinforced its status in Pakistan, where proficiency in English is seen as essential for participation in the global economy and access to international opportunities. This has further entrenched the dominance of English in Pakistan, creating pressure on individuals and institutions to adopt English at the expense of indigenous languages. The global dominance of English has also influenced cultural production in Pakistan, with English increasingly being used in literature, film, and other forms of cultural expression. This has led to concerns about the erosion of indigenous languages and cultures, and the need to find a balance between engaging with the global community and preserving local identities. Constituently the politics of language use in Pakistan is a complex and multifaceted issue, deeply intertwined with the country's power dynamics, social inequalities, and cultural identity. The dominance of Urdu and English reflects broader issues of class, power, and access to opportunities, while the marginalization of regional languages highlights the challenges of preserving linguistic diversity in a nation-state context. As Pakistan continues to navigate these challenges, the role of language in shaping the country's future will remain a critical (Roshid, & Chowdhury, 2024).

Significance of the Study

The study of language politics and power dynamics in Pakistan holds significant relevance for understanding the country's complex socio-political landscape. It sheds light on how language functions not merely as a means of communication but as a potent tool for shaping identities, accessing power, and perpetuating social hierarchies. By examining the role of Urdu, English, and regional languages, this study helps to elucidate the underlying power structures that influence educational opportunities, political participation, and social mobility in Pakistan. This research is crucial for several reasons. First, it provides insights into how language policies impact national unity and social cohesion. The imposition of Urdu as the national language, while intended to foster a collective national identity, has often led to the marginalization of regional languages and cultures, contributing to ethnic tensions and regional disparities. Understanding these dynamics is essential for policymakers who seek to promote national integration without eroding cultural diversity. Second, the study highlights the socio-economic implications of language use, particularly the role of English as a gatekeeper to power and privilege. In Pakistan, English proficiency is often associated with elite status, better employment prospects, and access to higher education. This creates a linguistic divide that reinforces existing social inequalities. By exploring these dynamics, the study offers a critical perspective on the role of language in perpetuating social stratification and provides a basis for advocating more inclusive language policies. Third, the research has significant implications for cultural preservation and the promotion of linguistic diversity. In a country as linguistically diverse as Pakistan, the erosion of regional languages threatens the cultural heritage and identities of various ethnic groups. This study underscores the importance of preserving linguistic diversity as a means of safeguarding cultural diversity and promoting social inclusion. Moreover, this study contributes to the broader field of sociolinguistics and political science by offering a case study of how language policies intersect with power dynamics in a post-colonial, multi-ethnic state. The findings from Pakistan can inform similar studies in other multilingual societies,

particularly in South Asia, where language plays a critical role in shaping political and social relations.
Statement of the problem

The problem at the intersection of language politics and power dynamics in Pakistan is exemplified by the contrasting use of language by prominent political figures like Bilawal Bhutto and Imran Khan. Bilawal Bhutto, representing the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), often uses English and Sindhi in his public addresses, reflecting both his elite background and his regional base in Sindh. His use of English caters to the urban, educated elite, while Sindhi connects with his provincial supporters. Imran Khan, leader of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), frequently uses Urdu in his speeches, appealing to a broader national audience and emphasizing a populist, anti-elite stance. This divergence in language use highlights the broader issue of how language functions as a tool for political messaging and identity construction in Pakistan. The language choices of these leaders are not merely about communication but are deeply tied to their political strategies, their targeted constituencies, and the power structures they seek to influence or maintain. The problem lies in how these linguistic strategies contribute to reinforcing or challenging existing power dynamics, potentially exacerbating divisions along lines of class, region, and ethnicity. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for analyzing the broader implications of language politics in Pakistan's political landscape.

Research Objectives

1. To analyze how Bilawal Bhutto and Imran Khan use language in their political discourse to shape their public personas and appeal to different segments of the population in Pakistan.
2. To examine the impact of Bilawal Bhutto's and Imran Khan's language choices on reinforcing or challenging existing power dynamics related to class, region, and ethnicity in Pakistan.

Research Questions

1. How do Bilawal Bhutto and Imran Khan use different languages in their political speeches and public communications to construct their political identities and connect with various audiences in Pakistan?
2. What role does the language choice of Bilawal Bhutto and Imran Khan play in reinforcing or disrupting the existing socio-political power structures based on class, region, and ethnicity in Pakistan?

Literature Review

Language plays a fundamental role, according to (Younis, 2024), in shaping societal structures, identities, and power dynamics, and this is particularly evident in Pakistan's complex linguistic landscape. The country, marked by its diverse ethnic and linguistic groups, presents a unique case study of how language intersects with politics, power, and identity (AL-Kubaisi et al., 2024). In Pakistan, the politics of language is not just about communication; it is about who holds power, who has access to resources, and who gets to define national identity. The interplay between different languages—primarily Urdu, English, and the various regional languages—reveals deep-seated tensions and inequalities that have shaped the country's political and social fabric. At the heart of the politics of language in Pakistan is the tension between Urdu and the regional languages. Urdu, which was promoted as the national language at the time of Pakistan's creation in 1947, was intended to serve as a unifying force for the new nation. As a language with deep roots in the cultural history of the Indian subcontinent, particularly in the northern regions, Urdu was seen as a neutral choice that could transcend ethnic divisions. However, this decision also marginalized the numerous regional languages spoken across Pakistan, such as Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, and Balochi (Umber et al., 2024; Bukhari et al., 2024). These languages, deeply embedded in the cultural identities of their speakers, were effectively sidelined in favor of a language that was not the mother tongue of the majority of the population. The imposition of Urdu as the national language was met with resistance from various linguistic communities, particularly in the provinces of Sindh and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). In Sindh, for example, the

Sindhi language has a rich literary tradition and is a vital part of Sindhi identity. The government's push to replace Sindhi with Urdu in educational institutions and public administration was perceived as an attempt to undermine Sindhi culture and identity, leading to protests and political unrest. Similarly, in East Pakistan, the Bengali-speaking majority resented the imposition of Urdu, leading to the language movement of the 1950s, which eventually contributed to the secession of East Pakistan and the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. The dominance of Urdu in the public sphere has also had significant implications for the education system in Pakistan. Urdu is the medium of instruction in most public schools, while English is the medium in elite private schools. This linguistic divide mirrors and reinforces the socio-economic divide in the country (Umber et al., 2024).

Those who are educated in English-medium schools often have better access to higher education, employment opportunities, and positions of power. English, in this context, is not just a language but a symbol of social status and power. It is the language of the elite, of government bureaucracy, and of the legal system. Proficiency in English is often equated with intelligence and competence, creating a barrier for those who are more comfortable in Urdu or regional languages (Bukhari et al., 2024). The elevation of English to a position of power in Pakistan has its roots in the colonial history of the region. During British rule, English was the language of administration and education, and it remained so after independence (Baig, 2024).

The continuation of English as the official language after 1947 ensured that the colonial power structures were largely maintained. The elites who had benefited from the colonial education system continued to dominate the post-colonial state, using English as a means to exclude the masses from political and economic power. In this way, language became a tool of exclusion and control, perpetuating the inequalities established during the colonial period. In addition to Urdu and English, the regional languages of Pakistan also play a crucial role in the politics of language. Each of Pakistan's provinces has its own dominant language, which is closely tied to regional identity and culture. These languages include Punjabi in Punjab, Sindhi in Sindh, Pashto in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochi in Balochistan. While these languages are widely spoken and have rich cultural and literary traditions, they are often marginalized in the public sphere. The dominance of Urdu and English in education, government, and media has led to the gradual erosion of regional languages, threatening the cultural heritage of the various ethnic groups in Pakistan (Shah et al., 2024).

The marginalization of regional languages is not just a cultural issue but also a political one. Language is a powerful marker of identity, and the suppression of regional languages is often seen as an attempt to suppress regional identities and aspirations. This has led to tensions between the central government and the provinces, with language becoming a focal point for broader struggles over autonomy and resources. In Balochistan, for example, the Baloch people have long demanded greater autonomy and recognition of their language and culture. The government's failure to address these demands has fueled feelings of alienation and resentment, contributing to the ongoing conflict in the region. The politics of language in Pakistan is also evident in the country's media landscape. Urdu dominates the print and electronic media, while English-language media caters primarily to the educated elite. Regional languages, meanwhile, struggle to find a place in the national media, which tends to reflect the perspectives and interests of the Urdu-speaking and English-speaking elites (Hashmi et al., 2024).

This linguistic bias in the media has significant implications for political discourse in Pakistan. It means that the voices and concerns of speakers of regional languages are often excluded from national debates, further marginalizing these communities. In recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the need to promote and preserve Pakistan's linguistic diversity. Efforts have been made to introduce regional languages into the education system and to promote them in the media. However, these efforts are often limited and face significant challenges (Aslam, 2024). The dominance of Urdu and English, coupled with the lack of resources and political will, means that regional languages continue to be marginalized. Moreover, the increasing influence of globalization and the rise of English as the global

lingua franca pose further challenges to the preservation of regional languages in Pakistan. The politics of language in Pakistan is a reflection of the broader power dynamics in the country. Language is not just a means of communication but a tool of power, used to shape identities, control resources, and maintain social hierarchies (AL-Kubaisi et al., 2024).

The dominance of Urdu and English reflects the power of the central state and the elite, while the marginalization of regional languages reflects the exclusion of the provinces and the lower classes from political and economic power. These linguistic hierarchies are deeply entrenched, making language a central issue in the ongoing struggle for power and identity in Pakistan. In conclusion, the politics of language in Pakistan is a complex and multifaceted issue that reflects the country's diverse linguistic landscape and its deep-seated social and political inequalities. The dominance of Urdu and English has marginalized regional languages and reinforced existing power structures, creating a divide between the elite and the masses. At the same time, the suppression of regional languages has fueled tensions between the central government and the provinces, contributing to ongoing conflicts and struggles for autonomy. As Pakistan continues to grapple with these issues, the politics of language will remain a key factor in shaping the country's future. Understanding and addressing these linguistic power dynamics is crucial for building a more inclusive and equitable society in Pakistan (Younis, 2024; Roshid, & Chowdhury, 2024; Fatima et al., 2024).

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to explore the politics of language use and its impact on power dynamics in Pakistan, focusing on the political figures Bilawal Bhutto and Imran Khan. The methodology is designed to provide a comprehensive analysis of how these leaders utilize language to shape their political identities and influence socio-political power structures.

Research Design

The study adopts a case study approach, focusing on Bilawal Bhutto and Imran Khan as the primary cases. This approach allows for an in-depth examination of the specific strategies these leaders employ in their use of language and how these strategies relate to broader power dynamics in Pakistan.

Speech Analysis

A selection of speeches, public addresses, and interviews delivered by Bilawal Bhutto and Imran Khan over the past five years will be analyzed. These will be sourced from official party channels, media outlets, and social media platforms.

Media Content

Analysis of media coverage (print, broadcast, and online) will be conducted to understand how the language used by these leaders is portrayed and perceived by the public and media. Posts, tweets, and other forms of social media engagement by Bilawal Bhutto and Imran Khan will be examined to understand how language is used in digital political communication. Relevant academic literature, reports, and historical documents will be reviewed to contextualize the findings within the broader socio-political landscape of Pakistan.

Data Analysis

The primary method of analysis will be discourse analysis, which will focus on the language, rhetoric, and framing used by Bilawal Bhutto and Imran Khan. This will involve examining how they use language to construct their political narratives, appeal to different demographics, and position themselves within the political spectrum. Themes related to power dynamics, such as class, regionalism, ethnicity, and elitism, will be identified and analyzed across the data. This will help in understanding how language choices by these leaders reinforce or challenge existing power structures. A comparative analysis will be conducted to highlight the differences and similarities in the language use of Bilawal Bhutto and Imran Khan. This will help in understanding the distinct strategies each leader employs and the implications of these strategies for their political agendas.

Discussion

The analysis of the politics of language use and power dynamics in Pakistan, focusing on Bilawal Bhutto and Imran Khan, is structured around the themes of language as a tool for identity construction, audience targeting, and reinforcement or disruption of socio-political power structures. The data analysis draws from speeches, media content, and social media activity, utilizing discourse analysis, thematic analysis, and comparative analysis to explore these themes.

Discourse analysis was employed to examine the rhetoric, language choice, and framing in the speeches and public communications of Bilawal Bhutto and Imran Khan.

Bilawal Bhutto

Bilawal often uses English when addressing international audiences or urban, educated constituencies, signaling his elite background and Western education. His use of Sindhi in local contexts, particularly within Sindh, reinforces his connection to his regional base and his party's roots in Sindhi nationalism. Bilawal's language choices often emphasize inclusivity and democracy, with a focus on human rights, pluralism, and provincial autonomy. This dual-language strategy allows him to appeal to different audiences—aligning with the PPP's historical positioning as a party of both the elite and the working classes, while also addressing regional concerns.

Imran Khan

Imran Khan predominantly uses Urdu, the national language, in his speeches, which allows him to connect with a broad, national audience. His use of simple, direct language and populist rhetoric positions him as a leader of the common people, contrasting with the perceived elitism of his political opponents. Khan's speeches often invoke religious and nationalist sentiments, emphasizing themes of justice, anti-corruption, and self-reliance. His language choices are aimed at fostering a collective national identity that transcends ethnic and regional divides, positioning him as a unifier and a leader of the masses.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted to identify recurring themes related to power dynamics, including class, regionalism, ethnicity, and elitism, across the communications of Bilawal Bhutto and Imran Khan.

Class and Elitism

Both leaders' language use reflects their differing approaches to class and elitism. Bilawal's occasional reliance on English, especially in formal settings, reinforces his association with the political and social elite. This can alienate some segments of the population, particularly those who view English as a marker of elitism and exclusion. In contrast, Imran Khan's consistent use of Urdu, and his focus on issues of social justice and anti-elitism, reinforces his image as an outsider challenging the status quo. This aligns with his populist strategy of appealing to the disenfranchised and positioning himself against the traditional elite, represented by figures like Bilawal.

Regionalism and Ethnicity

Bilawal's use of Sindhi highlights his emphasis on regional identity and his party's stronghold in Sindh. This use of language underscores the PPP's commitment to provincial autonomy and regional rights, which is central to its political platform. On the other hand, Imran Khan's preference for Urdu is a strategic choice that underscores his vision of a unified national identity, downplaying ethnic and regional differences in favor of a collective national consciousness. This approach is designed to appeal to a broader audience across Pakistan, but it may also marginalize regional languages and identities, particularly in ethnically diverse regions.

Religious and Nationalist Sentiments

Imran Khan frequently uses religious references and nationalist rhetoric in his speeches, which resonate with a large segment of the population that identifies strongly with Islamic values and Pakistani

nationalism. This contrasts with Bilawal Bhutto's more secular and inclusive language, which reflects the PPP's traditional stance on religious pluralism and minority rights. This difference in language use highlights the distinct political ideologies of the two leaders and their parties, with Khan appealing to a more conservative, religiously-oriented base, and Bhutto targeting a more liberal, progressive audience.

Comparative Analysis

A comparative analysis was conducted to highlight the differences and similarities in the language use of Bilawal Bhutto and Imran Khan, focusing on how these differences reflect their political strategies and influence power dynamics in Pakistan.

Target Audience

Bilawal Bhutto's language use is more segmented, with distinct linguistic choices for different audiences—English for the urban elite and international community, and Sindhi for his provincial base. This segmentation reflects his strategy of maintaining a broad appeal across different social and regional groups. In contrast, Imran Khan's consistent use of Urdu positions him as a leader for all Pakistanis, aiming to unify the nation under a common identity. This consistency in language use aligns with his populist image and broad-based appeal.

Power Dynamics

The analysis reveals that Bilawal's and Khan's language choices both reinforce and challenge existing power dynamics in Pakistan. Bilawal's use of English perpetuates the association of English with the elite, potentially reinforcing social hierarchies. However, his use of Sindhi and emphasis on regionalism challenges the centralization of power and advocates for greater provincial autonomy. Imran Khan's use of Urdu, while inclusive on a national level, may inadvertently marginalize non-Urdu-speaking communities, reinforcing the dominance of Urdu as the national language. His populist rhetoric, however, challenges the traditional elite and seeks to disrupt established power structures.

Implications for Power Dynamics

The findings suggest that language use by Bilawal Bhutto and Imran Khan is a critical factor in shaping political power dynamics in Pakistan. Bilawal's multilingual approach allows him to navigate different socio-political contexts, but it also reflects and reinforces existing class and regional divisions. Imran Khan's focus on Urdu and populist rhetoric strengthens his appeal to a broad national audience, but it may also contribute to the marginalization of regional identities and languages.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that language is a powerful tool in the political strategies of both leaders, used to construct political identities, connect with different constituencies, and navigate the complex power dynamics of Pakistan's diverse society. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for analyzing the broader implications of language politics in Pakistan's political landscape.

Findings

The analysis of the politics of language use and power dynamics in Pakistan, focusing on Bilawal Bhutto and Imran Khan, reveals several key findings that illustrate how language serves as a strategic tool for political identity construction and the reinforcement or disruption of power structures.

Bilawal Bhutto

Bilawal's use of English and Sindhi reflects a dual strategy aimed at appealing to both the urban elite and his regional base in Sindh. His reliance on English in formal and international contexts underscores his elite background and Western education, aligning him with Pakistan's traditional political elite. In contrast, his use of Sindhi helps him connect with his provincial constituency, emphasizing his commitment to regional identity and provincial autonomy.

Imran Khan

Imran Khan's consistent use of Urdu in his public addresses positions him as a leader of the common people, appealing to a broader, national audience. His language choice reinforces his populist image, portraying him as an outsider challenging the traditional elites and advocating for national unity and justice.

Reinforcement and Disruption of Power Dynamics

Bilawal Bhutto's use of English reinforces the association of English with the elite, potentially perpetuating class divisions in Pakistan. His use of Sindhi, however, challenges the centralization of power by advocating for regional rights and autonomy. Imran Khan's focus on Urdu disrupts the elitist connotations of English, aligning him with the masses and challenging the traditional power structures dominated by the English-speaking elite. However, this may also marginalize non-Urdu-speaking communities by reinforcing the dominance of Urdu as the national language.

Bilawal's multilingual approach highlights the importance of regional identities, particularly in Sindh, where Sindhi is a key component of cultural and political identity. This approach challenges the central government's dominance and advocates for a more decentralized power structure. In contrast, Imran Khan's emphasis on Urdu and national unity seeks to transcend regional and ethnic divisions, promoting a collective national identity. While this strategy unifies, it may also overlook the significance of regional languages and identities, potentially leading to the marginalization of non-Urdu-speaking groups.

Impact on Political Strategies

Bilawal Bhutto's segmented language strategy allows him to cater to different social and regional groups, maintaining his appeal across various constituencies. This approach reflects the PPP's historical positioning as a party of both the elite and the working classes, as well as its commitment to regional autonomy. Imran Khan's consistent use of Urdu, combined with his populist rhetoric, strengthens his image as a unifier of the nation and a champion of the common people. His language use aligns with his broader political strategy of challenging the status quo and mobilizing mass support across Pakistan.

Socio-Political Implications

The study finds that the language choices of Bilawal Bhutto and Imran Khan have significant socio-political implications, influencing how power is distributed and perceived in Pakistan. Bilawal's use of English and Sindhi reflects and reinforces existing class and regional divides, while also challenging centralized power. Imran Khan's use of Urdu promotes national unity but may inadvertently marginalize regional identities. These dynamics highlight the complex interplay between language, identity, and power in Pakistan's political landscape.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that language is a powerful tool in the political strategies of both Bilawal Bhutto and Imran Khan. Their language choices are not merely about communication but are deeply intertwined with their efforts to shape political identities, connect with diverse constituencies, and navigate the intricate power dynamics of Pakistan. Understanding these findings is essential for comprehending the broader implications of language politics in Pakistan's evolving political landscape.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of Bilawal Bhutto's and Imran Khan's language use within Pakistan's political arena reveals the critical role that language plays in constructing political identities and shaping power dynamics. Bilawal Bhutto's strategic use of English and Sindhi reflects a dual approach aimed at balancing his appeal to both the elite and his regional constituency in Sindh. This strategy underscores his commitment to regional autonomy while simultaneously reinforcing the association of English with Pakistan's traditional elite. In contrast, Imran Khan's consistent use of Urdu positions him as a populist leader, appealing to a broad national audience and challenging the elite-dominated power structures. His emphasis on Urdu and national unity seeks to transcend regional and ethnic divides, but it may also risk marginalizing non-Urdu-speaking communities. These language strategies have significant socio-political implications, influencing how power is perceived and distributed in Pakistan. Bilawal's multilingual approach highlights the importance of regional identities and challenges centralized power, while Imran Khan's use of Urdu promotes a unified national identity but may overlook the complexities of Pakistan's linguistic diversity. Ultimately, the findings of this study demonstrate that language is not

merely a tool for communication but a powerful instrument in political strategy, used by both leaders to navigate the intricate power dynamics of Pakistan's diverse society. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for comprehending the broader implications of language politics in Pakistan's evolving political landscape, where language continues to play a pivotal role in shaping political identities, influencing power relations, and impacting national unity.

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