

## **Azadi and Inqilab Protests' Print Media Coverage and the Use of Operative Modifiers in Pakistani context**

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### **Abstract**

*In August 2014, Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT), two leading opposition political parties of Pakistan, announced long marches and sit-ins against the government of the then prime minister Nawaz Sharif. These sit-ins were preceded by two long marches-Azadi march of PTI and Inqilab march of PAT. These events captured the attention of electronic and print media of the country more than any previous political event. However, the media groups did not emerge to represent different stakeholders of this issue with complete impartiality, but appeared as power centers extending their support in favor of one or the other party to enact or resist status quo. This study aims to investigate how four mainstream English newspapers-Dawn, The News, The Nation, and Daily Times used modifiers as linguistic choices to favor or contradict the cause of one of the major participants of this whole event- the government, PTI and PAT. The study anchors around the basic assumption of Critical Linguistics (which later became CDA) that language is a social act and ideological processes in discourse depend upon linguistic choices. Among the different linguistic choices, this research studies only the functioning impact of modifiers in ideological representation of different groups and personalities. The analysis of the data shows that English print media remained biased against the opposition parties PTI, and PAT.*

**Key words:** Modifiers; Critical Linguistics; Critical Discourse Analysis, Long Marches, PTI, PAT, Government

### **1. Introduction**

The 2013 general elections in Pakistan were followed by a grave political instability as the PTI did not accept the result and its chief Imran Khan urged for the inquiry of the result of 4 constituencies in order to validate the credibility of electoral system of Pakistan. Receiving no favorable response from the other side, PTI had to record protest in several public demonstrations. In one such power show on June 27, 2014 PTI chief made a call for Azaadi

March- a public protest whose climax would be in the form of *sit-in* with a demand of resignation of the then prime minister Nawaz Sharif.

Following the call of PTI, Dr. Tahirul Qadri, chairman of PAT, also announced his march in the same dates ,but named it differently as ‘Inqilaab March’. The purpose behind this march was the ruthless killing of the workers of Minhaj Trust at its head office in Model Town Lahore. The Minhaj Trust was attacked by the Punjab police and as a result many workers were killed. A new character came on screen during all this activity was Gullu Butt who assisted Punjab Police in their power exercise. In the beginning Dr. TahirulQadri refused to join hands with PTI, but later on the same dates two huge marches were seen. This unexpected alliance posed a great threat for the sitting government.

During this entire process media appeared as a self styled power center playing its stronger role than ever before. Instead of functioning as reporter different media groups assumed the role of supporters of different political parties. Some media groups supported the government and status quo while supported the opposition parties and the doctrine of change. The hidden support of the media could be exposed by utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis as a research method. CDA, in fact attempts to expose and resist how power relations are enacted, reproduced, and resisted through discourse structures in a society.

### **Research question**

How did the modifiers function as linguistic choices in the English print media discourse to represent different stakeholders of the event?

### **2. Literature Review**

Van Dijk(1995;1998a) puts forth that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) deals with detailed analysis of a written or a spoken text in order to expose the discursive sources which involve power, dominance inequality and biasness. It analyzes the methods, through which, the sources of discourse are kept, maintained and reproduced in some particular context of society, politics and history. So, the prior purpose of CDA is to look for power relations which are being exercised among the social groups. It is also concerned with the ideology lie behind the curtain to promote some kind of dominance or inequality among the social groups of the society. In this way CDA brings to light the hidden ideologies behind a particular discourse and it deals with the

strategies which manipulate, legitimate and other ways of discourse through which minds and actions of people are influenced according to the interest of powerful.

In the late 1970s, a group of linguists and literary theorists developed Critical Linguistics (Fowler et al., 1979; Kress & Hodge, 1979). Their approach was based on Halliday's (1985) Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). CL scholars such as Trew (1979a, p. 155) aimed at identifying how linguistic processes represent ideological processes. Influenced by Halliday, these CL scholars view language, in use, as a social act which performs three meta-functions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions. According to Fowler (1991, p. 71), and Fairclough (1995b, p. 25), whereas the ideational function refers to the speaker's experience of the world, the interpersonal function represents the speakers' attitudes and assessments about the phenomena in question, and establishes a relationship between listeners and the speakers. Instrumental to these two functions is the textual function. It is through the textual function of language that speakers are able to produce texts that are understood by listeners. It is an enabling function connecting discourse to the co-text and con-text in which it occurs. This function refers to the development of text out of the available choices in linguistics, grammar and so on.

Halliday's view of language as a '*social act*' is pivotal for many of CDA's scholars. According to Fowler et al. (1979, p.185), CL, like sociolinguistics, stresses that the connections between linguistic structure and social structure are inseparable. However, the difference lies in that in sociolinguistics the concepts 'language' and 'society' are separated in a way that one has to talk about the links between the two, for CL, on the other hand, language is an essential part of social process (Fowler et al., 1979, p. 189).

Another fundamental assumption shared by CDA and SFL is that speakers make lexical and syntactic choices which are consciously or unconsciously "principled and systematic" (Fowler et al., 1979, p. 188). Thus choices are ideologically based. According to Fowler et al. (1979), the "relation between form and content is not arbitrary or conventional, but . . . form signifies content" (p. 188). In sum, language is a social act and it is ideologically driven.

### **3. Methodology**

This is a qualitative research which anchors around the basic assumption of CDA, influenced by Halliday (1985) that discourse is a network of linguistic choices that performs ideological function. Among these linguistic choices, this research has studied only modifiers. The news

items, which carried modifiers, were selected from four mainstream English newspapers-Dawn, The News, The Nation, and Daily Times. The three editions of the newspapers were selected from August 14 to August 16. The rationale for this delimitation was that these days were most crucial for the both the marches, and the event dominated the maximum space in media during these three days. This study attempted to uncover the ideological structures working behind discourse structures in English print media.

#### 4. Analysis

Modifier, as defined by the Longman dictionary of contemporary English, is a word or group of words that gives additional information about another word. Modifiers can be adjectives as in the case of intelligent boy intelligent is modifier (adjective); in the case of ‘the boy worked intelligently, intelligently is modifier (adverb); and in the case of the boy with an acute brain, with and acute brain (Adjective phrase) is modifier. So when a word, phrase, or clause qualifies a noun, pronoun, verb, adverb, or adjective it functions as a modifier. In this way it is a word or group of words that describes or characterizes another word or group of words.

When a discourser selects some particular modifiers for describing a person, a thing, or a phenomenon he gives certain attributes to that thing or person. He expresses his views about that thing using different modifiers; therefore an analysis of the modifiers chosen by a particular discourser would reveal his ideology about the things he aims to describe.

Following is a brief analysis of the modifiers which functioned to describe different stake holders of long March events- the two leaders Imran Khan and Tahirul Qadri, the participants of the Marches, the two parties PTI and PAT, the government officials etc.

##### A. Dawn

##### i. **Saner minds prevail amid maneuvering (Dawn, August 14, 2014)**

This is the headline of the daily Dawn’s edition of August 14, 2014. It states the condition prevailing in the country’s capital in a roundabout and ambiguous expression instead of representing the things in a plain and straightforward way. The word ‘*Saner*’ in the noun phrase is the modifier which modifies the plural noun minds. This word mind here refers to the

collective mindset of the government. The second degree adjective ‘*Saner*’ modifying the noun minds is in fact attribute given to the government by the newspaper. This choice of modifier here suggests that in the opinion of Dawn newspaper, the government have acted wisely in tackling the opposition. But another question should be answered in the analysis of this modifier. Why did the newspaper use second degree adjective? The reason for use of second degree adjective in this headline is that the newspaper intends to juxtapose the conduct of the marchers with the behavior of the government. The newspaper thinks that comparatively the government is saner as compared to its opposition. The use of such modifier is a clear indication of the partiality of media.

**ii. Ditched Qadri overtakes PTI march (Dawn, August 15, 2014)**

No other newspaper used a more derogatory modifier for Dr. Qadri than the one which have been underlined in the above sentence. During the long march event Dawn gave primary importance to the coverage of PTI instead of PAT. However, here Dawn allotted a separate position to convey the news of DR. Qadri’s *inqilab* march’s overtaking of Imran’s Azadi march. The adjective ‘*ditched*’ belittles the status of Dr. TahirulQadri. It creates an image in the mind of the reader that Dr. TahirulQadri is a person of a low stature who might be ditched by a top level political leader Imran Khan. Even the fact of overtaking PTI march cannot compensate the image evokes by the modifier: ‘Ditched’. This modifier conveys a complete background situation in one word. It implies that Imran Khan did not bother to take his unofficial ally with him and set off for his destination abandoning him behind. It further shows that he was not given a lot of importance as he was left ignored. Media could not dare to use such a belittling modifier for Imran Khan. The use of such an attribute for Dr. Qadri signifies that he has been ditched by the English print media which did not give him the same importance which it provided to Imran Khan.

**B. The News**

**i. No unconstitutional march, sit-in, orders LHC**

This headline shows that LHC used the modifier ‘*unconstitutional*’ for the marches; however, this is not the fact. The orders of LHC did not term the march as unconstitutional. It just

restrained the two parties from staging their marches in unconstitutional way. There is a clear difference between the facts and their media presentation. The News gave this attribute to the march to show its grudge for the marches. In the opinion of The News the march is constitutional, but it could not share its opinion openly. Therefore, it related it as a statement from the LHC which really did not exist in that way.

This manipulating of fact is a very clear evidence of media's partiality. This choice of modifier tells that The News is in favor of government, and it dislikes the march activism by PTI and PAT.

### **ii. Mushloyalists' presence in PTI irked Hashmi**

'Mush' is not a word of English language. The newspaper has coined this modifier to denote to General (R) Musharaf, the Ex-Army chief and President of Pakistan. Mush is an abbreviated form of Musharaf. This modifier refers to the past loyalty of some politicians, who are now present in PTI, to Musharaf. The fact conveyed in this news story goes against PTI. Why did the newspaper find it necessary to coin such modifier? In order to highlight this fact by giving it the heading position the newspaper devised this term. Sometimes for attracting the attention of audience the newspapers use such structures.

An important fact about this news is that it was not a type of news item which got a lot of coverage by most of media. It could not have the same satirical effect had it been presented in a usual way. For instance this news might be conveyed in the following way.

#### **The presence of Musharaf's loyalists irked Hashmi**

But this structure would have presented the facts in an objective way while the structure used by the newspaper appeared to ridicule the ironical situation in which Musharaf's loyalists are present in party which is ready be slaughtered for the true cause of democracy. In order to highlight the irony of situation The News coined this peculiar structure.

### **C. The Nation**

"Not that Imran Khan and Tahir-ul-Qadri have ever called it peaceful, but have you ever seen a "peaceful" revolution? Most revolutions are bloody, if not extremely bloody. States take decades to recover from a real revolution. And the same stands for a functional democracy. Authoritarianism for Pakistan is not a

type of governance but a style, one that we seen in democratic governments. And Imran Khan and Qadri are using this same style of ordering around party workers, throwing televised tantrums and rejecting negotiations with a *legitimate* government.” (The Nation Editorial, August 14, 2014)

This extract taken from the editorial of The Nation contains many significant modifiers. These modifiers describe the view of the newspaper about the revolution Imran and Qadri want to bring, the democracy, and the present government. This rejects the idea of a peaceful revolution. It means to say that the use of modifier for a revolution is a sheer impossibility. It is paradoxical to say a revolution peaceful. This idea presented in the editorial intends to correct the ideology of the two leaders. It suggests to them they should not deem it peaceful, because it would not be peaceful if it was a revolution, and it would not be a revolution if it were peaceful. The leaders in fact do not know, in the point of view of editorial, what it means to be a real revolution.

In the last line of the above extract, the editorial writer could not hide his soft corner for the government. The noun phrase ‘*legitimate* government’ contains a noun ‘government’ which is modified by the modifier ‘legitimate’. The choice of this modifier convey that in the view of The Nation the present government against which the protesters/marchers are going to bring a revolution is legitimate. In this way the march activism, in their view, would certainly be illegitimate.

#### **D. Daily Times**

- i. “Two protest groups- one led by imran Khan, the other by *activist cleric* Thairul Qadri- are heading to the capital town from Islamabad.”

This sentence has been taken from the headline story of Daily Times. No modifier has been used for Imran Khan, but Tahirul Qadri has been attributed as ‘*activist cleric*’. No doubt it is true for TahirulQadri, but there were certain modifiers which might add to the recognition of the other leader-Imran Khan. Before we go into the details of such discrimination in the description of the two leaders we see how The Nation described the same event.

“Two protest groups one led by *cricketer-turned-opposition politician* Imran Khan the other by PAT chief TahirulQadri- are heading to the capital from Lahore.” (The Nation: August 15, 2014)

The Nation used almost same wording but the only difference is that it used a modifier for adding to the recognition of Imran Khan instead of Tahirul Qadri. A long modifier '*cricketer-turned-opposition politician*' needs an analysis.

First we deal with the issue that why did Daily Times use a modifier with the name of Tahirul Qadri. The modifier 'activist cleric' suggests the image of Tahirul Qadri's identity as a theologian. There is no doubt about it and even a person who goes for a surface level analysis of the English Newspapers would agree with the fact that English print press gave a secondary importance to the coverage of Dr. Tahirul Qadri. One reason for this discrimination might be that he possesses a religious identity and have not been a part of democratic process of the county since long ago. The title of a newspaper article of the Daily Times said, 'Insanity, thy name is Inqilab in Pakistan.' The daily Times went against Dr. Qadri in its coverage of Inqilab March. Moreover, the modifier '*activist cleric*' may also imply that Tahirul Qadri's March activism must have some doctrinaire agenda. This attribute given to him would perform a function of recalling the reader that he is a religious cleric who owns a particular religious doctrine and feels pride in preaching it; therefore his Inqilab is not a 'revolution' but an activism to impose his agenda on the state and the citizens.

The modifier '*cricketer-turned-opposition-politician*' used to modify the noun Imran Khan, in the headline story of The Nation, also carries meanings. Everyone knows that Imran Khan was a renowned cricketer in past but why to mention it here when he is going for a very serious agenda of liberating the people of Pakistan from the autocracy of the so called democratic rulers of the country. This modifier evokes the image of an immature political leader. A person may be a good cricketer but it is not necessary that he is a good politician at the same time. So the long modifier creates the image of an immature politician. It is general assessment among very large section of people that Imran considers politics is just a game of cricket. His political discourse is completely dominated by the cricket terminology. So this choice may signify that he is still fit for playing cricket than doing such painstaking service for his people which demands a political acumen and sagacity.

## **5. Conclusion**

The data analyzed in this research shows that mainstream English print media of Pakistan, during their coverage of '*long marches and sit-ins*' utilized the modifiers to present a negative picture or



mitigate the face and agenda of the opposition parties and their leadership-PTI and PAT. The functioning of the modifiers in selected news stories reveal that English print media acted as supporter of the government instead of the impartial reporter of the event. However, the functioning modifiers remained more biased against PAT chief, Dr. Tahirul Qadri as compared to PTI chief Imran Khan. For example

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