

# PRONOMINAL CHOICES AS RATIONALIZATION TOOL: A POLITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF GENERAL MUSHARRAF'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper intends to dig out the usage of personal pronouns which play a significant role in rationalizing offensive and unpleasant acts and things into inoffensive and pleasant ones in the political autobiography of General Pervez Musharraf [1]. The selection of such a long narrative is helpful to judge and unmask the covert motives and ideologies of the author. The paradigm of critical discourse analysis and its offshoot, political discourse analysis are gone through generally to assess ideology, domination and power issues underlying the political discourse. For the specific purpose of pinpointing the role of pronouns in the selected discourse, a model is adapted from Paul Simpson and Andrea Mayor [2] who presented various linguistic tools and techniques for the analysis of political discourse in their book, Language and Power (2010). The ideas of pronominal choices as theoretical underpinnings has been applied on General Musharraf's political discourse and favourable results as pointed out by the authors – the construction of solidarity and unity with the general public, the obfuscation of agency, the credit taking and murkiness of responsibility – have been detected. It has also been found that the study of autobiography is more helpful and auspicious to arrive at the real aims and objectives of the political authors as compared to their political speeches, interviews and advertisements.*

**Keywords:** Pronominal choices, rationalization, critical discourse analysis, political discourse analysis

## INTRODUCTION

Being an open system human language is infinite and holds the capacity of creativity and productivity [3,4]. This attribute of human language bestows humans for constructing novelty, and makes them innovative for their mental and daily life endeavors. It can be (re)shaped and patterned according to the necessities and requirements from time to time. This feature of language has been exploited by human beings extensively for all types of purposes either negative or positive, according to the needs of individuals, norms of social groups and any given society. This facet of language also helps in rationalizing and modifying offensive and unpleasant acts and things into inoffensive and agreeable ones. Being a social practice, language is not just a tool of communicating one's ideas or information to others rather it actively works at every level of a society especially in (re) shaping ideologies [5]. It rambles from smaller groups to larger ones; connects them; harmonizes and regularizes them. Thus it becomes such an essential part of a society that it involves and grips the issues which affect the lives of people in general. This socially consequential nature of language gives rise to the issues of ideology, power, domination and identity which are the main essence of critical discourse analysis [6].

In the modern world, the notion of power is related with politics that enables individuals – aspiring or striving for power and domination – to accomplish their motives. Language as an influential and consequential tool is employed frequently in power dynamics. Politicians seem to exploit it in their debates, statements, speeches and interviews besides writing their autobiographies.

In the recent times, print and electronic media are considered major tools for political communications. Both advertisements and representatives of political parties and leaders appear and present their party viewpoints. But these have their limitations related to both time and space. For television advertisement or debate shows are unable to

provide the audience with a complete access to the views or ideologies of their political leaders [7]. In this regard Pakistani media is an instance where political talk shows and exposition of other political activities like protests, meetings and rallies are presented in abundance. Almost every talk show deals with the time to time issues or current affairs and provides arguments and counter arguments on public related issues where it becomes difficult for the viewers or listeners to reach at some concrete understanding and conclusion. Besides the issue of confusions, media has also its concerns regarding entertainment factor. Media owners, anchors, producers and editors keep the element of entertainment in view so they cannot present the true or wider picture more often. Their premium motive is to attract audience rather than conveying the complete picture of politics which is treated there as a show business [8]. Paid commercials and advertisements by the politicians cannot communicate the larger perspective to their audience for many limitations involved in the process [7]. In this scenario, both politicians and the public need such type of a precise and extended medium which can help them to avoid the inadequacies of communication. Autobiography is much helpful in this regard [9].

A Researcher in [9] considers political autobiography as the strongest tool employed by politicians for the objective of persuasion besides changing attitudes of the audience. As a matter of fact, political autobiography is a long narrative in which so many settings, characters, ideas etc. are presented. The matter of identification among readers towards the autobiographer is of much significance because, in the extensive narrative, the readers may form some type of association or commonality with a character, situation or ideology. And this association causes a reader to get inspired or persuaded. Thus it, eventually, leads to (re)shape attitudes (ibid.). The attitudes are also affected and altered through specific terminology or “*terministic screen*” an author creates

in the minds of readers [10]. These terministic screens are, frequently, utilized in symbolic parts of some discourse.

An autobiographer applies both subjective and objective approaches in his/her discourse. On subjective level, the descriptions are related to the particular events and situations of his/her own life or the lives of some of the closely associated individuals or institutions. Whereas on the objective level, his/her role is that of an observer and details are related to the interests of an audience in general [10]. Both the subjective and objective levels of an autobiography can be considered effective for an autobiographer and a reader alike in the sense that both get an equal opportunity to carry out their profit – for an author in conveying his/her complete viewpoint and for a reader in judging the presented viewpoints in detail. In other words, political autobiography – covering a long political career – not only gives a chance to a politician to describe his/her agenda, detailed descriptions related to complex issues, gradual political variations and justifications for unpopular or undesirable policies and ventures but, at the same time, it also provides a reader an equal opportunity to know and assess his/her leader or politician in entirety because he/she gets much information regarding the author and his viewpoints.

Autobiography is an effective genre on the basis of both political and rhetorical implications. Not many critics have given much importance to autobiography as literary or rhetorical discourse. They considered it in the perspective of history for the descriptions of events and occurrences. But its worth as a strong rhetoric tool cannot be avoided or denied [9]. Its description is both engaging and persuading for the linguistic devices it applies.

Keeping in view these features of language and autobiography, the researcher has selected General Pervez Musharraf's "In the Line of Fire" to unearth the underlying ideologies and other motives. A brief overview of the autobiography is given in the following lines.

#### **A Review of "In the Line of Fire"**

"In the Line of Fire" by General Pervez Musharraf was published in 2006 by Simon and Schuster, when the author was the president of Pakistan besides being the army chief. It consists of 352 pages, comprises six parts which are subdivided into thirty two chapters along with an epilogue. The first part, "In the Beginning" deals with the early life of the author especially the migration of his family from India to newly established Islamic state, Pakistan in 1947 after the division of the sub-continent. In the second part, "Life in the Army", he describes his ingress into the army besides the worse political, economic and social conditions of Pakistan, his becoming the army chief, and a description of the Kargil issue. Then the author moves to his conflict with the Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, the hijacking of his plane, and his "inevitable" takeover. The fourth part of the book coped with his endeavors regarding the rebuilding of his nation regarding economic, political and educational fronts. The major issue which can be called a focal point, especially to attract the foreign audience, the terrorism, is undertaken in fifth part of the autobiography. It unleashes the commitment of the author

to tackle terrorism, the successes and future plans against it. The last part entitled, "Pakistan at Home and Abroad", sorts out the issues of nuclear proliferation and the controversial role of Dr. Abdul Qadir Khan in the episode besides describing the enterprises in the fields of women's emancipation, progress in social sector and his efforts to cope with the effects of the earthquake of 2005. The book ends at "the epilogue" in which General Musharraf gives his reflections and describes the strong role of fate in shaping his life and gives various examples to be a great leader.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Much work has been done to analyze political discourse under the paradigm of critical discourse analysis and its upshot, political discourse analysis. In his research article titled "A reflection of culture and persuasion in Philippine political discourse", Paulina M. Gocheco [11] investigates the role of pronouns in the political ads during political campaigns and opines that pronouns – as strong linguistic features – contain the power of persuasion. He mainly focuses the use of first persons of personal pronouns in singular and plural forms and highlights their inclusive and exclusive nature in communicating some covert idea.

Under the tradition of rhetorical criticism which began in the twentieth century, political discourses remained important object of study for the exploration of political motives underneath them [12]. In the research article, "*The style of political speeches*", Leeuwen [12] analyzes the speeches of some renowned politicians and points out the style and expression as important constituents of such discourses. The researcher opines that the same words with different styles can make a lasting and effective impression on the minds of the audience.

Rozina and Karapetjana [13] have explored the traces of linguistic manipulation in political discourse. They delimit their study to some of the rhetorical devices i.e. metaphors, allusions, metonymy and connotations and conclude that such devices are of much influence for manipulation in political discourse. They also are of the view that all types of regimes, either democratic or totalitarian, exploit language tool for all types of purposes, from conveying information and commands to influencing, persuading or misguiding the masses [13].

Jessica Hakansson [14] explores all types of personal pronouns like I, we, you, he, she and they in a comparative study of the political discourse of two presidents of America, President Bush and President Obama. She brings their policies and ideologies to light in their usage of pronouns. She concludes that both these political figures have the same motives while exploiting pronominal choices. They share and obscure responsibility with the use of we while the singular form of first person, I, creates the effects of exclusion. The third persons he and they serve to make some policy or idea ambiguous.

In his doctoral thesis titled "Pronouns of politics: the use of pronouns in the construction of 'self' and 'other' in political interviews", Researchers in [15] explores the use of pronouns and declares that these help to create favourable and desirable

images of not only for the users but also for those for whom these are used. He further calls pronouns as identity markers which have the capability to mystify and glorify oneself. The politicians also exploit them to change “selves” – from myself to himself and ourselves to themselves – through which they can obscure realities and hide their true motives and intentions in their discourse.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Being a social practice, discourse is not only shaped by the social processes but it also has the ability to shape them. In other words, discourse is both socially conditioned and socially constitutive [6]. For its influential nature, it raises the significant and vital questions of power and struggle over power. Such dimensions are revealed in some discourse under an approach called critical discourse analysis that concentrates, generally, on the relations of discourse and society [16].

The roots of critical discourse analysis (CDA) can be traced in various fields from classical rhetoric to socio-linguistics, pragmatics, applied linguistics and text linguistics [16]. CDA is a complex and multidisciplinary field that deals with the relationships between language, ideology, power, identity, hierarchy, dominance, social inequality and exploitation. Teun A. van Dijk [17] designates it as “socio - political discourse analysis”. Later, he [18] has termed it as critical-political discourse analysis. Locke [19] quotes one of the founders of CDA, Norman Fairclough in the following words:

*to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.*

This definition of Fairclough distinctly indicates the objectives of CDA which are to delve into the subsurface dimension of discourse especially that of related with power dynamics. Fundamentally, it studies the patterns and organizations of elite discourse [16]. Michel Foucault [20] calls discourse not just the way of communication but something that has its strong connections with power and desire and these connections have to be disguised to achieve desire and power [21]. The main objective of CDA is to decipher and demystify the hidden connections of ideologies and power issues in discourses [6]. At times, CDA is criticized on the basis that it ignores the neutrality of language and proclaims the perpetual presence of hidden ideologies and power aspects under every discourse [22]. For this reason, CDA proponents are denounced as activists

rather than analysts. Critics of CDA opine that language does not always have power dynamics underneath it thus the CDA approach is questionable. Despite its criticisms, CDA has developed itself to be a powerful discipline for studying political discourse. It is an interdisciplinary field that is being used in various areas of social sciences. It takes into consideration multifarious theories and methodologies derived from various theoretical backgrounds. It can be viewed as a varying, heterogeneous field that cannot be taken as a closed paradigm rather an open research programme and academic discipline [6].

As mentioned earlier, CDA is not a closed paradigm, thus, it does not have set rules and patterns which may lead to some set methodologies and theories. Rather, it retains and broadcasts eclecticism and pragmatism. The researchers can choose from a wide variety of theories and methodologies in different disciplines and fields to study the issues and problems at hand. They can also develop, adapt and adjust various theories and methodologies according to their areas and interests [6]. Still they share the following three points in any approach to critical discourse analysis:

1. Interdisciplinary approach
2. Methodological eclecticism
3. Problem oriented approach

Politicians exploit various linguistic tools and techniques in their discourse among which the use of metaphors, pronouns, parallelism, the rule of three, implications, euphemism and dysphemism are prominent. These are employed to inspire and influence the minds of audience. Among all these the use of pronouns for the earlier mentioned purposes is significant. Politicians select diverse pronouns for themselves at the same time to show their involvement with the public and the topic. This technique is applied mainly to influence the minds of the audience towards some agenda and that is the main objective of the politicians [23]. Researchers in [2] have presented a model of various linguistic techniques for the analysis of political discourse in their book, Language and Power. Their ideas regarding the use of pronouns by politicians have been adapted in the current study. This model is reinforced by the same thoughts of Thomas et al. [23]. The authors are of the view that the use of pronouns is much significant in political discourse. Politicians employ them frequently for the accomplishment of the varied purposes such as:

1. to shift responsibility
2. to obfuscate agency
3. to achieve prominence
4. to create the sense of unity and inclusion

### Delimitation of the Selection of Pronominal Choices

Keeping in view the above mentioned features, the model has been applied on the political autobiography of General Pervez Musharraf entitled “In the Line of Fire.” The texts where pronouns are exploited for the above mentioned purposes have been extracted and analyzed separately. The selection of the texts has been made keeping in view the main allegations and criticisms against General Musharraf. Thus the pronominal choices are delimited to the issues which are as under:

1. The violation of the Constitution of his country (The 1999 Coup)
2. The overthrow of an elected government of Nawaz Sharif
3. The Kargil war with India
4. His cooperation with Americans and her allies in Afghan war

### ANALYSIS OF PRONOUNS IN “IN THE LINE OF FIRE”

In this section, critical analysis of “In the Line of fire” is done keeping in view historical, social and cultural perspectives in view. The extracts are taken from the text where the author intends to rationalize his exploits. The main focus is on the pronominal choices which serve the agenda of the author.

*All four wheels of my car left the road and we shot quite some distance up in the air.” (Page 3)*

Here the author is actually describing an incident about an assassination attempt by the terrorists when he was headed towards the army house. Firstly he has used the possessive case of personal pronoun “my” that is singular in nature but later in his statement he turns towards a plural form of personal pronoun “we”. Here the shift from singular to plural is striking for creating some extra effect in the narration of the incident. At home, General Musharraf is criticized for cooperating Americans in Afghan war after the incidents of 9/11. During this war, a movement called Tehrek – e – Taliban Pakistan sprung up in Pakistan which began to attack Pakistanis, mostly innocent citizens. The critics and the opposition always held General Musharraf responsible for that. Here, the General implies that he was not himself safe from the terrorists’ activities. He also includes others in the formation of the policies.

*I wanted to explain the military situation, to demonstrate how successful we had been (Page 95).*

The pronoun “we” in this statement tends to share the responsibility of the army action in Kargil. The General purports as if he were not the only one responsible for the Kargil issue rather the whole army had the equal share in this adventure. Actually, Kargil issue is another charge against the General. He defends his position with the help of pronouns by creating the sense of inclusion and solidarity. The implication underlying his statement is that he was not alone while making decision on Kargil and it was a joint venture by all the supreme commanders of the military who were going successful on the front.

*We all wanted to ensure that this would be the last time the army was forced to assume leadership of the country.*

*At the same time, we started selecting my cabinet and other crucial members of my team (Page 144).*

Through the use of “we”, the author shifts the responsibility of the violation of the constitution and then the selection of his team to run the affairs of the country to others as well. By conjuring up the notion of inclusion, he seems to create the image of solidarity among readers. By the use of personal pronoun, the author also intends to show his sense of democracy while describing the selection of various ministers and other officials.

*They demonstrated complete commitment to my cause (Page 167).*

The possessive case of personal pronoun “I” is used by the author to demonstrate the self-importance and distinctiveness. “They” presents the people in general and constructs the image of solidarity. The General also implies the significance of his role in shaping the political structure of his country. The third person of personal pronoun is also obfuscating the agency in the whole episode of the military coup of General Musharraf.

*I realize that many joined the new party because of their support of and commitment to me (Page 167).*

In this statement, the writer implies that the politicians were showing their loyalties to him rather than to their country. Egocentricity is palpable in the use of the objective case of personal pronoun “me”. He presents himself as the wisest and the most upright person with whom everyone was joining hands when he established a political party called Pakistan Muslim League (Q). This is, in fact, an answer of another charge against him that he forcedly made a political party by rupturing various parties of his country.

*To the credit of my economic managers, we paid off all our most expensive loans; secured debt relief; obtained new, favourable loans (Page 185).*

The use of “my” and “we” is not ignorable here. The author makes himself prominent among others. He is taking full credit for the enhancement of the economy of his country. He shows his wisdom in the use of “my”. The General implies his important and positive role in solving the economic problems of his country. It has always remained an ideology of all military dictators to criticize the civilians for their malpractices and inefficiencies (Khan 1967). He, indirectly, blames the politicians of his country for their corruption especially on economic front.

*We have done more than any other country to capture and kill members of al Qaeda (Page 223).*

The sense of unification and the sharing of responsibility again prevail in the sentence with the use of the pronoun “we” which also implies that he, the General, was not alone in doing action against the terrorists rather all the authorities and important personalities were also with him besides the public support. In this statement, the author seems to address foreign audience. America and her allies always stress Pakistan to do more. The author is of the view that they have done much in war against terror.

### CONCLUSION

Autobiography is found a very suitable tool in the hands of politicians who get a wide and extended scope in long narrations to present their agendas, goals and covert motives. At the same time, it also provides readers with the opportunity to assess their leaders, their policies and ideologies in detail. General Musharraf has used pronouns meticulously in his political autobiography. These play significant role in the discourse. First persons of personal pronouns viz. “I” and “We” and their variants like “My”, “Me”, “Our” and “Us” have their significance in the descriptions of the author. Second persons like “You” and

“Your” are also detected. Third persons’ pronouns like “He” and “They” have their own role too. All these personal pronouns are successfully performing the subsequent tasks.

1. The agency on dire issues like Kargil war, violation of the Constitution and overthrow of an elected government and cooperation with the Americans and her allies in war against terrorism is obfuscated with the usage of pronouns.
2. Sometimes these are there in the discourse to hold responsible for some issues like economic progress and establishment of positive changes in the country. This happens when the author wants to take credit.
3. The pronominal choices also obscure readers’ notion of absence in the discourse. On this basis, such choices are intentional and conscious efforts.
4. On the other side these pronouns also share commission or responsibility of the issues which are difficult to hold.
5. These also serve the writer to obscure responsibility on the controversial issues.
6. These help to create intimacy, familiarity, the sense of inclusion or collectivity with readers.
7. The use of pronouns also provides an opportunity for the author to paint his positive picture.

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