



'Politics is a Game': An Analysis of Cricket Language used as Metaphors in Imran Khan's Political Speeches

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Abstract

The dexterous use of language is crucial to convey feelings, emotions, likes, dislikes or to emphasize an idea. Politicians are known for exercising their power through discourse, which is mostly carried out through the tool of persuasion which is the central key of political discourse that attracts the audience. Persuasion can be carried out through the use of figurative language that is used for expressing complex ideas. The interesting use of figurative language in political discourse has become the centre of attention due to the vast implications of political discourse. This study analyses the metaphorical use of cricket language in the domain of politics in the political speeches of Imran Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan. The whole attention was gathered around the specific parts of the political speeches delivered by him. For analyzing the data, the researchers applied Lakoff and Johnson (1980) work 'Metaphor We Live By' as the theoretical framework. The finding of the study showed that Imran Khan constantly uses cricket language in his political speeches for different purposes like positivity, negation, tribute/praising, patriotism, emphasizing rules and boasting/power showing. The results show his preoccupation with idiosyncratic language choices as it seems he considers politics as a game of choosing words. He specifically uses cricket language when he addresses the public and wants to recall his past, criticizes someone, shows his love towards the motherland, emphasises his fairness and impartiality. Along with this, he also uses cricket language for pursuing foreigners. The study is significant for students of language as well as politics as it uncovers mapping of various domains to express a phenomenon.

Keywords: Cricket Language; Political Discourse; Metaphors; Political Speeches



Introduction

Political speeches and rhetorical use of language have become the centre of interest of many studies. Politicians try to persuade their audience through the colourful use of language with the help of figures of speech like simile, metaphor, hyperbole, fun, and others. These figures of speech impart color to the meanings (Ullah, Zahra, Khan, Ahmad, & Naz, 2021). Chetia (2015) and Talik (2007) state that the word metaphor is derived from the Greek 'metaphero' which carries a word over or beyond. It is a transformation of one thing or an idea into another without any formal acknowledgement. It does not only explain things or ideas but gives a chance to the reader for imagination. According to van Dijk (1998), political discourse is recognized by its speakers or authors. The study of political discourse encompasses the talk and text produced by political stakeholders, such as the president, prime minister, members of the parliament, political parties, and institutions that are linked to politics. Politicians can be self-designated or appointed for making policy and are being paid for the activities they do politically. Political discourse also signifies that every talk and text of a politician is not political. Their talk and text would be political when they perform actions, such as ruling, governing, voting, protesting. For recognizing political text and context these categories are highly magnificent; societal domain, political systems, political values, political ideologies, political institutions, groups, actors, relations, process, actions, discourse and political cognition. Therefore, this study focuses on the metaphoric use of language in political speeches delivered by Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan. Along with this, it is also important that after taking charge as PM, Imran Khan uses cricket language for various purposes that gives more emphasis to those purposes. The cricket language has also affected media as 92 News channels had the headline on 29 April 2019 'Match took place among players in Karachi'. Here, the headline means that 'people quarrelled during the gathering there in Karachi'.

Rhetoric is the art of using language effectively that persuades the audience. For a long time, it is the centre of interest of many types of research that focus on rhetorical use in different aspects of everyday life. Even it is considered as the cornerstone for communication. Talik (2007) reflects that figurative language is used for emotional excitement. It makes the external world coloured and is used since the earliest time. Van Dijk (1998) suggests that rhetoric is



mostly used in political discourse and it is also not surprising that it is used for persuading the audience. Wodak (2009) reveals that politicians perform speeches and always use persuasive tactics and strategies for achieving their desired goals. Deignan (1997) claims that metaphor has been the subject of a great volume of studies in the last two decades. Regmi (2014) expresses that figures of speech are used for deepest expression conveyed through metaphors, similes, symbols, images and personifications. Some speakers and writers are keen to make use of colourful language for their rhetoric. They attract their audience and readers through these selections of colourful words. He further stresses that these devices enhance the curiosity of learning a language. The usage of rhetorical devices creates a conducive environment. However, the present study focuses on cricket language in political speeches used as a metaphor that brings desired goals.

According to Charteris-Black (2004), metaphors are extensively used by politicians and abundantly occur in newspapers and religious books. He further elaborates on the study of metaphors from different perspectives by different scholars. Katrandjiev, Velinov and Radova (2016) worked on advertising slogans. In this study, they investigated various rhetorical figures and shed light on their effective use for the sake of meaning generation and gaining attraction. They explored that metaphorical use of language is frequently found in advertising slogans as compared to the rest of rhetorical figures. Metaphors are commonly used in the everyday discourse of the people for communicating serious issues that affect their lives such as economy and power. They are mostly found in election campaigns, advertisements (Chetai, 2015), courtrooms, educational materials and news reports.

Fairclough (2001) expresses that power can be exercised in two ways; one is a physical force that is time-consuming and the second one is changing the beliefs of the audience through language. That is why the second one is mostly preferred for controlling others. As Chilton (2004) express that language is the oldest successful source for pursuing the masses used by specific individuals or group of people.

Metaphor (Lakoff & Johson, 1980) is considered as a persuasive tool of poetry for arousing the feelings of the audience. It is a collection of colourful words rather than a simple expression of language. The domain of metaphor however is not limited to language only; it is



ubiquitous in everyday life (in expressions such as 'life is money'), thought and action. Based on linguistics evidence, our concepts are related to metaphors, and metaphors also structure our perception, thinking and action such as in expressions like "argument is war" (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Here, the reference is not to the physical war, but the action in arguments. It is an understanding of one thing in terms of another.

The use of words is not always poetic, rhetorical, and fanciful when expressing metaphors but it could be literal as well. As Imran Khan in his speech "*I want to play now*", does not mean that being a former cricket player he wants to play cricket again, but he refers to his political campaign that he is running and shows his intention to take part in the election. Similarly, he says '*don't miss the ball*' in which he addresses the audience in a business matter, where he means to say '*don't miss the chance*'. This way, he persuades his audience and offers them to come and take part in the business. For analyzing the data in a better way and getting better results, the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1980) 'Metaphors We Live By' was taken as a theoretical framework. Metaphor is ubiquitous in activities performed by a human. It is not limited to language only. It is pervasive in action and thought as well. Our conceptual system, our thinking and our action is likely to be metaphorical in nature. There are two domains in conceptual metaphor for explaining an idea or meaning of one thing through another. These two domains are the source and target domains. The source domain helps us in drawing metaphorical expressions and the target domain is the idea that is expressed through source domain mapping. Deignan (1997) says that conceptual metaphors work according to the understanding of humans, beyond language, and are linguistically realized as metaphors.

Politicians use persuasive language and techniques to persuade their audience and get their futuristic goals. They understand the requirements of the surroundings and needs of the masses and use persuasive techniques accordingly. Many types of research have documented the use of political speeches for creating a persuasive impact on the masses, where politicians make use of implicit means to convey their standpoints. Uzma's (2013) study is based on Imran Khan's political speech, to uncover the means through which a political leader conveys his ideology using persuasive language. The study analyzed the speech thoroughly, which was delivered at Shaukat Khanam Hospital two days before the 2013 election. The obtained results of



the study clarified that IK (Imran Khan) used certain persuasive devices to attain his desired political goals. In another study, Naz, Alvi and Baseer (2012) researched Benazir Bhutto's political speech. The study focused on the semantic turn which was analyzed through Hallidial Systemic Functional Linguistics. The researcher revealed that Benazir Bhutto mostly used linguistics terms to ensure the emotional and physical participation of her audience. Furthermore, the research of Al-Hamad and Al-Shunnag (2011) studies Syrian politicians' speeches in which they used the figure of speeches for gaining political advantages. The authors analyzed four figures of speech: metaphor, simile, euphemism and personification that were found in their speeches.

Altikriti (2016) took Obama's victory speeches and investigated that he used contrastive speech acts. Nourali, (2016) focused on the speeches of Iraq and American presidents where stress was given on simile, metaphor, repetition, allusion, alliteration and parallelism. The results showed that Iran's president mostly used alliteration and the American president frequently used metaphor more than other persuasive devices. Al-Saedi (2017) discussed Donald Trump's inaugural speech which showed that for arising the emotion of the audience he used repetition to convey the idea and strategy more effectively.

The above studies clearly indicate that political speeches have been a frequently researched site for studying the political leaders' persuasive language. As Fairclough (2001) claims, power is exercised through discourse. In the same vein, the present study takes Imran Khan's political speeches, after being elected as the Prime Minister of Pakistan and focuses on the use of cricket language in his speeches. This research analyses the use of metaphors from the domain of the game of cricket, which helps IK to gain the interest and attention of the audience while delivering his message.

Methodology

The study takes the data only from Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan's political speeches. It highlights only those specific parts of the speeches which are used metaphorically and convey hidden meaning or beyond the surface level which are used to garb the emotions and attention of the audience. Here, the focus remains on the cricket language that has been used metaphorically.



The data focused only on those speeches that were delivered after taking the charge as PM of Pakistan. Most of his speeches were in Urdu, being the national language of Pakistan. Speeches delivered in English version were taken directly, while speeches in Urdu were translated into English for the purpose of analysis. It is also crucial to point out that despite being the PM, there is very little written version of the speeches available. Therefore, all selected speeches for the data were first carefully listened to and then translated to English for better results.

The aim of this paper is to investigate the cricket language used metaphorically in the political speeches of Imran Khan. The primary focus remains on investigating the specific parts of speeches that make use of this type of language for persuasive impact. The study also analyses various functions performed through the use of cricket language in his speeches. The focus of analysis takes into account the ideas which he conveys through cricket language.

Results and Discussion

Firstly, all the metaphors were identified in which cricket language was used. Therefore, all metaphoric expressions that were not related to the domain of cricket were excluded. Secondly, for the purpose of analysis, the functional features associated with the discovered metaphors were identified and were categorised according to the functions.

In every day as well as specialised contexts, people frequently use figurative language to make their message more effective. The use of metaphors for persuasion in political discourse is well documented. Similarly, the metaphorical use of language is well reflected in Imran Khan's political speeches. Table 1 below provides the analysis of metaphors and their categorisation according to their functions as found in the data of this research.

Table: 1 Metaphors Categorization according to Functional Features

Functions	Examples
Positivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ I <i>combated</i> for 22 years in the political <i>ground</i>. ➤ This is time, my last words to the investors, this is the time to come to Pakistan



	when it is just going on the <i>upswing</i> , this is the time to invest in the country and do not <i>miss the ball</i> .
Negativity	➤ The <i>twelfth man</i> in politics whose <i>wicket</i> has been dropped.
Tribute/Praising	➤ I also want to mention that those were <i>team players</i> who were doing politics for high goals. I pay compliment to both; Ahsan Rasheed and Saloni Bokhari.
Patriotism	➤ I and my nation will play/fight till the <i>last ball</i> . ➤ My sole aim is to <i>win</i> for my nation and to bring up my country.
Rule formulation	➤ A good <i>captain</i> must go over his <i>team</i> . ➤ He must stop one <i>player</i> and select another.
Boasting/power show	➤ I will <i>combat</i> all of them alone. ➤ So, this charter of democracy which lasted for ten years was broken by PTI <i>inswing yorker</i> . ➤ I recently changed the <i>batting order</i> of my <i>team</i> and made some more changes. ➤ Mehmood Khan, I want to address you as well that you also keep a keen eye on your <i>team</i> .

Functional Features

Politicians use figurative language to convince and persuade their audience for getting their desired goals. For instance, '*I combated for 22 years in political ground*' was used in Imran Khan's speech to show his struggle. He was a cricket player and now uses that language in the



political field. As we know that the term 'field' may have been appropriate to talk about politics, but here, he uses the word '*ground*' for politics that shows his intention towards cricket and therefore reflected in the language use. He used *ground* because when someone plays in the ground everybody sees him. The more visible metaphorical expression and mapping in the gaming world allow him to clearly map his struggle and journey in a symbolic way.

The next example found in his speech is: '*This is time, my last words to the investors, this is the time to come to Pakistan when it is just going on the **upswing**, this is the time to invest in the country and do not **miss the ball***'. That excerpt is taken from the speech which he delivered in Dubai and addressed investors. He speaks clearly that Pakistan has a good time for investment and invited the investors to the country for investment as the country is going in the right direction. Therefore, in order to convince them not to miss this golden opportunity/chance, he uses gaming vocabulary such as *upswing* for the *right direction* and *ball* for chance/opportunity. This transference from the domain of game to the domain of economy allows investors to concretise their actions and work towards the target.

He also used cricket language for criticizing someone or to create a negative image of something in the audience mind. This kind of situation may demand implicit and indirect means and the use of cricketing metaphors facilitate the transference of ideas among domains in difficult situations. That's why he takes the help of cricket language in the expressions like '*The **twelfth man** in politics whose **wicket** has been dropped*'. Here, he used the *twelfth man* for Maulana Fazlurahman, an ex-parliamentarian from the opposition party, and used *wicket* for his seat that he has lost in the last election. Imran Khan criticizes Maulana Fazlurahman here and is of the view that he is no more able to run the country and take part in politics because he is an extra man. He tries to clear his position by saying that he even lost his political seat.

Alongside using the cricket language as a weapon for opponents to criticize them harshly, he also uses it as a token for praising something or someone politely by giving more emphasis on a specific thing or person: '*I also want to mention that those were **team players** who were doing politics for high goals. I pay compliment to both; Ahsan Rasheed and Saloni Bokhari*'. The purpose of using cricket language is to target those members of the party that are actively involved in political activities and have more contributions to the party.



It is his ideology, as reflected through his speeches, to do best for his country and expects his citizens to do well as well. He expresses his strong feelings for the country through cricket language, for example, *'I and my nation will play/fight till the **last ball**'*, and *'My sole aim is to **win** for my nation and bring up my country'*. He shows patriotism and love for the country in these statements by claiming that he and his followers will fight till the last breath. He uses the *last ball* for the 'last breath'. He glorifies his passion for the country by using cricket language and conjuring metaphors of the game to motivate the audience and express his enthusiasm for working for the welfare of the nation. This also acts as a symbol of victory and reminisces the audience of his World Cup 1992 win which he gave to the country as a team captain. Based on this usage of cricket language as metaphors he creates sympathy, establishes regularity and understanding among the citizens for the progress of the country.

He further uses cricket language for establishing and formulating rules for himself as a leader. He delivered the speech after MNA Asad Qaisar and MNA Shehriyar Afridi of his political party took charge of the office, and he told the public that *'A good **captain** must go over his **team**'*, and *'he (good captain) must stop one **player** and select another'*. In these sentences, he uses *captain* for *leader* and *team* for *cabinet*. He mentions clearly that politicians are not out of the circle of accountability as they are also responsible to follow the rules and there would be a check and balance upon their performance. He used word *player* for a 'minister' and told them if they fail to work on time they will be changed. There would be no relaxation for them.

Imran Khan also uses cricket domain metaphors for showing his power. He uses this language very skillfully for indirect criticism and warning others. He uses some specific words for expressing his deep emotions in public like, *'I will **combat** all of them alone'*, *'So, this charter of democracy which lasted for ten years was broken by PTI **inswing yorker**'*, *'I recently changed the **batting order** of my **team** and made some more changes'*, *'Mehmood Khan, I want to address you as well that you also keep a keen eye on your **team**'*. He just used one word *combat* that has deep meaning in the context that shows his power that he alone is enough for all the politicians that are against his party. Further, he shows the power of his political party, addressing the ex-prime minister Nawaz Sharif and ex-president Asif Zardari that these both had collectively made a democracy that was really the centre of corruption, but that charter of



corruption was broken by PTI's (Pakistan Tehreek Insaf) *in-swing yorker*. In-swing yorker clearly shows power because it is very hard to stop and take a side. Along with this, he also warns the members of his PTI party that he had taken charges of ministry from some of the ministers and demands some more efforts for the nation. He uses *batting order* for *ministers selected* for a profile and *team* for his *political party*. Here, he addresses one of his party members (Mehmood Khan) and told him that he must evaluate his workers as well.

To sum up the above discussion, it is observed that metaphors are not confined to the works of poetry and literature only, but used for multiple purposes by the speakers in everyday language as well politics to bring the desired goals, such as for imparting hidden ideas and notions, and for aesthetic pleasure. The whole discussion is replete with various purposes used by Imran Khan for conveying his ideas. If we pay heed to these metaphors, which are used for emphasis, sincerity, euphemism and to establish certain truths, these are quite revealing and are hard to avoid specifically in the political discourse.

Limitations of the study

This study has specific limitations, along with its strengths of carrying out an in-depth metaphor analysis as a rhetorical device in political discourse. First, it is limited to the political speeches delivered by the PM of Pakistan, Imran Khan, for most of the life he has been playing cricket and has a long career in that field. Second, the data is limited to only those speeches that were delivered after being elected as a Prime Minister. Thirdly, it is limited to analyzing language related to cricket only used in metaphorical ways.

Conclusion

To conclude, the researchers explored metaphors in political speeches delivered by the PM of Pakistan Imran Khan. The utmost focus remained here on the cricket language that was used as a metaphor that had different functions according to need and situation during his address to his audience. These metaphors were used for various functions in political discourse such as for expressing positivity, for harsh criticism of others, for emphasizing national ideology, fairness and equality under rules, and euphemism. This indicates that metaphors are not limited to a single field of literature. Other than literary purposes, metaphors are used to fulfil various



purposes in other domains according to situational dynamics such as politicals to further political goals including favouring one's agenda.

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