

A Stylistic Analysis of Islamophobic features: Prime Minister Imran Khan's Speech at UNGA 2020

Muhammad Manzoor Alam^{1*}, Kayenat Shah², Rameen Jabbar³

¹Lecturer, Department of English Literature and Linguistics, Government College Gulabad, Dir Lower, KP, Pakistan Email: alammanzur779@gamil.com

²MS Scholar, Department of English Literature and Linguistics, City University of Science and Technology Peshawar, KP, Pakistan Email: kayenatshah66@gamil.com

³MS Scholar, Department of English Literature and Linguistics, City University of Science and Technology Peshawar, KP, Pakistan Email: rameenjabbbar0@gamil.com

ABSTRACT

The current paper bases the research upon the analytical techniques of Leech and Short (1981) to perform a comprehensive stylistic analysis of the Islamophobic feature of Prime Minister Imran Khan's speech in the U.N. General Assembly on September 25, 2020. A brief literature review emphasizes the importance of the selected speech and how stylistic analysis opens newer vistas of understanding for researchers. The discipline of stylistics explores the actual and implied meanings of words used in the selected speech. As the use of figurative language is quite evident thus, the address is investigated for the presence of lexical, syntactic, and semantic features in it. The proposed analysis unveils the stylistic reasoning behind Prime Minister Imran Khan's choice of particular words to convey his concern for the Islamophobic tendencies of non-Muslim bodies. A thorough stylistic examination has successfully identified the persuasive attempts of the speech towards its audience.

Keywords

Imran Khan, Speech, UNGA, Islamophobia, Stylistics Analysis

Introduction

Language is a unique tool that is used for user stimulation. Speakers have a clear purpose behind the use of language in context. Similarly, different speakers use language to present the country's social, cultural, and ideological aspects and events. Language is a multi-layered method of communication. It is believed that words or combinations are always socially, politically, economically, and racially loaded. The best analysis of critical discussions offers the best analytics tools for understanding the hidden agendas hidden by language.

Stylistics is the branch of linguistics concerned with studying how language is used in either text or speech. It does not affect itself heavily with the content; instead, it focuses upon the author's tone in the text and the speech delivery style of the speaker. The following analysis is an attempt to study the style of the premier in delivering a

speech that communicated the concerns of the Muslim country to world leaders.

This article is directed towards performing a stylistic analysis of the Islamophobic feature of the speech made by the 22nd prime minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, in UNGA. The speech of Imran Khan is considered very impressive and persuasive that's why his speeches are prone to different strategic implications. He addressed the general debate of the 75th U.N. General Assembly on September 25, 2020. In his 25 minutes long speech, he raised the issues of the Coronavirus pandemic, Climate change, Regional peace and focused chiefly on 'Islamophobia.' Imran Khan, in this one speech, gives more details about Islamophobia. On Islamophobia, he talked in the 11th minute of his speech in the U.N. General Assembly. Alongside the topics mentioned earlier in the speech, Mr. Khan addressed the issue of Islamophobia in great detail. He connected Islamophobia to the Peace and Conflict of Palestine.

Anti-semitism is only one facet of Islamophobia. It is the most destructive when embedded in civil and judicial systems that wrongly stigmatize Muslims in the name of national security (Katz, 2018). Terrorism has been used as a political tool to justify heinous breaches of civil and human rights.

The institutionalization of Islamophobia refers to government actions intended at creating anti-Islam/Muslim habits or behavior as the population's norm; this commonly takes the form of anti-Muslim legislation. In 2009, the French government launched a "national identity campaign" to ensure that France has a distinct non-Muslim and non-immigrant identity and voted in September of that year to outlaw the wearing of the burqa and niqab in public. President Nicolas Sarkozy referred to the burqa as a "walking coffin" that is "not welcome" in France (Vandenbelt, 2021). Despite the fact that Switzerland only has four mosques with minarets and a small, law-abiding Muslim population, the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP) predicted that "the towers would soon be sprouting up across the country, signaling the beginning of a takeover by Sharia-supporting zealots." Radical-right parties in Western Europe, such as the SVP, saw a resurgence during this period, gaining significant voter support and, in some cases, joining ruling government coalitions (Vandenbelt, 2021).

Problem Statement

Language has a power that no other instrument can have. Individuals can express their views and ideas based on language. People use different communicative strategies to get favor from others. Persuasive and bombastic language is primarily used by journalists, people in business, and political leaders. The researchers in this paper aimed to find out linguistic choices and to explore intended or hidden meanings of the words used by Imran Khan, the 22nd prime minister of Pakistan, in his speech.

Research Objectives

- To find out the actual and implied meanings of words used in the selected speech of Imran Khan
- To identify the presence of lexical, syntactic, and semantic features in Imran Khan speech.

Significance of the Study

The study gave insight to the readers on how political leaders use persuasive language to gain favor from people. Every individual needs to be familiar with the reality at the back of speeches that politicians propagate. National solidarity must be promoted to bring unity, peace, and solidarity. A country provides protection and rights, so citizens must be loyal and patriotic to their country. A discourse producer should not spread such words to collapse society, cultural and political ideologies. A discourse producer should spread such comments in his/her speech which shows a positive image of society. One should use his/her language sensibly, and it is significant to sense upon words before their use.

Literature Review

The selected speech is crucial and emerges the Pakistani Prime Minister as a vocal Muslim world leader. The virtual address at UNGA was given heavy coverage and was "the most-watched video among world leaders" (Dawn.com, 2020), topping the address of the USA's president, Donald Trump. Muslim community if praised the speech, Indian media criticized the bluntness of Khan and reported, for India's government that Khan reserved his harshest words" (Hindustan Times, 2021). This led to drift towards scholarly readings of the address. A recent study was conducted in linguistics upon the Prime Minister's speech at the United Nations General Assembly. The research employs Halliday's systemic functional linguistics (SFL) model and explores "the transitivity process in political speech" (Mushtaq et al., 2020).

The stylistic reading of a speech that was to be broadcasted in front of the whole world gives the researchers a deeper understanding of the meanings. The appropriate reasoning for this

analysis can be that "Stylistic analysis takes account of the dynamic continuities in communication behavior" (Lomax et al., 1977). It helps to focus on the figurative language used and thus helps to learn more than the denotative meanings of the words. The selection of analyzing the figurative language in the speech is apt because such an analysis reveals "the choice of figurative language" [...] "and the specific meaning or purpose of using the figurative language as employed" (Leech and Short, 1981) by either the writer or the speaker. The discipline of stylistics and stylistic analysis often gets confused with other literary disciplines. It lies upon the borderline of two disciplines, linguistics, and literary criticism. Therefore, it has been called "an area of mediation between two disciplines" (Widdowson, 1975). The line drawn by stylistics depends "upon where the person is standing when he is looking at it" (Munir, 2014).

Muslims are scrutinized and marginalized in countries other than the United Kingdom. Under Trump's presidency, controversial policies such as the 'Muslim ban' have been implemented in the United States. Extreme right-wing parties have gained ground in Germany, Austria, Italy, and Hungary, making far-right political rhetoric increasingly frequent in Europe. In this context, we've seen an increase in acts of violence against Muslims in the U.K., including the terrorist attack on Finsbury Park Mosque and several incidents of stabbings and hijab pulling directed towards Muslims. There is no legal name to define the prejudice and discrimination faced by Muslims; Islamophobia has become a popular way of describing the phenomena (S. F. Z. A. Shah, 2018).

Islamophobia takes many forms, ranging from macro-level prejudice, social exclusion of Muslims in society, and hate crimes, which are defined as "any criminal offense that is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice against someone based on a personal characteristic," to micro-aggressions such as bomb jokes and terrorism (Ali, 2017). After the Brexit vote, there has been a significant spike in hate crimes against Muslims in the United

Kingdom. Following the Manchester bombing, the non-governmental organization Tell MAMA (Measuring Anti-Muslim Incidents) registered 141 anti-Muslim incidents (Tell MAMA, 2016). Following the London Bridge attack, there was a significant increase (Abbas, 2019).

According to a recent study of young Muslims in the United Kingdom, 61 percent indicated they had either experienced Islamophobia or knew someone who had. Discriminatory policies and hate crimes are commonplace in Europe regarding negative attitudes toward Muslims. Muslims are hated by 52 percent of Spaniards and 50 percent of Germans, according to the Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes study. Twenty-five percent of answers in the United States and the United Kingdom were negative. These ideals may also be seen in the rise of extreme right-wing political movements across Europe, such as Pegida and Britain First, which have attracted crowds of up to 25,000 people for protests. In light of more polarized communities and increased anti-Muslim sentiment, we as psychologists must investigate the implications and ramifications of Islamophobia. Other marginalized groups, such as Hindus and Sikhs, are commonly racialized as Muslims because of their skin color. Still, this study will focus solely on the impact of Islamophobia on Muslims. They are more likely to face it, but there is also a more significant body of research on their reactions to Islamophobia (Abbas, 2019).

There has been a lot of research done on the impact of Islamophobia on Muslims, with some of it looking at its link to psychological distress symptoms. Other research has looked into how it influences people's self-esteem in greater depth. Studies have discovered a range of behavioral changes following a hate crime, such as disguising one's Muslim identity or becoming more reclusive and alienated. They also talk about how people deal with Islamophobia and how individuals and communities may be resilient in the face of hardship (N. Shah, Shah, & Pasha-Zaidi, 2021).

Between September 2001 and March 2004, fifteen confirmed instances of "desecration against an

Islamic mosque or institution" occurred, according to the Canadian branch of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN), which they consider as evidence of growing anti-Muslim prejudice. Racism toward Australia's 280,000 Muslims (1.5 percent of the population) was on the rise, as indicated by calls for the government to outlaw the niqab and burqa, which are considered incompatible with the country's Judeo-Christian heritage. As a result of rising Islamophobia in New Zealand, the Federation of Islamic Associations of New Zealand (FIANZ) felt compelled to make a statement reaffirming their pledge to "live in peace and abide by the law," as well as their "unquestionable commitment to the welfare of our country (Renton & Gidley, 2017)."

In this age of digital technology, news and information circulate quickly. Information is available at the touch of a button and can be broadcast in various ways (e.g., cable news networks, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter). The primary source of concern, rather than the transmission methods, is how information is received and debated in the media (Lim, Dollah, & Rahman, 2021).

Prejudice appears to be a fundamental part of the human race, unfortunately. Depending on their own social, cultural, or religious background and perspective, most people will develop prejudices toward a person, an event, or a belief system at some time in their lives. Prejudice is frequently the result of a lack of awareness of the values, beliefs, and history. Islamophobia is an example of bias (Loyd & Gaither, 2018). Many non-Muslims harbour prejudice or suffer from Islamophobia due to a lack of understanding or limited knowledge about Islam or general misunderstanding about it. Teachers at all levels can contribute to closing these knowledge gaps by providing correct information on the history and nature of Islam in the United States and around the world. If we fail in educating children throughout their school years, it will be incredibly difficult to reverse negative views toward any religion later in life (Ali, 2017).

Methodology and Framework

The researchers used a qualitative approach, and the target of the study was to explore the speech of Mr. Imran Khan in September 2020. This article adopts the linguistic approaches put forward by Geoffrey Leech and Mick Short in the 1981 book *"Style in Fiction."* The researchers tried to explore the style of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Imran Ahmad Khan's speech at UNGA in 2020. The book mentioned above bolsters the need for the consideration of the style of the author with "Stilus virum arguit" meaning "The style proclaims the man" (Leech and Short, 1981). Therefore, a comprehensive stylistic analysis helps to understand the intentions of the premier through analyzing the delivery and style of the selected speech. The study was conducted on the levels of lexical, syntactical, and semantic, respectively, in the stylistic.

Analysis and Discussion

Lexical analysis

The lexical analysis reveals the careful utilization of particular words and phrases in Khan's UNGA speech. The usage of a particular language in life renders it a division in usage levels, such as common words, literary words, and technical words. Common or popular words are part of an ordinary person's vocabulary and are often spoken in daily life. Speakers usually employ such words to make their speeches familiar and relatable to the expected audience. Some of the words were, **"freedom, hate, fight, brave, insulted, blamed, curfew, dream,"** etc. These words though ordinary, did communicate the premier's message to the masses. Literary words fall in an elevated speaking style or are used in official documents. A group of literary words spotted in Khan's speech were **"impunity, wilful provocations, incitement, resilient coalition, subjugating, discriminatory laws, victimized, marginalized,"** etc. These words aided the speaker's cause as they helped create an atmosphere of the resilience of Muslims in front of the subjugating phenomenon of Islamophobia. The selected speech abounded with the words specific to politics and was utilized by the speaker

to state some facts in front of the world leaders. The technical words were, *"scourge, RSS ideology, extremist, Nazis, concentration camps, genocide, Hindutva ideology, radicalization, brute-force, draconian laws, state terrorism, plebiscite, a war crime, fascist totalitarian,"* etc. The prime minister of Pakistan indicted India of sponsoring Islamophobia in the region and exploited the terms specific to the Nazi-Jewish conflict to draw similarities between the situations.

Speakers often use a complete form of words in their shortened form in everyday speech. This approach is adopted to reinforce the importance of the claims made in the speech. *"I am honoured, we need to, we all must, we have been, we are still not out, is not enough, will need to be,"* etc. This efficient modification in the words makes the speech inevitable to be considered impactful. It successfully gives away the realization that even though English is not a native language of Pakistan, the country can put together an accurate statement for its leader in the language of world leaders.

Pronouns such as *"I, we, you, they"* also make an essential aspect of lexical analysis. The prime minister manipulated and placed two types of pronouns in his speech, *I* and *We*. He said, *"I congratulate, my government, I called,"* to cement his position as the leader of a country and what his government has brought to the table of world politics. The use of the other pronoun was, *"we commend, we envisage, we adopted, we realized, our smart lockdown."* This usage is an attempt of the premier to own his government's actions and convey an air of unity and oneness of his nation.

Syntactical analysis

The syntactical screening of the United Nations speech reveals the presence of another stylistic device: periodic sentence. Periodic sentences are rather indirect sentences that delay their meaning and purpose until the very end of the sentence. For example, *"This is unprecedented in history and does not augur well for the future of India as we*

all know that marginalization of human beings leads to radicalization." Through this exemplary use of a rhetorical device, the premier tries to shake the United Nations out of their long indifference towards India's war crimes. Another instance of a syntactical device justifies claiming that "the periodic sentence can be rhetorically effective" (Zheng, 2014). The speaker also uses the stylistic technique of parallelism to draw attention towards his purpose of making this speech. *"We believe the driving force in international relations must be cooperation, in accordance with principles of international law, and not confrontation and force."* The researchers' placement of this particular sentence of the speech in the phenomenon of parallelism can be explained by the exact definition of the device. Parallelism consists of those sentences or phrases that follow the same structure to draw a comparison between ideas to manifest the differences or similarities between them.

Semantic analysis

The article proceeds with the observation of semantic features in the context. The use of euphemism is the most prominent semantic feature in speech. Euphemism can be defined as a "substitution of an agreeable or inoffensive expression for one that may offend" (Zheng, 2014). It is often wise to use specific expressions to cushion the strong impact of some harsh or blunt fact. The selected speech displays several instances of Khan's careful selection of words to remain inoffensive and get his message across. For example, the Prime minister calls the notion of Islamophobia a *"scourge that splits humanity."* Scourge is the symbol of a whip used to punish and oppress, so the idea of Islamophobia is labelled as an antic of the Western world to make the Muslima community suffer.

Another instance is when the premier highlights the RSS-led fascist strategies of India and gives a warning of retaliation from the Pakistani nation. He said that any attempt *"to aggress against Pakistan will be met by a nation that will fight for its freedom to the end."* This is an excellent example that serves all the purposes of

euphemism as it is the means to veil unpleasant words and convey more than that. The speaker's choice of these words warns India about the consequences of its actions and manages to highlight the freedom fighting of Pakistani people since the day of partition. ***"India is playing a dangerous game of upping the military ante against Pakistan in a nuclearized strategic environment."*** This euphemism for the possibility of India's attempt to wage a nuclear war against Pakistan, which will be harmful to not only the region but the whole world delivers the message that Pakistan will never be complicit in the regional tensions. It also mocks the naivete of the Indian government, which thinks little of control line violations of a heavily nuclear-armed neighboring state.

A semantic analysis pinpoints the use of metaphors in a text or speech. Oxford English Dictionary defines metaphor as a trope applied "to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable" but is used to create impact. The head of the state took hold of metaphors to deliver a quality statement. One of the best examples of the presence of metaphor is ***"festering wound."*** Khan compares the state of Palestine as a 'festering wound' for the Muslim ummah. A wound that has long been neglected and is now infected; producing pus is the dictionary meaning of the word under study. Although the speech does not abound with metaphors, this usage has successfully drawn a true picture of the Israeli occupation in Palestine.

Conclusion

To sum up the discussion, it is safe to say that the article has carried out a stylistic analysis of the Islamophobic feature of Prime Minister Imran Khan's speech at UNGA 2020. It was a speech that proved to be not only impactful because of its political and strategic implications but managed to get heard and appreciated worldwide. Prime Minister Imran Khan enriched his address with many rhetorical devices. A detailed stylistic analysis performed on the levels of lexical, syntactical, and semantic features has exhibited the effectiveness of the speech. The concern of

Islamophobia was addressed most persuasively, and the narrative of the head of the state of Pakistan employed rhetorical devices to make the world understand his stance.

The speech under study is related to media practices and social and cultural practices. It shows the citizen's interest as they are motivated by the prime minister of the state to promote religion Islam among the people of the country. An individual must give preference to Islam over his/her interest. Islam must be appreciated socially culturally and promote the development of the state. A Muslim must be loyal and show respect and love for Islam. These discourses conveyed by Imran Khan in his speech are also political because these discourses show the political ideology of the prime minister.

Suggestions and Recommendations

It is recommended to future researchers to investigate further the function of language in propagating and promoting national solidarity, patriotism, and corruption in other forms of political discourses such as speeches and addresses belonging to political figures. It also enables the discourse analyst to study the language's role while doing critical discourse analysis. Researchers are suggested to do content analysis and textual analysis to observe the task of language as a device and medium used for propagating and promoting patriotism, solidarity, and corruption.

References

- [1] A. (2021, September 25). At UNGA, Imran Khan tries to paint Pakistan as a victim of U.S. ungratefulness. Hindustan Times.
<https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/at-unga-imran-khan-tries-to-paint-pakistan-as-a-victim-of-us-ungratefulness-101632543262728.html>
- [2] Abbas, T. (2019). Islamophobia and Radicalisation: A Vicious Cycle: Oxford University Press.

-
- [3] Ahmad, L. (2020). Killing Within Communities: What Causes Collective Violence, How We Remember It, and Why It Matters.
- [4] Ali, A. (2017). The impact of Islamophobia on the Muslim American community: accounts of psychological suffering, identity negotiation, and collective trauma.
- [5] Dawn.com. (2020, October 1). Imran's General Assembly speech most viewed among world leaders on U.N.'s YouTube. DAWN.COM.
<https://www.dawn.com/news/1582654>
- [6] Katz, E. B. (2018). An imperial entanglement: anti-semitism, Islamophobia, and Colonialism. *The American Historical Review*, 123(4), 1190-1209.
- [7] Khan, H.E. Imran. (2020, September 25). Statement by the Prime Minister of Pakistan H.E. Imran Khan to the Seventy-fifth Session of the U.N. General Assembly.
- [8] Lim, A., Dollah, W. A. K. W., & Rahman, S. A. (2021). The awareness of fake news phenomenon through information literacy competency in social networking sites (SNS). *Journal of Academic Library Management (AcLiM)*, 1(2), 75-85.
- [9] Lomax, A., Berkowitz, N., Dorothy Deng, Carol Kulig, & Markel, N. (1977). A Stylistic Analysis of Speaking. *Language in Society*, 6(1), 15-47.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4166897>
- [10] Loyd, A. B., & Gaither, S. E. (2018). Racial/ethnic socialization for White youth: What we know and future directions. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 59, 54-64.
- [11] Marfouk, A. (2019). I'm neither racist nor xenophobic, but: dissecting European attitudes towards a ban on Muslims' immigration. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42(10), 1747-1765.
- [12] Metaphor. Oxford Reference. Retrieved October 3, 2021, from <https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100153175>.
- [13] Munir, A. (2014). A Stylistic Analysis of Barack Obama's Second Inaugural Address.
- [14] Mushtaq, M., Saleem, T., Afzal, S., & Saleem, A. (2021). A corpus-based ideational meta-functional analysis of Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan's speech at United Nations general assembly. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 7(1), 1856999.
- [15] Renton, J., & Gidley, B. (2017). Anti-semitism and Islamophobia in Europe: A shared story? : Springer.
- [16] Rodríguez Maeso, S., & Araújo, M. (2017). The (im) plausibility of racism in Europe: policy frameworks on discrimination and integration. *Patterns of Prejudice*, 51(1), 26-50.
- [17] Shah, N., Shah, M., & Pasha-Zaidi, N. (2021). Research with Minoritized Muslim Communities Toward a Positive Psychology of Islam and Muslims (pp. 51-74): Springer.
- [18] Shah, S. F. Z. A. (2018). Spaces of Engagement: Relocating European Islamophobia in Muslim Diaspora Enclaves (Vol. 11): LIT Verlag Münster.
- [19] Short, M. H., & Leech, G. (1981). *Style in fiction*. Harlow: Longman.
- [20] Vandenbelt, K. (2021). The Post-September 11 Rise of Islamophobia: Identity and the 'Clash of Civilizations' in Europe and Latin America. *Insight Turkey/Spring 2021-Resurge Of Anti-Islam Activity Worldwide*, 145.
- [21] Widdowson, H. G. (2014). *Stylistics and the Teaching of Literature*. Routledge.
- [22] Zheng, S. (2014). A Stylistic Analysis on "I have a dream." *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences*, 9(1).