



## **Critical Discourse Analysis of News Articles Reporting Saudi Crown Prince’ Visit to Pakistan: A Comparative Study of “Dawn” and “The New York Times”**

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### ABSTRACT

*Keywords:*

CDA, Ideology,  
media,  
news article,  
Pak-Saudi relation

*This paper attempts to present a qualitative analysis of two newspaper reports, from Dawn and The New York Times, in connection with Saudi crown prince’s visit to Pakistan. Norman Fairclough’s three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis, also called socio-cultural approach, was employed to study the lexical choices and linguistics structure of the two news articles. Purpose of this study was to critically analyze the portrayal of socio-political situation of Pakistan and Pak-Saudi relation in the two newspapers’ reports. Results reveal that Pakistan is presented as politically and economically progressing country in both the newspapers’ reports. On the other hand, Dawn has presented a more positive image of the Pakistan and Saudi relations, showing strong ties between the two nations, than The New York Times, which presents strain in these relations. Dawn views these relations as multifaceted, including social, religious, cultural, economic and political factors, while The New York Times gives more focus on strategic and political relations between the two countries.*

### INTRODUCTION

Among the Muslim world, Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are considered as strong nations- former having acquired nuclear power and later bestowed by nature with the wealth of oil. Both nations have strong political, strategic, religious, social and cultural relation. Pakistan, since its birth, has stood shoulder to shoulder with Saudi Arabia in every critical situation; similarly, Saudi Arabia has provided both moral and monetary support to Pakistan in bad times. Alam, et. al. note, “The mutual relations between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Islamic republic of Pakistan are brotherly and friendly since the independence of Pakistan” (Alam, Almotairi, Gaadar, & Malik, 2013). Moreover, Pakistan has got a very strategic location on the globe. All these factors play a key role in the regional as well as international politics. Both these countries are not only revered by the Muslim world but the non-Muslim states also gave importance to their relations with both countries while framing their foreign policy.

Media, whether print, electronic or social media, especially in the age on fast changing world, are

very influential in framing public opinion of people regarding political, religious and military situations, working under certain ideologies through the presentation and interpretation of such events and propaganda. Johnnie Manzarria and Jonathon Bruck (1999) consider media as a tool for political and social propaganda. Having acquired such powers, media are considered the fourth pillar of state.

Keeping these two socio-political contexts under consideration, the present paper aims at investigating with the tools of critical discourse analysis two news articles from Pakistani newspaper *Dawn* and USA's *The New York Times* reporting Saudi Arabia's crown prince Muhammad bin Salman's visit to Pakistan as a string of prince's Asia tour. Saudi prince arrived in Islamabad, Pakistan's capital, on Monday evening February 17<sup>th</sup> 2019. During two days official visit, issues of bilateral economic and political interests were discussed between two officials of the states.

Purpose of the current study is to qualitatively analyse the discourse of two news reports- *Dawn* and *The New York Times*, on the above-mentioned event using critical discourse analysis (henceforth CDA) approach in order to look for the portrayal of the socio-political condition of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and the ideology of political-strategic dominance in Pak-Saudi relations. This research follows three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis propounded by Norman Fairclough, which is further discussed in the literature review section.

## Objectives

Objectives of this research are:

- To find out the linguistic choices exercised for presenting socio-political conditions of Pakistan and Pak-Saudi relations in the discourses of two news articles of *Dawn* and *The New York Times*.
- To find out the portrayal of the ideology of political-strategic dominance in Pak-Saudi relations in the discourses of two news articles of *Dawn* and *The New York Times*.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

James Paul Gee, writing about language, says that language is not used only saying things rather language serves another important function by allowing human beings “to do things and to be things” and, by allowing people “to engage in actions and activities” (Gee, 2011).

Language is used, by people, in all activities. This use of the language varies across different situations. According to (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002), the organization of language in different domains of social life is based on different patterns. They attribute this characteristic organization of language as ‘discourse’. Discourse is any use of language, either written or spoken. Discourse analysis (DA) is concerned with how these patterns are arranged differently and how they function differently.

On the other hand, critical discourse analysis (CDA) views the analysis of these language patterns

from slightly different perspective than DA. The term “critical”, however, is defined in various ways by different scholars, but in essence, it involves the context of the language use. Wodak and Meyer (2001) argue that discourse can only be interpreted in relation to its context and hence, critical discourse analysis identifies extralinguistic factors like society, culture and ideology. “In any case, the notion of context is crucial for CDA, since this explicitly includes social, psychological, political and ideological components and thereby postulates an interdisciplinary procedure” (Meyer, 2001).

Speakers and writers do not use language in isolation; rather, language is backed by one or a mix of many contexts such as cultural, social, political, religious and psychological. “CDA accepts this social context and studies the connections between textual structures and takes this social context into account and explores the links between textual structures and their function in interaction within the society” (Khan, 2014). Another researcher writes: “Our words are never neutral; they convey how we see ourselves, our identity, knowledge, values and beliefs” (Fiske, 1994). Todoli et. al. are of the same opinion, writing that words “are politicized”; because words reflect the interests of the speaker or writer, they contain certain view in background even if the addressee is not aware of this (Todolí, Labarta, & Dolón, 2006). CDA investigates to disclose these hidden views behind the text by analysing how the text is constructed.

Since its inception, Critical discourse analysis has become one of the most dominant models in text analysis. The purpose of critical discourse analysis, as quoted in Wodak, *Critical Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis*, (1984), is to analyse the structural relationship of domination, power and control as exercised through language.

Fairclough further elaborates on the significance of CDA writing that this interdisciplinary approach offers “systematic and critical techniques” to analyse and describe written and spoken texts, allowing for explanation of the wider context in which the text is produced (Fairclough N., 2003).

As mentioned above, CDA emphasises the context of the text when discourse analysis is carried. In this connection, there are also several variations of CDA based on the studies of discourse analysts. But here the researcher will discuss only Norman Fairclough’s method of CDA whose primary feature is “the merger of some key concerns of linguistic and critical social research” (Peräkylä, 2005).

### **Norman Fairclough’s Three-Dimensional approach to CDA**

Fairclough’s approach draws on several older approaches. “The new point is that it is based on various new theories about society and the relation between language, discourse and society” (Fairclough, 2003).

Fairclough’s model of CDA takes the discourse concurrently. Three dimensions of this model include (i) text (in the form of oral, written and visual images), (ii) creation, distribution and consumption of the text called discourse practices, and (iii) wider social and cultural practices.

“This feature of the framework encapsulates what I think as important principle for critical

discourse analysis; that analysis of the text should not be artificially isolated from analysis of institutional and discursual practices within texts are embedded” (Fairclough N., 1995).

Discourse, according to Fairclough and Wodak, is “socially *constitutive* as well as socially shaped: it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people. It is constitutive both in the sense that it contributes to transforming it” (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997).

Fairclough has devoted a complete book to media analysis. He argues that “the analysis of any particular type of discourse, including media discourse, involves an alternation between twin, complementary focuses, both of which are essentials: communicative events and the order of discourse” (Fairclough N., 1995). Former focuses on particular communicative event, for example a specific news article, concerning with the continuity and change of the event, that is, its normative and creative features. Later focuses on the broader, general order of discourse, that is, its evolution in the context of social and cultural changes.

### **Primary Source Data**

Primary source data for the analysis are two news articles reporting Saudi Arabia’s crown prince Muhammad bin Salman’s visit to Pakistan. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have very strong political and religious relations; in this connection, it was a very historical visit. Owing to Pakistan’s geo-strategic location and Saudi Arabia’s influence over the Muslim world, international media throughout the world and especially in Pakistan and USA gave full coverage to prince’s visit to Pakistan.

The study selected two newspapers namely Dawn News and The New York Times because both are considered top read newspapers in the respective countries and abroad. News article one (*Saudi Crown Prince accorded rousing reception*) is taken from Dawn News, Pakistan. This news article was published online on February 18th, 2019 on the newspaper’s website (Raza, 2019). News article two (*Saudi Crown Prince Promises \$20 Billion in Investments for Pakistan*) is taken from The New York Times, America. This news article was also published online on February 18th, 2019 on the newspaper’s website (Masood & Abi-Habib, 2019).

## **ANALYSIS**

Qualitative analysis of the two news articles is presented separately, in this section, while seeking answers to the two research questions simultaneously.

### **SAMPLE 1:**

Several words in this sample are traced to be effective in bringing a specific impact to the overall impression of the text. Headline of the news in first sample contains word “accorded” which has formal connotations, a synonym e.g. ‘grant’ or ‘give’ will not produce the same effect. Another word in the same line, “rousing” has connotation of emotion and excitement; it shows the feelings

of hospitality.

Thematic treatment in the minor headlines of the news article is suggestive of the special importance of the elements taken as themes.

MoUs worth \$20bn signed

PM speaks about prisoners' misery, immigration facility for Haj pilgrims

21-gun salute for royal guest

Highest civil award for Prince Mohammad

Themes in the above lines are underlined. Theme shows the focused content of the sentence attracting the readers' attention first and hence serves the purpose for writer of how they want to form readers' opinion.

Line no. 10 bears an instance of nominalization where many processes are used as theme in a passive declarative construction to direct readers to the action instead of agent.

*The issues of immigration clearance of Haj pilgrims, over 2.5 million overseas Pakistanis in Saudi Arabia and over 3,000 Pakistani prisoners in Saudi jails were also discussed.*

This sentence is immediately followed by an active agent construction, again declarative, placing responsibility of 'assurance' on the agent 'Crown Prince':

*The Crown Prince assured Prime Minister*

In line no. 11 '*The Crown Prince assured Prime Minister*', word 'assured' intensifies the act of telling or announcing. This is followed by personal pronouns 'he' and 'his' in line no. 12 with the connotation of authority which reinforces the assurance of previous line.

In line 20, title 'royal guest' is used instead of the name which has an impact of affinity between the two nations and bondage in Pak-Saudi relations.

Line no. 25 uses metonymy in '*Saudi Arabia had signed*' referring to the government of KSA in general, thus labelling the act of signing as part of Saudi's foreign policy as nation instead of prince's personal affairs. On the other hand, the active agent construction of this sentence points to the ideology of dominance and authority in this business matter on part of Saudi Arabia.

The use of modal auxiliary in line no. 36, where 'would' can express intention and wish (but not a planned action), creates ambiguity from writer's perspective. However, co-text provides a background based on which it can be safely contextualised as intention for cooperation in the field of tourism between two nations.

*Saudi Arabia and Pakistan would cooperate with each other (36)*

Another instance of lexical choice is the use of two different words for nearly the same concept i.e. 'asked' and 'requested' in lines 59 and 60 respectively.

*'the prime minister asked the crown prince to allow...'* (59)

*'...and requested him to take care of over 2.5m Pakistanis living in the kingdom'* (60)

'Requested', in contrast to 'asked', shows formality and higher dominance level. On other hand, from co-text it is evident that the case of Hajj and immigration is of the same concern to both nations being one sender and other receiver of the Hajis. While the case of Pakistani labourers brings more responsibility on prime ministers' shoulders than crown prince.

Quotation marks are also used in the news article, for two different purposes: direct speech and foregrounding. There are many instances where news-article writer has directly quoted the original speakers in the text for the sake of authenticity and objective presentation without giving critique. Line no. 42 [in response to the "special request" made by...] and line no. 86 [as a "historic one" and hopes...] have second kind of quotation, that which is used for special focus our attention and foregrounding.

In line 85, *'Islamabad describes'* the use of metonymy, where Islamabad refers to the government of Pakistan in general, an impact of national solidarity. Same effect is achieved in line no. 88 by the use of additive conjunction also, presenting govt and opposition on one page for the sake of national interest.

## **SAMPLE 2:**

Word 'promises' in the headline and the word 'pledged' in line no. 5, directs readers view to a wider connotation, of something which is yet to happen, distracting from the worth of investment. This view is foregrounded later in line no.12 by 'over-promising' which entails that Saudi government is never serious about the agreements made with allies. In such co-text, the word 'overpromising' is used as euphemism for false promise. This leads to the presupposition that Saudi government does not have sufficient funds to fulfil these promises.

*"Saudi Crown Prince Promises \$20 Billion in Investments for Pakistan"* (headline)

*"Riyadh has a long history of over-promising to please allies."* (12)

The near synonyms in line no. 6 and 7 ('shore up' and 'revive' respectively) along the adjective 'struggling' are suggestive of the view that Pakistan's economy is growing. The word 'secure' in line no. 10 implies that Pakistan is a potential market for investment in the field of oil and petroleum business.

*"...investments in Pakistan to shore up the country's struggling economy"* (06)

*"Islamabad is trying to revive its global standing"* (07)

The use of idiom 'kicking off' in theme position in line no. 13, sets the tone of the news article as

less formal. It gives impression of indifferent attitude towards crown prince's tour of Asia.

*"Kicking off a tour of Asia with a visit to Pakistan this week"* (13)

This tone is further carried on to line no. 19 by taking hosts in theme position rather than the guest and the honour of 21-guns salute. This thematic treatment shows the secondary importance of salute letting readers to infer that this is routine for foreign guests.

Adjective 'separate' in line no. 14 (*held separate meetings*) expresses the connotation of the two objects of the noun *meetings* that is 'prime minister' and 'army chief', as being equally important and powerful. This provides a special reference to the political situation in Pakistan. This is followed by metaphorical reference, in line 16, to the two key positions by 'country's two levers of power' further back-grounding the previous presupposition. Line 16 uses a generalized compound noun in theme position '*security officials*' as active agent of the verb *gave* instead of civilian official spokesperson of the government or country's official news agency as commentator.

Similarly, a particular view of Pak-Saudi relations is presented in line 17. This line could have included *political* with noun 'ties' but it has been omitted to foreground the view that Pak-Saudi relations are more towards military cooperation.

*"...an important opportunity to strengthen military ties with Saudi Arabia"* (17)

Reporting on prince's endorsement of Mr Khan, two premises are given: first, in line 23 '*Mr. Khan faces increasing opposition*' and second, in line 24 '*Pakistan's alliance with US has weakened*'. Former is based on ambiguity as neither reason for this opposition nor its direct link with the argument is provided and further this is linked through temporal conjunction to the later. The argument follows, in the form of entailment, as crown prince being close to both Mr. Khan and Trump can help bridging the gap between Pakistan and USA. This special linguistic treatment leads the readers to presuppose that Pakistan needs to be in good terms with USA.

Lines no. 18, 34 and 36 have the same semantic content; evident from keywords *Pak-Saudi relations* and *strain*. This repetition signifies the intensification of foregrounding, on Pak-Saudi relations, which aids in public opinion formation. The bottom line is that Pak-Saudi relations are not always intransigent, as would be the case if the base of these relations was religion, but rather these are based on national interests of the countries whereas refusal to aid Saudi in her regional politics 'strained' these relations.

*"...that has come under strain in recent years"* (18)

*"...two countries' security ties, which have come under strain in recent years"* (34)

*"Ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia grew strained"* (36)

In line no. 39, superlative degree of descriptive adjective, that is '*most sophisticated*', with the post-modifier '*in the region*' comes as appreciation for the military and strategic position of

Pakistan.

Line no. 44 gives an implicit reference to Pakistan's foreign policy on regional politics. Phrase 'trying to balance' alludes to Pakistan's neutrality and impartiality in the sectarian tussle between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

### **Comparison of two samples based on the use of linguistic choices**

Although text of both of the selected samples shows objectivity and impartiality in reporting the event of Saudi Arabia's crown prince Muhammad Bin Salman's visit to Pakistan, there are certain lexical elements and other textual properties that give a slightly different overview of both the news articles from sample 1 and sample 2.

The news article of *Dawn* presents an unbiased and objective report of the event through the use of transitivity. Meanwhile, the text, through the use of positive connotation such as 'rousing reception' and 'royal guest' and repetitive use of 'crown prince' highlights the importance of both the guest and the event contributing to the positive image of the nation.

On the order of discourse, organization of the reporting is not chronological but rather based on the degree of importance- major events and topics are presented first and major portion is given to them followed by ones with less importance. On the basis of space given to different topics in the news article i.e. from the point of topicality, the order is: matters of finance and economy, bilateral politico-strategic relation, events in honour of the guest and civil rights and privilege for Pakistani labourers and Hajjis.

The overall tone of the news article of *The New York Times* is suggestive of journalistic objectivity by using neutral thematic progression and lexical choice with neutral connotation; yet it embodies an ideological presentation of the event which is helpful in framing public opinion of the readers that is based on a specific geo-political ideology. For example, through discursive practice in reporting Pak-US relations, lexical choices in case of Saudi's economic status and through topicality and lexical choices in case of presenting internal politico-military power situation of Pakistan.

Based on topicality, largest portion of the article is devoted to economic status of Pakistan and the investment made by Saudi crown prince. Event reporting, in this sense, is further supported by direct quotation of guest's admiration of Pakistan's progressing condition. This topic is followed by Saudi's economic and political situation especially foreign investments and relations with Iran. Three minor topics, organized in terms of space, include Pak-US relations, honours conferred to the guest and prince's assurance to Pakistani labourers' civil rights.

## **DISCUSSION**

As stated in literature review, discourse and society are interdependent. Discourse stems from some social setting and in turn affects it. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia has strong political and religious ties. In this perspective, the news article of *Dawn* presents a positive image of the two

nations. It further constructs the notions of affinity between the two nations at official as well as individual levels. This is evident from thematic content of line 40 and 41 where participle clause represents the simultaneity of the two processes of ‘*calling*’ and ‘*assuring*’; additionally, bringing participle clause to thematic position enhances the importance of the action of calling which provides a background for the act of assurance.

*‘Calling himself an ambassador of Pakistan in Saudi Arabia, the crown prince assured the prime minister that he would do his best to address the problems confronting Pakistanis living in his country.’*

This closeness is also revealed in line no. 22, ‘*Prime Minister Khan drove the crown prince*’. Thematic treatment here enhances the impact of the action ‘*drove*’. In the following line, no. 23, the lexical item ‘*front seat*’ removes the gap of formal host and guest. The news article also presents positive image of both ruling and opposition parties in the concluding sentence by the use of correlative conjunctions *not only* and *but also*.

The *Dawn*’s article underlines the positive side of the MOUs signed for investments, implicitly ruling out the uncertainty about the actualisation of these investments. This uncertainty is explicitly stated in the article of the *NY-Times*. Thus, the resulting public opinions based on two news reports will be different. Crown prince’s reception is reported in detail by *Dawn* news with positive connotation and having semantic content of affinity and excitement while the report of *NY-Times* gives a formal simple account. In the news article of *Dawn*, numerous and long direct quotations from the speakers go side by side with correspondent’s commentary of the reported event to highlight the authenticity of the news content, on the other hand, *NY-Times*’ news article has only two short direct quotations in this regard. Moreover, features of topicality and transitivity are used to highlight either agent or action. These features are used more in the article by *Dawn News* than by *NY-Times*.

Besides political ties, Pakistan has got strong religious connections with Saudi Arabia. These associations are apparent in both texts. Article from *Dawn News* draws on these links with more intensity whereas *NY-Times*’ article focuses on the political relations between the two countries. In news article from *Dawn*, the power relation is shown as dominated by Saudi Arabia. On the contrary, *NY-Times*’ article accounts for the Pakistan’s contribution in the bilateral investment deals in terms of being a potential market for Saudi’s crude oil. Political image of Saudi Arabia presented in *NY-Times*’ article is supported by words with negative connotations like ‘*over-promising*’, ‘*military campaign*’ and ‘*sectarian*’. Nevertheless, Saudi Arabia is seen as key role player in bridging the chasm in Pak-US relations.

Another important point from the social perspective, which is dealt with by both the news article is the case of Pakistani prisoners in Saudi jails and Pakistani labourers working in Saudi Arabia. *NY-Times* over-generalizes the situation using adverb of frequency ‘*often*’ making Saudi judicial system responsible for such a high number of prisoners in jails. In this regard, *Dawn* news refrains from such commentary.

Being America’s front line daily, this newspaper has a key role in formation of public opinion of readers. This is directly linked with the image of Pakistan abroad. The positive image presented

helps building reputation of the country. Pak-Saudi relations and Pak-Saudi-Iran trio coincides to the fact that inter-nations relationships revolve around their national interests and that foreign policy of a nation is always flexible as to suit any possible change in regional geo-political situation.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, two newspaper articles were analysed in the light of Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA. Analysis showed that numerous lexical choices and other linguistic features, like transitivity, topicality and modality, are employed in the articles to portray social and political status of Pakistan and Pakistan-Saudi relation. Analysis also showed a slightly different presentation of Pak-Saudi relations where *Dawn's* news article presented more positive aspect of the social, religious and political relations between two countries while *The New York Times'* article shows a fluctuating scenario of political and strategic relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Moreover, such kind of linguistic treatment also reflects particular viewpoints of the news outlets which are crucial in framing public opinion of the masses.

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