# INTERPLAY OF GRAPHIC-METAPHORICAL ELEMENTS IN PAKISTANI POLITICAL CAMPAIGN POSTERS: A VISUAL COGNITIVE STYLISTICS PERSPECTIVE

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## ABSTRACT

*Political campaign posters tend to embark the political vision, election mandate and socio-cognitive aspects of Pakistani society during all types of election spans. The election posters are purposeful designed to communicate, persuade and transfer information during election campaigns. The study intended to examine Pakistani election posters through the lens of visual-cognitive stylistics. 10 posters of each of the four popular political parties, thus n=40, selected through purposive sampling. The selected posters have been analyzed through foregrounding and cognitive metaphor theory (mentioned in Kövecse, 2021) on graphilogical, lexical, syntactic and semantic levels. The identified graphilogical and textual elements of the sample are then studied and interpreted. The cognitive metaphor theory and foregrounding perspective have been applied to evaluate the cognitive implications of the explored elements. Political Posters of Pakistani election campaigns strategically make use of stylistic devices and linguistic elements to influence the perceptions of the viewers. The study signifies political strategies through posters and unravels the mystery of political posters in Pakistani context.*

**Keywords:** Political Posters, Political Campaign, Pakistan, Cognitive Processes, Cognition

## INTRODUCTION

Political campaign strategies are diversified for every country. The political figures spread and propagate their ideologies, notions, visions and campaign promises. The party may take a variety of channels to successfully transfer the electorate's information and party's message. Posters have become the carrier of political ideologies and vision that have been effectively spread by the politicians (Fox,2022). The message is not only represented by words but also semiotic modes of the poster. Similarly, the words of a political poster under pins several layers of meaning that require executive cognitive functioning to evaluate and interpret them. Thus, the posters of political campaigns need to understood and interpreted with relation to cognition

Political campaign posters serve as a crucial medium for communication, influencing public perception and cognitive processing through their graphological and textual elements. While Cristobal (2022) has examined these elements in the context of Philippine political posters, there is a significant gap in research regarding how similar strategies function within Pakistan's diverse and dynamic political landscape. Given the country's multiparty system, varying literacy rates, and cultural influences, the impact of visual and textual elements on the cognitive functioning of the masses remains an area that requires further exploration.

**Aims and Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze how graphilogical and textual elements of the political campaign posters proceed to the cognitive functioning of the masses. Cristobal (2022) has already studied graphilogical and textual elements of the Philippine political posters. The particular aim of this study is to reciprocate the study into Pakistan's versatile political context.

**Research Objectives**

The particular aim of the study has given rise to the following objectives.

**Main Objective**

1- To analyze political posters with cognitive stylistically

**Subordinate Objectives**

2- To explore the graphic elements of Political posters
3- To evaluate the textual elements of electoral campaign posters

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of the study holds in two folds. Firstly, the study is vital for analyzing political posters through a stylistic point of view. Secondly; it supports further research in poster studies to infuse messages with the effective use of colors, graphics and lexicology. The poster developers of different companies would understand the impact and utility of posters and create more effective posters of electoral campaigns. The study paves the road for researchers to stylistically analyze the posters of political campaigns from further perspectives.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

Language since the early development deals with the purpose of communication in this society. Gee (2005) claims that language performs two significant functions.

1- The social happenings in this society and associate a human with its culture and institutions thereby language.
2- Language can be a means of propagation of ideas ideologies end social messages.

The functions of languages can easily be understood through stylistic analysis. Crystal and Davy (2020) explain the main aim of stylistics to discover the language features in terms of specificity and restricted social aims. The sequential flow of language evaluates the communicative linkage of language and society. Peracchio (2005) narratives that stylistics analysis of the advertisements (both posters and animated) provide the descriptor of the communication through graphics and human mind. Meanwhile, Kameneva et al. (2018) associate the uses of stylistic devices and cognitive tropes to the advertising posters with social context. Therefore, language of the non-literary texts tends to communicative cognitive message blended with social context.

**Stylistics of Posters**

Rosenberg (2023) claims that posters are the medium to share meanings and communicate several messages. Gallo et al. (2001) dates back the history of posters to 200 years. Initially, they were visually designed to appeal to the senses of the viewers. The striking lithography used in hand made written posters enhanced their spread in the entire Europe. Thus; posters incorporate a diligent message to the audience through several persuasive techniques. Sharndama and Mohammed (2013) further elaborate the definition of a poster as the written representation of a monologue that may include a proclamation or testimony that advocates a purpose. These enticing techniques can be used for both advertising and political campaign posters. Collocations play a major role in generating meaning full posters. Damkor (2022) make use of the Lexico-stylistic techniques to

rejuvenate the collocation use through posters. Apart from language, visuals share equally persuasive message to the masses. Al-Gburi (2022) represents that even pictorial posters can initiative cognitive processes and communication.

## Cognitive Communication Through Political Campaign Posters

During Political campaigns, posters act as a major tool to intervene cognitive execution and campaign information among masses. Russmann (2012) has marked political posters as the subject for political conversation and strategies. Such posters are coaxed with images and slogans to attribute ideology and partition as per people's interest. Zheltukhina et al. (2016) proclaim that the political posters not only contain phrases or simple statements but also visual elements. The graphics may contain the image of the representative and the logo of the political party. From the turn of the century; posters have provided a persuasive platform for communicating political mandate. Akram and Iqbal (2020) have focused the political slogans raised in Pakistan Elections and Jalsas; incorporating the significant interplay of words to enhance the political awareness among masses.

The visual effects infuse into the long term memory and stays well as compared to the uttered slogans. Ezebube et al. (2017) confirms the manipulation of visual elements over the psychology of voters through political posters. However, the political posters have been designed not only with slogans but with semiotic modes. Thus, the study of posters becomes vigilant with the analysis of visuals as well as text. The intellectual interplay of graphilogical and textual elements both can create different impact upon cognitive execution (Algburi, 2022). Thus, the previous studies have been left the gap of studying graphilogical motifs of the posters along side with textual and semantic elements. The eminent gap of the past literature leads to the following research questions

1- What are the graphic elements of Political posters
2- What are the textual elements of electoral campaign posters
3- How to analyze political posters with cognitive stylistics

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical and analytical framework for this study is the visual cognitive stylistic analysis. Burke (2005) discusses that such stylistic analysis is supported and directed by cognition. It is one of the advanced domains of stylistics where the linguistic elements are utilized to look at their impact upon cognition. Semino and Culpepper (2002) state that this kind of analysis make hold of the informed cognitive structures that employee the generation and reception of linguistic elements of the textual depending upon the systematic consideration of linguistic knowledge and meta-cognitive processes. Thus, the domain is the extension of the linguistic stylistic analysis that has been implored with theories.

It is visible that the world revolves around text. Pollard (2002) discusses that textual representation can propagate the employment if cognitive processes within the human communication of all forms. Thus, the various forms of communication drive the foundations of the contemporary text world theory. Gavins (2007) explains that the modern theory of text world deconstruct the meanings in political discourses, multi-modal textual analysis, narratives, scripts, language of law and even resides in pedagogical stylistic analysis. Fauconnier (1997) as mentioned in Vasola, 2025 implies that text is the well blend of several elements. This, the meaning generated is the result of many merged theories and aspects of language. A metaphor is a figure of speech that refers one idea through another. Lakoff & Johnson (1980) explain that each text whether literary or non literary contains metaphors that sews many layers of meanings within the texts. Metaphors not only build up keen understanding but facilitate readers to generate systematic layers of interpretations if the text. The sensory-schemata shape the intelligence of the human mind (Piaget & Cook, 1952).

Moreover, Arbib (1992) distinguishes schema theory from the others that schemata are the units that can provide a relationship between complex structures.

## Conceptual Framework

Cognitive stylistics is a vast domain, through which multiple theoretical frameworks are gleaned out. However, for this particular study, two profound theories have been selected from the course work of (Stockwell, 2002).The domain of the research design and corresponding to the research questions.

### 1. Cognitive Metaphor Theory

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2020) emphasize upon the semio-cognitive semantics. Thus, metaphorical use of language prevails in linguistics as well as in multi-modal domain. Pourebrahim (2015) mentions that visual metaphors exist that prominently channelize the hidden message through pictures and figures. Both the metaphors are selected and studied with the perspective of cognition.

### 2. Foregrounding Theory

The particular theory discussed the capability of the reader to utilize the previously provided knowing in understanding the fore grounded techniques used through visuals, graph logical elements, deviation and other lexico-phraseological elements of the text. Hence, this theory helps us explore and recognize the major elements that need to be focused and interpreted.Certain patterns, symbols and words that gave been fore grounded, are studied and analyzed. As the focus of this study is political posters, the visual-cognitive analysis has been selected to interpret the visual and semiotic modes of the posters alongside with the cognitive implications of the text.

## MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The particular research study has followed a descriptive qualitative design to analyze the graphical and textual elements of the selected posters. The sample n=40 has been analyzed stylistically.

### Sample and Instrumentation

40 posters of different political parties alongside with the private candidates in the local body elections have been selected. The posters were chosen through purposive sampling technique that reflects clear political messages through their graphics and lexical choices. The medium sized posters have been identified for the particular study. 10 posters for every major political party[1] have been chosen.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The posters have been keenly studies in terms of colors, lexicology and graphics.

Table.1

*Graphic Elements*

| Elements | Party. A | Party B | Party C | Party D | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Images** | 25 | 30 | 44 | 33 | 174 |
| **Candidate Image** | 8 | 10 | 10 | 10 | 38 |
| **Tools/ Figures** | Mosques, Tombs and shadowy figures | Shadowy figures | Flag | N | 5 |
| **Use of Logo** | Scale | Bat | Lion | Arrow | 100% |

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[1]Registered parties of Pakistan that have been enlisted as the top political parties in the elections of 2018 as per the report of ECP (Election Commission of Pakistan).

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Colors** | Blue Green White Yellow | Red Green Black | Green White | Red Black Green White | Green, black, blue, red, white, yellow |
| **Use of Patriotic Colors** | Blue and Green | Green | Green White | Green. White | Green ,white |
| **Use of Gender Implications** | Blue | Nil | Nil | Nil | Blue |
| **Use of colors with symbols** | White (Peace) Aqua (Serenity) | Red( Urgency and danger) Black (gross state) | Green (Sovereignty) White (Minority) | Nil | Red, black |
| **Facial Expressions** | Smile ( Serious | Smile Thinking Plain | Smile Victory pose Plain | Smile Thinking pose Plain | Smile, thinking, Plain, Victory pose |
| **Gaze Directed to Audience** | 12 | 20 | 7 | 24 | 63 |
| **Gaze not directed to Audience** | 13 | 10 | 33 | 7 | 111 |

### 1- Graphilogical Level

Electoral Campaign posters in Pakistan can be seen in a variety of sizes. However the shape remains four sided. Usually they are designed in the political party colors to reflect the Novelty and specificity of the poster of the passes by through their vibrancy of colors and attractive slogans. The poster also includes the image of the representative and the chairperson of the political party. Some interesting information is provided regarding the representative. Likewise the logo is also highlighted in the political poster.

*Placement of Graphilogical Elements*

The poster designing of the political company is itself a complicated process. The images of Political chairperson have been presented on the top of the posters. The mean logo is usually placed on the bottom left or right side of the poster. In the Centre left or right, party flag or any other information is directly corresponding to the image of the candidates. So that people can assume that the main logo and slogans written on the poster are the voice of the candidates. The posters contain the name of the candidate, the voting section and the name of the party.

In some cases the logo of the party is much visible in every poster. In most cases the logo is presented with the marked stamp. So that the people who are not even literate can understand that what is the major purpose of this poster. There are also some other information present on the poster such as the supporting figures of the party and election

details and figures have been back grounded in comparison of the image of the candidate. The slogan, candidate 'image and logo have always been put in the front line to foreground the main information of the poster.

### Coloration

The poster contains a manifestation of several colors to share the unsaid meaning of the candidate and the political party. Various political parties that have opted for a set of thematic colors in particular. O'Connor (2021) claim that traditional color theory mark blue is the representation of patriarchy and men management policy. Similarly the use of red and black color in posters highlights the alarming situations of the country. However most of them contain green color to represent the loyalty, patriotic essence of the country and composure. Some posters contain white color to initiate the ruling of peace and solitary towards public and the party. The images present upon the posters represent perspective.

### Font Style and Layout

The font size and font color used in such posters is very interesting. Generally all posters have utilized either black white or red color contrasting to the use of the background. So that the text becomes visible and clear for the public. Some of the political posters contain a single phrase that induces the poetic essence. Meanwhile other carries complete sentences. The posters include many chunks of smaller texts that directly communicate with the public and reconciles with the viewpoint of the party.

### Human Images

It can be seen that not every poster of Pakistan election campaign contains the photograph of the candidate. The frequency of candidate images=38. However the total images are of the political leaders (n=174) have been present upon every poster. Generally in Pakistan the image of the main chairperson of the political party is the major instrument for gaining the attraction of the voters and increasing the winning probability of the election. So, the reason to provide the candidate photo is a way of receiving voters.

### Facial Expressions of the Portraits

The images of the political figures contain smiling facial expression while some candidates have supported a thinking pose. Both these gestures represents to different set of meanings. For instance, a smiling face manifests friendliness, trust and relaxation. The smiling facial expressions candidates show that candidate is approachable for the audience. Mean while a thinking pose represent leadership seriousness and vision.

### Direction of the Gaze

The images represent dual options of gaze direction. One set of images have gazes directed towards the audience and not directed towards the audience. McGowan (2003) contributes to the versatility of the gaze impact upon the viewers. Pakistani Political posters appeal differently on the basis of gaze direction and eye contact maintained in the images. Gaze directed towards Audience in the images affirm the air of confidence, truthfulness and honesty. Meanwhile, Gaze not directed towards the audience refers to the candid images or lack of trust and honesty towards people.

### Symbolism and Figures

The table 1 shows that the Pakistani posters contain tools and symbolic figures to manifest their political perspective. Some of them include the patriotic images such as Pakistani flags of the country and the figures of unity and patriotism. The use of figures has been specific for each political party. For instance, Party A uses tomb of Quid-Azam and shadows of the public. Party B makes use of images of Quad-Azam and Bat. However, symbolic figures in the poster of Party C and D were scanty.

### Textual Level

This sections deals that how textual elements interplay with the graphilogical elements to invite cognitive inquiry of the people.

Table.2

*Textual Elements*

| Sr. | Textual Elements | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **Phrases** | 54% |
| **2** | **Sentences** | 46% |
| 3 | **Repetition** | 32% |
| 4 | **Patriotic Words** | 67% |
| 5 | **Name of Party's chairpersons** | 18% |

**2-Lexical Level**

The lexical level deals with the vocabulary repertoire of the language. Thorne (2019) acclaims the lexis of politics should be relevant, objective and nominal in nature. The political lexis didactically points out to the political plan of action. They act like keywords embodied for the perspective of the candidate.

*Punctuation and Capitalization*

Pakistani posters are usually in the Urdu language. Therefore, most of the posters are devoid of punctuation, capitalization or other parts of speech. However the technique of foregrounding has been cleverly used in most of the posters.

*The Choice of Lexis*

The in depth visual analysis of the political posters discusses that the lexis are usually metaphorical and descriptive. The table 2 explains that the mission of the party and the candidates is represented by the certain metaphors and emotive linguistic elements. They are cleverly decided to entice the voters and persuade them for the particular candidates. 67% of the lexis is based upon patriotic words. The word '*Pakistan*' has been used to affirm loyalty towards the country and people. Similarly, the word '*Islam* and *Democracy*' have been repeatedly appeared with the word 'Pakistan' to pop up the relation between the political mandate and the suitability of the seat.

The word '*corruption*' has been used a political strategy in many of the slogans of multiple political parties. For instance the word corruption used by Party A represents the financial corruption of the states (Zaib et al, 2024). However, Party B highlights the injustice and individual corruption. All political parties of Pakistan have taken up several metaphors to embody their entire mission plan. For instance, Party B represents make use of the word justice to ensure and inculcate the particular ideology in voters' minds. Similarly, Party A highlights religious framework by using 'religious terminologies' frequently. Party D stresses upon the value of the voting and sustainable leadership by using the word '*Vote*' and '*Servant of nation'*. The words like your and very eminent in such posters. They infuse familiarity between candidates and the public. Emotional lexis is used to exaggerate their performances and promises after standing victorious in the coming elections.

**3-Syntactic Level**

Political posters are analyzed at sentence level, where the close interpretation of words, clauses and phrases determine the grammatical units of the language.

The phrases and sentences are usually declarative or assertive sentences providing a direction for the masses. As the space upon the poster is limited, the message is compressed to phrases or one or two sentences only. Lengthy posters may clutter the visual impact and cut down the attention of the viewers. The posters do not include any compact vocabulary

that is not familiar with the voters. Instead of that, the posters contain common words from the indigenous languages as well. The language of the politics is subject-specific and campaign targeted. Thorne (2019) says that the choice of words represent the plan of action. Therefore, every political poster represents what the political campaign is up to.

Table 2 represents that most 54% of the posters contain political phrases. While 46% of the text included in the posters were clear sentences.18% of the text contains the name of the renowned leaders of the political party. Most of them contain either the name of Pakistan or the name of the main leader of the political party.

Some of the slogans[2] are as follows:-

1-May Bhutto Live جئے بھٹو

2-Islamic Pakistan: Flourished Pakistan اسلام ی پاکستان پھلا پھولا پاکستان

3- Justice, Human, self-respect انصاف ,انسان ,عزت نفس

3. Service of Public : Respect The vote ووٹ کو عزت دو

The given slogans used in such posters are not only emotive in nature but also plays with the minds of the viewers. They target the emotional compartment of the voters. Moreover, small but impactful slogans are easy to recall and recite repeatedly.

**4-Semantic level**

The keen identification of political posters provides how words altogether provide the social and connotative meaning for the society. The words have been fore grounded to provide contextualized meanings.

**Fore grounded Meanings**

The interwoven elements of foregrounding directly affect the meaning conveyed by the particular poster. Bhattacharya et al. (2010) evaluate the foregrounding elements on the basis of color, size, placement, alignment, and aesthetics. Thus, political posters have been inclined to such foregrounding tactics. The poster where the images of the leader have been fore grounded alongside the image of the candidate highlights two interpretations.

- The candidate is the direct representative of the party's chairperson.
- The candidate is not popular enough; so the image of the known leaders have been used as a probe to attract the public

The fine use of colors appeals the viewers and stays more in the memory. The slogans of the posters are usually for grounded than the rest of the elements. For instance, the slogans and phrases of Party B's posters have been highlighted with blood red colors. Party A and C make use of serene colors to foreground themselves as the torch bearer of peace, solidarity and unity. Likewise, the foregrounding technique used by the PartyC is the center alignment. The things either the image or the phrases that need to be highlighted, are put into front; in the middle of the poster.

**Selected Metaphors of the Posters**

Top five repeated metaphors have been selected to understand the societal, contextual clear meanings of the political campaign.

**"Corruption کرپشن"**

Party B refers corruption as the parasite has demoralized the entire country like termite. In contrast of it, Party A has confined the meaning of corruption with the financial aspects only.

**"Democracy جمہور"**

This metaphor has been the keyword for Party.3. The word does not only show the power of the public but hidden meanings have been connected. This word has been replicated with the process of arbitration and middle-ways in the politics.

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[2] The slogans have been translated from Urdu to English.

**"New Pakistan نیا پاکستان"**

The metaphor points to the era of changes. It is a confluence with the renaissance of 14th century to the struggles of revolutions of France and Russia (Nawaz et al,2024). Hence, it is not only the slogan but an expression of changing mindsets, and national identities.

**"Tsunami "سونامی"**

Although, tsunami refers or the sea storm, however, here this word metaphorically represents the crowd of enlightened people and supporters of Party B.

## Visual Metaphors

The posters of Party C lead the trajectory towards visual metaphors. Ziemkiewicz& Kosara (2008) focus that a surface level pictograph can targets a more sensible symbolic interpretation. The lion in the front of a green flag not only represent the poster design but also Pakistan with the bravery and courage. The metaphorical use of lion stimulates the notion that only lion can rule the country of green.

Aligning with Makananise (2023) ,the results have reflected how different graphic elements and textual elements are joined together providing a cognitive meaning end the political narrative to the public. Different political parties intentionally make use of graphilogical elements, metaphors and techniques of foreground for manipulative purposes. The manipulative use of linguistic elements explains that how these posters provide the essence of self glorification of the political figure. These posters play a vital role in elections as they propagate the ideas and campaign promises to the public.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Just like the other democratic countries, the political parties of Pakistan make use of political posters during their election campaigns that promote their chance of victory in the elections in the country. The pertaining use of persuasive language and appealing graphics is visible for inculcating the particular vision into the minds of the masses. The current study has evaluated the political campaign posters of eminent political parties and private candidates that compete in the elections.

Following the results of this study, it is recommended that future researchers should conduct a longitudinal study comparing political campaign posters from multiple election cycles in Pakistan. This would help analyze how the use of graphological and textual elements evolves over time and how different political climates influence campaign strategies. Apart from that, the similarities and differences in political campaign posters between Pakistan and other democratic countries should be explored. A comparative study could provide insights into how cultural and political differences shape the use of persuasive language and visual elements in political advertising.

It is suggested that further studies should focus on the psychological and behavioral impact of political posters on voters. Research could investigate how different demographics, such as age, education level, and political affiliation, cognitively process and respond to the persuasive elements of campaign posters. Similarly, With the rise of digital campaigns, examining how political posters are used in online platforms (e.g., social media, websites) can be an interesting area of investigation

## Limitations and Delimitations

The study has been co fined to the analysis of Pakistani local body elections only. The posters of Jalsas and other political events may represent different set of interplay of graphilogical and textual elements. Similarly, the placements of such elements would be different than the campaign posters. The sample size for this study has been kept to 40 only

that may have generalized the results. Likewise, the study fluctuates upon the major four Political parties of Pakistan only.

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## Appendix.1

Party. A. Jamaat e Islami. (J. I)
Party. B Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI)
Party. C Pakistan Muslim League Noon (N-League)
Party. D Pakistan People's Party (PPP)