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**A Critical Discourse Analysis of Punjabi Language Marginalization in Pakistan's English-Language Print Media**
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**Abstract**

*This study explored the linguistic portrayal of marginalization of the Punjabi language in three dominant newspapers in Pakistan namely Dawn, The News International and The Express Tribune. The qualitative research design was employed. This study utilized Socio-Cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework by Van Dijk (2008) to analyze a corpus of twenty-one editorials and opinion articles from 2010 – 2025. The analytical approach is based on three levels: macrostructure (global thematic and ideological significance), microstructure (lexical choices, metaphors, suppositions, syntactic structures), and superstructure (organization of the genre and the distribution of voice). The results revealed that all these newspapers have a deficit approach towards constructing Punjabi while they simultaneously show sympathy towards the language and reiterate the ideological hierarchy that prioritizes Urdu and English. But there are marked differences in newspaper types: Discourses in Dawn are most often structurally critical and polyphonic, with institutional/class-based explanations for marginalization being foregrounded; The News International is the most often cultural/soft power framing; and The Express Tribune is the most often identity stigma/historical nostalgia framing. All three newspapers, however, in the end naturalize Punjabi's ban from institutional spaces. The results of this research help add to the body of knowledge in the field of language ideology, media discourses and linguistic inequality in multilingual societies in South Asia.*

**Keywords:** Critical Discourse Analysis, Van Dijk, Punjabi language, marginalization, print media, language ideology, Dawn, The News International, The Express Tribune, Pakistan

**1. Introduction**

Language is not just an instrument of communication, it is a social institution, it is a symbol of a collective identity and it is the place of an ideological struggle (Van Dijk, 2008). In multilingual countries, the communicative status of languages is never an uncharged phenomenon but is determined by a complex of historical power relations, colonial legacies and institutional practices which favor some languages over others. The study of language ideology and media discourse is very interesting in the context of Pakistan. Pakistan is one of the most linguistically

diverse countries in South Asia with over 70 regional languages, but the official and institutional discourse is almost exclusively limited to Urdu, the national language, and English, the language of higher education, judiciary and upper echelon of the civil administration (Abbas & Bidin, 2022; Khan et al, 2025).

Punjabi is a very ambiguous and paradoxical place in this linguistic hierarchy that is analytically productive and useful. According to the Census 2023 data (Haider, 2024, The News International), it is the most commonly used language in Pakistan where around sixty percent of the population considers it as their mother language. However, despite the fact of its demographic strength, the language of Punjabi has not made its way into formal education, official government communication or into the institutional media. Urdu and English has been linked to education and modernity and upward social mobility, whereas it is linked to rurality, informal speech and low social status in dominant discourse. So, it is linked to rurality, informal register and low social status in dominant discourse while Urdu and English are related to education, modernity and upward social mobility (Haider et al., 2021; Kanwal & Arslan, 2024; Khan et al., 2025).

Pakistan's language situation is a complex one that has been formed by intricate political, cultural, ideological dynamics in favor of some languages over others. Although, Punjabi is the most popular regional language in the country, it has been marginalized in the national language discourse and Urdu has been promoted as a symbol of national unity and identity (Fayyaz Hussain et al., 2024; Hashmi et al., 2024). However, previous research has highlighted the role of language policies, media discourses and historical power dynamics in the under-representation of linguistic communities in Pakistan, often at the expense of the regional languages and in favor of Urdu and English. (Hashmi et al., 2024) Linguistic marginalization can also have major social and political implications, as illustrated by the historical conflicts which can occur over exclusionary language policies (Butt et al., 2024). In this context, the current study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to analyze the representation of Punjabi in Pakistani print media and investigate the discursive productions that can contribute towards its marginalization in the overall linguistic hierarchy of Pakistan.

Print media is one of the important domain that should be studied in the conception of language ideology. English-language newspapers in Pakistan serve as the voice of the elite and their opinion articles and editorials have an impact on the public opinion of social, cultural and political issues, such as the status of regional languages. Three newspapers play particularly influential role in the Pakistani public discourse, Dawn which is widely considered as the most authoritative English-language newspaper in the country, The News International, which is one of the most widely circulated newspapers and The Express Tribune, which has gained a sizeable readership among the younger, educated Pakistanis. These three newspapers offer a rich analytical comparative source to study the language ideology that is constructed, strengthened and challenged, in elite Pakistani print media.

Though the issue of language marginalization has been receiving considerable attention in Pakistan in the context of the Punjabi language (Abbas & Bidin, 2022; Hashmi et al., 2025; Khan et al., 2025; Kanwal & Arslan, 2024), the domain of English-language print media discourse has not yet been the subject of much scholarly attention. In Pakistan, most of the CDA studies have been conducted on the policy documents, speeches and curriculum texts, yet have overlooked newspaper editorial and opinion columns (Hashmi et al., 2025; Khan et al., 2025). Moreover, no research hitherto has done a systematic comparative study and analysis of the different newspapers in the same elite English language press to see how they present the marginalization of Punjabi in different ways. The present study attempts to fill the gap.

Within the framework of Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive CDA, twenty-one editorials and opinion articles are analyzed from Dawn (10 texts), The News International (6 texts) and The Express Tribune (5 texts) from 2010 to 2025. Analysis is then carried out on the newspapers at three different levels – macrostructure, microstructure and superstructure – before a comparative analysis is discussed across the newspapers. The research will try to bring out the common and different rhetoric and schemas in which the three key English language newspapers in Pakistan portray the marginalization of the Punjabi language.

### 1.1 Research Questions

1. What lexical choices, metaphorical constructions, agency patterns, and presuppositions operate at the microstructural level of these newspapers' editorials and opinion articles to reproduce or challenge the ideological hierarchy privileging Urdu and English over Punjabi?
2. How do Dawn, The News International, and The Express Tribune ideologically construct Punjabi language marginalization at the macro structural level?
3. How do genre conventions, voice distribution, and rhetorical strategies at the super structural level differ across the three newspapers?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Language Policy and Punjabi Marginalization

The official language policy, educational policy, and administrative practices consistently and regularly reveal the institutional marginalization of Punjabi in Pakistan as documented in the research. The research on language policy in Pakistan shows that the institutional marginalization of Punjabi takes place through the official language policy, educational policy and administrative policy. Khan et al (2025) used the theories of CDA and Language Ideology to show how historical and socio-political factors have been reflected in the policies regarding Urdu and English, which have linked Urdu with national unity and English with progress, and have marginalized Punjabi to rural and informal contexts. It was found in the National Education Policy (2009) and in the Punjab Curriculum Policy (2015) that the role of Punjabi was not formally included in any of them. Abbas and Bidin (2022) also pointed out that, over years, colonial history and interest of the elite have continued to favour Urdu and English, and have ignored the indigenous languages. These studies serve as useful background reading to the understanding of the structural situation of the Punjabi marginalization however, neither of them looked into newspaper editorials and opinion pieces as a place of ideology construction.

### 2.2 Sociolinguistic Decline and Language Shift

The sociolinguistic aspects of the decline of Punjabi have been looked upon by several researchers. Haidar et al. (2021) concluded that social prestige and economic mobility concerns were significant factors for Punjabis, particularly those in urban areas, in not speaking Punjabi in public, especially for younger generations and females. Through mixed methods studies, Kanwal and Arslan (2024) reported that the dominance of Urdu and English along with insufficient institutional support, was driving the shift from Punjabi language. Din and Ghani (2017) reported that there was a loss of Punjabi features of film and popular culture, whereas Mushtaq and Khan (2025) reported systematic lexical loss. These studies are studies of the sociolinguistic reality to which media representation needs to be related and understood but not the representation and/or social construction of the decline in print media.

### 2.3 Media Representation and Linguistic Ideology

The processes of constructing and reproducing language ideology through the media are a staple of the CDA literature (e.g., Van Dijk, 2008). The media in Pakistan is known to make Punjabi equate with rural and informality, thus reinforcing the social hierarchy, which is more dominant

for Urdu and English, Punjabi is less favored (Khan et al., 2025). In Canada, Punjabi diaspora media was examined by Fontaine (2012) and these ethnic media were found to be important in creating counter-narratives to counter mainstream negative representations of the Punjabi. But, no research has yet grappled with the systematic study of the construction of the ideology of Punjabi language in Pakistani major English language newspapers by means of editorial and opinion discourse.

#### **2.4 Critical Discourse Analysis and Power Relations**

Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive CDA has been widely used in the research of language, power and ideology in different national settings. In Pakistan, Butt et al. used two theories: the Cultural Capital theory (Bourdieu) to explore the process of marginalization and the CDA (Van Dijk) to explore the process of other-representation of languages. They found a systematic pattern of positive self-representation of dominant languages and other-representation of regional languages. To understand the patterns of symbolic exclusion in political and educational discourses, Hashmi et al (2025) employed the humanistic framework of Van Dijk's Ideological Square and macrostructure analysis. Minhas and Salawu (2025) investigated the topic of digital activism around the Punjabi cause on social media. All of these studies, however, failed to perform a multi-newspaper CDA (Content-Data analysis) for print media editorials and opinion pieces.

#### **2.5 Gaps in Existing Literature**

The existing literature shows that a gap is that, although CDA has been used to analyze the language ideology in the language policy documents, political speeches, curriculum textbooks, and social media, there has been no systematic and comparative study on the construction of the Punjabi language ideology from the editors and opinion writers of the major English-language newspapers in Pakistan. The current study closes this gap by performing a three-level CDA on 21 texts from three newspapers, enabling within and cross newspaper analysis of the patterns of ideologies. This comparative dimension is especially relevant in light of the fact that newspapers might cater to different audiences, have varying philosophies, and create language ideology in different ways.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

#### **3.1 Van Dijk's Socio-Cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis**

In the present study, the Socio-Cognitive Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework proposed by Van Dijk (2008) is used as a basis. It is especially appropriate for analysis of newspaper editorials and opinion pieces, in which discourse is considered as the product of the interaction between language, cognition and social structure, allowing for the researcher to move between micro aspects of language and macro aspects of ideology. Van Dijk (2008) presents a CDA that takes place on three levels: discourse (i.e. the language in texts), cognition (i.e. mental models, beliefs and ideologies of the producers of texts), and society (i.e. social structures and power relations that at the same time shape and are shaped by discourse).

The Ideological Square is a central analytical tool of this framework. Van Dijk (2008) claims that there are patterns of positive self-representation and negative other-representation in the way that powerful social groups and their symbols are represented. This is part of the Pakistani language ideology, which is manifested in the positive representation of Urdu and English (as modern, educated, national, progressive) and the negative representation of Punjabi (as rural, informal, stigmatized, declining) or in its implicit presupposition as inferior. The Ideological Square is an analytical tool that can be used to identify these patterns when analyzing the specific lexical, metaphorical and argumentative choices of editorial and opinion related texts.

#### **3.2 Three Levels of Analysis**

The analytical framework used in this study is based on Van Dijk (2008) who used three levels for analysis. The macrostructure level deals with the overall message, topic and prevailing ideology of each text (what it is really about in terms of the hierarchy that it constructs of the hierarchy of language). The microstructure level deals with linguistic features occurring at the level of sentences and words: lexical choices (lexical items used for describing Punjabi and its speakers); metaphorical constructions (conceptual frames that are activated); nominalization and agency (who is seen as an actor or not); presuppositions (what is assumed to be on the shared ground); and rhetorical strategies (how arguments are organized and directed). The superstructure level analyzes the organization and generic features of the texts (editorial, opinion column, personal essay, news report) and the voice used to convey authority and how the genre conventions impact the ideology message. These three levels give a holistic and systematic approach to analyze the process of constructing language ideology in print media texts.

#### **4. Research Methodology**

##### **4.1 Research Design**

The method used in this research is a qualitative research method which is based on Critical Discourse Analysis. The purpose of the study is about analyzing the patterns of ideology, linguistic representation, and power relations in newspaper texts and the qualitative approach is suitable for such purpose, because it allows for the analysis to be interpretive rather than statistical (Creswell, 2014). The study is comparative design with the comparative analysis of texts of three newspapers taken separately and then cross newspaper comparative analysis in the discussion. This comparative dimension is a methodological contribution which distinguishes this study from the previous CDA studies, which were single-newspaper or single-corpus CDA studies of Pakistani language ideology.

##### **4.2 Corpus Selection**

Twenty-one editorials and opinion articles, each in English-language, have been included in the corpus from three newspapers, Dawn (10 texts, 2010-2024), The News International (6 texts, 2014-2025), and The Express Tribune (5 texts, 2016-2024). These three newspapers have been selected for the reasons of their institutional influence and representativeness. Dawn is Pakistan's oldest and most trusted English-language newspaper, read by the educated elite and policy makers and is influential in the policy making process. News International is one of the most circulated English newspapers in Pakistan with wide national circulation. The Express Tribune, which is also founded in cooperation with The International Herald Tribune, caters to a younger, urban and worldly audience and has a voice akin to that of its co-founders.

The texts were chosen using purposive sampling (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) as texts which were directly related to the topic of Punjabi language status, identity, policy or sociolinguistic decline were chosen. In qualitative CDA research a convenient and widely used sampling method is purposive sampling, which allows the selection of analytically rich and/or thematically relevant texts. The time frame of the corpus (15 years of 2010-2025) enables the observation of discursive patterns over a period of 15 years, thus detecting any discursive changes over time as well as any persistent discursive formations as ideology. The entire corpus is included in the table 1.

**Table 1 Complete Corpus of Selected Editorials and Opinion Articles (N = 21)**

| <b>Section A: Dawn (D1–D10)</b>                  |              |  |                  |                              |
|--|--------------|--|------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Code</b>                                      | <b>Date</b>  | <b>Title and Author</b>  | <b>Newspaper</b> | <b>URL</b>                   |
| D1   | Feb 26, 2024 | Punjab notes: Cultural intervention: a hope for Punjabi – Mushtaq Soofi                | Dawn             | dawn.com/news/1817180        |
| D2   | Feb 21, 2023 | Punjabis themselves are oppressing their language – Irfan Aslam                        | Dawn             | dawn.com/news/1738234        |
| D3   | Jun 1, 2024  | A case for Punjabi – From the Newspaper  | Dawn             | dawn.com/news/1836985        |
| D4   | Mar 30, 2014 | Mother tongue: The dilemma of the Punjabi language                                     | Dawn             | dawn.com/news/1096547        |
| D5   | Jan 8, 2024  | Punjab notes: They celebrate the death of their language – Mushtaq Soofi               | Dawn             | dawn.com/news/1803972        |
| D6   | Nov 10, 2017 | Punjab Notes: Census: rejection of Punjabi as mother language                          | Dawn             | dawn.com/news/1326784        |
| D7   | Sep 10, 2010 | Injustice to the Punjabi language – From The Newspaper                                 | Dawn             | dawn.com/news/561055         |
| D8   | Jan 23, 2019 | At first I was afraid but now I can say I am a proud Punjabi speaker – Rishabh Kochhar | Dawn             | dawn.com/news/1386634        |
| D9   | Feb 21, 2015 | Govt not encouraging Punjabi language – Staff Reporter                                 | Dawn             | dawn.com/news/1164957        |
| D10  | Sep 4, 2016  | Mind your language: The movement for the preservation of Punjabi – Sara Kazmi          | Dawn             | herald.dawn.com/news/1153482 |
| <b>Section B: The News International (N1–N6)</b> |              |  |                  |                              |
| <b>Code</b>                                      | <b>Date</b>  | <b>Title and Author</b>  | <b>Newspaper</b> | <b>URL</b>                   |
| N1   | Feb 23, 2025 | Punjabi, a dying language? – Dr. Mazhar Abbas  | The News Int'l   | thenews.com.pk               |
| N2   | Jun 1, 2025  | A language in decline – Iqbal Haider Butt  | The News Int'l   | thenews.com.pk               |
| N3   | Feb 21, 2016 | The soft power of Punjabi – Dr. Tariq Rehman   | The News Int'l   | thenews.com.pk               |
| N4   | Feb 23, 2014 | Our distance from Punjabi – Nadir Ali  | The News Int'l   | thenews.com.pk               |
| N5   | Feb 21, 2023 | Punjabi language not oppressed from outside – Sadia Salahuddin                         | The News Int'l   | thenews.com.pk               |
| N6   | Nov 20, 2024 | Punjabi language a symbol of love, harmony – Our Correspondent                         | The News Int'l   | thenews.com.pk               |
| <b>Section C: The Express Tribune (ET1–ET5)</b>  |              |  |                  |                              |
| <b>Code</b>                                      | <b>Date</b>  | <b>Title and Author</b>  | <b>Newspaper</b> | <b>URL</b>                   |
| ET1  | Feb 28, 2016 | Alienating the Punjab from Punjabi – Mariam Shafqat                                    | Express Tribune  | tribune.com.pk               |
| ET2  | Feb 22, 2016 | Why is Punjabi viewed as an inferior language? – Fatima Majeed                         | Express Tribune  | tribune.com.pk               |

|     |              |   |                 |                |
|-----|--------------|---|-----------------|----------------|
| ET3 | Jan 12, 2017 | Why have we forgotten the glory of Punjabi? – Azam Gill                       | Express Tribune | tribune.com.pk |
| ET4 | Oct 19, 2016 | Punjabi is a regional language, not hate speech – Raina Iqbal                 | Express Tribune | tribune.com.pk |
| ET5 | Nov 17, 2024 | Punjabi tops Pakistan's languages: Census 2023 reveals trends – Mehtab Haider | The News Int'l  | thenews.com.pk |

Note: D = Dawn; N = The News International; ET = The Express Tribune. Texts purposively sampled for direct engagement with Punjabi language status. Sources: Dawn (2010–2024); The News International (2014–2025); The Express Tribune (2016–2024).

#### 4.3 Analytical Procedure

The texts have been analyzed in three stages. The first stage (macrostructural analysis) involved identifying the global topic, dominant ideological frame and positioning of Punjabi in the overall argument of the text. For stage 2, the microstructural features identified were the lexical field involved in talk about Punjabi and its speakers, metaphoric and conceptual frames, the nominalization, agency construction and passive voice, embedded presuppositions, and rhetorical organization. At the stage 3, the superstructural analysis took into account the conventions of genres, structuring of genres, and distribution of voice, rhetorical strategies, and their combined ideological impact. To uncover positive self-representation (of Urdu/English) and/or negative other-representation (of Punjabi) or their inversions, an analysis of the rhetorical forms was carried out systematically throughout each of the three stages in Van Dijk's Ideological Square. Analysis before Cross Newspaper comparison was done individually to the newspapers.

#### 4.4 Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability were established by systematically using the analytical categories of Van Dijk on all twenty-one texts, direct adherence to evidence from the texts in all interpretative claims, transparent documentation of the analytical process in the tabular format presented in Section 5, and positioning of findings in the larger body of CDA literature on the Pakistani language discourse (Hashmi et al., 2025; Khan et al., 2025; Butt et al.). The comparative design is also of three newspapers which serves as another safeguard against overgeneralizing from one newspaper corpus.

#### 5. Analysis

The analysis is broken into three parts, for each of the three newspapers. Each section is followed by analysis at the three levels of CDA (macrostructure, microstructure, and superstructure) and its interpretative discussion, both in tabular and written form. This structure maintains the analytical integrity of the within newspaper analysis, yet allows for the cross newspaper comparison that was done in Section 6.

##### 5.1 Dawn Newspaper: Analysis

###### 5.1.1 Macrostructural Analysis — Dawn

The macrostructure level reviews the topic in the global level, ideology that dominates the editorial or opinion article and positioning of the Punjabi language in each article. This analysis is shown for all 10 Dawn texts in Table 2.

**Table 2** Macrostructural Analysis — Dawn (D1–D10)

| <b>Code</b> | <b>Global Topic</b>                                 | <b>Dominant Theme</b>                        | <b>Ideological Positioning of Punjabi</b>  | <b>Ideological Square (Van Dijk, 2008)</b>  |
|-------------|---|--|--|---|
| D1          | Cultural intervention as hope for Punjabi           | Cultural activism and revival hope           | Punjabi positioned as culturally imperilled but salvageable through activist intervention            | Positive other-rep (cultural hope) but within persistent deficit frame                      |
| D2          | Punjabis oppressing their own language              | Internal oppression / self-inflicted decline | Oppression framed as self-generated; Punjabi speakers positioned as primary agents of language death | Ideological inversion: negative other-rep disguised as community accountability             |
| D3          | Legal and civic case for Punjabi                    | Rights advocacy and institutional demand     | Punjabi claimed as a constitutional right; institutional failure foregrounded                        | Mixed: positive rights-rep; state positioned as delinquent actor                            |
| D4          | Dilemma of Punjabi as mother tongue                 | Identity conflict and institutional neglect  | Punjabi speaker caught between emotional attachment and social pressure to use Urdu/English          | Negative other-rep of Punjabi's status; dominant languages implicitly normalized            |
| D5          | Punjabis celebrate the death of their language      | Self-destruction narrative                   | Punjabi speakers constructed as complicit in the language's disappearance; ironic framing            | Strong negative other-rep; spectacle of self-inflicted erasure foregrounded                 |
| D6          | Census rejection of Punjabi as mother tongue        | Institutional exclusion via official data    | Census mechanism used to deny Punjabi's demographic reality; state complicity highlighted            | Negative rep of state; Punjabi cast as institutionally invisible despite numerical majority |
| D7          | Injustice to Punjabi language                       | Structural injustice and elite complicity    | Punjabi framed as victim of deliberate systemic exclusion; elite Punjabis as traitors                | Negative other-rep of Punjabi's institutional status; class-based critique embedded         |
| D8          | Personal identity: pride in being a Punjabi speaker | Individual identity reclamation              | Personal narrative of overcoming shame; Punjabi speaker as courageous exception                      | Positive self-rep of Punjabi identity but framed as exception, not norm                     |
| D9          | Government not encouraging Punjabi                  | State negligence and                         | Absence of state support documented; Punjabi positioned as   | Negative rep of state; Punjabi as structurally orphaned language                            |

|     |                                      |                          |  |   |
|-----|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--|---|
|     |                                      | institutional gap        | abandoned by its own government  |   |
| D10 | Movement for preservation of Punjabi | Civil society resistance | Activist community framed as counter-force against institutional neglect | Positive other-rep of Punjabi resistance; systemic critique most explicit in corpus |

Note: Analysis conducted following Van Dijk's (2008) macrostructural CDA categories. Ideological Square identifies patterns of positive self-representation and negative other-representation.

**5.1.2 Microstructural Analysis — Dawn**

Table 3 demonstrates the microstructural analysis of the Dawn texts in terms of words, phrases and sentences which includes lexical choice, metaphorical frames, agency constructions, presuppositions and ideological functions.

**Table 3** Microstructural Analysis — Dawn (D1–D10)

| Code | Lexical Choices  | Metaphor / Imagery   | Nominalization / Agency   | Presuppositions   | Ideological Function   |
|------|--|--|---|---|--|
| D1   | 'hope', 'intervention', 'revival', 'cultural survival'   | Punjabi as patient needing cultural medicine                       | 'intervention', 'revival' erase state as responsible agent            | Presupposes culture alone can compensate for institutional failure            | Positions civil society as saviour; naturalizes state absence from linguistic responsibility         |
| D2   | 'oppressing', 'self-inflicted', 'complicit', 'silence'   | Language as victim of its own speakers' violence                   | Active voice directed at Punjabi community: 'Punjabis are oppressing' | Presupposes institutional neutrality; silence treated as voluntary betrayal   | Activates self-blame; reproduces dominant ideology by locating failure within marginalized community |
| D3   | 'case', 'right', 'demand', 'constitutional', 'neglect'   | Language rights as legal argument; court metaphor                  | Nominalization: 'neglect', 'exclusion' (hides institutional agency)   | Presupposes Punjabi deserves institutional recognition                        | Most rights-affirmative text in Dawn corpus; shifts blame to state rather than community             |
| D4   | 'dilemma', 'torn', 'conflict', 'mother tongue', 'burden' | Punjabi as emotional burden; mother tongue as site of internal war | First-person constructions: 'I feel ashamed', 'we choose Urdu'        | Presupposes individual choice drives language shift (not structural pressure) | Individualism frames structural inequality as personal crisis; normalizes elite language preference  |
| D5   | 'celebrate', 'death', 'complicity', 'silence', 'funeral' | Language death as a macabre celebration; Punjabis at their own     | Ironic active voice: 'they celebrate the death'                       | Presupposes that Punjabi decline is preventable but deliberately allowed      | Irony intensifies self-blame; spectacle of complicity naturalizes elite abandonment                  |

|     |   |  |  |   |  |
|-----|---|--|--|---|--|
|     |   | language's funeral   |  |   |  |
| D6  | 'rejection', 'census', 'denial', 'erasure', 'undercount'      | Census as weapon; official form as instrument of linguistic violence | Nominalization: 'rejection' and 'erasure' preserve state as anonymous agent      | Presupposes census is ideologically neutral instrument (revealed to be otherwise) | Exposes institutional complicity; state shown as active agent of Punjabi invisibility                  |
| D7  | 'injustice', 'elite', 'betrayal', 'oppression', 'denial'      | Class treason metaphor; elite Punjabis as collaborators in erasure   | Active constructions: 'elites deny', 'institutions exclude'                      | Presupposes that class loyalty should include linguistic loyalty                  | Most structurally critical text in corpus; names elite class interest as driver of marginalization     |
| D8  | 'afraid', 'proud', 'courage', 'identity', 'reclaim'           | Journey metaphor: from shame to pride as personal heroism            | First-person active: 'I was afraid', 'I can say I am proud'                      | Presupposes shame is the default emotional experience of Punjabi speakers         | Personal courage narrative exceptionalized; normalizes shame as the baseline condition                 |
| D9  | 'not encouraging', 'absence', 'gap', 'failure', 'neglect'     | Government as absentee parent; Punjabi as orphaned language          | Passive voice: 'Punjabi is not being encouraged' (diffuses state responsibility) | Presupposes government should encourage regional languages (but doesn't)          | Critique of state is present but grammatically diffused through passive construction                   |
| D10 | 'movement', 'preservation', 'resistance', 'activism', 'fight' | Battle metaphor: preservation movement as war against erasure        | Active agent: 'activists fight', 'community resists'                             | Presupposes that resistance is necessary and ongoing                              | Most explicitly political text; frames Punjabi advocacy as collective resistance; activates solidarity |

Note: Microstructural analysis following Van Dijk's (2008) categories including lexical choices, metaphor, nominalization, agency, and presupposition.

### 5.1.3 Superstructural Analysis — Dawn

Table 4 shows the superstructural analysis of the Dawn texts per genre in terms of genre conventions, genre organization, voice distribution, rhetorical strategies and their overall ideological impact.

**Table 4** Superstructural Analysis — Dawn (D1–D10)

| Code | Genre / Text Type                  | Structural Organization                         | Voices and Authority   | Rhetorical Strategy  | Ideological Effect  |
|------|------------------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| D1   | Cultural commentary                | Thematic analysis + call to action              | Cultural activist voice (Mushtaq Soofi); no official voice   | Activist appeal to community solidarity                          | Positions civil society as primary agent of language preservation; state conspicuously absent                 |
| D2   | Opinion column                     | Diagnosis of problem + partial critique         | Journalist observer; no Punjabi speaker direct voice         | Ironic reversal argument: 'Punjabis are their own enemy'         | Interview-style analysis gives credibility to self-blame; structural critique avoided                         |
| D3   | Advocacy editorial                 | Problem-rights argument-institutional demand    | Editorial collective voice; constitutional framing           | Legal-rational appeal  | Most structurally explicit advocacy text; maps gap between constitutional right and institutional practice    |
| D4   | Personal reflective essay          | Personal experience + generalization            | First-person author narrative; no counter-voice              | Confessional rhetoric; 'I'→'we' movement implicates all Punjabis | Personal dilemma generalized to community; individualizes structural inequality                               |
| D5   | Satirical cultural column          | Ironic narration + moral condemnation           | Cultural commentator (Mushtaq Soofi); no institutional voice | Irony and dark humour as rhetorical tools                        | Satire intensifies emotional impact; moral condemnation directed at community, not state                      |
| D6   | News analysis                      | Data presentation + ideological critique        | Journalist voice; census data as authority                   | Statistical evidence + political critique                        | Unusual combination of data and critique; census framed as political instrument of Punjabi erasure            |
| D7   | Investigative opinion              | Historical-structural analysis + class critique | Intellectual voice; historical evidence cited                | Class-based argument; names elite beneficiaries                  | Most structurally critical text in entire corpus of 21; explicitly names class interest as ideological driver |
| D8   | Personal narrative / autobiography | Chronological personal story                    | First-person speaker voice — rare in corpus                  | Confessional journey: shame to pride                             | Personal narrative humanizes abstract marginalization; but its exceptionality confirms shame as the norm      |

|     |                 |   |   |  |  |
|-----|-----------------|---|---|--|--|
| D9  | News report     | Factual reporting + government critique | Staff reporter; official sources                | Empirical evidence + neutral framing           | Journalistic neutrality limits advocacy; critique of government present but not foregrounded             |
| D10 | Feature article | Profile of movement + policy context    | Journalist (Sara Kazmi); activist voices quoted | Advocacy journalism; community voices included | Most polyphonic text in Dawn corpus; activist voices given direct representation — rare in entire corpus |

Note: Superstructural analysis following Van Dijk's (2008) framework examining genre, text organization, voice distribution, and rhetorical strategy.

#### 5.1.4 Dawn News Findings and Discussion

The Dawn corpus is the most analytically diverse out of the three newspapers studied. There are a number of interesting trends seen across the ten texts. First, only Dawn's newspaper texts explicitly foreground structural and class-based explanations for the marginalization of the Punjabis. First of all, the corpus does not include texts by other newspapers that explicitly foreground structural/class-based explanations for the marginalization of the Punjabis. Especially noteworthy is the case of D7 which assigns elite Punjabi speakers to the role of ideological ally in the marginalization of their own language, explicitly linking the hierarchy of languages to class interest. D10 also emphasizes civil society resistance by way of advocacy journalism, and is the only work of the entire corpus of twenty-one works to feature activist Punjabi voices as such. These two texts are a unique discursive layout in Dawn as found in the other two newspapers.

Secondly, Dawn's corpus is influenced by the cultural column provided by Mushtaq Soofi on a regular basis which is titled as 'Punjab Notes' (D1 and D5). Soofi's style is unique in that it is an advocacy for the culture as well as a critique of the behaviour of Punjabis, with a wry, dark humour that serves as her rhetorical device. The rhetoric of D5 regarding the death of their language is very effective, but ideologically murky, because it simultaneously heightens awareness of the crisis, and forces moral condemnation on the community and not the state. This pattern is a type of critical discourse which both critiques and perpetuates the deficit frame. Third, there is an internal tension between the self-blame discourse in The News International corpus and other structurally critical discourse (D3, D7, D10) in the same newspaper as D2 and D4, which, in contrast, are self-blame texts in the News International corpus, but structurally less critical, which is not seen in the D2 and D4 of the News International corpus. Analytically, D6's discussion of the census as an active tool of erasing the Punjabi identity is in the unique class of the 21 texts: there is no other text in any of the three newspapers that explicitly connects an official state mechanism to its role in erasing Punjabi identity.

#### 5.2 The News International and The Express Tribune: Analysis

##### 5.2.1 Macrostructural Analysis — The News International and The Express Tribune

Table 5 shows the macrostructural analysis of the six News International texts (N1 – N6) and the five Express Tribune texts (ET1 – ET5). Two newspapers are analyzed combined in two sets of tables which allow direct comparisons, and codes are clear to distinguish between the two newspapers.

**Table 5** Macrostructural Analysis — *The News International (N1–N6)* and *The Express Tribune (ET1–ET5)*

| <i>The News International (N1–N6)</i> |   |   |  |  |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| <b>Code</b>                           | <b>Global Topic</b>                               | <b>Dominant Theme</b>                     | <b>Ideological Positioning of Punjabi</b>  | <b>Ideological Square (Van Dijk, 2008)</b>                                       |
| N1                                    | Status of Punjabi as a dying language             | Language death and neglect                | Punjabi positioned as victim of institutional neglect; speakers blamed for abandonment   | Negative other-rep: Punjabi as dying, rural, inferior                            |
| N2                                    | Decline of Punjabi in contemporary Pakistan       | Sociolinguistic decline narrative         | Punjabi framed as receding despite large speaker base; elite discourse normalized        | Negative other-rep: Urdu/English implicitly progressive; Punjabi receding        |
| N3                                    | Cultural and political potential of Punjabi       | Soft power and cultural capital           | Punjabi reframed as asset but qualified with loss narrative; still subordinate to Urdu   | Mixed rep: positive cultural framing within persistent deficit logic             |
| N4                                    | Emotional disconnection of Punjabis from language | Identity alienation                       | Punjabi speaker positioned as ashamed of own language; identity crisis foregrounded      | Negative other-rep of Punjabi speakers; self-blame discourse activated           |
| N5                                    | Internal factors of Punjabi language oppression   | Self-oppression narrative                 | Oppression framed as self-inflicted rather than systemic; shifts blame from institutions | Ideological inversion: negative other-rep disguised as positive community agency |
| N6                                    | Punjabi as symbol of love and harmony             | Cultural celebration (official event)     | Primarily symbolic and ceremonial; no policy or institutional critique                   | Positive symbolic rep; no challenge to language hierarchy                        |
| <i>The Express Tribune (ET1–ET5)</i>  |   |   |  |  |
| <b>Code</b>                           | <b>Global Topic</b>                               | <b>Dominant Theme</b>                     | <b>Ideological Positioning of Punjabi</b>  | <b>Ideological Square (Van Dijk, 2008)</b>                                       |
| ET1                                   | Alienation of Punjab from Punjabi language        | Identity politics and colonial alienation | Punjabi positioned as historically abandoned by its own geographic community             | Negative other-rep: Punjabi displaced; Urdu imposition backgrounded              |
| ET2                                   | Perceptions of Punjabi as inferior language       | Social stigma and prestige hierarchy      | Punjabi framed as stigmatized; inferiority attributed to social attitudes                | Negative other-rep: Punjabi associated with shame and backwardness               |
| ET3                                   | Historical glory and present                      | Memory, nostalgia, and loss               | Contrast between glorious past and degraded present;                                     | Nostalgic frame; present political responsibility sidestepped                    |

|     |   |  |   |  |
|-----|---|--|---|--|
|     | neglect of Punjabi                                  |  | nostalgia as ideological tool   |  |
| ET4 | Punjabi as regional language versus political label | Linguistic rights and defensive framing              | Punjabi defended as a constitutional right against political misuse               | Mixed rep: defensive positive self-rep against dominant stigmatizing discourse |
| ET5 | Census 2023 data on Punjabi speaker numbers         | Demographic dominance vs. institutional invisibility | Statistical dominance acknowledged but framed against backdrop of marginalization | Contradiction: positive statistical fact vs. negative institutional rep        |

Note: N = The News International; ET = The Express Tribune. Analysis following Van Dijk's (2008) macrostructural CDA categories.

**5.2.2 Microstructural Analysis — The News International and The Express Tribune**

Table 6 shows the microstructural analysis of The News International and The Express Tribune texts, which focuses on the linguistic features used to build up the ideology at the level of words, phrases and sentences.

**Table 6** Microstructural Analysis —The News International (N1–N6) and The Express Tribune (ET1–ET5)

The News International (N1–N6)

| Code | Lexical Choices  | Metaphor / Imagery   | Nominalization / Agency   | Presuppositions   | Ideological Function   |
|------|--|--|---|---|--|
| N1   | 'dying','neglected','marginalized','endangered'        | Punjabi as dying patient requiring intervention                    | Nominalization: 'marginalization','neglect' hides who marginalizes    | Presupposes natural/inevitable decline rather than systemic exclusion | Naturalizes decline; positions Punjabi as passive victim rather than politically excluded language   |
| N2   | 'in decline','fading','receding','losing ground'       | Language moving backward or downward in a vertical hierarchy       | Passive: 'Punjabi is being lost' — no clear responsible agent         | Presupposes other languages are naturally advancing                   | Creates inevitability discourse; Urdu/English progress naturalized; Punjabi decline decontextualized |
| N3   | 'soft power','cultural heritage','potential','revival' | Punjabi as untapped national resource; culture as diplomatic asset | Nominalization softens political dimension: 'promotion','development' | Presupposes Punjabi needs elite approval to gain legitimacy           | Positions Punjabi as culturally valuable but requiring external validation from dominant groups      |
| N4   | 'distance','shame','reluctance','inferiority'          | Distance as moral and  | Active voice at speakers: 'we   | Presupposes shame is personal rather                                  | Activates self-blame; reproduces dominant ideology   |

|    |   |  |   |   |  |
|----|---|--|---|---|--|
|    |   | emotional failure; Punjabi as abandoned child                      | have distanced ourselves'   | than socially constructed   | by locating failure in marginalized community  |
| N5 | 'from within', 'self-inflicted', 'our own attitude' | Internal disease metaphor: problem originates within the community | Agency attributed to Punjabi speakers, not institutions or policies | Presupposes institutional neutrality; government policy treated as irrelevant | Deflects from systemic inequality; legitimizes institutional inaction by blaming community   |
| N6 | 'love', 'harmony', 'unity', 'celebration', 'pride'  | Punjabi as emotional symbol of communal warmth and political unity | Emotional rather than political language; no critical agency        | Presupposes Punjabi's value is sentimental and ceremonial, not institutional  | Domesticates Punjabi; removes it from political discourse; limits it to cultural performance |

**The Express Tribune (ET1–ET5)**

| Code | Lexical Choices  | Metaphor / Imagery  | Nominalization / Agency  | Presuppositions  | Ideological Function  |
|------|--|---|--|--|---|
| ET1  | 'alienating', 'native tongue', 'estranged', 'severed'  | Amputation: Punjabi severed from Punjabi as colonial injury     | Passive: 'Punjab has been alienated' — systemic agent remains vague            | Presupposes that land-language bond is natural and was deliberately broken | Foregrounds alienation as historical injury; implicitly critiques Urdu imposition without naming it |
| ET2  | 'inferior', 'looked down upon', 'stigmatized', 'rural' | Social hierarchy: Punjabi at bottom of vertical prestige ladder | Nominalization: 'the perception of inferiority' distances writer from judgment | Presupposes inferiority is only perceived, not institutionally constructed | Reproduces stigma while appearing to critique it; separates perception from structural reality      |
| ET3  | 'forgotten glory', 'lost heritage', 'once flourished'  | Historical nostalgia: golden age versus degenerate present      | Past-tense active: 'Punjabi flourished', 'we forgot'                           | Presupposes a glorious past and an unworthy present                        | Nostalgia displaces present political action; glorification sidesteps current responsibility        |
| ET4  | 'regional', 'not hate'                                 | Defense: Punjabi as territory                                   | Defensive passive: 'Punjabi has been   | Presupposes Punjabi needs to be defended                                   | Reactive rather than proactive rights discourse;  |

|     |   |  |  |   |   |
|-----|---|--|--|---|---|
|     | speech', 'right', 'recognition'                       | being protected from misrepresentation   | labeled' external stigmatizing force named                   | — and justified to a hostile majority                                       | operates within dominant language framework   |
| ET5 | 'tops', 'largest', 'census reveals', 'despite', 'yet' | Statistical paradox: numerical dominance coexisting with symbolic invisibility | Factual active voice + ironic conjunctions: 'yet', 'despite' | Presupposes demographic power should translate to institutional recognition | Exposes contradiction between numbers and power; informational rather than advocacy-based framing |

Note: Microstructural analysis following Van Dijk's (2008) categories. N = The News International; ET = The Express Tribune.

**5.2.3 Superstructural Analysis — The News International and The Express Tribune**

The analysis of superstructure of The News International and The Express Tribune texts is shown in Table 7, which deals with genre, organization, voice distribution, rhetorical strategies and ideological effects.

**Table 7 Superstructural Analysis — The News International (N1–N6) and The Express Tribune (ET1–ET5)**

*The News International (N1–N6)*

| Code | Genre / Text Type           | Structural Organization                                    | Voices and Authority   | Rhetorical Strategy   | Ideological Effect  |
|------|-----------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| N1   | Opinion column              | Problem-cause-solution; solution absent or vague           | Academic expert (Dr. Mazhar Abbas); Punjabi speakers absent as active voices | Emotional appeal + statistics of decline                    | Expert discourse legitimizes deficit framing; Punjabi speakers are objects of concern, not agents |
| N2   | Opinion column              | Historical narrative of decline; no advocacy conclusion    | Intellectual observer; no institutional critique                             | Narrative progression from past vitality to present decline | Normalizes decline as historical trajectory; no call for institutional accountability             |
| N3   | Opinion/cultural commentary | Comparative framing: Punjabi potential vs. present neglect | Academic linguist (Dr. Tariq Rehman); policy-oriented                        | Logical argument + cultural evidence; conditional advocacy  | Policy-oriented but conditional; Punjabi's value justified through instrumental soft-power lens   |

|    |                                   |  |   |  |  |
|----|-----------------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| N4 | Personal reflective essay         | Personal narrative + generalization to community | First-person author voice; no opposing voices           | Confessional rhetoric; 'we' construction implicates all Punjabis | Individual experience generalized to community; shame discourse reproduced through confessional genre        |
| N5 | Opinion article (interview-based) | Expert quotation + journalist commentary         | Academic (Dr. Ishtiaq) quoted as primary authority      | Appeal to authority; deflects from structural critique           | Interview format gives academic legitimacy to self-blame; structural critique is absent                      |
| N6 | News report (official event)      | Event description + official statement           | Official political voice (PA Speaker); celebratory tone | Ceremonial rhetoric; no critical framing                         | Official ceremony as ideological performance; Punjabi reduced to political symbol rather than lived language |

**The Express Tribune (ET1–ET5)**

| Code | Genre / Text Type         | Structural Organization                        | Voices and Authority   | Rhetorical Strategy                            | Ideological Effect  |
|------|---------------------------|--|--|--|---|
| ET1  | Opinion column            | Historical analysis + contemporary application | Intellectual female voice (Mariam Shafqat); postcolonial awareness | Historical argument + sociolinguistic evidence | Historical framing adds depth; identifies colonial roots but stops short of policy advocacy         |
| ET2  | Youth opinion article     | Social analysis + call for attitudinal change  | Youth perspective; no institutional voices                         | Rhetorical questions + social observation      | Focuses on attitudinal not institutional change; stigma critique without structural solution        |
| ET3  | Reflective cultural essay | Memory narrative: past glory + present loss    | Personal and cultural memory; literary references                  | Nostalgic rhetoric + cultural pride appeal     | Nostalgia displaces political action; glorification of past may inhibit forward-looking advocacy    |
| ET4  | Student opinion article   | Rights argument + sociolinguistic evidence     | Student voice; peer-addressed rhetoric                             | Logical argument + example-based reasoning     | Rights-based framing; most politically explicit in TNI/ET corpus; limited institutional authority   |
| ET5  | News/data report          | Statistical summary + contextual commentary    | Journalist (Mehtab Haider); Census 2023                            | Data-driven + ironic juxtaposition             | Census data challenges marginalization factually; journalistic neutrality limits advocacy potential |

|  |  |                            |  |
|--|--|----------------------------|--|
|  |  | data as ('yet', 'despite') |  |
|  |  | authority                  |  |

Note: Superstructural analysis following Van Dijk's (2008) framework. N = The News International; ET = The Express Tribune.

#### 5.2.4 The News International Findings and Discussion

News International texts have three over-arching discursive tendencies. First, the deficit frame is used throughout all the six texts, and the lexical field of Punjabi is made up of words related to decline, dying, distance, shame and neglect. The most benign of all the seemingly positive texts in the corpus (N3 authored by the great linguist Dr. Tariq Rehman) uses the geopolitical jargon of 'soft power' to bolster the potential of the Punjabi language, but does so by advocating the status of this language on the basis of external utility — that is, giving reasons for its elevation that are not linguistic or cultural. It is an ideologically important subtle trend of the instrumentalization of Punjabi identity.

Secondly, there is a definite tendency towards the self-blame story in The News International corpus. In both cases, N4 (Nadir Ali) and N5 (the interview with Dr. Ishtiaq) place blame on the Punjabi speaking community rather than on institutional or policy aspects, for the marginalization of Punjabi. The N5 significance of the text concerns the way it presents the self-blame argument—in the voice of an academic authority in the form of an interview—making it seem as if it has institutional credibility, despite the radical and ideologically conservative nature of the argument that shames the state and turns it away. Third, N6 is a unique sub-genre of the corpus—namely official reporting of events that uses ceremonial language that builds Punjabi in the image of political harmony without any institutional critique. This genre carries out Van Dijk (2008) legitimation function of ideological discourse, which is implicit in a language hierarchy that is ignored.

#### 5.2.5 The Express Tribune Findings and Discussion

The Express Tribune corpus shows a unique discursive shape, which is influenced heavily by the younger audience base with a more global perspective. There are three patterns of note. The first is that The Express Tribune has the highest frequency of identity-based framing, with the conceptual frames of stigma, inferiority and historical alienation being the predominant ones (ET1, ET2 and ET3). The Express Tribune is more personal in terms of identity and emotional frames, while The News International is more cultural and instrumental in framing the issues and Dawn is more structural and class based in critiquing the issues. This variation is a reflection of, and reproduces, the cognitive models that its editors and contributors take it for granted that its readers have.

Secondly, there are more historically oriented that are included in The Express Tribune corpus. Alienation of Punjabi in the context of colonial history is explored by ET1 (Mariam Shafqat) while ET3 (Azam Gill) uses nostalgia to remind people of a golden age of Punjabi, and its current degraded state. Nevertheless, the historical awareness frame is analytically useful, yet, it is important to note that the nostalgia frame is an important ideological shift, as it removes responsibility for current conditions from the historical past, lessening the pressure and need to take responsibility for current institutional accountability.

Third, ET4 (Raina Iqbal) is the text which has most explicit rights-based corpus and one of the most politically assertive texts in the TNI/ET corpus (twenty-one corpora in all). ET4 tackles head-on the political stigmatization of Punjabi that is unique in the corpus, making the claim that Punjabi is a regional language, not hate speech. The authoring of this text, however, is a student, a 1.5-authorial subject in the genre hierarchy of the English-language newspaper, which reduces the institutional power of this text.

**6. Cross-Newspaper Comparative Analysis and Discussion**

This section compares newspapers cross-newspaper at all three levels of analysis, having analyzed each newspaper individually. A comparative matrix, summarizing the main similarities and differences in the patterns of ideas that can be found in the three newspapers, is presented in table 8. Extended discussion of the main similarities and differences in the patterns of ideas in the three newspapers follows.

**Table 8** Cross-Newspaper Comparative Analysis — Dawn, The News International, and The Express Tribune

| Analytical Dimension              | Dawn  | The News International   | The Express Tribune   |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|---|
| <i>Dominant Macro Frame</i>       | Structural critique + self-blame in tension; most ideologically diverse               | Deficit framing dominant; cultural/instrumental advocacy                               | Identity stigma + historical nostalgia dominant                                     |
| <i>Institutional Critique</i>     | Strongest of three papers; explicitly names state, census, and elite class complicity | Moderate; present but grammatically diffused through passive constructions             | Weakest; tends toward attitudinal and historical rather than institutional critique |
| <i>Self-Blame Discourse</i>       | Present (D2, D5) but counterbalanced by structural texts                              | Prominent (N4, N5); uncounterbalanced within corpus                                    | Present (ET2) but framed more as social stigma than moral failure                   |
| <i>Voice Distribution</i>         | Most polyphonic; activist voices directly represented (D10)                           | Expert and official voices dominant; Punjabi speakers absent as agents                 | Youth and student voices; more first-person expression                              |
| <i>Lexical Field for Punjabi</i>  | 'injustice','complicity','resistance','movement','hope','funeral'                     | 'dying','declining','distance','shame','soft power','love'                             | 'inferior','alienated','forgotten glory','regional','hate speech'                   |
| <i>Dominant Metaphors</i>         | Cultural medicine; class treason; battle/resistance; self-inflicted funeral           | Dying patient; abandoned child; untapped resource; sentimental symbol                  | Amputation/severance; vertical hierarchy; historical golden age                     |
| <i>Dominant Genre</i>             | Cultural columns; investigative opinion; advocacy journalism                          | Expert opinion columns; interview-based articles; official event reporting             | Youth opinion; reflective cultural essays; news/data reports                        |
| <i>Rhetorical Strategy</i>        | Irony, satire, class critique, activist appeal  | Appeal to authority, conditional advocacy, emotional appeal                            | Rhetorical questions, historical nostalgia, defensive rights argument               |
| <i>Ideological Square Pattern</i> | Positive other-rep of Punjabi resistance; negative rep of state and elite class       | Negative other-rep of Punjabi (dying/declining); positive implicit rep of Urdu/English | Negative other-rep of Punjabi (stigmatized/alienated); historical positive self-rep |
| <i>Challenge to</i>               | Most explicit; D3, D7, D10 directly challenge dominant hierarchy                      | Implicit; N3 reframes but does not challenge;  | Moderate; ET4 most explicit rights claim; overall hierarchy reproduced              |

|                          |                      |                      |                     |
|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Language Hierarchy       |                      | overall reproduced   | hierarchy           |
| Temporal Range of Corpus | 2010–2024 (15 years) | 2014–2025 (11 years) | 2016–2024 (8 years) |

Note: Comparative analysis synthesizes findings from Tables 2–7. All three newspapers analysed using Van Dijk's (2008) Socio-Cognitive CDA framework at macrostructure, microstructure, and superstructure levels.

**6.1 Shared Ideological Patterns across All Three Newspapers**

The most basic result from the comparative analysis of the three newspapers across the cross is the fact that the deficit frame has remained constant across all three newspapers. Though the discursive approach used differs – be it through structural critique, cultural advocacy, identity stigma, historical nostalgia, and/or rights-based argument – all three newspapers ultimately depict Punjabi as a language in crisis, decline, and/or in need of defence. As a whole this deficit frame forms the common social cognition as described by Van Dijk (2008) as an ideological frame that is taken for granted and influences the production of discourse in different editorial traditions. The deficit frame seems to be a discursive horizon that none of these newspapers can cross, as even the most sympathetic reporting in all three newspapers carries the underlining message that the use of Punjabi is inadequate or requires 'defence' against political misrepresentation, as described in the first and third newspaper above.

A second common feature in the texts is neglecting or silencing the voice of the Punjabi speakers. The leading writers in all three newspapers are academics, journalists, intellectuals, officials and cultural commentators. The Punjabi community is most often the object of concern, the subject of scholarly enquiry, or the victim of institutional neglect; rarely an agent with institutional authority, speaking and acting for themselves. D10 in Dawn is an exception; there, the activists are quoted verbatim. The ideological nature of this structural silence of the voice of the Punjabi speaker from the authoritative position of text perpetuates the social conditions of marginalization even within the text that is pro-Punjabi.

Another common trend is that Urdu and English are not mentioned as agents, in most texts. Both languages exist as universal norms, taken for granted as a standard that is used to compare Punjabi and in which it is lacking, but these are seldom cited as agents of the processes of exclusion. Such discursive invisibility of the dominant languages is a key ideological process, which is characterized by the fact that it naturalizes their dominance, as if this were a natural background condition instead of a result of history, of power structures and of institutional decisions. The interests and choices of the Punjabi-speaking elite, as an engine of linguistic hierarchy, are only named in D7, and, even here, the focus is on relations between different classes within the Punjabi community instead of on the state (and colonial history) that originally created Urdu dominance.

**6.2 Inter-Newspaper Differences: Discursive Strategies and Ideological Orientations**

The three newspapers present the same deficit frame, but in significantly different discursive ways, which are shaped by different editorial traditions, readership and institutional locations. Dawn's corpus has the most different types of texts and is most important structurally. It foregrounds class-based critique (D7), uses satirical irony to show complicity within the community (D5), and presents advocacy journalism with activist voices (D10), and highlights state mechanisms as tools of linguistic erasure (D6) elements which set it apart from the other two newspapers. Although not in a fundamental way as evidenced in Table 8 that shows both Dawn's most critical texts fall within the deficit frame of reference, Dawn's discourse does

provide more discursive space for structural criticism than any of the other two discourses, The News International or The Express Tribune.

The News International corpus is most distinctive in terms of the expert authority brought into the mix and a cultural and instrumentalist formulation of Punjabi. The highly academic and intellectual nature of the voices (Dr. Mazhar Abbas, Dr. Tariq Rehman, the interview with Dr. Ishtiaq) in the TNI corpus helps to create a certain form of elite authority for TNI discourse. This authority is utilised, however, largely in the context of deficit framing (N1, N2), as well as self-blame discourse (N4, N5), and not to structural critique. While N3 is attempting to revalue Punjabi, it is done in the soft power manner and the process of cultural legitimation of Punjabi is based on the condition that it has to be instrumentalized for the external image of the Pakistani state.

The corpus used for the Express Tribune is the smallest (five texts) but analytically unique as it is the most densely packed with identity and historically oriented discourse. The dominance of youth voice (ET2) and student voice (ET4) and the predominance of personal-reflective genres (ET3 and ET8) is indicative of the newspaper's targeting a younger, educated audience, who are making sense of issues relating to linguistic identity in a post-colonial cultural context. In contrast to the way the texts of Dawn and The News International are much more institutional than the texts of the Express Tribune, the latter is more emotionally expressive and as such translates the discussion of Punjabi marginalization into the realm of personal feeling and cultural sentiment, which is a space that is not necessarily one of policy and institutional accountability.

### **6.3 Implications for Understanding Media Discourse and Language Ideology**

In the cross-newspaper comparative analysis, it is found that the construction of Punjabi language ideology in print media in Pakistan is not a uniform and monolithic process but it is subject to editorial traditions, voice distribution, genre conventions and readership assumptions of the newspapers. However, the persistence of the deficit frame, regardless of the discursive approaches in the three newspapers, indicates that the frame is a deep formation, which overstands the differences in the newspapers. It is congruent with Van Dijk (2008) who suggested that main ideologies are not asserted but rather the hierarchical assumptions become naturalized in various discursive settings.

The findings also have implications for the understanding of the relationship between media advocacy and language revitalization. The three newspapers have texts that are apparently pro-Punjabi and worried about its disappearance. But the analysis shows that this sympathy is overwhelmingly manifested in frames – deficit, self-blame, nostalgia, and instrumentalism that, in the end, question and normalize the conditions of the marginalization of Punjabi. The dominant frames – deficit to rights, self-blame to institutional accountability, nostalgia to present-tense political demand and expert commentary to direct representation of Punjabi speaker voices – would need to switch gears to be truly supportive of language equality. This change is only subtly manifested in the corpus (most obviously in D3, D7, D10, and ET4) and is not a trend in the corpora as a whole.

### **7. Conclusion**

The present study has carried out a systematic comparative Critical Discourse Analysis of twenty one (21) editorials and opinion articles from three major English language newspapers of Pakistan viz Dawn, The News International and The Express Tribune which were published during the period of 2010 to 2025. The Socio-Cognitive CDA model of Van Dijk (2008) at the three levels of analysis (macrostructure, microstructure and superstructure) has been applied in the study to find out the ideological representation of the marginalization of the Punjabi language in each of

the three newspapers separately and to see the similarity and dissimilarity in the three newspapers in terms of their representations of the marginalization of Punjabi language.

The analysis shows the similarities and the differences as well. All the three newspapers present a deficit frame, which makes Punjabi a language in crisis, in decline or in need of institutional safeguarding. All three actively marginalize the Punjabi speakers from discursive authority. All three make Urdu and English dominant and natural, without actually saying so. The above-mentioned commonalities reveal that in the print media, which are used as a medium of communication by the elite, the language hierarchy prevails even in discourses which seem to oppose or empathize with the Punjabi language.

Meanwhile, analytically significant differences among the newspapers exist. The most structurally significant and polyphonic, the explainers of Punjabi marginalization most often in the foreground and those most willing to represent the voices of activists are found in Dawn's corpus. This characteristic of News International's corpus relates most closely to the combination of knowledgeable authority and cultural instrumentalism and self-blame. The Express Tribune is most personal and nostalgic of historical times. These differences show variations in the context of the three newspapers' editorial traditions, readership, and institutional positions, and indicate that the reproduction of language ideology in print media in Pakistan is a heterogeneous process not uniform.

This study contributes to the research in three ways. First, this is the first systematic three level comparative CDA of the Punjabi language discourse in three major English language newspapers of Pakistan. First, it offers the first systematic three level comparative CDA of the discourse of Punjabi language in three major Pakistani English language newspapers (EPNs). Second, it shows how Van Dijk's Ideological Square works in this particular context, which has hardly been discussed in the CDA literature, that of South Asian multilingual media discourse. Thirdly, it offers empirical evidence for the argument that sympathy with marginal languages is not necessarily an act of genuine challenge to linguistic hierarchy, for the manner of expression of sympathy can itself help to create the conditions of marginalization.

This study could be continued in a number of directions in the future. A comparison with Urdu language newspapers would uncover the presence or absence, and if present, the manner in which the Punjabi language ideology is built up in Urdu language print media. Longitudinal study of a single newspaper would allow for the analysis of the discursive changes over a more extended period of time in the wake of policy change, Census results and/or language activism. The study of how these constructions are interpreted by and given meaning to readers with varying social positions would greatly benefit from reception studies. In the end, comparative examination of South Asian multilingual contexts (India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka) would help to gain a better understanding of how the relationship between the media discourse and the language ideology and linguistic inequality in postcolonial multilingual societies works.

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