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Investigating the Role of English in Pakistani Street Banners and Political Poster Discourse Menahil Aslam

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Abstract

The use of English in political banners and posters were studied in Pakistan. It utilized a linguistic perspective of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to study ten posters that were gathered from protest scenes in major cities in Pakistan. In these posters Urdu, regional language (Sindhi) and English were used. The study examined the reasons behind protesters' use of English, how it can be utilized with visual components, and what it tells about identity, power and politics. The results indicate that English is used for various purposes. It is a way to get protest messages to the international community. It denotes schooling and progressiveness. It also does not show a sense of resistance to the state. SFL demonstrates the significance of language in terms of meaning and emotion. CDA brings to light the dynamics of power in these messages. The overall impact is enhanced through the use of visual elements like color and typography. This study helps discourse studies because it demonstrates the use of both linguistic and visual means by Pakistani protesters to create the sense of solidarity and influence public discourse

Keywords: English, Political Banners, Systemic Functional Linguistics, Critical Discourse Analysis, Multilingualism, Pakistan

1. Introduction

Language communicates, but it does more! It is a reflection of social, cultural and political realities. Language used in public places in multilingual countries such as Pakistan has serious implications. Urdu is the country language. It promotes unity. Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Balochi are the regional languages which describe different cultural identities. English is a different case. It is linked to education, prestige and the world. Street banners and political posters can be seen all over Pakistan. They are seen in elections, protests, religious affairs and social movements. All these are accessible to all socioeconomic groups. In recent years, there have been more instances of English being used in such materials. This trend leaves us with some important questions to consider. How is it that protestors opt for English? To whom are they trying to go? What about this option gives us an idea of what Pakistani society is like?

The choice of the English language for a protest banner is not only a linguistic one. It's a strategic move. English signals sophistication. It connects the message with values that are world values. It addresses particular audiences like international media and educated elites of the cities. In political terms, English may be used to suggest progressive stance and/or a wish to appeal to a broader audience. This study throws some light on the use of English in Pakistani street banners and political posters. It examines the purpose of using English, the ways in which it works alongside visual design and the insights it offers into power, identity and political communication. The study is designed to promote the understanding of the language usage in public places in the multi-linguistic context in Pakistan. The study helps to understand the sociopolitical context of language choice in public places. It also helps to develop an insight into the global character of protest and the role of English in postcolonial settings.

1.1 Research Questions

1. What linguistic patterns appear in Pakistani political banners and posters?
2. What does the strategic choice of English reveal about the target audience and political goals?
3. In what contexts and for what purposes is English used?
4. How does English differ from or complement local languages such as Urdu and Sindhi?

2. Literature Review

Language, power and ideology can be studied in the productive context of street banners and posters. There are a number of strong bodies of analysis for this kind of analysis, such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). CDA was developed by Fairclough (1995) to help uncover the power dynamics in the language. SFL was developed by Halliday (1978) who was based on the premise that the language always has social functions.

There have been several studies that have been done on CDA in the context of Pakistani politics. In their study, Khan and Jabeen (2021) studied the campaign documents and demonstrated the process of language in forging the nationalist ideologies. They were predominantly on Urdu literature, however. They did not look into the emergence of English in the city. Likewise, Aslam et al. (2022) examined the parliamentary speeches with the support of SFL. Their work demonstrates the power that can be communicated through transitivity. Street banners, on the other hand, are not as well studied.

Again, this is an area where multimodal analysis comes to play. Kress and van Leeuwen's research (2006) demonstrated interaction between visual and textual aspects of public communication. This framework was used to analyze electoral posters in Pakistan by Rehman and Anwar (2020). They learned that the use of colour, typography and imagery support linguistic messages. They had the emphasis on Urdu and regional languages, however. Posters in English language were not investigated.

English used in public protest has been studied as a means for global outreach internationally. Pennycook (2017) contends that the use of English can be considered a "glocal" medium in postcolonial contexts. It is available everywhere and has local significance. For Siddiqui (2023), in the context of Pakistan, the use of English on street banners conveys modernity and resonates with the educated city dwellers. Very little research has focused on the particular structures of language that are found within these texts of English.

Studies of posters around the world demonstrate that it is vital that emotional and persuasive language is used. Malik and Iqbal (2021) conducted a study on the South Asian protest art and they determined that metaphors and slogans help to build solidarity. Bhatia and Ross (2019) remarked that the techniques used in protest and advertising language is the same, for example repetition and ellipsis. The insights gained from these studies are relevant to the analysis of

Pakistani banners, however, they were not primarily concerned with the English as the primary medium.

Abdullah and Khan (2023) conducted a recent study on COVID-19 awareness posters in Pakistan. They determined that using simple, straightforward words, along with visual graphics, enhances message effectiveness. They studied only the state sponsored materials. Protest banners are not so. They do not endorse the official narratives but rather question them.

Although a lot of work has already been done, the use of English in street banners and political posters of Pakistan is still under researched. In Urban Pakistan English language banners come with a wide array of problems such as governance, social justice and human rights. They need to be studied in detail with regard to their linguistic and pictorial approaches. This study addresses this gap, using both SFL and CDA approaches to a corpus of ten protest posters from all over Pakistan.

3. Research Methodology

A qualitative approach is taken in this study. It looks at the use of English in the banners and posters of the streets in Pakistan. Emphasis is placed on both the linguistic and visual aspects.

3.1 Data Collection

Purposive sampling was done to select 10 English language posters. The posters are from the urban protests in various cities such as Karachi, Lahore, Hyderabad, Okara and Islamabad. Street and intersection surveys, social media (X - formerly 'Twitter' and Instagram), and news outlets (Dawn and The News International). The sources selected were identified as being those who offer authentic information about protest materials and grassroots activism (Rehman & Anwar, 2020). The chosen posters have a variety of topics. That includes issues of human rights, governance, economic issues and social justice. This collection offers a broad range of examples of the use of English in protest contexts.

3.2 Analytical Frameworks

The study is based on two frameworks. SFL (Halliday, 1978) analyses the social and cultural meaning that is created within language. Emphasizes three metafunctions: ideational (represents reality), interpersonal (acts relationships), and textual (organizes information). CDA (Fairclough, 1995) focuses on the ways in which texts assert, challenge, and resist authority and create or assert collective identity. Visual analysis is based on the work of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) which emphasizes colour, typography and images.

4 Results and Analysis

Each poster is analyzed using SFL and CDA in the following section. For the purposes of the linguistic analysis, visual descriptions are included.

Picture 1: "Chief Justice, Is the court open to the public today???"

Description: Two masked women hold a sign questioning the Chief Justice about court access, in a large crowd, apparently at night.

SFL Analysis:

Ideational: The text speaks to and asks questions about a state of affairs: the open court. This is with regard to public rights in the justice system.

Interpersonal: The triple question marks indicate the speaker's sarcasm and frustration. Low modality of the question suggests uncertainty of access to and accountability of judges.

Textual: The theme of the opening of the addressee is the theme for this. Sentence is simple and clear. Rhetorical weight is in the punctuation.

This banner is challenging access to the judiciary in English. The protesters broke into Islamabad's red zone in 2024 in protest of the resignation of the Chief Justice. The main audience of this English here is legal specialists and the English speaking media. It gives a sense of

formalization and urgency. The message is in line with the one that was sent in 2007 by the lawyer's movement. It doesn't get to rural people, but it really fits into the urban protest culture.

Picture 2: “#BehindYouSkipper ‘Beggars Can’t Be Leaders!’ Imported Government Will Not Be Accepted!!!”

Description: A sign in a PTI crowd twists the proverb ‘beggars can’t be choosers’ to attack the government.

SFL Analysis:

Ideational: The relationship that comes up in ‘Beggars Can't Be Leaders’ is that of the unfitnes of the government. ‘Imported Government’ serves as the participant and ‘Will Not Be Accepted’ is a behavioral rejection.

Interpersonal: Whereas triple exclamation marks and the hash tag are used to indicate strong negative appraisal. The hashtag amplifies the message to the online community.

Textual: Speech bubble style lends an informal and confrontational tone. The negation is repeated for the purposes of cohesion.

This Banner is in response to the ouster of Imran Khan in 2022. Foreign interference was suggested by the use of ‘imported government’. English takes the saying and twists it around to make fun of their opponents. Urban youth are the main targets of PTI rallies, which typically use English to have an impact on the community and disseminate messages. The puns and jargon lend the banner the potential to go viral.

Picture 3: “WE ARE CHOOSERS NOT BEGGERS”

Description: A young woman in a PTI cap holds the sign. An Imran Khan poster is visible in the background.

SFL Analysis:

Ideational: The relational process ‘WE ARE’ makes a contrast between ‘CHOOSERS’ and ‘BEGGERS’. Protestors take on the role of empowered agents.

Interpersonal: Block caps insure identity. The positive appraisal of oneself is a rejection of the label ‘beggar’. Tone is defiant.

Textual: Short parallel structure. The misspelling of ‘BEGGERS’ adds authenticity to the banner. This banner is in reaction to the opposition rhetoric that was heard during PTI rallies in the year 2022. English is restored to its dignity and sovereignty. It is a hasty misspelling of polish. It also highlights the grassroots aspect of the protest, as it was not professional, but rather grassroots. The local support and the global observation is achieved through bilingual context, English sign, Urdu chants.

Picture 4: “Petrol Hike a Bomb” – “Electricity Bomb” (with Urdu)

Description: A group protests with signs about price hikes. They hold lanterns and fruits. Languages are mixed.

SFL Analysis:

Ideational: The metaphor ‘Hike a Bomb’ is a comparison between price increases and violence. The impact of the material on the common people is at the heart of the matter.

Interpersonal: The term ‘Bomb’ has negative appraisal. It is painful and requires alleviation but does not explicitly say so.

Textual: The theme multimodality of load shedding is emphasized by short phrases and the use of visual symbols like lanterns.

These banners came up in 2023 when mass protesting against IMF backed price hikes. English illustrates the economic crisis and connects this with wider issues such as the IMF conditionalities. Urdu text relates to common people. The languages, when combined, create a

bond between different social classes against inflation. Metaphor of the bomb is easy to comprehend but powerful.

Picture 5: “The Pakistan People’s Party’s demand is the restoration of the 1973 constitution.”

Description: A collage shows PPP leaders, historical images, and a gavel symbol.

SFL Analysis:

Ideational: The relational process ‘demand is’ refers to the party's objective. The term ‘restoration’ indicates “change”.

Interpersonal: The formal tone is used to convey the party's institutional position. The use of appeal to history reinforces the argument.

Textual: The sentences here are much longer than in the other slogans. Historical depth provided by visuals.

PPP has always been strong in its demand for the restoration of the original constitution of 1973. The use of English makes the statement official and diplomatic. It's aimed at policy makers, foreign observers. This is a formal register, which is a part of the legacy of constitutional democracy of Pakistan, through PPP.

Picture 6: “BILAWAL BHUTTO ZARDARI CHAIRMAN” (intra-party election results)

Description: A poster announces PPP election results with photos and party flags.

SFL Analysis:

Ideational: Names and titles are used to identify. The process of ‘election’ is a selection of ‘Elected’.

Interpersonal: Capitals are used to evoke a celebratory mood. High modality = high level of confidence, high level of legitimacy.

Textual: Information is clearly organized in list format. Inclusivity is enhanced by bilingual elements.

This poster is from the intra-party elections for the April 2025 presidential primary election. English shows leadership in a formal style. Designed to be circulated on digital platforms such as TikTok and Instagram where English language content is more likely to spread. English enhances the party's institutional credibility in the processes of the party.

Picture 7: “Save River Indus SUP / Save Sindh / NO MORE CANALS ON RIVER INDUS” (with Urdu)

Description: A large banner held by a group with red flags. A portrait is also visible.

SFL Analysis:

Ideational: All the commands are material processes: ‘Save’ and ‘NO MORE’. Participants are the river and Province of Sindh.

Interpersonal: Urgent demands. Criticism of the building of canals. The commitment of emotions is high.

Textual: Repetition of ‘Save’ results in cohesion. Mixed languages make multiple audiences.

This banner is in regards to the protests against federal canal projects diverting Indus water in 2025 in Sindh. English enhances the message of the environment in international forums. The Sindh United Party's English language presence is beyond the reach of the Sindhi speaking community. The bilingual design brings together local and global concerns. The banner also reflects discontent with the federal policies which are deemed to be Punjab-centric.

Picture 8: “RELEASE IMRAN KHAN RALLY & AZADI Celebration” (UK location)

Description: A poster for a UK PTI event. Imran Khan’s photo and contact numbers are included.

SFL Analysis:

Ideational: “RELEASE” means that the material is required. The events are marked by ‘RALLY & AZADI’. In the song ‘Celebration’ the mood changes to one of hope.

Interpersonal: Imperative structure (emphasises urgency). 'Celebration' is a protest that is positive.

Textual: The information is arranged by bold titles. The list of organizers helps to add weight. The poster is part of a campaign to free Imran Khan from detention, which was held in August 2025 at the UK. It's English for the diaspora audience. It co-ordinates participation through social media. The Urdu word 'Azadi', meaning 'freedom' adds a note of emotion to the message and makes it understandable to a Pakistani and non-Pakistani audience. Diaspora banners such as this sustain the ties with the homeland and put protests on the international agenda.

Picture 9: "PPP LEADS ANTI-CORRUPTION MARCH TARGETING KPK GOVT / Netizens React With Sarcasm"

Description: A graphic combines a protest photo with a headline about public sarcasm.

SFL Analysis:

Ideational: LEADS' action and the relation attack mentioned in 'TARGETING' make PPP appear to be adversaries of the KPK government.

Interpersonal: 'SARCASM' is a form of public skepticism. The message in the headline is a no-brainer.

Textual: Headline format combines text and images. The visual supports the framing of the news. The presentation style is news-like, with a visual to support it.

This march was organized by PPP against PTI-governed KPK (corruption). In response, though, citizens responded with sarcasm due to PPP's own governance record. English is an accurate reflection of irony and speeds up the sharing of information in social media. Political banners in Pakistani culture are primarily in English and are meant to attack opponents, but can be said to have a negative effect when they are understood and show inconsistencies. This banner illustrates the way in which English is also the target for critical reception.

Picture 10: "STOP PROMOTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN"

Description: Women at a protest hold the sign in bold text. A photo of a woman making a stop gesture is visible. Urdu text appears in the background.

SFL Analysis:

Ideational: The word 'STOP' is a material process. The actors, the implied ones, are the society, the media and the authorities and the victims are women.

Interpersonal: The imperative has high modality which expresses urgency. Emotional solidarity is created through negative appraisal of 'VIOLENCE'. The message is aimed at viewers who have been a victim of harassment.

Textual: All capitals are indicative of urgency. The command to build is a word that leads to the issuing of the command. Stop gesture is used to reinforce linguistic message multimodality.

The banner was carried at Aurat March marches organized in the cities such as Lahore, Islamabad, etc. every year on the occasion of International Women's day. English is targeted at the international media, NGOs and the educated urban population. Makes the demand visible around the world. Although there are laws in place, such as the Punjab Protection of Women Act, 2015, their implementation is weak. The demand is backed by legal and diplomatic support from English. Especially in rural setting, the background Urdu text might have more relevance

5 Discussion

This section addresses the results of the study based on the four research questions of the study. It also provides comparisons and contrasts of the current results to those of previous studies. The theoretical frameworks Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) are discussed.

The analysis shows some regularities in the language used in the 10 posters. The most common structure is imperative. The banners (Pictures 7, 8, 10) seem to display the same command - 'STOP,' 'SAVE,' and 'RELEASE. These are some high-modality options. In terms of SFL, they establish a direct interpersonal contact between protester and audience or authority. According to Halliday (1978) this is known as the demand function of language. The speaker is calling for an action, rather than just information. This is a conscious linguistic approach. It puts the protester in the role of an agent that can make demands.

The second important pattern is metaphor. These phrases, such as 'Petrol Hike a Bomb' (Picture 4), are symbolic, allowing the abstraction of the economic policy to be turned to physical pain. In a study of protest language and advertising, Bhatia and Ross (2019) found that this is consistent with the findings of the study. They said that emotional metaphors are most effective in limited areas. The same has been verified in the present study in the context of Pakistan. The bomb metaphor is effective because it's a visceral thing. It does not demand any knowledge in the realm of academic learning. The image is self-explanatory to anyone who has ever suffered the consequences of load-shedding or price increases.

There is also some nominalization as in formal party banners. In the noun phrases, 'Restoration of the 1973 Constitution' (Picture 5) and 'Anti-Corruption March' (Picture 9), the emphasis lies with the noun phrases. SFL is a nominalization strategy. It eliminates actors and processes, and substitutes them for abstraction. This gives the sense of a party's demands being institutional, natural and not to be heard by the individual. Nominalization is identified as one of the important CDA markers by Fairclough (1995). Can make agency and responsibility difficult to see. In picture 9 'Anti-Corruption March' the irony is that PPP is being accused of corruption. A phrase like that is nominalized and appears as an objective action, but not a political maneuver.

Another common occurrence is the use of negation. In 'Imported Government Will Not Be Accepted' (Picture 2) and 'NO MORE CANALS ON RIVER INDUS' (Picture 7), the rejection of identity is created through a form of refusing. The identity is created through a refusal in 'Imported Government Will Not Be Accepted' (Picture 2) and 'NO MORE CANALS ON RIVER INDUS' (Picture 7). A similar trend was noted by Kaleem et al. (2022) in their research on election slogans of Pakistan. They discovered opposition identity can be formed by the denial of something, rather than the affirmation of something. The present results corroborate this observation in slogans to protest banners. Negation is not the only option in grammar. It's a political position.

In Pakistan, previous research on political discourses has been largely on Urdu texts (Khan & Jabeen, 2021; Aslam et al. 2022). The present study has an important contribution. The same language trends are seen in materials in English. The structural strategies will not be changed when selecting English. It alters the audience, it changes the reach. This implies that there is a common rhetorical grammar of the protest discourse in Pakistan, irrespective of language.

The use of English is not standardised in all protest situations. Four contexts and purposes are identified, based on the study. One of the first types of English used in accountability discourse is called "English for post-facts". Picture 1 ('Chief Justice, Is the court open to the public today???) takes a challenge to an institution of the state in English. It's not to be aimed at the general public. It's the institution and what the media reports on it. This is in line with the idea that language is a space of conflict of power, as put forward by Fairclough (1995). The engagement of the English language for questioning the Chief Justice is symbolic. Takes the language of the law to question the law. Khan and Jabeen (2021) found similar trends in the Pakistani political platforms, but just in Urdu. The findings of the present study reveal that English

has even more power in cases of accountability as it reflects the formal language of the institutions being held accountable.

Secondly, English is found in a contestation of ideas. PTI banners (Pictures 2 and 3) present a political story in English. 'Imported Government Will Not Be Accepted' and 'WE ARE CHOOSERS NOT BEGGERS' are identity statements. Responds to accusations from the opposition. Pennycook (2017) maintains English in postcolonial context is a 'glocal' instrument. It's international but local. These PTI banners bear witness to this. They make a local political and use internationally known English. The meaning of the proverb 'beggars can't be choosers' comes into play only because the audience is familiar with the original. This is assumed to be for an English-reading audience. It addresses both the urban educated supporters of the PTI and the international media.

Third, English is featured in environmental and rights advocacy. The two other pictures, Picture 7 ('Save River Indus') and Picture 10 ('Stop Promoting Violence Against Women') are in English and extend beyond national boundaries. The posters are geared towards NGOs, foreign governments, and international media. This is in line with Pennycook (2017) and Siddiqui (2023). According to them, English is used in Pakistan as an intermediary for the attainment of foreign platforms. The present research has direct evidence from protest materials. This is the most beneficial function for environmental and human rights campaigns. They do not have domestic audiences, they have international audiences.

Fourthly, there is diaspora communication and internet communication in English. Picture 8 (UK PTI Rally) is for circulation abroad Pakistan. For audiences across the UK and other English speaking countries, English is the natural choice of language for the diaspora audience. Manan et al. (2017) observed the glocalization of English on the linguistic map of Pakistan. The results of the current study indicate that the glocalization of this is now being used to promote political mobilization. The diaspora banner is more than just informational. It is a device that allows keeping political connections open between countries.

The four contexts have not been sufficiently covered in the previous studies conducted in Pakistan. Previous studies (Shaheen et al., 2024; Jabbar et al., 2025) concentrated on the visual aspects or Urdu language options. The present study contributes to this by demonstrating that English is used for specific purposes and those are different in a systematic manner from those of the indigenous languages.

There is no competition between the local and English languages in these banners. It is complementary. Function of each language in the communicative act. This evidence is in line with the concept of 'glocalization' of English in Pakistan suggested by Manan et al. (2017). The present study offers, however, more specific evidence in regard to the working division at the banner level.

English names and metaphoric the economic problem in Picture 4 ('Petrol Hike a Bomb'). Urdu text gives context to the message and local feeling. Both languages are used at the same time to reach the audience. English is accessible to journalists, social media users and the educated English-speaking observers. Urdu is accessible to the masses, including non-English literate audiences. This is a strategic design, it is not a contradiction in the use of a bilingual approach.

In Picture 7 ('Save River Indus'), English is making an environmental demand that can be understood by international environmental forums. The local, ethnic aspect of the grievance is accentuated with Urdu and Sindhi. Sindh United Party does this to court both international environmentalists and the local Sindhi nationalists. This approach is similar to Al-Momani and Al-Shraideh's (2022) findings in the protest posters used in Jordan, where Arabic and English played

different roles in relation to their audiences. The current study is also in the same direction as in Pakistani context.

Rehman and Anwar (2020) observed that almost all the electoral posters in Pakistan are in Urdu or regional languages. They didn't go through an examination of English. The focus of the present study is to reveal that English has become a well-established and developing feature in protest materials particularly in the urban context. It is not however, a total replacement of the local language as this is not often done. It supplements them. This indicates that English is not a dominant register in Pakistani protest discourse but has been introduced as a second register.

This is where SFL comes in handy. Halliday (1978) believes that language choice is a social choice. The protester both makes an Ideological, Interpersonal, and Textual Choice when writing in English. They're presenting reality through the prism of international, enacting the relationship with the world and shaping the message for maximum impact. The Urdu is added when they add another layer of meaning that is within the local cultural codes. The two languages result in a more rich semiotic resource than either language alone.

CDA has another dimension. Fairclough (1995) states that language mirrors and reifies power relations. But the use of English in protest banners is not a politically "pure" one. In Pakistan, the language of the elite institutions, such as court, university, corporate media, federal government, is English. To use English in the language of protest is a form of appropriation! It thrusts into the mainstream of high-level discourse a space for bottom-up calls. This is a language subversion. The protestors aren't only protesting in English. They are coming into a space that they traditionally haven't been able to access.

The selection of English indicates three points about these protest materials and their target audience and political agenda. First, it provides insights into audience stratification. Not every English language banner is geared to the same audience. The PTI banners (Pictures 2, 3, 8) address educated young people, the diaspora community and social media users, who are located in urban areas of Pakistan. PPP banners (Pictures 5, 6) are aimed at institutional actors, journalists and policy makers. Women's rights banners (Picture 10) are aimed at NGOs, foreign media and international human rights organizations. Groups are distinctively made up in language. This is a new type of audience stratification, which so far has not been examined in the studies of protest discourse in Pakistan. To study Aurat March, Baig et al. (2020) had concentrated on visual and Urdu text. The present research reveals that the English text in the same movement creates a unique audience and express different political intentions.

Secondly, the selection of English is a reflection of political agendas that are not limited to the national/state level. Local languages are usually the only ones used in domestic protests as they are aimed at the Pakistani state. The protesters' use of English is indicating their desire for international attention. They want people to know it exists from foreign governments, human rights groups or the global media. This is substantiated by the following pictures: Picture 10 (violence against women), Picture 7 (Indus water rights) and Picture 8 (diaspora rally). These are not merely addressing the Pakistani government. They are building up of pressure or case for international support.

Third, English illuminates how digital media is transforming the communication of protest. Between 2013 and 2022, Shahn et al. (2024) observed long march placards. It was discovered that the elements of the visual were seen as dominant. English language has emerged as a more dominant element in recent materials particularly for circulation on the social media in the current study. The algorithms on digital platforms are more likely to reach English-language content. Protesters understand this. They write in English not just because they think in English, but because English goes farther on the Internet. It's a new discovery. Previous research failed

to associate language choice with dynamics of platforms. The present research indicates that social media is a structural aspect of protest language.

The implications are theoretical and are important. Pennycook's (2017) concept of glocalization is a good way of capturing the nature of English-local language dynamics. But this aspect of the algorithm is not fully captured. The current study suggests an extension of this framework. Language is not only a product of postcolonial linguistic hierarchy but also a product of the logic of social media platforms in the digital era. English is selected, in part, because it works better on X, Instagram and TikTok. This introduces another technological dimension into the sociolinguistic phenomenon that has previously been seen as a purely sociolinguistic phenomenon.

All of Halliday's (1978) three metafunctions are evident in this data. The function of the idea shows the ways in which English makes a variety of political realities (sovereignty, oppression, resistance) in various protest situations. The interpersonal function reveals the way the English asserts authority, urgency and solidarity as a function of the grammatical construction used (imperatives, questions, declaratives). The textual function demonstrates the ways that English is structurally organized for maximum clarity and digital reach in protest messages. Combined these functions show that English is not a mere adornment in Pakistani protest banners. It performs its purpose at all levels of significance.

The results obtained in the present study are in accord with some of the earlier studies, and distinct from some of the earlier studies. This study validates Pennycook's (2017) glocalization theses. English is not simply transcoded into Pakistani protest materials; it is also a language that resonates locally. English is not just translated into Pakistani protest materials, it is also a local language. This can be seen in almost all the posters studied. The present study provides specificity, however. Pennycook discussed English in postcolonial contexts in general. This study demonstrates the operation of glocalization at the sentence level by means of imperatives, metaphor and negation, as well as at the multimodal level, by the juxtaposition of English text and local-language captions, and culturally coded visuals.

It is found that the multimodal strategies partially support the findings of Rehman and Anwar (2020) that improves accessibility. They specialized in Urdu posters. This present study adapts their model to ELL materials and demonstrates that the same multimodal structure is found in ELL materials. English language text is complimented by color, typography and visual metaphor to create a cohesive message.

The study builds on the study of Khan and Jabeen (2021) who have noted that the political communication in Pakistan is predominantly Urdu in nature. The data presented in this current document indicates that today's protest materials in cities have a meaningful representation of English. This is no contradiction, since their travel to the Dimmer is a necessity for them. It reflects a change in context. The campaign posters were examined by Khan and Jabeen who look at a broad electorate throughout the country. In the current study, the target population are protest posters which are aimed at more focused and educated city audiences. The difference in findings is due to the difference in the communicative purpose.

The study also diverges from the study conducted by Abdullah and Khan (2023) which is that state-sponsored public communication in Pakistan utilizes basic and direct language. State materials lack ideology. Protest banners do just that: they say the opposite. They question state narratives using irony (Picture 9), sarcasm (Picture 1) and wordplay (Pictures 2, 3). This contrasts with the fact that language choice in public space is extremely ideological. The different communicative goals that state and non-state actors have lead them to employ different linguistic strategies.

Last, but not least, the study builds on the work of Shaheen et al. (2024) on the long march placards. Their work had illustrated the need for images in political protest. The present research demonstrates that, as well, the linguistic aspect plays an equal part, particularly in English-language texts created for digital distribution. Language and image go inseparably together in these texts. They are mutually dependent and cannot be understood without each other.

To conclude, the discussion illustrates the strategic, purposeful and multifunctional use of English in the Pakistani political banners. It is doing work in three areas: ideational, interpersonal, and textual. It has a variety of applications in different ways of protesting. It supports local languages, it is not a replacement. And it shows political agendas that are not limited to national, but international and digital audiences. The findings of the study add to the previous research work conducted in the field of CDA, SFL and multilingual public discourse in Pakistan.

6 Conclusion

This study concludes that English is not a supplementary language in the political banners of Pakistan. It's a planning device. It is used intentionally by protesters to gain attention of the international audience, to assert identity and to challenge power. The presence of English is more pronounced in the areas of human rights, international solidarity and digital circulation. It exists with Urdu and Sindhi too which indicates a sophisticated communicative strategy. Protestors select the language they use according to audience, purpose and context. The results indicate that political banners are indeed multimodal texts in Pakistan. Language and pictures are complementary. Together, SFL and CDA shed light on the meaning, as well as the power dynamics that lie within these materials. These choices of language are influenced by the postcolonial background of Pakistan. English has a colonial past and it is now employed in opposition to authority, for establishing solidarity, and communicating with the world. Future research should have more posters, interview protesters, and provide a discussion of rural contexts, where English is less prevalent.

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Appendix-A



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