

Political discourse rests heavily on persuasive aspects of language. Political writers use a well-stocked battery of persuasive devices to rationalize their actions or to sway people into a supportive world. Readers and listeners are not normally very analytical or rational in their approaches and responses. Empty rhetoric, falsehood wrapped in piety, plausible deceit, thunderous assertions, misdirected arguments, false conclusions – as long as they succeed in moving people – they will be employed. This may be described as the “dishonest” use of language. However, if the pursuit of power is considered to be legitimate, then all means employed in the realization of that pursuit are legitimized. The present study is not judgmental about these matters. It merely seeks to identify some of the linguistic devices used in the process i.e. the rationalization of the political role besides pointing out some errors in arguments.

Pakistani political scenario is permeated with a dichotomy of power between civilian rulers and military dictators. Each claims his/her positive efforts in the welfare and progress of the country, whereas the consequences tell a different story. The social, geographical, political and economic conditions have deteriorated through the sixty-five years’ history of Pakistan. Politicians hold military Generals responsible for these and the latter have the same opinion about politicians. Language is an obvious tool for them to rationalize their roles while in or out of office. Ms Benazir Bhutto’s and General Pervez Musharraf’s political autobiographies entitled “Daughter of the East” and “In the Line of Fire”, respectively, have been selected for this analysis.

The analysis has been done under the paradigm of critical discourse analysis to unearth hidden motives and ideologies underneath discourses. The selected models – for the purpose of looking into the linguistic techniques employed by the authors for the rationalization of their rule and logical errors committed in the process – proved useful in validating the purpose for which these are formed. Applying these tools, the researcher was able to uncover a number of rationalizations and fallacies in the autobiographies noted above. The genre of autobiography has also been found useful to examine personal motives of the authors.