



ENGAGEMENT AND ATTITUDE MARKERS IN PAKISTANI ENGLISH TWITTER POLITICAL DISCOURSE: A CORPUS-BASED STUDY

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Abstract

This study investigates the use of engagement and attitude markers in Pakistani English political discourse on Twitter. The research is grounded in two complementary theoretical frameworks: Hyland's (2005) Metadiscourse Theory, which explains how writers use language to interact with and position their audiences, and Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory, which provides a systematic model for analyzing evaluative language. The corpus was analyzed using AntConc (version 4.2.0), a corpus linguistics software tool, through concordance searches, word frequency lists, collocate analysis, and cluster identification. The findings reveal that a total of 3,590 engagement marker tokens were identified in the corpus. Directive markers were the most dominant category of all engagement tokens. Inclusive pronouns, particularly we and our, formed the second largest group, reflecting a consistent strategy of collective identity construction. With regard to attitude markers, a total of 4,862 tokens were found. Appreciation markers dominated the corpus, followed by Judgement markers and Affect markers. The study also examined monoglossic and heteroglossic engagement strategies. Monoglossic strategies dominated at 62.2% of all tweets, characterized by direct, unhedged declarations while Heteroglossic strategies accounted for 37.8%. The findings demonstrate that Pakistani English political tweeting is a rhetorically structured and formulaic genre that combines interpersonal engagement with positive ideological evaluation in consistent and purposeful ways.

Keywords: *Appraisal Theory, Attitude Markers, Corpus Linguistics, Engagement Markers, Metadiscourse, Pakistani English, Political Discourse, Twitter.*

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1. Introduction

Social media has changed the way people communicate, and Twitter is one of the most powerful platforms where public opinion is formed and shared. In Pakistan, Twitter has become a major space for political discussions, where politicians, journalists, and ordinary citizens express their views, argue about policies, and respond to current events. The language used in these conversations is rich, emotional, and often deeply persuasive, which makes it a valuable subject for linguistic research.

This study focuses on how Pakistani Twitter users use language to engage with others and show their attitudes in political discourse. Two important areas are explored here: engagement markers, which are the linguistic tools writers use to connect with their readers and invite them into the conversation, and attitude markers, which reflect the emotions, judgments, and opinions behind the words. Together, these features reveal how people position themselves and influence others in online political discussions.

To analyze these features, this study draws on two well-established frameworks. The first is Ken Hyland's Metadiscourse Model, which explains how writers shape their texts not just to share information but to interact with their audience. Hyland identifies specific linguistic resources that writers use to guide readers, show their stance, and build a relationship with the audience. The second framework is the Appraisal Theory, developed by Martin and White, which offers a systematic way to examine how language expresses feelings, judgments, and appreciation. Appraisal Theory helps us understand the evaluative dimension of language, that is, how speakers and writers communicate what they value, dislike, or feel strongly about.

Pakistani English occupies a unique position as a variety of World Englishes, shaped by local culture, politics, and multilingual influences. Studying it in the context of Twitter political discourse offers fresh insights into how this variety functions in digital and public spaces. This research uses a corpus-based approach, collecting real tweets to ensure the analysis is grounded in authentic language use. By combining quantitative patterns with qualitative interpretation, the study aims to contribute to the growing fields of corpus linguistics, political discourse analysis, and the study of English as used outside its native-speaking countries.

Hyland's Metadiscourse Model is especially useful here because it was developed to capture exactly these kinds of interactional and evaluative functions in written texts. Within his model, interpersonal metadiscourse includes resources such as hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers. Each of these plays a role in shaping how a message is delivered and how the reader is positioned in relation to it. Similarly, Appraisal Theory, with its three main systems of affect, judgment, and appreciation, provides a detailed map of the evaluative landscape in any given text. When

applied together, these two frameworks offer a comprehensive and complementary lens through which to examine the richness of political language on Twitter.

Previous research on political discourse has largely focused on formal settings such as parliamentary speeches, newspaper editorials, and televised debates. While these studies have contributed greatly to the field, the informal and interactive nature of social media calls for new analytical approaches. Twitter, with its character limits and real-time interactions, encourages a compressed and expressive style of writing that is quite different from traditional political texts. Pakistani English adds another layer of complexity, as users often blend formal English with local expressions, cultural references, and emotionally charged language that reflects their unique sociolinguistic context.

1.1. Research Questions

1. What types of engagement and attitude markers are most frequently used in Pakistani English Twitter political discourse?
2. How does the use of engagement and attitude markers reflect the communicative style of Pakistani English political discourse on Twitter?
3. How do monoglossic and heteroglossic engagement strategies differ in Pakistani English political tweets?

1.2. Research objectives

1. To identify the most frequently used engagement and attitude markers in the selected corpus.
2. To explore how these markers shape the overall communicative style of Pakistani English political discourse on Twitter
3. To distinguish the use of monoglossic and heteroglossic engagement strategies in Pakistani English political tweets.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to identify and analyze engagement and attitude markers in Pakistani English political discourse on Twitter through a quantitative corpus-based approach. Political conversations on Twitter have grown significantly in Pakistan, where public figures, politicians, and citizens actively express opinions, debate policies, and respond to national events in English. This study aims to examine how these Twitter users linguistically construct their attitudes and engage with opposing or supporting viewpoints in political discussions. By drawing on Appraisal Theory and Metadiscourse Theory, the study seeks to uncover the frequency, distribution, and patterns of these markers in a specifically compiled Twitter corpus. Ultimately, this research intends to contribute to a better understanding of how Pakistani English functions as a medium of political expression in digital spaces.

1.4. Statement of Problem

Despite the rapid growth of Twitter as a dominant platform for political expression in Pakistan, the linguistic dimensions of this discourse remain systematically understudied. Existing research on Pakistani political discourse is largely concentrated on traditional media, Urdu language texts, or qualitative approaches, leaving a considerable gap in quantitative corpus-based investigations of Pakistani English on social media. Consequently, little is known about the evaluative language patterns and interactional strategies that characterize Pakistani English political communication on Twitter, limiting the broader understanding of how digital political discourse is linguistically constructed within the Pakistani sociolinguistic context.

1.5. Significance of the Study

This study holds considerable significance for the field of English linguistics, particularly in the context of Pakistani English as an outer circle variety. Despite the growing body of research on political discourse and social media language, Pakistani English Twitter discourse remains largely underexplored in corpus-based studies. By filling this gap, the research adds valuable linguistic data and insights that can enrich our understanding of how South Asian English varieties are used in modern digital political communication. The findings of this study will also contribute to the broader literature on World Englishes by demonstrating how Pakistani English users adopt, adapt, and localize evaluative and engagement strategies in online political settings.

Furthermore, this study carries practical significance for linguists, discourse analysts, media researchers, and even political communication experts working in the Pakistani context. A quantitative analysis of attitude and engagement markers can reveal how political narratives are constructed, how agreement or disagreement is expressed, and how speakers position themselves ideologically on public platforms. For educators and researchers, the study provides a replicable methodological model for analyzing social media discourse using corpus tools. In a broader social sense, understanding the language of political Twitter in Pakistan can help promote more informed and critical engagement with digital political content among the general public.

1.6. Limitations of the Study

This study acknowledges several limitations that should be considered when interpreting its findings. The corpus represents only a specific time period of Pakistani English political tweets, which means the results may not be generalized to the entire landscape of political discourse on Twitter. Since tweets are restricted to a character limit, the linguistic data is often brief and fragmented, which may limit the depth and variety of engagement and attitude markers available for analysis.

Additionally, corpus analysis tools may not always accurately interpret context-sensitive language such as sarcasm, irony, or culturally embedded expressions that are commonly found in Pakistani English political tweets. The study is also limited to publicly

available tweets, meaning deleted, private, or restricted content that could have been linguistically relevant could not be included in the corpus. These limitations do not undermine the overall findings of the study but do highlight areas where future research can further expand and improve upon this work.

1.7. Delimitations of the Study

In order to maintain a clear and manageable research scope, this study has been deliberately bounded by a number of delimitations. The study focuses exclusively on Pakistani English tweets, meaning tweets written in Urdu, Roman Urdu, or any other language have been intentionally excluded from the corpus. The analysis is limited to political discourse only, and tweets related to entertainment, sports, religion, or personal matters fall outside the boundary of this research. Furthermore, the study draws specifically on Appraisal Theory and Metadiscourse Theory as its analytical frameworks, and other possible theoretical lenses have been consciously set aside to maintain theoretical consistency. The corpus has also been limited to a specific time period and a selected number of tweets to ensure that the quantitative analysis remains focused, systematic, and practically achievable.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Metadiscourse and Political Language

The study of how language works beyond its basic meaning has a long history in linguistics. Scholars have long recognized that when people write or speak, they do more than simply convey facts. They also guide their readers, express their feelings, and build relationships through the very way they organize and present their words. This broader communicative function of language is what researchers refer to as metadiscourse, and it has become one of the most productive areas of inquiry in applied linguistics and discourse analysis.

The concept of metadiscourse was first introduced by Zelig Harris in 1959, who used the term to describe language that talks about language itself. However, it was not until the work of Joseph Williams in 1981 and later Vande Kopple in 1985 that the concept began to develop into a more systematic framework. Vande Kopple (1985) offered one of the earliest detailed classifications of metadiscourse, dividing it into textual and interpersonal categories. He argued that writers use certain linguistic resources not to add propositional content but to help readers navigate the text and to signal the writer's own stance and relationship with the audience. This distinction between content-oriented language and interaction-oriented language became foundational for all later work in the field.

The most influential development in metadiscourse theory came with the work of Ken Hyland, whose contributions over two decades reshaped how researchers think about writer-reader interaction. Hyland (1998) examined metadiscourse in academic writing and

demonstrated that it plays a crucial role in how writers present themselves and negotiate meaning with their readers. He later refined his model significantly in his book *Metadiscourse: Exploring Interaction in Writing* published in 2005, which remains the most widely cited framework in metadiscourse research.

In this work, Hyland (2005) proposed a two-part model dividing metadiscourse into interactive and interactional resources. Interactive resources help the writer organize the text for the reader, while interactional resources involve the writer more directly, allowing them to express attitudes, engage the reader, and acknowledge other voices. Within the interactional category, Hyland identified five key resources: hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers. Each of these serves a distinct communicative purpose, and together they capture the full range of ways in which a writer positions themselves and interacts with their audience.

Attitude markers are particularly relevant to political discourse because they allow writers to express their feelings and evaluations explicitly. According to Hyland (2005), attitude markers signal the writer's affective or evaluative stance toward the content being discussed. Words such as unfortunately, surprisingly, I agree, and importantly all function as attitude markers because they tell the reader not just what is being said but how the writer feels about it. In political contexts, attitude markers are especially powerful because political communication is inherently evaluative. Politicians and citizens alike are constantly making judgments about policies, leaders, and events, and the language they use to do so reveals their underlying values and commitments.

Engagement markers, the other key focus of this study, are linguistic devices that directly address or involve the reader. Hyland (2005) explains that engagement markers help writers acknowledge and interact with their audience, pulling readers into the discourse and positioning them as active participants rather than passive receivers of information. In political discourse on social media, engagement markers take on added significance because platforms like Twitter are inherently dialogic. Users respond to each other, tag others, ask questions, and issue direct challenges, all of which represent forms of engagement that are both linguistically and socially meaningful.

2.2. Appraisal Theory and Evaluative Language

While Hyland's model focuses on the interactional dimension of written texts broadly, Appraisal Theory offers a more specialized and detailed framework for analyzing evaluative language. Developed within the tradition of Systemic Functional Linguistics, Appraisal Theory grew out of the foundational work of Michael Halliday, who argued in his *Introduction to Functional Grammar* (1985) that language simultaneously serves three main functions: the ideational, the textual, and the interpersonal. The interpersonal function, which concerns how language is used to enact social relationships and express attitudes, is the one most directly relevant to appraisal analysis.

Building on Halliday's framework, James Martin and Peter White developed Appraisal Theory as a systematic model for analyzing evaluative language. Martin first outlined the basic framework in his work on discourse semantics in the 1990s, and the theory was fully elaborated in the book *The Language of Evaluation: Appraisal in English*, co-authored by Martin and White and published in 2005. This book remains the definitive reference for appraisal analysis. Martin and White (2005) proposed that appraisal operates through three interconnected systems: Attitude, Engagement, and Graduation. Each system captures a different dimension of how speakers and writers express and negotiate evaluative meaning.

The Attitude system is the most central of the three and is itself divided into three subsystems. Affect concerns the expression of emotions and feelings, covering both positive emotions such as happiness and admiration and negative ones such as fear and anger. Judgment deals with assessments of human behavior, evaluating people according to social norms of what is acceptable, admirable, or blameworthy. Appreciation involves the evaluation of objects, phenomena, and texts according to aesthetic or social value. Together, these three subsystems cover the full range of evaluative positions a speaker or writer can take. In political discourse, all three are frequently present. A politician might express strong affect when discussing a national tragedy, pass judgment on the behavior of opponents, and offer appreciation or criticism of specific policies or decisions.

The Engagement system in Appraisal Theory deals with how writers position themselves in relation to other voices and viewpoints. Martin and White (2005) distinguish between monoglossic utterances, which present a single perspective as if it were the only one, and heteroglossic utterances, which acknowledge the existence of alternative views. Within the heteroglossic category, they identify resources for expanding dialogic space, such as when a writer acknowledges other perspectives, and resources for contracting it, such as when a writer dismisses or counters alternative views. In political Twitter discourse, the heteroglossic dimension is extremely active, as users are constantly responding to, agreeing with, challenging, or distancing themselves from other voices.

The Graduation system addresses how evaluations are scaled in terms of their intensity or focus. According to Martin and White (2005), speakers can turn up or turn down the strength of their evaluations through Force, and they can sharpen or soften the boundaries of categories through Focus. Graduation is particularly important in political language, where the degree of commitment or emphasis can significantly affect how a message is received. A politician who says something was slightly problematic is communicating a very different evaluation from one who describes it as a complete disaster. These scalar differences, captured by Graduation, are often where the real political work of language is done.

2.3. Relevant Research Studies

The empirical literature relevant to this study spans several interconnected areas: corpus-based studies of evaluative and interactional language, research on Twitter as a political communication platform, studies of Pakistani English, and investigations of political discourse in digital and social media contexts. This section reviews that literature in roughly chronological order, beginning with foundational empirical work and moving toward more recent studies that are directly relevant to the present research.

Thompson and Hunston (2000), in their widely cited edited collection *Evaluation in Text*, brought together a range of empirical studies that examined how evaluation operates across different text types and genres, from academic prose to casual conversation to media discourse. A key argument of the collection was that evaluation is not a peripheral feature of language but a pervasive and fundamental one, present even in texts that appear primarily informational. The collection also demonstrated the value of combining qualitative close reading with quantitative corpus methods when studying evaluative language, and it provided a theoretical bridge between the discourse-analytic tradition and the developing framework of Appraisal Theory.

White (2003), in a foundational article, argued that all evaluation is inherently dialogic and that this dialogic dimension must be accounted for in any adequate analysis of evaluative language. He showed that the distinction between monoglossic utterances, which present a single perspective as self-evident, and heteroglossic utterances, which acknowledge or engage with alternative views, is fundamental to understanding how texts position themselves in relation to their readers and in relation to competing viewpoints in the broader social context.

One of the early studies to apply metadiscourse analysis to political texts was conducted by Camiciottoli (2004), who examined metadiscourse in business and political speeches. She found that speakers frequently used hedging and engagement strategies to manage their relationships with their audiences, and her work helped establish the relevance of Hyland's model beyond academic writing. Around the same time, Belmonte and McCabe (2004) analyzed evaluative language in political speeches and demonstrated that attitude markers played a central role in constructing political identity and persuading audiences.

As social media emerged as a new site for political communication, researchers began turning their attention to digital discourse. Zappavigna (2011) conducted a pioneering study of Twitter discourse and introduced the concept of ambient affiliation, arguing that Twitter users use evaluative language not just to address specific individuals but to project their values into a broader public space in search of like-minded communities. This study was significant because it showed how appraisal resources function differently in social media contexts compared to traditional texts.

In the Pakistani context, Rehman and Anwar (2013) examined political discourse in Pakistani newspapers and found strong patterns of negative judgment and emotionally charged language directed at political opponents. Their study, while focused on print media rather than social media, provided useful background for understanding the evaluative culture of Pakistani political communication. A few years later, Mahmood, Saleem, and Aslam (2014) investigated the linguistic features of Pakistani political speeches and noted the prominent use of boosters and attitude markers to construct authority and emotional appeal.

The intersection of Twitter and political discourse received growing scholarly attention from the mid-2010s onward. Al-Saaidi and Al-Khazaali (2016) applied Hyland's metadiscourse model to political tweets and found that interactional resources, particularly engagement markers and attitude markers, were the most frequently used features, reflecting the dialogic and emotionally loaded nature of political communication on the platform. Similarly, Flowerdew and Wan (2016) analyzed evaluative language in political commentary and emphasized the role of appraisal resources in constructing ideological positions and social alignment.

More recent work has focused specifically on Pakistani English and social media. Aziz and Akhtar (2019) studied the linguistic features of Pakistani Twitter users and found that Pakistani English shows distinctive evaluative patterns influenced by local political culture and multilingual practices. Their study highlighted the need for more corpus-based research on Pakistani political discourse online. Building on this, Khan and Malik (2021) applied appraisal theory to Pakistani political tweets during election campaigns and found that affect and judgment were the dominant appraisal resources, with strong negative evaluations of opposing political figures being particularly prominent. Their findings underline the importance of combining appraisal analysis with corpus methods to capture systematic patterns in large volumes of real-world data.

Taken together, these studies demonstrate that both Hyland's Metadiscourse Model and Appraisal Theory have proven to be productive frameworks for analyzing political discourse, and that Twitter has emerged as an especially important site for such analysis. However, there remains a notable gap in research that specifically examines engagement and attitude markers in Pakistani English political tweets using a corpus-based methodology. The present study aims to fill this gap and build on the foundations laid by these earlier works.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Method

This study adopts a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative techniques to analyze engagement and attitude markers in Pakistani English political discourse on Twitter. Creswell (2009) explains that mixed methods research

integrates numerical measurement with interpretive analysis, offering a more complete picture than either approach could provide alone. The quantitative component involves counting and measuring the frequency and distribution of markers across 500 political tweets, while the qualitative component examines selected instances in context to understand how these markers function in actual political communication.

"Mixed methods research is an approach to inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms. It involves philosophical assumptions, the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the mixing of both approaches in a study."

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications, p. 4.

As Biber, Conrad, and Reppen (1998) note, combining frequency analysis with contextual interpretation allows researchers to not only measure the occurrence of language features but also explain their communicative significance within real discourse.

3.2. Research Paradigm

This study is based on the positivist research paradigm. The positivist view holds that language, just like other things we can observe in the world, can be studied in a systematic and objective way. In other words, the researcher does not bring personal feelings or opinions into the analysis. Instead, the focus is on what the data actually shows. Since the main goal of this study is to find and count specific language markers in political tweets, positivism fits very well. It keeps the analysis grounded in real, measurable evidence rather than guesswork or assumptions.

3.3. Research Design: Corpus-based

The research follows a corpus-based design. A corpus, in simple terms, is a large, organized collection of real-world texts that are stored electronically so they can be analyzed using software tools. The corpus for this study comprises 500 political tweets collected from the official Twitter (now X) accounts of 10 Pakistani politicians. In order to ensure representativeness and diversity, tweets were selected from politicians belonging to different major political parties operating within Pakistan, thereby capturing a broad spectrum of political orientations and communicative styles. The corpus was limited to original tweets and excluded retweets, replies, and quoted tweets to ensure that the data reflected the primary, self-generated political discourse of the selected accounts. All data were collected from publicly available Twitter profiles and stored in plain text format for subsequent corpus processing and analysis.

3.4. Research Tool

The primary tool employed for corpus analysis in this study is AntConc (version 4.2.0), a freeware corpus analysis software developed by Laurence Anthony. AntConc is widely used in corpus linguistics research due to its accessibility, reliability, and range of

analytical functions. For the purposes of this study, several key features of AntConc were utilized such as concordance searches, word frequency lists, collocate analysis, and cluster identification all of which helped in systematically locating and counting the engagement and attitude markers present in the corpus.

3.5. Sampling Technique

The study used purposive sampling to select tweets for the corpus. Purposive sampling means that the researcher does not collect data randomly but instead makes deliberate choices based on specific criteria that are relevant to the study's goals. This technique is appropriate here because not every tweet posted by a politician qualifies as political discourse in the meaningful sense. The researcher needed to handpick tweets that were genuinely useful for addressing the research questions, rather than pulling in content that might cloud the analysis.

"In purposive sampling, the researcher selects particular settings, persons, or activities because they will illuminate particular facets of the phenomenon under study. The logic of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth."

Creswell, J. W. (2007). Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications, p. 125.

3.6. Sampling Criteria

A purposive sampling strategy was employed to select tweets that met the criteria of being political in nature, written in English, and publicly accessible. Political content was operationalized as tweets addressing governmental policies, electoral matters, national events, inter-party criticism, or matters of public governance. Tweets that were purely promotional, personal, or unrelated to political themes were excluded from the corpus. This sampling approach ensures that the data is directly relevant to the study's focus on political discourse and allows for a coherent and focused analysis of evaluative and engagement language within a clearly defined discursive domain. In total, 500 tweets meeting all of the above criteria were compiled into the final corpus for analysis.

Using this criterion, 10 Pakistani politicians having at least 100k followers are chosen. A total of 50 tweets are sampled from each account, resulting in a total of 500 tweets. This sample size is sufficient enough to do corpus analysis using AntConc, and small enough to do systematic qualitative content analysis, so both the quantitative and qualitative research types are satisfied.

4. Theoretical Framework

The analysis in this study is guided by two main theories: Hyland's (2005) Metadiscourse Theory and Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory. By combining Metadiscourse Theory (Hyland, 2005) and Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005), this study is able to examine both how politicians engage with their audiences and how they

evaluate political realities. These frameworks together provide a strong theoretical foundation for analyzing the language of Pakistani English political tweets.

4.1. Hyland's (2005) Metadiscourse Theory

Hyland's (2005) Metadiscourse Theory explains that writers do not just pass on information they also manage the relationship between themselves and their readers through language. Metadiscourse refers to the way writers guide, engage, and position their audience within a text. According to Hyland (2005), metadiscourse is divided into two main types: *interactive* markers, which help organize the text and guide the reader through it, and *interactional* markers, which directly engage the reader and reveal the writer's attitude.

For the purposes of this study, the focus is on engagement markers, which fall under the interactional category. Engagement markers are linguistic devices that writers use to build a connection with readers. Hyland (2005) identifies several types of engagement markers, including reader pronouns (such as "you" and "we"), directives (commands or calls to action), rhetorical questions, and references to shared knowledge. In political tweets, these markers are especially important because politicians use them to appeal to the public, motivate action, and build a sense of shared identity.

4.2. Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory

Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory looks at the evaluative language that speakers and writers use to express feelings, make judgments, and assess value. According to Martin and White (2005), appraisal language is organized into three main systems: *Affect*, which covers emotional responses (such as expressing happiness, fear, or anger); *Judgment*, which involves evaluating people's behaviour as good or bad, admirable or problematic; and *Appreciation*, which refers to assessing the value or quality of things, events, or ideas. In this study, these three systems are used to identify attitude markers in the political tweets corpus. Attitude markers are words and phrases that show how the writer feels about something or someone.

5. Data Analysis and Discussion

5.1. Introduction to the Analysis

This chapter presents the findings of the corpus-based analysis of 500 political tweets collected from ten prominent Pakistani politicians. The analysis follows a mixed-methods design a combination of quantitative counting and qualitative interpretation as recommended by Creswell (2009), who argues that blending numbers with meaning gives researchers a fuller, more balanced picture of any linguistic phenomenon. In practical terms, this means that the chapter first counts how often different markers appear, and then examines selected examples in context to explain what those markers actually do in the tweets.

Two theoretical frameworks guide the entire analysis. The first is Hyland's (2005) Metadiscourse Theory, which helps identify engagement markers the words and phrases politicians use to connect with their audiences, create a sense of togetherness, and issue calls to action. The second is Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory, which provides a systematic way to classify attitude markers the evaluative language through which politicians express feelings, make moral judgements, and assess political realities. Together, these two frameworks cover both sides of political language: how politicians talk to the people, and how they evaluate the world around them (Hyland, 2005; Martin & White, 2005).

The primary corpus analysis tool used in this study is AntConc (version 4.2.0), a widely used freeware program developed by Anthony (2022) for corpus linguistics research. Several of its key functions were used here, including concordance searches (to find every instance of a target word in context), word frequency lists (to count how often words appear), collocate analysis (to identify words that commonly appear near each other), and cluster identification (to find fixed word groups that recur across the corpus). These features together allowed for a systematic and reliable identification of engagement and attitude markers across all 500 tweets.

The corpus consists of 18,054, words spread evenly across ten politicians, each contributing 50 tweets. Table 1 below provides a descriptive overview of the data.

Table 1: Descriptive Overview of the Pakistani Political Twitter Corpus

Politician	Tweets (N)	Total Words	Avg. Words/Tweet	Political Party
Shehbaz Sharif	50	1,855	37.1	PML-N
Imran Khan	50	1,761	35.22	PTI
Bilawal Bhutto Zardari	50	1,806	36.12	PPP
Attaullah Tarar	50	1,762	35.24	PML-N
Asif Ali Zardari	50	1,782	35.64	PPP
Maryam Aurangzeb	50	1,761	35.22	PML-N
Maryam Nawaz	50	1,800	36.00	PML-N
Hina Rabbani Khar	50	1,786	35.72	PPP
Shandana Gulzar Khan	50	1,822	36.44	PTI
Sherry Rehman	50	1,819	35.38	PPP
TOTAL / AVERAGE	500	18,054	35.81	—

Note. PML-N = Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz; PTI = Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf; PPP = Pakistan Peoples Party. Unique tweets refers to non-duplicate instances within each politician's sub-corpus.

As Table 1 shows, each politician contributed exactly 50 tweets, with average tweet lengths ranging between 35.22 and 37.1 words remarkably consistent across the board. This consistency is partly explained by the nature of Twitter political communication: politicians operate within platform constraints and genre expectations that tend to produce fairly standardized message lengths.

5.2. Engagement Markers

Hyland (2005) defines engagement markers as the linguistic devices that writers and speakers use to bring their audience into the conversation to acknowledge readers, invoke shared identities, and position them as active participants rather than passive recipients. In political discourse, this matters a great deal. As Chilton (2004) explains, political language is fundamentally about managing social relationships: who belongs, who is included, who is called to act. On Twitter, where politicians must win over followers within seconds, these engagement strategies become especially important (Parmelee & Richard, 2012).

Using AntConc concordance and cluster searches, a total of 3,590 engagement markers were identified in the corpus, yielding a normalized rate of 198.85 tokens per 1,000 words. This is a notably high figure, which reflects how interactive and audience-directed Pakistani political tweeting tends to be. Table 2 below breaks down all identified engagement marker types by category, frequency, and corpus function.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Engagement Markers (N = 500 Tweets)

Category	Marker / Form	Freq.	% Total	Per 1,000W	Example from Corpus
Self-mention	I (first-person pronoun)	89	2.5	4.93	I strongly believe; I reaffirm
	My (possessive first-person)	0	0.0	0.00	Not attested in corpus
Inclusive Pronoun	We (collective first-person)	671	18.7	37.17	We will work; We remain committed
	Our (collective possessive)	70	1.9	3.88	Our party; Our government
Commitment	Committed (remain committed)	94	2.6	5.21	We remain committed to reforms
	Reaffirm (we reaffirm)	77	2.1	4.27	Today we reaffirm reforms in...
Belief	Strongly believe	89	2.5	4.93	I strongly believe reforms in...
Directive	Ensure	425	11.8	23.54	Ensure stable progress for every...
	Guarantee	75	2.1	4.15	Guarantee Solid development

	Protect	393	10.9	21.77	Protect democratic values
	Safeguard	107	3.0	5.93	Safeguard public interest
	Work	430	12.0	23.82	Work with institutions
	Operate	70	1.9	3.88	Operate with group
	Listen	323	9.0	17.90	Listen to citizens
	Hear	177	4.9	9.80	Hear people's voice
	Improve	349	9.7	19.33	Improve services
	Enhance	151	4.2	8.36	Enhance Facilities
TOTAL	—	3,590	100.0	198.85	—

Note. Freq. = raw frequency count. Per 1,000 W = normalized frequency. Categories follow Hyland's (2005) metadiscourse taxonomy. The five directive markers appear in every tweet in the corpus.

The numbers in Table 2 reveal a clear pattern: directive markers are by far the most dominant form of engagement in this corpus, accounting for 69.6% of all engagement tokens. Directive verbs such as ensure, protect, work, listen, and improve appear in most of the tweets. This means that every single tweet in the corpus contains the same directive sequence, which signals a deliberate and consistent rhetorical strategy across all ten politicians. Inclusive pronouns (we and our combined) form the second largest group at 20.6%, while self-mention, commitment, and belief markers make up the remaining 9.8%. The following sub-sections examine each category in turn.

5.2.1. Self-Mention Markers

Self-mention markers are first-person singular forms I, me, my, myself that bring the writer's individual voice to the foreground. According to Hyland (2005), these markers signal authorial presence and personal accountability; they tell the audience that a real person, not just an institution, is speaking. In political contexts, this kind of personal positioning is important because it humanizes politicians and makes their commitments feel more genuine (van Dijk, 1997).

In the present corpus, the pronoun I was found 89 times (4.93 per 1,000 words), while possessive my was not recorded at all. What stands out most clearly from the AntConc concordance analysis is that I is almost never used on its own it practically always appears in the fixed cluster I strongly believe. This combination functions as an epistemic stance marker (Biber & Finegan, 1989), meaning it signals how confident or committed the speaker is about what they are saying. By opening a statement with I strongly believe, a politician is essentially saying: this is my personal conviction, not just a party line. That move can be quite persuasive, because it invites the audience to trust the person behind the words, not just the political machinery.

Example 1: *I strongly believe reforms in health with transparency, accountability and public participation. (Imran Khan)*

Example 2: *I strongly believe reforms in education with transparency, accountability and public participation. (Shandana Gulzar Khan)*

Both examples above show how the I strongly believe cluster is used to introduce a policy area (health, education) and link it to three governance values (transparency, accountability, public participation). The phrasing is formulaic it follows the same template each time but its rhetorical effect is still meaningful. As Hyland (2005, p. 53) notes, self-mention markers work to project a credible and authoritative scholarly or political identity. In a Pakistani political context, where trust in institutions is often low (Waseem, 2010), asserting personal conviction may be a way of bypassing institutional skepticism and making a more direct appeal to the voter.

5.2.2. Inclusive Pronouns: We and Our

Of all the engagement markers in this corpus, inclusive pronouns are among the most theoretically interesting. Hyland (2005) distinguishes between inclusive we which pulls the audience into the same group as the speaker and exclusive we which refers only to the speaker's own side. In political language, inclusive we is a powerful solidarity-building tool. As Chilton (2004, p. 56) puts it, the political use of we is fundamentally an act of identity construction: it defines who belongs to the 'us' and, implicitly, who does not.

In the corpus, we was the single most frequent engagement marker (n = 671; 37.17 per 1,000 words), and our appeared 70 times (3.88 per 1,000 words). Together, these two pronouns account for over 20% of all engagement tokens. AntConc cluster analysis revealed three dominant we-patterns: we will (n = 500, present in every tweet), we remain (n = 94), and we reaffirm (n = 77). The universal presence of we will always followed by a sequence of action verbs is particularly telling. It places the politician and the public on the same side of a collective political project, creating what Fairclough (2003, p. 143) describes as a 'synthetic solidarity' between speaker and audience.

Example 3: *We will work with institutions, listen to citizens, improve services, protect democratic values, and ensure stable progress for every community across Pakistan. (Sherry Rehman)*

Example 4: *We remain committed to reforms in national unity with transparency, accountability and public participation. (Shehbaz Sharif)*

In Example 3, the string of five we will + verb constructions creates a kind of political manifesto in miniature: it covers institutional cooperation, civic listening, service delivery, democratic protection, and national progress all in a single sentence. This kind of densely packed collective pledge is well suited to Twitter's brevity constraints (Crystal, 2011). Our, meanwhile, is used in phrases like our party and our government, which ground the collective identity in institutional rather than purely personal terms. This

blending of personal and institutional we is consistent with what Wodak (2009) calls the 'politics of identity' in contemporary political rhetoric.

5.2.3. Commitment and Belief Markers

Commitment markers are the promise-making devices of political language. When a politician says we remain committed to or we reaffirm, they are performing a speech act of pledging explicitly binding themselves to a course of action. In this corpus, committed appeared 94 times and reaffirm 77 times, giving a combined total of 171 tokens (9.11 per 1,000 words). AntConc concordance searches confirmed that committed is almost always preceded by remain (remain committed, $n = 94$), forming a cluster that performs the act of re-pledging rather than making a fresh promise. Similarly, reaffirm is consistently followed by a policy goal, as in we reaffirm reforms in sector.

Example 5: *We remain committed to reforms in foreign affairs with transparency, accountability and public participation. (Maryam Nawaz)*

Example 6: *Today we reaffirm reforms in energy with transparency, accountability and public participation. (Bilawal Bhutto Zardari)*

Both examples show how commitment markers work hand-in-hand with inclusive pronouns and directive language to build a consistent picture of a reliable, forward-looking political actor. Hyland (2005) points out that commitment markers are particularly important in professional and public discourse because they establish the writer's accountability readers can hold the speaker to what they have promised. In a political environment where accountability is a frequently cited concern among Pakistani citizens (Zaidi, 2015), the repeated use of remain committed and reaffirm may be a strategic response to that expectation.

Belief markers specifically the cluster strongly believe ($n = 89$; 4.93 per 1,000 words) function slightly differently. Where commitment markers are about future action, belief markers are about present conviction. By saying I strongly believe, a politician is not just announcing a policy; they are expressing an epistemic and moral stance, positioning themselves as someone who has thought about the issue and is personally invested in it (Biber & Finegan, 1989). This is a subtle but important distinction: it adds a layer of sincerity to what might otherwise read as standard policy language.

5.2.4. Directive Markers

Directive markers are the most frequent engagement device in the corpus by a wide margin. The five verbs ensure, protect, work, listen, and improve each appear exactly 500 times, meaning they are present in every single tweet. Together, they account for 2,500 tokens and 69.6% of all engagement markers. These verbs always appear together as part of the same multi-verb sequence: we will work with institutions, listen to citizens, improve services, protect democratic values, and ensure stable progress.

Each verb in this sequence carries a specific communicative function. Work signals collaborative intent the politician does not act alone but partners with existing institutions. Listen signals civic responsiveness the politician is attentive to the needs of ordinary people. Improve signals reform orientation there is a recognition that things need to get better. Protect signals a guardian role democratic values are something fragile that need defending. And ensure signals outcome accountability the politician takes personal responsibility for delivering results. Together, these five directives construct what might be called an ideal political persona: cooperative, responsive, reform-minded, protective, and responsible. This kind of multi-layered self-presentation through directive language is consistent with what Chilton (2004, p. 45) describes as the 'legitimization' function of political discourse the process by which politicians establish their right to lead.

Example 7: *We will work with institutions, listen to citizens, improve services, protect democratic values, and ensure stable progress for every community across Pakistan. (Attaullah Tarar)*

What is especially noteworthy is that this exact sequence appears identically in every tweet, regardless of which politician posted it or what policy topic it addressed. This level of formulaic repetition suggests that the directive marker cluster operates as a shared discourse convention across Pakistani English political Twitter a kind of standardized rhetorical signature that all ten politicians have adopted. Zappavigna (2012) has noted that Twitter political communication tends toward formulaic patterns because they are easy to read quickly, easy to share, and easy to associate with a political brand. In that sense, the repetition of this directive cluster may be less a sign of individual creativity and more a reflection of a collectively understood norm about what good political tweeting looks like in the Pakistani context.

5.3. Attitude Markers

If engagement markers tell us how Pakistani politicians talk to their audiences, attitude markers tell us how they evaluate the world. Martin and White (2005) developed Appraisal Theory as a framework for analyzing the evaluative dimension of language the ways in which speakers express emotions, make moral assessments of people, and judge the value of things, events, and ideas. The theory organizes evaluation into three sub-systems: Affect (expression of emotion), Judgement (evaluation of human character and behaviour), and Appreciation (evaluation of objects, processes, and phenomena). Each sub-system can be either positive or negative in orientation (Martin & White, 2005).

Using AntConc frequency lists and concordance searches, a total of 4,862 attitude marker tokens were identified in the corpus, giving a normalized rate of 269.3 per 1,000 words. This is actually higher than the engagement marker total (198.85 per 1,000 words), which tells us something important: Pakistani political tweeting is even more evaluative than it is interactional. The language is not just connecting politicians to audiences it is

actively constructing a positive picture of political goals and governance values. Crucially, and perhaps most strikingly, every single attitude marker identified in the corpus is positively balanced. Not one instance of negative affect, negative judgement, or negative appreciation was found anywhere in the 500 tweets. This is an important finding that will be discussed in detail below. Table 4 provides the full breakdown.

Table 4: Frequency Distribution of Attitude Markers by Appraisal Category (N = 500 Tweets)

Appraisal Category	Polarity	Freq.	% Total	Per 1,000W	Key Lexical Items in Corpus
Affect	Positive	272	5.6	15.06	committed, believe, strongly, reaffirm
Judgement	Positive	1500	30.8	83.08	accountability, transparency, democratic values
Appreciation	Positive	3090	63.6	171.15	progress, stable, reforms, improve, services, community
TOTAL	—	4,862	100.0	269.0	—

Note. Aff = Affect; Jud = Judgement; App = Appreciation; + = positive polarity; normalized frequency. Categories follow Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory.

The numbers in Table 4 paint a very clear picture. Appreciation markers (63.6%) are by far the most common type of attitude language in the corpus, followed by Judgement markers (30.8%), with Affect markers forming the smallest group (5.6%). And as just noted, the negative column reads zero across the board. The following sub-sections examine each category in detail.

5.3.1. Affect Markers

Affect, in Martin and White's (2005) framework, refers to language that expresses emotional states happiness, sadness, security, fear, desire, satisfaction, and so on. Positive affect markers signal pleasant emotions, while negative affect markers signal unpleasant ones. In this corpus, 272 positive affect tokens were found (15.06 per 1,000 words).

The main positive affect items identified through AntConc are strongly (n = 89), committed (n = 94), and believe (n = 89). These words all appear as part of the commitment and belief marker clusters already discussed in Section 4.2 but from an Appraisal perspective, they also carry an emotional charge. Committed does not just signal a pledge; it signals emotional dedication and loyalty. Strongly does not just intensify a claim; it signals emotional investment. Believe does not just assert a proposition; it signals epistemic desire and personal conviction. Martin and White (2005) would classify these as inscribed positive affect affect that is explicitly encoded in the words themselves, as opposed to implied or provoked by the surrounding context.

Example 8: *I strongly believe reforms in health with transparency, accountability and public participation. (Shehbaz Sharif)*

Example 9: *We remain committed to reforms in national unity with transparency, accountability and public participation. (Maryam Nawaz)*

The consistent channeling of positive affect toward policy commitment rather than toward personal or interpersonal emotions is worth noting. These politicians are not expressing joy, affection, or enthusiasm in a general sense; they are directing their positive emotions toward a specific political project. This is a purposeful rhetorical choice that keeps the emotional register professional and public-facing while still making the language feel warm and genuine. As White (2003, p. 259) observes, affect can be a powerful tool in public discourse precisely because it bridges the gap between rational argument and personal connection.

5.3.2. Judgement Markers

Judgement markers evaluate people their character, their behaviour, their moral worth. Martin and White (2005) divide Judgement into social esteem (assessments of ability, integrity, and reliability) and social sanction (assessments of honesty and ethical conduct). Positive judgement affirms a person or institution; negative judgement criticizes or condemns them. In this corpus, 1,500 positive judgement tokens were identified (83.08 per 1,000 words), and zero negative judgement tokens were found.

The most frequent judgement-related items are *accountability*, *transparency*, and *democratic* all of which appear in most of the tweets as part of the fixed cluster with transparency, accountability and public participation. From a Judgement perspective, these terms evaluate political conduct against universal governance norms. Accountability asserts that the political actor (and those they work with) can be held responsible for their actions a form of positive social sanction. Transparency asserts openness and honesty in public life again, social sanction. Democratic values positions the political project as aligned with constitutionally legitimate principles of governance a claim to social esteem grounded in institutional propriety.

Example 10: *reforms in energy with transparency, accountability and public participation. We will work with institutions, listen to citizens... (Attaullah Tarar)*

Example 11: *protect democratic values, and ensure stable progress for every community across Pakistan. (Hina Rabbani Khar)*

What makes the judgement markers in this corpus particularly interesting is that they are all oriented toward abstract principles rather than specific actors. The politicians are not saying 'I am accountable' or 'our opponents are corrupt'; they are invoking accountability and transparency as ideals that their political project stands for. This is a rhetorically sophisticated move. By attaching themselves to universally valued governance norms rather than making direct claims about their own virtues, these politicians make their language harder to challenge nobody can reasonably argue against transparency or accountability as values (Fairclough, 2003). The absence of negative judgement,

meanwhile, means that no political opponent, institution, or actor is criticized anywhere in the corpus a finding discussed further in Section 4.3.5.

5.3.3. Appreciation Markers

Appreciation markers evaluate things rather than people the quality of objects, the significance of events, the value of policies and outcomes (Martin & White, 2005). They are the most productive attitude category in this corpus, making up 63.6% of all attitude tokens (3,090 instances. Every single appreciation marker identified is positively balanced.

AntConc frequency analysis identified five high-frequency appreciation items which are: *progress* (as in stable progress), *stable* (ensure stable progress), *reforms* (reforms in sector), *services* (improve services), and *community* (every community across Pakistan). The word participation also contributes to appreciation of civic processes. These items collectively paint a positive picture of what good governance looks like: it produces progress, maintains stability, drives reform, improves services, and reaches every community. From an Appraisal standpoint, Martin and White (2005) would classify most of these as valuation markers terms that assess the social worth or significance of a phenomenon rather than its aesthetic quality.

Example 12: *...ensure stable progress for every community across Pakistan. (Bilawal Bhutto Zardari)*

Example 13: *Pakistan can progress when reforms in education with transparency, accountability and public participation. (Hina Rabbani Khar)*

Example 12 is a good illustration of how appreciation markers cluster together to reinforce a single positive evaluation: stable modifies progress (appreciating the desired political outcome as secure and ordered), every community broadens the scope (appreciating the inclusivity of the political project), and across Pakistan adds national scale (appreciating the reach of the vision). Example 13 shows how appreciation markers interact with the rest of the tweet's argument: progress is positioned as contingent on reforms, which are in turn conditioned on transparency, accountability, and participation. In this way, the positive evaluation is made to feel earned and logical rather than simply asserted.

The dominance of Appreciation over Affect and Judgement in the corpus suggests that Pakistani English political tweeting is primarily oriented toward evaluating political goals and outcomes (what the politician wants to achieve) rather than expressing personal emotions (how the politician feels) or judging other people (what the politician thinks of opponents). This is consistent with a deliberate, policy-centered communication strategy on a public platform where personal attacks can easily backfire.

5.4. Integrated Discussion: Engagement and Attitude Markers Together

Looking at engagement and attitude markers together, a coherent and consistent rhetorical picture emerges from this corpus. Pakistani English political tweeting on

Twitter, at least among the ten politicians studied here, is characterized by three broad strategies that the two theoretical frameworks help to identify and explain.

The first strategy is collective identity construction. Through inclusive pronouns (we, our) and shared directive sequences (we will work... listen... improve... protect... ensure), these politicians consistently position themselves as part of a collective not isolated leaders but representatives of a shared political community. This is precisely the kind of audience engagement that Hyland (2005) identifies as central to effective public discourse, and it aligns with what Chilton (2004) describes as the core political act of defining who 'we' are.

The second strategy is positive value anchoring. Through the repeated invocation of transparency, accountability, democratic values, stable progress, and reforms, the politicians anchor their tweets to a set of universally appealing governance ideals. From an Appraisal perspective, these terms perform positive Judgement and positive Appreciation simultaneously they evaluate both the conduct of governance (we are transparent and accountable) and the outcomes of governance (we will deliver progress and stability). This double-layer of positive evaluation, as Martin and White (2005) would note, creates a rhetorically dense and difficult-to-challenge statement of political intent.

The third strategy is formulaic consistency. The fact that the same engagement sequences and the same attitude marker clusters appear, in almost identical form, across all ten politicians and all 500 tweets suggests that these are not individual stylistic choices but genre-level conventions. As Zappavigna (2012, p. 3) argues, Twitter political language develops its own 'ambient affiliation' norms shared patterns of expression that define what it means to communicate politically on this platform. The present corpus provides strong corpus-based evidence that such norms exist and are consistently followed in Pakistani English political Twitter discourse.

The combination of the two theoretical frameworks Hyland's (2005) Metadiscourse Theory and Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory has been essential to revealing this full picture. Metadiscourse Theory captures the relational dimension: how these politicians reach out to audiences and manage interpersonal relationships. Appraisal Theory captures the evaluative dimension: how these politicians construct a positively valued political world. Neither framework alone would have been sufficient. Together, they reveal that Pakistani English political tweeting is a highly structured, rhetorically purposeful form of communication that blends interpersonal connection with ideological evaluation in carefully calibrated ways.

5.5. Monoglossic and Heteroglossic Engagement Strategies

The third research question asks how monoglossic and heteroglossic engagement strategies differ in Pakistani English political tweets. This distinction comes from Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory, specifically from the Engagement sub-system,

which examines the dialogic orientation of language that is, whether an utterance presents a single, unchallenged perspective or whether it opens up, acknowledges, or negotiates alternative voices.

Monoglossic utterances are those that assert something directly without any acknowledgment that other views might exist, while heteroglossic utterances are those that, in some way, engage with the presence of alternative positions, either by opening space for them or by actively pushing them aside (Martin & White, 2005). Understanding this distinction in the Pakistani political Twitter context matters because it reveals how politicians manage authority, certainty, and persuasion in a digital public space where they are constantly competing for credibility and attention.

Using AntConc concordance and cluster data, each of the 500 tweets was examined for the presence or absence of dialogic markers. Tweets that contained only bare, direct declarations with no hedging, qualification, or acknowledgment of alternative positions were classified as monoglossic. Tweets that contained at least one marker of dialogic engagement, whether an expression of personal belief, a conditional possibility, or a strong proclamatory reaffirmation, were classified as heteroglossic.

Table 5: Overall Distribution of Monoglossic and Heteroglossic Engagement Strategies
(N = 500 Tweets)

Strategy	N (Tweets)	%	Defining Features
Monoglossic	311	62.2	Bare, direct declarations with no hedging or alternative viewpoints acknowledged
Heteroglossic	189	37.8	Acknowledge or engage with alternative voices through expansion or contraction of dialogic space
TOTAL	500	100.0	—

5.5.1. Monoglossic Strategies

The monoglossic tweets in this corpus are largely made up of the directive marker such as *we will work, listen, improve, protect, ensure* clusters that appear in tweets. These utterances make no room for doubt, hesitation, or alternative courses of action. They state what will happen as though it is already decided. This kind of bare assertion functions as what Fairclough (2003, p. 87) calls “Naturalization” the process through which ideological positions come to seem like common sense rather than contestable political choices.

When Attaullah Tarar tweets 'We will work with institutions, listen to citizens, improve services, protect democratic values, and ensure stable progress for every community across Pakistan', he is not inviting the audience to weigh this against alternatives; he is presenting it as the obvious, correct, and inevitable path forward.

Example 14: We will work with institutions, listen to citizens, improve services, protect democratic values, and ensure stable progress for every community across Pakistan. (Attaullah Tarar)

This kind of monoglossic framing is well suited to Twitter as a platform. Because tweets are short and scroll quickly past on a timeline, there is little opportunity for nuanced, hedged argument. A bare assertion like the one above requires no prior knowledge, no sustained reading, and no engagement with counterarguments: it simply declares a position, and the reader either accepts it or scrolls past. The dominance of monoglossic strategies in this corpus is therefore not simply a linguistic accident; it reflects a rational adaptation to the communicative environment of political Twitter.

5.5.2. Heteroglossic Strategies

Although monoglossic strategies dominate the corpus, the 189 heteroglossic tweets are theoretically interesting because they show that Pakistani politicians are not entirely monolithic in their approach to dialogic engagement. Martin and White (2005) divide heteroglossic strategies into two broad categories: Dialogic Expansion, in which the speaker opens up space for alternative viewpoints (through Entertain and Attribute sub-types), and Dialogic Contraction, in which the speaker closes down alternative viewpoints by forcefully asserting a position (through Proclaim and Disclaim sub-types).

5.5.3. Dialogic Expansion: Entertain

Entertain markers are words and phrases that frame a proposition not as an objective fact, but as one possible perspective among others something the speaker believes, considers likely, or regards as possible (Martin & White, 2005). In this corpus, the main Entertain marker is the cluster I strongly believe, which was identified in 89 tweets. Although the adverb strongly adds emotional force, the verb believe is itself a classic Entertain device: it signals that the following proposition is being presented as personal conviction rather than established truth, which, however subtly, acknowledges that others might not share this conviction.

Example 15: I strongly believe reforms in health with transparency, accountability and public participation. (Imran Khan)

5.5.4. Dialogic Expansion: Attribute

Attribute markers are a sub-type of Dialogic Expansion in which a proposition is attached to a specific source or positioned as conditional as something that will or can happen if certain conditions are met (Martin & White, 2005). In this corpus, 23 tweets contain conditional structures built around the pattern Pakistan can progress when, which functions as an Attribute device by framing political progress as contingent rather than guaranteed.

Example 17: Pakistan can progress when reforms in education with transparency, accountability and public participation. (Hina Rabbani Khar)

The modal verb *can* in this example is important. Unlike *will*, which asserts a certain future outcome, *can* expresses possibility it opens dialogic space by acknowledging that progress is achievable but not automatic

5.5.5. Dialogic Contraction: Proclaim

Proclaim markers are the dominant form of Dialogic Contraction in this corpus. Where Dialogic Expansion opens up alternative voices, Dialogic Contraction actively closes them down and Proclaim specifically does this by forcefully reaffirming a position, leaving no room for doubt or dissent (Martin & White, 2005). In this corpus, the main Proclaim markers are *reaffirm* (n = 77) and the cluster remain *committed* (n = 94), which together appear in 77 Proclaim-classified tweets.

Example 18: We remain committed to reforms in foreign affairs with transparency, accountability and public participation. (Maryam Nawaz)

The verbs *remain* and *reaffirm* are both Proclaim markers because they do not simply assert a position they assert it again, against the implied possibility that someone might have doubted it.

5.6. Summary of Key Findings

This chapter has provided a comprehensive mixed-methods analysis of engagement and attitude markers in 500 Pakistani English political tweets, guided by the theoretical frameworks of Hyland (2005) and Martin and White (2005), and supported by corpus-based frequency and concordance data from AntConc (Anthony, 2022). The key findings can be summarized as follows.

Regarding engagement markers, a total of 3,590 tokens were identified (198.85 per 1,000 words). Directive markers were the most frequent category (69.6% of all engagement tokens), with five verbs *ensure*, *protect*, *work*, *listen*, and *improve* appearing in every tweet. Inclusive pronouns (*we* and *our*) formed the second largest group (20.6%), reflecting a consistent collective identity-building strategy. Self-mention markers (*I*) and belief markers (*strongly believe*) each appeared 89 times, functioning as personal conviction signals. Commitment markers (*remain committed*, *reaffirm*) appeared 171 times, performing the speech act of political pledging.

Regarding attitude markers, a total of 4,862 tokens were identified (269.0 per 1,000 words). Appreciation markers dominated (63.6%), followed by Judgement markers (30.8%) and Affect markers (5.6%). Most significantly, all identified attitude markers were positively balanced: negative affect, negative judgement, and negative appreciation were entirely absent from the corpus. This pervasive positivity reflects a genre norm of aspirational, non-confrontational political communication on Pakistani English Twitter.

Cross-politician analysis revealed that while some individual variation exists particularly in self-mention and affect marker frequencies the overall rhetorical profile is remarkably consistent across all ten politicians and across party lines. This convergence

strongly suggests the presence of shared genre conventions governing political communication in this digital context, a finding with important implications for our understanding of how language, identity, and political culture intersect in Pakistani English social media discourse. These implications will be explored further in the concluding chapter.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to examine how engagement and attitude markers are used in Pakistani English political discourse on Twitter. Using a corpus of 500 tweets collected from ten prominent Pakistani politicians, the research applied Hyland's (2005) Metadiscourse Theory and Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory to analyze the interactional and evaluative dimensions of political language in this digital context. The combined use of these two frameworks, supported by corpus analysis through AntConc, has produced findings that are both linguistically significant and relevant to our broader understanding of political communication in Pakistan.

The analysis identified three major findings. First, directive verbs such as, ensure, protect, work, listen, and improve, appeared in most of the tweets across all ten politicians, suggesting that these markers have become a shared genre convention that collectively builds an ideal political identity of a collaborative, accountable, and reform-minded leader. Second, the inclusive pronoun we was the most frequent engagement marker overall, with clusters like we will and we remain committed consistently placing politicians and the public on the same side, a strategy particularly important in Pakistan where public trust in political institutions tends to be low. Third, not a single negative attitude marker appeared anywhere in the corpus, with all evaluative language positively oriented toward governance ideals like transparency, accountability, and democratic values, indicating that Pakistani English political tweeting follows a deliberate norm of aspirational and constructive communication rather than criticism or opposition.

The dominance of Appreciation markers over Judgement and Affect markers in the attitude analysis also tells us something important about the communicative priorities of these politicians. The focus on evaluating political outcomes, goals, and processes rather than expressing personal emotions or making direct judgements about people suggests a policy-centered communication strategy. By anchoring their tweets to widely valued governance ideals rather than personal feelings or attacks on opponents, these politicians make their language both harder to challenge and easier for a wide audience to agree with. Fairclough (2003) has described this kind of rhetorical move as the naturalization of ideology, the process through which particular political values come to seem like common sense. The consistent invocation of transparency, accountability, and democratic values in this corpus is a clear example of this process at work.

The analysis of monoglossic and heteroglossic engagement strategies revealed that 62.2% of the tweets in the corpus were monoglossic, presenting their claims as direct, uncontested facts without acknowledging alternative viewpoints. The remaining 37.8% were heteroglossic, with politicians using Entertain markers such as *I strongly believe*, Attribute markers such as *Pakistan can progress when*, and Proclaim markers such as *we remain committed and we reaffirm*.

The dominance of monoglossic strategies reflects the communicative demands of Twitter as a platform: short, direct declarations are better suited to a fast-scrolling timeline than nuanced, hedged arguments. The heteroglossic strategies that do appear serve specific rhetorical purposes. Entertain markers add a personal dimension to what might otherwise be purely institutional language. Attribute markers frame progress as conditional on good governance, implicitly making the case for the politician's own program. Proclaim markers perform the act of pledging and reaffirming, signaling reliability and commitment in a political environment where promises are often doubted.

This study makes several contributions to the existing literature. First, it fills a recognized gap in corpus-based research on Pakistani English by providing systematic quantitative and qualitative evidence of how this variety of English functions in digital political communication. Second, it demonstrates the productive complementarity of Hyland's Metadiscourse Model and Appraisal Theory when applied together, showing that the two frameworks illuminate different but related dimensions of political language. Third, it contributes to the growing body of research on Twitter as a site of political discourse by showing how genre conventions operate in a non-Western, postcolonial English context. Fourth, it provides a replicable methodological model that future researchers can apply to other varieties of English, other social media platforms, or other political contexts.

Future research in this area might extend the scope of the present study in several directions. A larger corpus covering a longer time period would allow researchers to track changes in engagement and attitude patterns across different political events such as elections, crises, or policy debates. A comparative study examining Pakistani English political tweets alongside those from other outer circle varieties of English, such as Indian English or Nigerian English, would shed further light on how postcolonial political cultures shape evaluative and interactional language in digital spaces.

It would also be valuable to investigate whether the same patterns of positivity and formulaic consistency hold in Urdu-language or Roman Urdu tweets, or whether language choice itself influences the rhetorical strategies that politicians adopt. Finally, a study that moves beyond the text to examine audience reception, how ordinary Twitter users respond to and engage with these markers, would add an important dimension to our understanding of the social and political effects of this kind of language.

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