

The Politics of Language

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Abstract

This paper undertakes a critical exploration of language as a strategic tool for persuasion, manipulation, and ideological reinforcement. Drawing from linguistic, rhetorical, and cognitive frameworks, it interrogates how language operates beneath the threshold of conscious awareness, subtly shaping perception and behavior. Research has revealed that much of what happens in our minds as a result of language use is still hidden from our conscious awareness, allowing those in positions of power to wield linguistic strategies with profound, often unnoticed, effects. The analysis spans political, social, and interpersonal domains, demonstrating how power structures exploit euphemisms, dysphemisms, and rhetorical fallacies to frame narratives, obscure truths, and mobilize belief. Far from being a neutral medium of communication, language emerges as a potent force - capable of both constructing realities and distorting them. By scrutinizing the ethical dimensions of linguistic manipulation, this study underscores the imperative of critical literacy in an era where rhetorical strategies increasingly define public discourse.

Keywords: Language manipulation, rhetorical strategies, euphemism, dysphemism, political discourse, power and language, propaganda, persuasion, cognitive linguistics, social influence, linguistic ethics, communication theory, discourse analysis

Introduction:

“We’re destroying words - scores of them, hundreds of them, every day. We’re cutting the language down to the bone,” says Syme, a character in the book *1984* by George Orwell, as he explains ‘Newspeak,’ a language devised to meet the ideological needs of IngSoc, or English Socialism. Newspeak, as we find out, is the only language in the world whose vocabulary shrinks instead of being enriched with time. Words considered ‘unnecessary’ are removed, such as “Bad” being replaced by “Ungood” and “Dark” being replaced by “Unlight.” Words like “free,” “honor,” “justice,” “morality,” and “democracy” are deemed heretical and hence cease to exist. Even if new words are introduced, they serve a political purpose, such as “Crimethink” and “Doublespeak.” The Revolution will be complete when the language is perfect.” Words, therefore, are not just words but concepts. Words determine not only how we communicate but also how we think. We cannot think without words, and if control is imposed on what words we use and how it is possible to control and even limit what we think.

Language as a key to understanding concepts:

Language is not merely a medium of communication - it is the very framework through which we perceive, interpret, and understand the world. Theories of language, particularly those from structuralism, post-structuralism, and linguistic relativity, emphasize that language is not passive but actively constructs meaning. Ferdinand de Saussure, the father of structural linguistics, argued that meaning is not inherent in objects or ideas but is produced through the differences between linguistic signs. According to Saussure, a word does not point directly to a concept; rather, meaning arises through the relation between the signifier (the word) and the signified (the concept)

it represents). This distinction suggests that language is not just a reflection of reality but a system that shapes how we categorize and process experiences.

This becomes more profound in the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (or linguistic relativity), which posits that the language one speaks directly influences one's worldview. For instance, the Inuit languages (Inuit languages are a group of closely related Indigenous languages spoken by the Inuit people across the Arctic regions of Canada, Greenland, and Alaska. They are part of the Eskimo-Aleut language family, which also includes Yupik languages (spoken in parts of Alaska and Siberia) and Aleut (spoken in the Aleutian Islands) have multiple words for different types of snow like: "Aput" - Snow on the ground, "Qanik" - Falling snow, "Nutaryuk" - Fresh snow, reflecting a heightened sensitivity to environmental nuances that English speakers may not perceive as distinctly. Similarly, in languages like Russian, which have separate terms for light blue and dark blue, speakers are faster at distinguishing shades of blue than English speakers, showing that linguistic categories can influence perception itself.

Moreover, Michel Foucault's post-structuralist theory of discourse demonstrates how language functions as a mechanism of power. According to Foucault, what we can think, say, or even imagine is governed by discursive structures that define what is "normal" or "true." For example, in colonial discourse, native populations were often described using terms like "primitive" or "savage," creating an ideological framework that justified imperial domination. In this case, language was not describing reality - it was manufacturing it.

Even in everyday political rhetoric, the framing of terms such as "terrorist" versus "militant" reveals the power of language to shape public opinion. These terms carry vastly different connotations despite referring to similar acts, showing that the choice of language is a political act

with real consequences. Thus, language is not a neutral vessel - it is an active force that structures knowledge, reinforces ideologies, and defines the boundaries of thought. Understanding language, therefore, is not just about grammar or vocabulary; it is the key to understanding power, perception, and the construction of social reality.

Language acts as a powerful tool for shaping opinions, influencing perceptions, and framing narratives. The way political parties, media outlets, pressure groups, and non-governmental organizations use language can significantly impact the public domain and affect political discourse.

In contemporary times, the intricate relationship between language and politics has reached its zenith, and language is now used as a strategic instrument to sway the masses and drive political agendas.

One way language can be used to manipulate the masses is through the “Framing Effect.” The Framing Effect implies that the way an argument, fact, or piece of information is framed can impact how it is perceived. Political leaders often use this technique to steer public opinion in a particular direction, portraying themselves in a favorable light. For a long time, concentration camps were not known as concentration camps but as camps for “special treatment.” This framing of camps shaped how people perceived each other and helped the Nazis justify their oppression of the Jews.

During election campaigns, contesting candidates employ “positive framing” to highlight the work they have done and the policies they have made while using “negative framing” for the opposition parties. It is common to hear words such as “dwindling economy,” “unemployment” to

criticize the government. What the government often presents as “welfare economics,” such as free education, health, and amenities, is criticized by the opposition as “freebies.”

During India’s first war of independence in 1857, what the British referred to as the “Sepoy Mutiny” was hailed by Indian freedom fighters as the “Revolt of Independence.” The Framing Effect lies in whether it is called a “revolt” or a “mutiny.”

Using euphemisms like “interrogation techniques” instead of “torture” and “collateral damage” instead of “civilian casualties” sanitizes the language used to describe controversial actions.

Language also shapes popular narratives. Narratives are overarching stories or themes that influence how people perceive events and issues. These political narratives are created through the continuous and repeated use of specific phrases and slogans. These are usually catchy and easy to remember and recall. In India, for example, when relations were good with pre-1962 war China, a popular slogan was “Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai” (Indians and Chinese are brothers). “Make America Great Again” and “Take Back Control” are other such slogans.

Slogans such as “Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas,” a slogan of Mr. Modi, are designed to capture attention, evoke emotions, and convince people that these leaders and their party would work for the betterment of the nation by promoting the stature of the individual: economically, politically, and socially.

Another example is the slogan “Garibi Hatao, Desh Bachao” (Remove poverty and save the country), popularized by the then Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, just before the 1971

elections as a way of capturing public attention by passing on the message of the country's development under her Congress Party's rule.

One of the most powerful examples of how language can be used to persuade and mythologize leadership in Indian political history is the slogan “India is Indira, and Indira is India.” Coined by “Dev Kant Barooah” during the peak of Indira Gandhi's dominance, particularly around the time of the Emergency (1975–77), this phrase exemplifies how euphemistic and symbolic language can blur the lines between a political leader and the nation itself. By equating Indira Gandhi with the entirety of India, the slogan created a rhetorical device that positioned dissent against her as an act of anti-nationalism. This is a classic example of persuasive language, where the leader becomes a metaphor for the state, enabling the suppression of criticism under the guise of patriotism.

Manipulation and propaganda in politics can also be achieved through language. Political actors may engage in deceptive rhetoric and euphemisms and deceive the public. By employing such methods, these actors can undermine democratic principles like transparency and accountability. Political parties, sometimes, employ the use of strong words to grab public attention and to persuade the audience. In the recently conducted 2024 lok sabha elections, both the BJP (Bharatiya janata party) and INC (Indian National Congress) used this method.

Table 1.

Keyword frequency Comparison: BJP vs. Congress manifestos (2024)

Keyword/Theme	BJP Manifesto	Congress Manifesto
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	Mentions	Mentions
Development	High	Moderate
Welfare	Moderate	High
National Security	High	Low
Caste Census	Not Mentioned	Prominent
Reservation	Moderate	High
Infrastructure	High	Moderate
Social Justice	Moderate	High
Healthcare	High	Moderate
Women	High	High
Empowerment		

This comparison reveals the differing priorities and framing strategies of BJP and Congress. While BJP emphasizes national security and infrastructure, Congress focuses on welfare and social justice. Such linguistic patterns, as discussed by Tannen and Lakoff, illustrate how language choices reinforce political identities and shape voter perceptions unconsciously.

Propagandistic language is used to distort facts and manipulate perceptions. This can range from subtle framing techniques to outright falsehoods propagated through various media channels. In authoritarian regimes, language manipulation is an indispensable tool in the hands of those in

power. Once a ruling government also establishes control over the media, the media is used as an instrument to control this 'public language' and thereby control the population.

Hitler's propaganda minister, Joseph Goebbels, was tasked with portraying a fair image of the Nazi regime to the German people. Highlighting the achievements of the Nazi party, creating narratives supporting and justifying government actions, and creating a despicable image of non-Aryans was part of this propaganda. A famous quote from Goebbels is, "If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it."

In the modern age, in addition to traditional media outlets, social media platforms have become important tools for political narrative-building and generating influence. Political leaders and interest groups use these platforms to disseminate their messages and shape narratives in the online realm.

On different social media platforms, leaders try to attract public attention and influence by connecting with voters, mobilizing supporters, and shaping public discourse using methods such as hashtags, memes, headline management and viral videos.

In general, language is a fundamental aspect of politics that influences how issues are framed, narratives are constructed, and opinions are generated. Whether language is used to persuade the public or to deceitfully divide them, the power of words in shaping political discourse cannot be ignored. Leaders in power can use alarmist language to exaggerate threats and justify authoritarian measures.

Another important aspect of language is how it influences policy-making procedures. Policy debates are often examined based on how they are communicated to the public. For

instance, debates over immigration reforms hinge on whether immigrants are portrayed as “illegal aliens” or “undocumented migrants,” demonstrating how language shapes policy priorities and public perceptions.

Language can be used as a tool to view the same idea or event from different perspectives. In his poem “The Right Word,” Imtiaz Dharker poetically addresses this very issue:

*Outside the door,
lurking in the shadows,
is a terrorist.*

Is that the wrong description?

*Outside that door,
taking shelter in the shadows,
is a freedom fighter.*

Words are powerful and play an important role in molding people’s minds in any desired direction.

Language can also be used to uplift the spirit of brotherhood, unity, and nationalism among the masses. Historically, political leaders have given speeches to sway audiences according to their will in their desired direction.

Both Martin Luther King Jr.’s “I Have a Dream” speech and Jawaharlal Nehru’s “Tryst with Destiny” address pivotal historical moments and harness the power of language to inspire collective imagination and hope. King’s speech is rich with metaphors drawn from scripture, nature, and American history. For instance, when he says, “I have a dream that one day every

valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low,” he invokes biblical imagery to signify the leveling of injustice. He speaks of cashing “a check” that was promised by the Constitution, turning a financial metaphor into a powerful moral claim on justice. Similarly, Nehru’s line, “At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom,” transforms a political transition into a poetic rebirth. The metaphor of India “awakening” contrasts sleep with action, darkness with light, servitude with sovereignty. He also refers to the moment as a “tryst with destiny,” personifying India’s freedom as a long-awaited romantic meeting, laden with emotional and historical weight. These metaphors do more than beautify the speeches - they function to stir emotion, instill hope, and create a shared narrative. Both leaders recognized that the success of their respective movements - civil rights in America and independence in India - depended not only on political strategy but on the ability to emotionally unite people through language. In doing so, they demonstrated that metaphors are not mere ornaments; they are central to framing struggles, defining visions, and mobilizing masses.

Language also plays an important role in maintaining inclusivity and diversity in politics. At the same time, if the languages of different linguistic regions are not equally represented, it can lead to discrimination, marginalization, and political distrust among the masses. Efforts like official language policies and language rights protection contribute significantly to a more inclusive political landscape. Terms such as “Unity in Diversity” and “Satyamev Jayate” (Truth alone triumphs) fulfill the positive function of uniting people.

Another important aspect of language analyzed by psychologists around the world is how individuals understand language. Even small variations in language use might reflect the speaker’s prejudiced opinions.

For example, a seemingly innocuous statement like “girls are as good as boys at driving cars” might quietly reinforce sexist beliefs. The grammatical form of this statement suggests that driving prowess is more prevalent or natural in boys than in girls. Thus, words have the unintended power to shape our perception of the world.

This statement - “girls are as good as boys at driving cars” - while seemingly progressive on the surface, subtly reinforces the very gender bias it appears to challenge. Psychologically, this reflects the concept of markedness in language, where one category is presented as the “norm” and the other as a deviation or exception. In this sentence, boys are positioned as the standard against which girls are measured, thereby sustaining the stereotype that driving is inherently a male domain. This is tied to linguistic framing, a phenomenon in cognitive psychology where the way information is presented influences how it is interpreted.

Even if the intention is to promote equality, the structure of such statements can unconsciously affirm existing hierarchies. Research in psycholinguistics, particularly by scholars like Deborah Tannen and Robin Lakoff, shows that language choices can reinforce power dynamics and social roles without the speaker realizing it. The human brain tends to process such comparative statements through existing schemas - mental structures shaped by cultural norms - which means listeners might hear affirmation of a stereotype rather than its dismantling. Furthermore, implicit bias is often activated through repeated exposure to such framed messages, subtly affecting attitudes and decision-making. For example, in educational settings, saying “girls can do math just as well as boys” might unintentionally imply that math is a male skill, thus influencing how girls perceive their own abilities. This demonstrates that language doesn’t just reflect thought - it molds it. When everyday phrases are built around implicit comparisons, they perpetuate social constructs and prejudices under the guise of neutrality or even praise. Therefore,

recognizing and consciously correcting such linguistic patterns is crucial not just for accurate communication but for fostering genuine equality in thought and behavior.

Age of Attention:

In today's attention driven society, language has become an indispensable tool for the professionals working across various fields to engage and retain their particular set of audiences. They employ the use of agenda driven language to meet the people's eye. This strategic selection of linguistic styles – ranging from the formal and gentle tone of journalists to the vulgar expressions of the stand up comedians – plays an important role in capturing attention and meeting the desired agenda.

This phenomenon is a classic example of the adaptive nature of language in multiple fields such as media, entertainment etc. Hence, it highlights how in contemporary society there exists a wide array of societal dynamics and audience expectations.

Inside the fancy newsrooms:

In contemporary times, the field of journalism has started to showcase the use of strategic attention-grabbing terms such as “exclusive” and “Badi Khabar” (Breaking news) and such a method has become a prevalent tactic to captivate audiences. While the use of these terms could be justified in situations of genuine urgency, their frequent deployment often serves to sensationalise content, sometimes diverting public attention toward less significant stories. This practice, which is part of “yellow Journalism,” involves the use of eye-catching headlines and sensationalised exaggerations to increase sales and viewership.

The phenomenon of “journalese” - a style of writing employed by journalists, which is characterised by artificial hyperbolic, and sometimes over-abbreviated language that is often considered typical of news media – further exemplifies this trend. Journalists, under pressure or sometimes due to their biases resort to such methods wherein they produce stories or headlines with familiar phrases and dramatic wording to convey urgency and importance. This leads to amplification of small events as major ones to attract attention.

The implications of such sensationalism are significant. For instance, during the Ebola outbreak of 2014, the way the US and UK media covered the news, actually defines this phenomenon of how extreme headlines prioritise shock value over accurate information, leading to public fear and misinformation.

However, such methods come with significant drawbacks. They not only distort public perception but also undermine the credibility of the media. By prioritizing sensationalism over factual accuracy, journalists risk eroding public trust and perpetuating misinformation. This erosion of credibility has led to growing public skepticism, evident in terms like “Godi Media” coined in India, which reflect the perception of media outlets being aligned with or subservient to those in power. When journalism becomes biased, it ceases to serve its democratic function - informing the public - and instead becomes a tool for narrative manipulation, prompting audiences to disengage and distrust the very platforms meant to hold power accountable.

Comic relief:

On the other hand, the stand-up comedians utilise the use of informal, and sometimes vulgar language to elicit laughter and connect with their audiences on a personal level. The use of

such language serves multifaceted functions like: it breaks the social taboo, and creates a sense of belongingness among the audience members.

The use of explicit language can heighten the comedic effect by introducing shock value, thereby capturing attention and provoking reactions. In the current times, shock value has emerged as a linguistic and rhetorical device to capture public interest. Shock value, in its simplest form, refers to the deliberate use of provocative, offensive, or unexpected language to evoke strong emotional reactions - be it amusement, outrage, or discomfort. This phenomenon is particularly evident in entertainment, social media, and political discourse, where heightened competition for engagement has incentivized content creators to push linguistic boundaries. For example: there are multiple indian comedians who employ the use of such tactics like: Samay raina, Tanmay Bhatt etc.

The use of such a method extends even beyond comedy, shock value is a key tool in political discourse, advertising, and digital media, where controversy fuels visibility. For example figures like: Donald Trump has strategically employed provocative language to capture media attention and sometimes to assert his dominance. During the recent visit of President Zelensky at the White house, Trump's use of blunt, sometimes offensive speech during the peace talk broke from traditional political decorum, earning both condemnation and unwavering loyalty from different segments of the public. His unfiltered style ensured that his statements dominated news cycles, regardless of whether they were praised or criticized.

This effect is also visible through the social media domains like twitter (now X) and TikTok, where users who employ provocative or extreme language - whether in humor, activism,

or trolling - often find themselves at the center of viral conversations, benefiting from the heightened engagement that shock value produces.

Moreover, comedians like Samay Raina have built their careers by using uncensored language to address societal issues. Raina's approach appeals to audiences who feel constrained by political correctness, offering a platform for expressing frustrations and challenging prevailing norms. His comedy reflects a segment of society that resonates with unfiltered discourse, highlighting the role of language in mirroring societal sentiments.

Linguistic Adaptation to Audience Preferences

The attention capturing power of language is not just confined to journalism and comedy and politics, but it also extends to advertising and digital content. Studies have shown that online advertisements in regional languages outperform those in English, particularly among resident Indians. This preference indicates that audiences are more likely to engage with content that resonates with their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. For example, a survey revealed that ads in languages like Hindi, Tamil, and Telugu attracted higher user engagement, emphasizing the importance of linguistic relatability in marketing strategies.

Furthermore, research published in the *Journal of Marketing* highlights that language simplicity and emotional resonance are key drivers of sustained audience attention. Content that is easy to process and evokes emotions such as excitement, hope, or anxiety tends to keep readers engaged longer. This finding suggests that beyond the choice between formal and informal language, the emotional undertones and readability significantly impact audience retention.

Academic Perspectives: Code-Switching and Audience Engagement

From an academic standpoint, the concept of code-switching - alternating between different languages or language varieties - plays a significant role in engaging diverse audiences. It helps people to connect with various demographic groups, enhancing relatability and comprehension. For instance, Nigerian stand-up comedians often blend English, Nigerian Pidgin, and indigenous languages in their performances. This linguistic strategy not only reflects the country's linguistic diversity but also ensures that the humor resonates across different audience segments.

Similarly, in political communication, the strategic use of language has been employed to influence specific demographics. Reports indicate that foreign adversaries have targeted U.S. elections by creating content in languages like Spanish to sway minority voters. This tactic underscores the power of language in shaping perceptions and influencing behavior, particularly when tailored to the linguistic preferences of target audiences.

In an era where capturing and retaining attention is paramount, the strategic use of language emerges as a critical factor across various domains. Whether through the formal tone of journalism, the provocative language of stand-up comedy, or the tailored messaging in advertising and political campaigns, language choices are meticulously crafted to resonate with specific audiences. Understanding these dynamics offers valuable insights into the interplay between language and attention, highlighting the need for adaptability and cultural sensitivity in communication strategies.

Slogans are succinct, memorable phrases designed to encapsulate the essence of a brand, movement, or ideology. Their creation is both an art and a science, involving strategic linguistic choices and psychological insights to ensure they effectively convey intended messages and

influence public perception. From advertising to political campaigns, slogans play a critical role in shaping how ideas are communicated and remembered.

Creating a powerful slogan requires thoughtful attention to language, length, and emotional impact. Brevity is a key component - studies suggest that the most liked slogans average around 4.9 words, while the most easily remembered ones are even shorter, at approximately 3.9 words. This conciseness ensures that slogans are easy to recall and process, especially in fast-paced environments saturated with competing messages. Word choice also matters significantly. According to research conducted by Bayes Business School (City, University of London), slogans using common, abstract words tend to be more likable, while those that employ rare, concrete terms are less liked but more memorable. This highlights an important trade-off between likability and retention, with marketers and activists tailoring their slogans depending on their immediate goals.

In addition to clarity and vocabulary, the use of poetic devices can enhance the appeal of a slogan. Rhyme, alliteration, and rhythm make slogans catchier and more enjoyable to say or hear - think of “Snap! Crackle! Pop!” or “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle.” These linguistic tools create a musicality that reinforces memorability. Equally important is emotional resonance. A slogan that evokes feelings is far more likely to leave a lasting impression. For instance, De Beers’ iconic line “A Diamond is Forever” not only promotes a product but also taps into deep emotional themes of love and permanence, which has profoundly influenced global cultural perceptions around diamond engagement rings.

Slogans serve multiple functions in society. In the commercial world, they help create brand identity and promote recognition. A slogan like Nike’s “Just Do It” does more than

encourage physical activity - it suggests a mindset of ambition and determination, aligning the brand with aspirational values. Slogans also help differentiate brands in crowded markets. Apple's "Think Different" wasn't just a marketing tool; it positioned the company as a symbol of innovation and creativity, appealing to a specific demographic seeking uniqueness. Beyond differentiation, slogans create emotional connections with audiences. L'Oréal's "Because You're Worth It" is a case in point - its empowerment message has turned it into more than a beauty campaign; it's a statement of self-worth that resonates with millions.

Perhaps more significantly, slogans possess the ability to shape public consciousness and societal values. Certain slogans transcend their initial purpose and become embedded in cultural norms. "A Diamond is Forever" is now synonymous with the idea of eternal love, illustrating how a commercial slogan can influence social customs. Similarly, slogans are central to political and social movements. Phrases like "Black Lives Matter" or "Make America Great Again" encapsulate complex ideologies in a few words, offering rallying cries that inspire action, loyalty, and sometimes polarization. These slogans are not just messages - they become identities, banners under which communities mobilize.

Moreover, slogans can subtly influence behavior and attitudes. Public health campaigns, for example, have long relied on slogans like "Stay Home, Stay Safe" or "Click It or Ticket" to encourage responsible action. These short, catchy lines leverage emotional cues - fear, safety, care - to drive behavioral change. Thus, slogans act as behavioral nudges, nudging societies toward specific collective goals.

In conclusion, slogans are far more than mere advertising tools. They are carefully crafted linguistic instruments with the power to influence thought, foster emotional connection, and even

redefine societal values. Whether created for a product, a campaign, or a cause, slogans operate at the intersection of language, psychology, and culture. In doing so, they shape not only what we buy and believe - but also how we see ourselves and the world around us.

The term “post-truth” gained significant prominence in the political lexicon following the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States in 2016. The Oxford Dictionaries even named “post-truth” as their Word of the Year in 2016, defining it as relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief. This concept underscores a shift in the public’s engagement with information, where emotional resonance and personal convictions often overshadow empirical evidence and factual accuracy.

Central to the post-truth environment is the proliferation of misinformation and the strategic dissemination of falsehoods, often referred to as the “firehose of falsehood” technique. This propaganda method involves broadcasting a large number of messages rapidly, repetitively, and continuously across multiple channels without regard for truth or consistency. The aim is to overwhelm the audience, creating confusion and disorientation, thereby making it challenging for individuals to discern fact from fiction. This approach has been notably utilized in various political contexts to manipulate public perception and divert attention from unfavorable realities.

In the context of Donald Trump’s presidency, the application of such techniques became evident. Trump’s frequent dissemination of false or misleading statements exemplified the firehose of falsehood strategy. By repeating falsehoods, he leveraged the psychological phenomenon known as the illusory truth effect, where repeated exposure to misinformation increases its

perceived veracity. This method not only sowed doubt about established facts but also eroded trust in traditional information sources.

A notable example of this strategy was the propagation of the “Big Lie” concerning the 2020 U.S. presidential election. Despite substantial evidence confirming the election’s integrity, Trump and his allies persistently claimed that the election was stolen through widespread voter fraud. This he did using his twitter. Like on November 15th, he tweeted: *“He only won in the eyes of the FAKE NEWS MEDIA. I concede NOTHING! We have a long way to go. This was a RIGGED ELECTION!”* and then on December 22, he tweeted: *“THE DEMOCRATS DUMPED HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF BALLOTS IN THE SWING STATES LATE IN THE EVENING. IT WAS A RIGGED ELECTION!!!”* This unfounded narrative was also amplified through various media channels, leading to significant portions of the populace questioning the legitimacy of the electoral process. The repetition of this falsehood not only fueled political polarization but also culminated in events such as the January 6th Capitol riot, highlighting the tangible consequences of post-truth politics.

The media’s role in this landscape is complex. Traditional journalistic practices, which often involve reporting statements from public figures, can inadvertently contribute to the spread of misinformation when those figures engage in deceptive communication. To address this challenge, linguist George Lakoff proposed the *“truth sandwich”* method, wherein factual information is presented before and after a false claim to mitigate its potential impact. This approach aims to frame misinformation within a context that emphasizes truth, thereby reducing the likelihood of the falsehood taking hold in public consciousness.

The implications of post-truth politics extend beyond individual events, influencing broader societal dynamics. The deliberate use of misleading language and narratives serves to divert public attention from substantive issues, manipulate perceptions, and consolidate power. This erosion of a shared factual foundation undermines democratic discourse, as debates become rooted in conflicting beliefs rather than common realities. Furthermore, the normalization of dishonesty in political communication fosters cynicism and disengagement among the populace, weakening the foundational trust necessary for functional governance.

Conclusion

The emergence of the post-truth era, particularly highlighted during and after Donald Trump's ascent to power, underscores the potent influence of language in shaping public perception and discourse. The strategic deployment of misinformation and emotionally charged narratives can effectively divert attention, mislead audiences, and construct alternative realities that serve specific political or economic agendas. Recognizing and addressing these tactics is crucial for fostering an informed citizenry and preserving the integrity of democratic institutions. In summary, the significance of language in politics cannot be overstated. Language is a powerful tool of political influence, used to shape policy outcomes, mobilize support, and frame political narratives. It is crucial for us to evaluate the language used by political actors critically, identify their persuasive strategies, and be aware of how language affects us and how we comprehend political issues as citizens and participants in political discourse. By understanding the power of words, we can become more informed and discerning participants in the political process.

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