Received: 10 August 2026; **Revised:** 28 September 2026; **Accepted:** 04 November 2026; **Published:** 20 November 2026
Archs Sci. (2026) Volume 76, Issue 5 Pages 198-213, Paper ID 2026521.
https://doi.org/10.68304/as/76521

The Relationship Between Language and Political Thought in Light of Contemporary Linguistic Approaches: An Analytical Study of How Language Shapes Political Awareness and Influences Public Opinion

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Abstract This study examines the relationship between language and political thought through contemporary linguistic approaches to explain how specific linguistic choices contribute to the formation of political awareness and influence the development and expression of public opinion. Adopting an analytical-integrative method, it synthesizes theoretical and empirical research from linguistic relativity, functional and critical linguistics, pragmatics, critical discourse studies, cognitive linguistics, political communication, social psychology, and corpus-assisted and digital discourse studies. On this basis, it proposes a multilevel model in which political meaning is constructed at five interacting levels (lexical, grammatical, metaphorical-conceptual, pragmatic, and discursive-medial) and filtered through audience predispositions, competing messages, and media environments. The analysis examines key mechanisms, including naming and labeling, the deletion of agency through passivization and nominalization, metaphorical framing, presupposition, inclusive and exclusive pronouns, legitimation and proximization strategies, repetition, and moralized-emotional language in digital networks. Taken together, these mechanisms show that language does not determine political thought but systematically channels attention, categorization, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and group identification. The empirical record supports a moderate position: linguistic framing effects are real and measurable, but their strength depends on prior beliefs, source credibility, competition among frames, deliberation, and critical literacy. The study illustrates these mechanisms with examples from Arabic political discourse, including diglossic code choice, contested political keywords, and the framing of the Arab uprisings, and it concludes with implications for critical language awareness, media literacy, journalistic practice, and research on Arabic political communication.

Index Terms political discourse, critical discourse analysis, framing, conceptual metaphor, linguistic relativity, public opinion, political awareness, Arabic political communication

I. Introduction

Politics is conducted, to a very large extent, in and through language. Aristotle connected the political nature of human beings to their capacity for speech, which allows them to articulate what is advantageous and harmful, just and unjust [1], and contemporary political discourse analysts have built on this observation to argue that political activity is inseparable from the use of language [2]. Constitutions, laws, treaties, election campaigns, parliamentary debates, protests, and diplomatic negotiations are either linguistic acts in their own right or are realized through them; to declare a state of emergency, to promise reform, or to recognize a government is to perform an action with words [3]. Political thought, understood as the systems of ideas through which communities conceive power, authority, legitimacy, justice, and belonging, is likewise articulated, transmitted, contested, and transformed in language. The question of how language and political thought are related is therefore not peripheral to political inquiry; it concerns the principal medium through which political life is organized, understood, and contested.

Concern with this question has a long history. Classical rhetoric treated persuasion as a political art. In the twentieth century, Orwell [4] warned that political language can be used to make the indefensible appear defensible and to dull the critical faculties of its audience, and Klemperer [5] documented, from within, how the vocabulary and phrasing of the National Socialist regime penetrated the everyday thought and speech of ordinary Germans. Since the 1970s, a series of linguistic approaches has turned these intuitions into systematic research programs: critical linguistics showed how grammatical choices encode ideological perspectives [6]; critical discourse analysis connected texts to relations of power and ideology

[7]–[9]; cognitive linguistics showed that political reasoning is structured by conceptual metaphors and frames [10], [11]; and political communication research demonstrated experimentally that the way an issue is framed can change the opinions people express about it [12], [13].

The question has acquired new urgency in the contemporary media environment. Digital platforms have transformed the production and circulation of political language: messages expressing moral emotion spread more widely in social networks [14], false news spreads farther and faster than true news [15], and the study of misinformation has become an interdisciplinary priority [16]. The Arab world has experienced these transformations in particularly concentrated form. Satellite television reshaped Arab political communication from the 1990s onward [17], [18], digital media played a significant communicative role during the uprisings of 2010–2011 [19], and the same events were framed in markedly different ways across newspapers and social media [20]. At the same time, the Arabic language itself has long been an object and an instrument of political ideology, bound up with debates about national identity, unity, and authenticity [21], [22].

Despite the volume of relevant research, knowledge about the relationship between language and political thought remains fragmented. Linguists analyze political texts but rarely measure their effects on audiences; psychologists and political scientists measure the effects of isolated linguistic cues but often abstract them from the discursive contexts in which they occur; and the concept of framing itself has been used so broadly that leading scholars have called for greater conceptual precision [23]. As a result, the central question, whether and how language shapes political thought, receives conflicting answers. At one extreme stands the strongly determinist view, dramatized in Orwell's fictional Newspeak and associated with the strongest readings of the linguistic relativity hypothesis, according to which the available vocabulary and grammar set the limits of what can be thought. At the other extreme stands the view that thought is largely independent of language and that linguistic differences have little cognitive consequence [24]. Between these extremes lies a large body of evidence that requires careful synthesis. In Arabic scholarship the problem is compounded: existing studies of Arabic political discourse have produced valuable analyses of particular speeches, events, and media [25]–[28], but they have seldom been integrated with the cognitive and experimental literature on framing and opinion formation. The problem addressed by this study is the absence of an integrative account that brings these approaches together, specifies the linguistic mechanisms involved, evaluates the evidence for their effects, and applies the resulting framework to Arabic political discourse.

The study addresses four research questions:

RQ1. How do contemporary linguistic approaches conceptualize the relationship between language and political thought?

RQ2. Through which linguistic mechanisms, and at which levels of linguistic organization, does political language shape political awareness and steer public opinion?

RQ3. What does the empirical evidence reveal about the strength, conditions, and limits of these effects?

RQ4. How are these mechanisms manifested in Arabic political discourse, and what are the implications for critical language awareness in Arab societies?

The study aims to map the principal contemporary approaches to language and politics and to identify their distinctive contributions; to construct an integrative model of the levels and mechanisms through which language influences political cognition; to evaluate the empirical evidence for and against strong claims of linguistic influence; and to apply the model to Arabic political discourse. Its theoretical significance lies in bridging traditions that are usually studied separately, namely discourse-analytic, cognitive, and experimental research, and in proposing a framework that can guide future empirical work. Its practical significance lies in its implications for education, journalism, and public life. If political language can systematically channel attention, attribution, and evaluation, then the capacity to recognize and analyze these effects is a component of democratic citizenship, and its cultivation is a legitimate goal of language education and media literacy programs.

The study is theoretical and analytical; it does not report newly collected experimental or survey data, but instead synthesizes, compares, and interprets previously published research. It analyzes linguistic mechanisms rather than the merits of particular political positions, and the examples it discusses have been chosen for their illustrative value, not as evaluations of the actors or causes involved. Five concepts are central. *Political thought* refers to the ideas, beliefs, values, and conceptual schemes through which individuals and communities understand and evaluate political life. *Political awareness* refers to citizens' cognitive grasp of political reality, including their knowledge, their interpretive schemas, their evaluative orientations, and their sense of identity and agency. *Public opinion* refers to the distribution of politically relevant attitudes in a population as expressed in public communication and measured in surveys; following Lippmann [29], it is understood to rest on the mental images through which people represent a political world that they mostly cannot observe directly, and following Zaller [30], individual opinions are understood to be constructed from the considerations that are salient at the moment of expression. *Political discourse* refers to the text and talk of political actors in political contexts and, more broadly, to public communication about political matters [31]. Finally, *framing* refers to the selection of some aspects of a perceived reality and their presentation in a way that promotes a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, or remedy [13].

II. Theoretical Framework: Contemporary Linguistic Approaches to Language and Political Thought

The relationship between language and political thought has been theorized from several directions. This section reviews eight contemporary approaches, moving from the most general claims about language and cognition to the specific study

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of political discourse, public opinion, and digital communication, and concluding with research on the Arab world. Table 1, at the end of this section, summarizes the principal concepts and scholarly contributions of these approaches.

A. From Linguistic Relativity to Neo-Whorfian Research

The most general version of the question is whether the language people speak shapes the way they think. Sapir [32] argued that human beings do not live in an objective world alone but are very much at the mercy of the particular language that has become the medium of expression for their society, so that what a community takes to be the real world is to a considerable extent built upon its language habits. Whorf [33] extended this idea to grammar, arguing that the grammatical categories of a language organize its speakers' experience of time, matter, and causation. In its strongest form, the resulting linguistic relativity hypothesis holds that language determines thought, so that concepts for which a language has no expression cannot be entertained by its speakers. This deterministic reading has been widely rejected, most forcefully by Pinker [24], who argued that thought is conducted in a language-independent mental code and that people routinely think thoughts for which they lack words.

Contemporary research has reformulated the question rather than abandoning it. Instead of asking whether language determines thought, neo-Whorfian research asks whether, how, and under which conditions language influences habitual thinking, attention, categorization, and memory [34]. Reviewing the experimental literature, Wolff and Holmes [35] concluded that there is little support for the view that language determines the basic categories of thought, but substantial support for weaker forms of influence: language can direct attention to particular aspects of experience, can augment cognition by providing tools for reasoning, and can temporarily induce particular modes of processing. Boroditsky's [36] comparison of how Mandarin and English speakers conceptualize time, for example, initiated an extensive and still-debated research program on whether habitual linguistic metaphors affect nonlinguistic reasoning. Slobin [37] proposed a particularly influential version of the weak hypothesis, "thinking for speaking": whatever their effects on thought in general, languages require speakers to attend to certain distinctions whenever they formulate an utterance, and these habits of attention shape how events are construed for the purposes of communication.

For the study of politics, the neo-Whorfian position has a clear implication. Political vocabularies and grammatical options do not imprison thought, but they make certain construals of political reality more available, more salient, and more natural than others. If a public consistently encounters an issue described in one vocabulary and one grammatical perspective, the categories and attention patterns encoded in that language are likely to shape how the issue is understood, even though alternative construals remain possible in principle. This moderate position, which this study calls "weak relativity," provides the cognitive foundation for the more specific approaches reviewed below.

B. Functional and Critical Linguistics

Systemic functional linguistics treats language as a social semiotic, a system of meaningful choices through which speakers construe experience, enact social relations, and organize texts [38]. Every clause represents a choice among alternatives: in the system of transitivity, a speaker chooses how to represent a process and its participants, including who is presented as acting and who as affected; in the system of mood and modality, the speaker chooses how to position the proposition with respect to certainty, obligation, and interpersonal relations; and in the system of theme, the speaker chooses what to present as the point of departure. Because these choices are always made from among alternatives, each one can be read as a perspective on the events represented.

Critical linguistics applied this insight to the analysis of ideology. Fowler et al. [6] showed that grammatical forms such as passivization, nominalization, and the deletion of agents encode particular perspectives on events, so that the same incident can be represented in ways that foreground or obscure responsibility. The approach provided much of the analytical vocabulary of later critical discourse analysis. It has also been criticized from within. Billig [39] pointed out that critical analysts themselves rely heavily on nominalizations and abstract categories, and that the effects of a grammatical form cannot be read off its form alone but depend on the context in which it is used. This criticism does not invalidate the critical-linguistic insight, but it warns against assuming that any given construction has a fixed ideological effect.

Two further traditions reinforce the view that political language is a form of social action. Edelman [40] analyzed political language as a symbolic resource through which governments define problems, enemies, and crises, and through which they can reassure publics even when policies fail to achieve their stated goals. Bourdieu [41] argued that the power of words is not contained in the words themselves but derives from the authority of the speaker and of the institution that authorizes them, so that political language must be analyzed together with the social conditions that make it effective.

C. The Pragmatics of Political Discourse

Pragmatics studies how meaning depends on context, intention, and inference, and it has provided several tools for the analysis of political discourse. Speech act theory showed that utterances do not merely describe the world but perform actions such as promising, threatening, declaring, and accusing [3], [42]. Grice [43] showed that much of what speakers communicate is implicated rather than stated, and relevance theory explained such inferences as the outcome of a general cognitive tendency to seek the most relevant interpretation for the least effort [44]. Political actors exploit both mechanisms. Implicature allows a speaker to convey a claim while retaining the ability to deny having made it, and presupposition allows a contestable proposition to be presented as shared background

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rather than as a claim open to debate. Mazid [45], for example, showed how presuppositions performed strategic functions in a major political speech delivered shortly after the attacks of September 2001, embedding contestable assumptions in the background of the text.

Wilson [46] demonstrated the value of pragmatic analysis for political language more generally, with particular attention to pronouns, implicature, and presupposition. Pronouns have proved especially revealing. The first-person plural can include or exclude the audience, can construct a national community or a partisan group, and can distribute responsibility and credit; studies of politicians' language have shown that shifts between inclusive and exclusive *we* perform continuous identity work [47], [48]. Pragmatics has also offered precise accounts of manipulation. Maillat and Oswald [49] defined manipulative discourse in cognitive terms, as discourse that exploits the constraints of human information processing to lead addressees to interpretations they would reject if they processed the message more fully, and van Dijk [50] characterized manipulation as an illegitimate form of influence that abuses power and exploits recipients' limited knowledge.

D. Critical Discourse Studies

Critical discourse studies (CDS) constitute the most extensive body of research on language and political power. Although the field contains several approaches, they share the assumption that discourse is both shaped by and constitutive of social structures, and that it plays a central role in producing, sustaining, and challenging relations of power [8], [9]. Fairclough [7] analyzed discourse at three interrelated levels: the text, the discursive practices through which texts are produced and interpreted, and the social practices in which those discursive practices are embedded. His work emphasized the role of "common sense" assumptions in naturalizing particular ways of seeing the world.

Van Dijk's sociocognitive approach adds an explicitly cognitive level. On his account, the link between discourse and society is mediated by social cognition: ideologies are shared social representations that organize group attitudes, and they shape discourse through the mental models that language users construct of events and communicative situations [51], [52]. A typical ideological organization of discourse follows what van Dijk calls the ideological square, which emphasizes the positive actions of the in-group and the negative actions of the out-group while de-emphasizing the negative actions of the in-group and the positive actions of the out-group. Van Dijk [31] also argued that political discourse analysis should be defined not only by the actors and genres it studies but by its concern with how discourse contributes to the reproduction of political power.

The discourse-historical approach developed by Reisigl and Wodak [53] and applied by Wodak [54] to right-wing populism provides a systematic inventory of discursive strategies: strategies of nomination (how actors are named), predication (which qualities are attributed to them), argumentation (how claims are justified), perspectivization (from whose point of view events are presented), and intensification or mitigation. Fairclough and Fairclough [55] reconceptualized political discourse as practical argumentation, in which claims about what should be done are derived from goals, values, and representations of circumstances, and they argued that the critical analysis of political discourse should evaluate these arguments rather than merely describe their linguistic features.

A particularly productive and widely developed line of research within critical discourse studies concerns strategies of legitimation. Van Leeuwen [56] identified four major strategies by which social practices and actions are legitimized in discourse: authorization (by reference to authority, custom, or law), moral evaluation (by reference to values), rationalization (by reference to goals and effects), and mythopoesis (by means of narratives). Reyes [57] identified strategies of legitimization in political speeches justifying war, including appeals to emotion, to a hypothetical future, to rationality, to the voices of experts, and to altruism. Cap [58], [59] developed the proximization model, according to which speakers legitimize action by construing distant entities and events as encroaching upon the space, time, and values of the speaker and audience, so that a remote threat comes to be perceived as near and urgent. Cap's model builds on Chilton's [2] deictic space theory, which analyzes political discourse in terms of the positioning of entities along axes of space, time, and modality relative to the deictic center of "us, here, now."

E. Cognitive Linguistics: Conceptual Metaphor and Frames

Cognitive linguistics has contributed the most explicit theory of how language structures political reasoning. Lakoff and Johnson [11] argued that metaphor is not primarily a figure of speech but a mechanism of thought through which abstract domains are understood in terms of more concrete ones, and that every metaphor highlights some aspects of its target while hiding others. Applying this theory to politics, Lakoff [10] argued that conceptions of the nation are commonly structured by the metaphor of the nation as a family and that two competing models of the family, a "strict father" model and a "nurturant parent" model, underlie the moral worldviews of conservatives and liberals in the United States. Frame semantics provided a complementary account of lexical meaning: according to Fillmore [60], words evoke frames, that is, structured bodies of knowledge about situations, roles, and relations, so that understanding a word involves activating the frame to which it belongs. Choosing a word is therefore choosing a frame, together with the roles, causal relations, and evaluations it brings with it.

These ideas have been developed into methods for analyzing political texts. Charteris-Black [61] analyzed the persuasive power of metaphor in the rhetoric of prominent politicians, showing how metaphors combine cognitive and emotional appeal to construct the speaker's legitimacy and to evaluate policies and opponents. Musolff [62] introduced the concept of metaphor scenarios, mini-narratives with built-in evaluative conclusions that circulate in public debate and

that explain why particular metaphors carry argumentative force. Hart [63], [64] combined cognitive linguistics with critical discourse analysis, showing how immigration discourse construes migration in terms of forces acting against barriers and how press reports of violence in political protests construe agency and responsibility through choices of perspective and event structure. Semino et al. [65] proposed an integrated account of metaphor and framing across cognition, discourse, and practice, emphasizing that the framing effects of a metaphor depend on how it is used in context, and Burgers et al. [66] extended the analysis of framing to other figurative devices, namely hyperbole and irony.

Experimental research has tested whether linguistic metaphors actually influence reasoning. In a widely cited series of experiments, Thibodeau and Boroditsky [67] found that describing crime as a "beast" preying on a city led participants to favor enforcement-oriented solutions, whereas describing it as a "virus" infecting the city led them to favor more reform-oriented solutions, and a later study reported that such effects occurred even when participants did not identify the metaphor as influential [68]. A follow-up study, however, found the effect to be considerably less robust than originally reported and dependent on features of the experimental materials and procedure [69]. Reviewing the evidence, Thibodeau et al. [70] argued that linguistic metaphors scaffold reasoning under specifiable conditions, for example when they are apt and presented early, while a systematic review of metaphorical framing experiments in political communication found that the reported effects are mixed and depend on several moderating factors [71]. The cumulative picture is consistent with the weak relativity position outlined above: metaphors can shape political reasoning, but their effects are conditional rather than automatic.

F. Framing, Agenda-Setting, and Public Opinion

Political communication research has studied the effects of language on public opinion with the methods of survey and experimental research. As noted in the introduction, Entman [13] defined framing in terms of the selection and salience of aspects of reality that promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation. Research distinguishes between two kinds of framing effect [12], [72]. Equivalency framing effects occur when logically equivalent descriptions lead to different choices; the classic demonstration is Tversky and Kahneman's [73] finding that preferences between public health programs reversed depending on whether outcomes were described in terms of lives saved or lives lost. Emphasis framing effects occur when a communication highlights a subset of potentially relevant considerations; Nelson et al. [74], for example, found that participants who saw news coverage of a Ku Klux Klan rally framed as a free speech issue expressed more tolerance for the rally than those who saw it framed as a threat to public order.

Several related models clarify how framing operates. Gamson and Modigliani [75] analyzed media discourse as a set of interpretive packages, each organized around a central frame and expressed through condensing symbols such as metaphors, catchphrases, exemplars, and visual images, and they showed how the dominance of packages shifted over time in public discourse on nuclear power. Scheufele [76] distinguished media frames, which are features of texts, from individual frames, which are schemas in the minds of audiences, and described framing as a process linking the two. De Vreese [77] proposed a typology distinguishing issue-specific frames from generic frames that recur across topics. Framing has also been distinguished from agenda-setting and priming. McCombs and Shaw [78] found that the issues emphasized by news media corresponded closely to the issues that voters regarded as most important, and Scheufele and Tewksbury [79] argued that agenda-setting and priming work through the accessibility of issues in memory, whereas framing works through the applicability of particular interpretive schemas to an issue.

Some of the most direct evidence for the political consequences of word choice comes from research on survey question wording. Rasinski [80] found that support for public spending varied substantially depending on whether the spending was described as "welfare" or as "assistance to the poor," and Smith [81] documented similar effects. More recently, Schuldt et al. [82] found that respondents' willingness to endorse the existence of the phenomenon depended on whether the question referred to "global warming" or "climate change," with the difference concentrated among Republican respondents. Such findings show that labels do not merely describe pre-existing opinions but participate in constituting the opinions that are expressed.

Theories of opinion formation explain why these effects occur and why they are limited. Zaller [30] proposed that individuals do not hold fixed opinions on most issues but construct them on the spot from the considerations that happen to be salient, which are in turn supplied largely by elite discourse; highly aware citizens receive more of this discourse but are also better able to resist messages inconsistent with their predispositions. Noelle-Neumann [83] argued that people's willingness to express opinions depends on their perception of the climate of opinion, so that the way media represent majority and minority positions can produce a spiral of silence. Experimental work has, in turn, specified the conditions under which framing effects weaken. Druckman [72] argued that framing effects are not in themselves evidence of citizen incompetence, because citizens often rely on frames offered by sources they regard as credible and knowledgeable; Chong and Druckman [84] showed that, in competitive environments, the relative strength of competing frames matters more than their frequency; and Druckman and Nelson [85] and Druckman [86] showed that deliberation and exposure to counter-frames can sharply reduce elite framing effects. At the same time, Cacciatore et al. [23] warned that the concept of framing has become so broad that it risks losing its explanatory value, and they called for a return to more precise definitions.

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G. Social Psychology of Language, Agency, and Intergroup Relations

Social psychological research provides experimental evidence about the cognitive consequences of specific linguistic choices. Maass et al. [87] documented the linguistic intergroup bias: people tend to describe positive behaviors of their own group and negative behaviors of out-groups in abstract terms, which imply stable dispositions, and to describe negative in-group behaviors and positive out-group behaviors in concrete terms, which imply situational causes; this asymmetry helps to maintain stereotypes. Research on agency has shown that grammatical form affects judgments of responsibility. Fausey and Boroditsky [88] found that agentive descriptions of an accident (someone ignited a napkin) led readers to attribute more blame and to assign higher financial liability than nonagentive descriptions of the same event (the napkin ignited). Henley et al. [89] found that news reports of violence written in the passive voice were associated with lower attributions of harm and perpetrator responsibility than active-voice reports, and Bohner [90] found that writers who attributed more responsibility to victims made greater use of passive constructions and other distancing features. These findings provide empirical support for a central claim of critical linguistics, namely that the grammatical representation of agency has consequences for how responsibility is perceived.

Other findings concern moral language and repetition. Graham et al. [91] found that liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations, which suggests that moralized vocabulary resonates differently with different audiences. Research on the illusory truth effect has shown that repeated statements are judged more likely to be true than new ones [92] and that this effect occurs even when people have knowledge that contradicts the statements [93]. The repetition of slogans and formulas, a pervasive feature of political communication, therefore has a cognitive basis.

H. Corpus-Assisted and Digital Discourse Studies

Two methodological developments have transformed the study of political language in recent decades. The first is the combination of discourse analysis with corpus linguistics. Baker et al. [94] demonstrated the value of this synergy in a large-scale study of the representation of refugees and asylum seekers in the British press, using frequency, keyword, and collocation analysis to identify recurrent patterns of naming and predication and then interpreting these patterns qualitatively. Corpus methods allow analysts to show that a particular construal is typical rather than exceptional, which strengthens claims about the cumulative effects of discourse.

The second development is the study of political language in digital networks. Brady et al. [14] found that the presence of moral-emotional words in messages about contested political issues increased their diffusion in social networks, and Rathje et al. [95] found that posts referring to the political out-group were substantially more likely to be shared than posts referring to the in-group, so that out-group animosity emerged as a strong driver of engagement. Vosoughi et al. [15] found that false news spread farther, faster, and more broadly than true news, an effect that was particularly pronounced for political news and was associated with novelty and emotional reactions. Lazer et al. [16] called for an interdisciplinary science of misinformation, and Pennycook and Rand [96] found that susceptibility to fabricated partisan news was better explained by a lack of analytic reasoning than by motivated reasoning. Digital environments have also favored particular political styles. Mudde [97] defined populism as a thin ideology that divides society into a virtuous people and a corrupt elite, a definition that makes populism inherently discursive; Moffitt and Tormey [98] analyzed populism as a political style characterized by appeals to the people, the performance of crisis, and deliberately transgressive manners; and Enli [99] showed how social media allowed candidates to perform authenticity as political outsiders.

I. Language and Politics in the Arab World

Research on the Arab world adds three distinctive dimensions. The first is language ideology. Suleiman [21] showed how the Arabic language has served as a central symbol of national identity in modern Arab nationalism, and Suleiman [22] analyzed how language becomes both an instrument and an object of political conflict in the Middle East, including through struggles over naming. The second is diglossia. Because Arabic speakers command both the standard language and a colloquial dialect, the choice between them is itself a political resource. Holes [26] showed how Gamal Abd al-Nasir exploited variation between the standard and Egyptian colloquial Arabic in his political speeches, Mazraani [28] analyzed variation in Arabic political speech-making more broadly, and Bassiouney [25], [100] showed how code choice served stance-taking and the politicization of identity during the Egyptian revolution and in modern Egyptian discourse more generally. The third dimension is the transformation of the Arab media landscape. Satellite television created new forms of political communication and a new Arab public sphere [17], [18]; a comparison of Al Jazeera's English and Arabic websites showed that the same organization framed the same conflict differently for different linguistic audiences [101]; and Egyptian state-run newspapers, independent newspapers, and social media framed the 2011 uprising in markedly different terms [20]. The slogans of the uprisings have themselves been analyzed as political discourse [102], and Lahlali [27] has examined the transition of Arabic political discourse across actors and genres since the uprisings, while Howard and Hussain [19] documented the role of digital media in the upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia.

J. Summary and Research Gap

Table 1 summarizes the approaches reviewed in this section and distinguishes their principal concepts, contributions, and representative sources.

The review shows that each approach illuminates a different aspect of the relationship between language and political

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Table 1: Contemporary Linguistic Approaches to Language and Political Thought

Approach	Key concepts	Contribution to the study of political thought	Representative works
Linguistic relativity and neo-Whorfian research	Weak and strong relativity; thinking for speaking; attention and categorization	Establishes that language can influence habitual construal without determining thought	Sapir [32]; Whorf [33]; Lucy [34]; Slobin [37]; Wolff and Holmes [35]
Functional and critical linguistics	Transitivity; modality; nominalization; agency	Shows how grammatical choices encode perspectives and distribute responsibility	Halliday [38]; Fowler et al. [6]; Billig [39]
Pragmatics	Speech acts; implicature; presupposition; deixis; manipulation	Explains how political meaning is conveyed indirectly and how assumptions are naturalized	Austin [3]; Grice [43]; Wilson [46]; Maillat and Oswald [49]
Critical discourse studies	Ideology; power; discursive strategies; legitimation; proximization	Links texts to social cognition, institutions, and relations of power	Fairclough [7]; van Dijk [51]; Reisigl and Wodak [53]; van Leeuwen [56]; Cap [59]
Cognitive linguistics	Conceptual metaphor; frames; force dynamics; construal	Shows how metaphors and frames structure political reasoning and evaluation	Lakoff and Johnson [11]; Fillmore [60]; Lakoff [10]; Hart [63]; Charteris-Black [61]
Framing and public opinion research	Equivalency and emphasis framing; agenda-setting; priming; question wording	Measures effects of wording on expressed opinions and specifies their limits	Tversky and Kahneman [73]; Entman [13]; Zaller [30]; Chong and Druckman [84]
Social psychology of language	Linguistic intergroup bias; agency and blame; illusory truth	Provides experimental evidence on the effects of specific linguistic forms	Maass et al. [87]; Fausey and Boroditsky [88]; Fazio et al. [93]
Corpus-assisted and digital discourse studies	Collocation; keywords; diffusion; moral-emotional language	Identifies typical patterns at scale and their circulation in networks	Baker et al. [94]; Brady et al. [14]; Vosoughi et al. [15]

thought, but that they are rarely combined. Discourse-analytic approaches offer rich accounts of linguistic form and social context but often infer effects from textual analysis alone; experimental approaches measure effects precisely but usually isolate a single cue from its discursive environment; and research on the Arab world has documented important features of Arabic political discourse without systematically connecting them to the cognitive and experimental literature. The present study responds to this gap by proposing an integrative model that specifies the levels at which language operates, the cognitive processes through which it influences political awareness, and the conditions that limit its effects.

An important distinction runs throughout this analysis: demonstrating a linguistic pattern in a political text is not the same as demonstrating its effect on an audience. A discourse analyst can establish which participants are foregrounded, which information is presupposed, and which metaphors recur in a text. Establishing whether these features change beliefs or behavior, however, requires appropriate audience evidence. The integrative perspective developed here therefore keeps textual interpretation, cognitive plausibility, and empirical evidence of opinion effects analytically separate, while examining how they may inform one another.

III. Method

A. Research Design

The study adopts an analytical-integrative design. An integrative review synthesizes representative literature on a topic in a way that generates new frameworks and perspectives, rather than merely summarizing previous findings [103]. Such reviews are especially appropriate when a topic has been studied within separate disciplinary traditions whose findings have not been brought together, and when the aim is to develop a conceptual model rather than to estimate a single effect size [104]. Both conditions apply here: the relationship between language and political thought has been studied in linguistics, discourse studies, cognitive science, social psychology, and political communication, and the goal of the study is to construct and apply an integrative model of the mechanisms involved.

B. Selection of Sources

The sources considered in the analysis comprise peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and foundational theoretical publications relevant to political language and public opinion. Four criteria guided their selection: (a) theoretical centrality, so that the foundational statements of each approach were included; (b) empirical rigor, so that experimental, survey, and corpus-based studies providing direct evidence about the effects of linguistic choices were represented; (c) relevance to the mechanisms that link language to political cognition and opinion, as opposed to the study of political language for other purposes; and (d) coverage of Arabic and the Arab world, so that the model could be applied to Arabic political discourse. Sources were identified through scholarly databases and through backward and forward citation tracing from key works. Selected bibliographic records were independently checked against publisher and scholarly records; full independent verification of every entry is not claimed. Because this is an integrative rather than an exhaustive systematic review, the selection of literature should not be interpreted as a comprehensive bibliographic census.

C. Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeded in four stages. In the first stage, each approach was mapped in terms of its key concepts, its units of

analysis, and its central claims about the relationship between language and thought. In the second stage, the linguistic mechanisms identified in the literature were extracted and organized according to the level of linguistic organization at which they operate: the word, the clause, the conceptual mapping, the utterance in context, and the discourse and its media. In the third stage, the evidence for each mechanism was evaluated according to its type (experimental, survey, corpus-based, or discourse-analytic), its consistency, its replicability, and the moderating conditions that it identifies. In the fourth stage, the results were integrated into a multilevel model that connects linguistic mechanisms to cognitive processes and political outcomes, and the model was applied to Arabic political discourse.

For Arabic in particular, this distinction also prevents constructed examples from being mistaken for documented frequencies of real-world political usage. A well-formed contrast can demonstrate the interpretive possibilities offered by two grammatical constructions without establishing how often either construction occurs in a newspaper, political speech, or digital platform. Claims about distribution would require a defined corpus, transparent sampling, and reproducible coding decisions. Claims about audience interpretation would additionally require direct evidence from speakers or readers in relevant contexts.

D. Illustrative Analysis of Arabic Examples

The application to Arabic draws on published studies of Arabic political discourse and on illustrative examples of three kinds: widely known public expressions such as protest slogans, competing lexical labels for the same events, and constructed minimal contrasts that isolate a single linguistic variable. These examples are analyzed for their linguistic form and for the construal of events that they make available. Two principles govern their use. First, the analysis concerns linguistic mechanisms, not the merits of the political positions or actors involved, and examples have been chosen because they illustrate a mechanism clearly. Second, claims about the effects of particular Arabic expressions on audiences are presented as hypotheses grounded in the general literature, not as established findings, unless they are supported by studies of Arabic-speaking audiences.

E. Limitations

The study has four principal limitations. It does not report new primary data, so its conclusions depend on the quality and scope of the studies it synthesizes. Its selection of sources, although guided by explicit inclusion considerations, is necessarily selective and incomplete within a multidisciplinary literature of this considerable size. Much of the experimental evidence on framing and metaphor comes from studies conducted in North America and Europe, and its generalization to Arabic-speaking societies, with their distinctive linguistic situation and media systems, requires direct testing. Finally, the Arabic examples are illustrative rather than systematically sampled. These limitations inform the agenda for future research presented in the conclusion.

IV. Analysis: A Multilevel Model of Linguistic Influence on Political Thought

The synthesis of the literature yields a model in which political meaning is constructed at five interacting levels of linguistic organization. At each level, specific linguistic mechanisms engage specific cognitive processes, which in turn bear on political outcomes. The influence of all five levels is filtered by a set of mediating conditions located in the audience and the communicative environment. Table 2 presents the model in summary form; the remainder of this section and the next discuss each level in detail.

A. The Lexical Level: Naming, Labeling, and Euphemism

The most elementary political act performed by language is naming. Because every word evokes a frame [60], the choice of a label for an event, a group, or a policy simultaneously influences the roles, causal relations, and evaluations through which the event, group, or policy may be understood. Critical discourse studies treat such choices as strategies of nomination and predication [53], and survey research shows that they alter expressed opinion: support for the same government program varies with whether it is called "welfare" or "assistance to the poor" [80], [81], and endorsement of the same environmental phenomenon varies with whether it is called "global warming" or "climate change" [82].

Arabic political discourse offers a particularly rich field of competing labels. The mass protests of 2010–2011 and their aftermath have been designated, depending on the speaker, as ثورة (*thawra*, "revolution"), انتفاضة (*intifāḍa*, "uprising"), حراك (*ḥarāk*, "movement" or "mobilization"), احتجاجات (*iḥtijājāt*, "protests"), فوضى (*fawḍā*, "chaos"), مؤامرة (*mu'āmara*, "conspiracy"), or فتنة (*fitna*, "strife" or "sedition"). Each of these competing labels activates a different interpretive frame. *Thawra* presents the events as the legitimate action of a people against an illegitimate order; *ḥarāk* is comparatively neutral and emphasizes collective movement without prejudging its outcome; *fawḍā* foregrounds disorder and the loss of security; *mu'āmara* relocates agency from the protesters to hidden external actors; and *fitna* draws on a deep religious and historical resonance, associated in Arabic-Islamic memory with destructive internal strife, that frames dissent as a moral danger to the community. The choice among these words is not a choice among synonyms but among competing accounts of who is acting, why, and with what moral standing, and studies of Egyptian media have shown how differently the same uprising was framed by different outlets [20]. More generally, Suleiman [22] has shown that language in the Middle East functions both as a site and as an instrument of political conflict.

Euphemism and dysphemism operate in the same way. Orwell [4] observed that euphemistic abstractions such as "pacification" could describe violent military action in terms that prevented hearers from forming a mental image of what

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Table 2: A Multilevel Model of Linguistic Influence on Political Awareness and Public Opinion

Level	Linguistic mechanisms	Cognitive processes engaged	Political outcomes	Key evidence
Lexical	Naming and labeling; euphemism and dysphemism; contested keywords	Categorization; frame activation; evaluation	Issue definition; policy support; group boundaries	Fillmore [60]; Rasinski [80]; Schuldt et al. [82]
Grammatical	Transitivity and agency; passivization; nominalization; modality; level of abstraction	Causal attribution; perceived responsibility; certainty	Allocation of blame and credit; accountability	Fowler et al. [6]; Henley et al. [89]; Maass et al. [87]; Fausey and Boroditsky [88]
Metaphorical-conceptual	Conceptual metaphors; metaphor scenarios; force dynamics	Inference patterns about causes and remedies	Policy preferences; perceived urgency	Lakoff [10]; Thibodeau and Boroditsky [67]; Hart [63]; Brugman et al. [71]
Pragmatic	Presupposition; implicature; speech acts; pronouns and deixis; legitimation; proximization	Background assumptions; identification; threat perception	Perceived legitimacy; mobilization; acceptance of action	Mazid [45]; Proctor and Su [48]; van Leeuwen [56]; Cap [58]
Discursive-medial	Repetition; narratives; code choice; media frames; network diffusion	Accessibility; familiarity; perceived climate of opinion; emotional arousal	Agenda; polarization; spread of misinformation	McCombs and Shaw [78]; Noelle-Neumann [83]; Fazio et al. [93]; Brady et al. [14]

Note. The influence of every level is moderated by audience predispositions and political knowledge, source credibility, competition among frames, deliberation, and media literacy [30], [72], [84].

was actually done. Arabic political history provides a well-known example of lexical framing in the designation of the June 1967 defeat as النكسة (*al-naksa*, "the setback"), a term that presents a catastrophic military defeat as a temporary reversal from which recovery is expected. By contrast, the designation of the events of 1948 as النكبة (*al-nakba*, "the catastrophe") frames them as a collective disaster and has become central to Palestinian collective memory. Such historically resonant names are not neutral descriptions: they encode a stance toward the events and shape the narratives within which later generations understand them. Contested keywords constitute a related phenomenon. Terms such as *dīmuqrāṭiyya* ("democracy"), *shūrā* ("consultation"), *'ilmāniyya* ("secularism"), *waṭan* ("homeland"), and *umma* ("community" or "nation") carry different meanings and evaluations in different political traditions, and political struggle is often conducted as a struggle over which meaning will prevail, a process that Bourdieu [41] described as the struggle over the legitimate naming of the social world.

B. The Grammatical Level: Agency, Transitivity, and Modality

The grammatical representation of events is a second, less visible level of influence. The contrast between the following descriptions of the same event illustrates the range of options available in both English and Arabic:

قتلت قواتُ الأمن ثلاثةَ متظاهرين (1a)

qatalat quwwātu l-amni thalāthata mutazāhirīn "Security forces killed three protesters."

قُتِلَ ثلاثةُ متظاهرين (1b)

qutila thalāthatu mutazāhirīn "Three protesters were killed."

لقي ثلاثةُ متظاهرين حتفَهم خلال الاشتباكات (1c)

laqiya thalāthatu mutazāhirīna ḥatfahum khilāla l-ishtibākāt "Three protesters met their deaths during the clashes."

سقوطُ ثلاثةٍ قتلى في الاحتجاجات (1d)

suqūṭu thalāthati qatlā fī l-iḥtijājāt "Three dead in the protests" (literally, "the falling of three dead").

Sentence (1a) is an active transitive clause that names the agent and presents the event as an action performed by one participant on another. Sentence (1b), an agentless passive, leaves the agent unexpressed, although the hearer may infer it. Sentence (1c) uses an idiomatic intransitive construction that presents death as something that happened to the protesters, and the phrase "during the clashes" suggests mutual violence and thus distributes responsibility across both sides. Sentence (1d), typical of headlines, nominalizes the event and presents the deaths as a quantity, removing the process of killing altogether. Critical linguists identified precisely such variation as a key mechanism by which news discourse distributes or obscures responsibility [6], and cognitive analyses of protest reporting have shown how choices of event structure and viewpoint construe agency in violent events [64].

Experimental research confirms that these grammatical choices matter. Agentive descriptions lead readers to attribute more blame and to assign greater liability than nonagentive descriptions of the same event [88]; passive-voice reports of violence are associated with lower attributions of harm and perpetrator responsibility [89]; and writers who perceive victims as more responsible choose passive and distancing constructions more often [90]. The evidence thus runs in both directions: grammatical choices reflect the speaker's attribution of responsibility and influence the audience's attribution

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of it. Billig's [39] warning should nevertheless be kept in mind. Passives and nominalizations have many legitimate uses, for instance when the agent is unknown or when the event itself is the topic, so their ideological effect must be established in context rather than assumed from form. Arabic offers a particularly finely graded set of resources for modulating agency, including the internal passive, the periphrastic passive with *tamma* followed by a verbal noun, idiomatic intransitives such as *laqiya ḥatfahu* ("he met his death"), and nominal headlines, which makes the analysis of agency especially important in Arabic news discourse.

Modality and evidentiality constitute a second grammatical mechanism. Expressions of certainty such as *lā shakka anna* ("there is no doubt that") close down debate by presenting a proposition as beyond question, whereas hedges such as *qad* with the imperfect ("may") and *min al-muḥtamal* ("it is likely") open space for alternatives. Attributions to anonymous sources, such as *afādat maṣādiru muṭṭali'a* ("informed sources reported") or the impersonal *yuqālu* ("it is said"), confer authority on a claim while relieving the speaker of responsibility for it. In Halliday's [38] terms, these choices realize the interpersonal metafunction: they position the speaker and the audience with respect to the truth and legitimacy of what is said.

A third grammatical mechanism concerns the level of abstraction at which actions are described. The linguistic intergroup bias documented by Maass et al. [87] implies that political discourse will tend to describe the positive actions of the in-group and the negative actions of the out-group in abstract, dispositional terms ("our forces are courageous"; "they are violent"), while describing the negative actions of the in-group in concrete, situational terms ("an incident occurred in which shots were fired"). This grammatical pattern is the micro-level realization of van Dijk's ideological square [51], [52], and it shows how ideological polarization can be reproduced without any explicit evaluative statement.

C. The Metaphorical-Conceptual Level

Metaphors provide the conceptual structures within which political problems and solutions are reasoned about [11]. Common political metaphors construe the nation as a family, a body, a building, or a ship; politics as war, sport, or a journey; society as an organism; and economic or social processes as machines or natural forces. Each metaphor brings with it what Musolff [62] called a scenario, a mini-narrative with built-in evaluative conclusions. If the nation is a ship in a storm, unity behind the captain appears rational and dissent appears dangerous; if crime is a virus, prevention and treatment appear appropriate; if it is a beast, capture and confinement do.

Contemporary Arabic political discourse employs several pervasive metaphors of this kind. The image of the community as الجسد الواحد (*al-jasad al-wāḥid*, "the one body") construes solidarity as organic interdependence, so that harm to any part is harm to the whole. The expression سفينة الوطن (*safīnat al-waṭan*, "the ship of the homeland") applies the ship scenario to the nation. The widespread phrases عجلة التنمية (*'ajalat al-tanmiya*, "the wheel of development") and عجلة الإنتاج (*'ajalat al-intāj*, "the wheel of production") construe the economy as a machine whose turning must not be interrupted, a construal that implicitly presents strikes or protests as obstacles that stop the wheel. The calqued expression خارطة الطريق (*khāriṭat al-ṭarīq*, "road map") construes a political process as a journey along a predetermined route toward a known destination, and الخط الأحمر (*al-khaṭṭ al-aḥmar*, "the red line") construes political limits as boundaries whose crossing triggers sanctions. Force-dynamic metaphors, which Hart [63] identified in European immigration discourse, are also common, as in descriptions of displacement as موجات (*mawjāt*, "waves") that threaten to overwhelm a host society.

The experimental evidence reviewed above indicates that such metaphors can influence reasoning but that their effects are conditional. Metaphorical frames appear most influential when they are apt, introduced early, and extended across a text, and when audiences do not already hold strong attitudes on the issue [69]–[71]. The effects of a single metaphor in a single message are therefore likely to be modest. The influence of metaphor in political life derives less from individual exposures than from the cumulative repetition of the same metaphorical scenarios across many texts and speakers, which gradually makes them appear to be the natural way of thinking about an issue [61], [65].

D. The Pragmatic Level: Presupposition, Pronouns, and Legitimation

At the pragmatic level, political meaning is conveyed through what utterances assume, imply, and do. Presupposition is particularly powerful because presupposed content is presented as shared background rather than as a claim open to evaluation. A question such as متى تتوقف الحكومة عن سياسة إفقار المواطنين (*matā tatawaqqafu l-ḥukūmatu 'an siyāsati ifqāri l-muwāṭinīn?* "When will the government stop its policy of impoverishing citizens?") does not assert that such a policy exists; it presupposes it, and any direct answer to the question accepts the presupposition. In the same way, a phrase such as عودة الأمن (*'awdat al-amn*, "the return of security") presupposes that security had been lost and implicitly credits whoever is presented as restoring it. Mazid [45] showed how presuppositions of this kind performed strategic functions in a major political speech, and the cognitive pragmatic account of manipulation explains why they are effective: because addressees allocate limited attention to background information, presupposed content tends to escape the critical scrutiny that asserted content receives [49]. Implicature operates similarly. A statement such as "some parties do not want this country to be stable" implicates a particular opponent without naming it, which allows the speaker to communicate an accusation while retaining the possibility of denying it [43], [44].

Pronouns and other deictic expressions construct the political community and its boundaries. The first-person plural نحن (*naḥnu*, "we") may include the audience as members of the nation, or exclude it as members of a government or party, and politicians shift continually between these readings to claim

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solidarity, share responsibility, or appropriate credit [47], [48]. Collective nouns perform a similar function. The most famous slogan of the 2011 uprisings illustrates how much political thought a single clause can condense:

الشعبُ يريدُ إسقاطَ النظام (2)

al-sha'bu yurīdu isqāṭa l-nizām "The people want the fall of the regime."

The definite generic subject *al-sha'b* ("the people") constructs a single collective agent and claims to speak for the whole population rather than for a group of protesters. The verb *yurīdu* ("want") presents the demand as an expression of collective will, in the imperfect, as a present and continuing intention. The verbal noun *isqāṭ* ("bringing down") turns the action into a goal, and the definite *al-nizām* ("the regime" or "the system") designates the target as a whole order rather than as particular officeholders. The slogan thus combines strategies of nomination and predication [53] with the construction of a fundamental opposition between a unified people and its rulers, a discursive structure that Mudde [97] identified as the core of populist thought. Studies of the slogans of the Arab uprisings have shown more generally how such formulas functioned as political discourse that constructed collective identities and demands [102].

Legitimation is a third pragmatic mechanism. Van Leeuwen's [56] categories of authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization, and mythopoesis, and Reyes's [57] strategies of appeal to emotion, to a hypothetical future, to rationality, to expert voices, and to altruism, can be observed, with context-specific variation, in political discourse across languages. A government justifying an extraordinary measure may invoke the constitution and the law (authorization), the protection of families and the homeland (moral evaluation), the achievement of stability and development (rationalization), and the heroic history of the nation (mythopoesis). Religious references can serve as a powerful form of authorization in some Arabic political discourse, a dimension that Lahlali [27] examined in his analysis of Arabic Islamic political discourse. Proximization adds a spatial and temporal dimension to legitimation: by construing a distant threat as approaching the borders, the streets, or the values of the audience, and by presenting the present moment as decisive, speakers make extraordinary action appear necessary and urgent [2], [58], [59].

E. The Discursive-Medial Level: Repetition, Code Choice, and Circulation

The fifth level concerns the organization and circulation of discourse over time and across media. Repetition is its most basic mechanism. Because repeated statements are judged more truthful than new ones, even when they contradict what people know [92], [93], the constant repetition of slogans, formulas, and labels in political communication has cognitive effects independent of the arguments that accompany them. Agenda-setting operates at the same level: the issues that receive sustained media attention become the issues that the public regards as important [78], and the issues that are salient become the criteria by which leaders and policies are evaluated [79]. Narratives and intertextual references, finally, embed individual messages in larger stories about the community's past and future, which is the discursive mechanism underlying mythopoetic legitimation.

Diglossia gives this level a distinctive form in Arabic. Because speakers command both the standard language and a regional dialect, the choice of variety is itself a meaningful political act. The standard language indexes authority, formality, learning, religious and legal legitimacy, and a pan-Arab audience, whereas the dialect indexes intimacy, sincerity, local identity, and solidarity with ordinary people. Political speakers exploit this contrast strategically. Holes [26] showed how Gamal Abd al-Nasir moved between the standard and Egyptian colloquial Arabic to modulate his relationship with his audience, Mazraani [28] analyzed similar patterns of variation in Arabic political speech-making, and Bassiouney [25] showed how code choice served stance-taking and the politicization of identity during the Egyptian revolution. In Arabic, therefore, the question of how language contributes to political awareness concerns not only the words and structures selected, but also the particular linguistic variety used to frame a speaker's relationship with the wider public.

The media environment determines which framings circulate and how widely. The rise of Arab satellite television created new forms of political talk and a more argumentative public sphere [17], [18]. The same organization may frame the same conflict differently for audiences in different languages [101], and state-run, independent, and social media in Egypt framed the 2011 uprising in markedly different terms [20]. Digital networks have intensified these dynamics and changed their structure. Messages containing moral-emotional language spread more widely [14], messages about political out-groups generate more engagement than messages about in-groups [95], and false news spreads farther and faster than true news [15]. The result is a structural incentive toward moralized, polarizing, and emotionally charged language, which favors the populist style of politics characterized by appeals to the people against elites, the performance of crisis, and a self-presentation as an authentic outsider [98], [99]. Digital media also enable counter-discourses: Howard and Hussain [19] documented their role in the upheavals in Egypt and Tunisia. Finally, the visible indicators of popularity on digital platforms plausibly provide new cues about the climate of opinion, so that the dynamics described by the spiral of silence theory [83] may now operate through shares and reactions as well as through traditional media coverage, a hypothesis that merits direct empirical investigation.

V. Discussion

A. From Linguistic Form to Political Awareness

The multilevel analysis makes it possible to specify how language contributes to the formation of political awareness. Six cognitive processes emerge as the principal links between linguistic form and political cognition. The first is categoriza-

tion: labels and keywords assign events, actors, and policies to conceptual categories and thereby activate the frames associated with those categories [60]. The second is the allocation of attention: language acts as a spotlight that makes some aspects of a situation salient and leaves others in the background [35], a function that framing research describes as the selection and emphasis of considerations [13]. The third is causal and moral attribution: the grammatical representation of agency, together with the choice between individualizing and contextualizing narratives, guides judgments about who is responsible for problems and their solutions. Iyengar [105] showed, for example, that news presented through episodic frames, which focus on individual cases, encourages viewers to hold individuals responsible, whereas thematic frames, which present general trends and contexts, encourage attributions of responsibility to society and government. The fourth process is evaluation and emotion: metaphors, moralized vocabulary, and euphemisms carry evaluative and affective charges that shape how events are felt as well as how they are understood [14], [61]. The fifth is identification: pronouns, collective nouns, and patterns of abstraction construct the boundaries between in-group and out-group and invite the audience to adopt a particular identity [48], [87]. The sixth is the establishment of familiarity and perceived truth through repetition [93].

These processes correspond closely to the four functions of framing identified by Entman [13]: categorization and attention contribute to problem definition, attribution to causal interpretation, evaluation and emotion to moral evaluation, and all of them together to the recommendation of remedies. In van Dijk's [51], [52] terms, they are the processes through which discourse contributes to the mental models that citizens construct of political events and, over time, to the shared social representations that constitute ideologies. Political awareness, on this account, is neither a passive reflection of political reality nor a mere product of discourse; it is a set of mental representations actively constructed by individuals from the linguistic material that their wider communicative environment makes available.

B. From Political Awareness to Public Opinion

The second step concerns the translation of political awareness into public opinion. Zaller's [30] model provides the most useful framework. If individuals construct their expressed opinions from the considerations that are salient at the moment of expression, then political discourse influences public opinion by determining which considerations are available and salient. Agenda-setting determines which issues become objects of opinion at all [78]; framing determines which considerations are weighted most heavily in forming opinions about those issues [12], [74]; and the perceived climate of opinion determines which opinions people are willing to express in public [83]. Research on survey wording adds a further point of considerable methodological and political significance: because expressed opinion varies with the wording of the question [80], [82], the public opinion reported in polls is partly constituted by the language in which it is measured. Struggles over the wording of surveys and referendum questions are therefore struggles over public opinion itself, a conclusion that gives new force to Lippmann's [29] observation that public opinion responds to representations of the world rather than to the world directly.

C. The Limits of Linguistic Influence

The third research question concerns the strength and limits of these effects. The evidence reviewed in this study supports a moderate position that rejects both linguistic determinism and the view that language is a neutral vehicle for pre-formed thoughts. Against determinism, there is no evidence that political vocabularies and grammatical habits make alternative thoughts impossible; people can and do recognize, resist, and reframe political language [24], [35]. Against neutrality, there is consistent evidence from survey experiments, laboratory studies, and corpus analyses that linguistic choices change what people attend to, how they attribute responsibility, how they evaluate policies, and which opinions they express.

Five types of moderating condition define the limits of linguistic influence. The first is the audience's prior beliefs and political knowledge: highly aware citizens receive more political messages but also resist those inconsistent with their predispositions [30]. The second is the credibility of the source, since citizens tend to accept frames from sources they trust [72]. The third is competition: when audiences encounter competing frames, the relative strength of the frames matters more than their frequency, and the effects of any single frame are reduced [84]. The fourth is deliberation: discussion among people with diverse perspectives sharply reduces elite framing effects [85], [86]. The fifth is the depth of processing. Manipulative discourse exploits shallow processing [49], and susceptibility to fabricated news has been linked to a lack of analytic reflection [96], which implies that conditions encouraging reflective processing reduce the power of manipulative language.

Two further qualifications are necessary. First, some findings on linguistic influence, notably on metaphorical framing, have proved less robust than early studies suggested [69], [71], and the concept of framing itself requires greater precision [23]. Claims about the power of political language should therefore be calibrated to the evidence rather than to the dramatic examples that often dominate public debate. Second, the relationship between language and political thought is bidirectional. Speakers' political attitudes shape their linguistic choices, as studies of the linguistic intergroup bias and of passive constructions in reports of violence show [87], [90], and those choices in turn shape the attitudes of their audiences. Fairclough [7] captured this dialectic in his view of discourse as both socially shaped and socially constitutive. Audiences, moreover, are not passive recipients: as Hall [106] argued, they may decode messages according to the preferred meaning encoded by their producers, negotiate that meaning, or read the message in an oppositional way. The slogans of the Arab uprisings, which appropriated the language of popular

sovereignty against the official discourse of the time, are a striking example of such oppositional appropriation [102].

D. Arabic Political Discourse: Distinctive Features

The fourth research question concerns the manifestation of these mechanisms in Arabic political discourse. The analysis suggests that all five levels of the model operate in Arabic, but that four features give them a distinctive character. The first is diglossia, which adds a level of meaning to every political utterance through the choice between the standard language and the dialect [25], [26], [28]. The second is the richness of Arabic grammatical resources for modulating agency, from the internal and periphrastic passives to idiomatic intransitives and nominal headlines, which makes the grammatical level of the model particularly important for the analysis of Arabic news discourse. The third is the depth of the religious and historical resonances carried by key political terms, such as *fitna*, *umma*, and *shūrā*, which allows lexical choices to activate frames rooted in centuries of collective memory. The fourth is the transnational character of the Arab media sphere, in which audiences in many states share a standard language and satellite and digital media, so that competing framings of the same events circulate across national boundaries [18]. Taken together, these features mean that research on Arabic political discourse cannot simply transfer models developed for English; it must incorporate the distinctive linguistic ecology of Arabic, including the political meanings of the language itself [21], [22].

E. Implications

The findings have four sets of implications. The first concerns education. If political language can systematically channel attention, attribution, and evaluation, then the ability to analyze it is a component of democratic citizenship. Arabic language curricula, which have traditionally emphasized grammar and literary appreciation, could integrate critical language awareness by teaching students to identify how labels frame events, how grammatical choices represent agency, how metaphors structure arguments, and how presuppositions embed contestable claims. The second concerns media literacy and resilience to manipulation. Research on misinformation has shown that corrections are most effective when they provide alternative explanations and avoid repeating the false claim [107], and that prebunking interventions, such as a game that exposes players to the techniques of misinformation in weakened form, can confer psychological resistance against them [108]. Similar interventions could be designed for Arabic-speaking audiences and could include linguistic techniques such as loaded labeling, agency deletion, and false presupposition.

The third group of practical implications concerns professional journalistic practice. The analysis of agency suggests that news organizations should name agents when they are known, rather than defaulting to agentless constructions in reports of violence; should either avoid evaluatively loaded labels or attribute them explicitly to the actors who use them; and should minimize reliance on anonymous attribution, which confers authority without accountability. The fourth group concerns further empirical research. The model proposed here generates testable hypotheses for research with Arabic-speaking participants, for example about the effects of agentive and nonagentive descriptions of political violence, of competing labels such as *thawra* and *fawḍā*, of metaphors such as the "wheel of production," and of the choice between the standard language and the dialect on the perceived credibility and sincerity of political speakers. It also calls for the construction of large annotated corpora of Arabic political discourse that would allow corpus-assisted analyses comparable to those conducted for English [94], and for computational studies of moral-emotional language in Arabic social media [14].

The proposed model also distinguishes the rhetorical force of a message from its factual accuracy or ethical legitimacy. A powerful frame may be influential without being justified, and a factually supported argument may fail to circulate because it attracts less attention. Critical language awareness must therefore involve both identifying how a message is constructed and assessing the evidence supporting its claims. This distinction helps connect linguistic education, responsible journalism, and independent public reasoning without assuming that any single expression determines the political judgement of its audience.

VI. Conclusion

This study set out to examine the relationship between language and political thought in light of contemporary linguistic approaches and to explain how language contributes to shaping political awareness and steering public opinion. In answer to the first research question, it has shown that contemporary approaches converge on a moderate conception of the relationship: language does not determine political thought, but it supplies the categories, perspectives, metaphors, and assumptions through which political reality is habitually construed. In answer to the second question, it has proposed a multilevel model in which political meaning is constructed at the lexical, grammatical, metaphorical-conceptual, pragmatic, and discursive-medial levels, and it has identified the principal mechanisms operating at each level, from naming and agency deletion to presupposition, proximization, repetition, and network diffusion. In answer to the third question, it has found that the effects of these mechanisms on political awareness and public opinion are real and measurable but conditional, being moderated by prior beliefs, source credibility, competition among frames, deliberation, and depth of processing. In answer to the fourth question, it has shown that all five levels operate in Arabic political discourse, where diglossia, grammatical resources for modulating agency, historically resonant vocabulary, and a transnational media sphere give them a distinctive character.

The overall conclusion is that language is best understood not as a prison of political thought, as the strongest versions of linguistic relativity and the dystopian image of Newspeak

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suggest, nor as a transparent window onto independent ideas, but as a set of lenses that bring some aspects of political reality into focus while leaving others blurred. Those who control the dominant lenses exercise considerable influence over public understanding, but their influence is limited by competition, deliberation, and the critical capacities of citizens. The cultivation of those capacities, the ability to recognize which lens is being offered and to look through others, is therefore one of the most important contributions that the study of language can make to political life.

Future research should pursue four directions: experimental tests of the model's hypotheses with Arabic-speaking participants; corpus-assisted analyses of large collections of Arabic political texts across countries, periods, and media; studies of the role of diglossic code choice in political persuasion and trust; and investigations of how digital platforms are transforming the circulation and effects of Arabic political language. Such work would both deepen the understanding of Arabic political discourse and test the generality of models developed primarily on the basis of English-language data.

Author Contributions

Both authors contributed equally to the conceptualization of the study, selection and interpretation of scholarly literature, development of the analytical framework, and drafting and critical revision of the manuscript. Both authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest relating to the research, analysis, or publication of this manuscript.

Funding Information

The authors report that they received no specific financial support for the research, preparation, authorship, or publication of this article.

Data Availability

No data was used for the research described in the article.

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