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Pakistani Variety of English: Its Forms and Functions

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Abstract

The study assumes: (a) Post-colonial literature in English provides the impetus for the emergence of a Pakistani variety of English, and (b) the Pakistani variety of English generalizes Urdu phrases to anticipate its various forms and functions in discourse. Pakistani English post-colonial writers have opposed imperialism while generalizing Urdu phrases to anticipate various forms and functions in discourse. A purposive sample consists of four short stories and one novel chosen to address the aforesaid standpoints. While studying these assumptions, factors such as translation and borrowing were considered.

The analysis shows that post-colonial literature in English manifests a variety of English. For example; Ahmad Ali writes in his novel, *Twilight in Delhi*, "If husband and wife are willing, what can the *Qazi* [justice] do?" (p 95). This is a mere translation of the Urdu proverb: *jab mian bivi raazi tuo kia keray ga qazi*. Talat Abbasi repeats the same phenomena intermittently in his short story, "Simple Question": "But it's like weights placed on my eyes," which exists in Urdu as *lakin aisey jese meri ankhoun pe wazan rakha hua hai*. This phenomenon is common and long standing in post-colonial literature. It deviates from the norms of standard English, thus marking legitimately a new offshoot of English.

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Key words: Pakistani English, Forms and Functions

Introduction

When a language comes into prolonged and consistent contact with other languages or dialects owing to reasons such as trade, occupation, immigration, social network, and so on, the languages exert influence on each other. As a consequence, a new variety comes into being. A variety is a neutral term used to refer to any kind of language – a dialect, accent, sociolect, style or register (Trudgill, 2003, p 139). The notion of variety is used here to refer to offshoot of Englishes. Researchers (Pennycook, 1998; Crystal, 1997; Pilpson, 1992; and Kachru and Nelson; 1992,) assert that the emergence of various Englishes is a product of the imperial transplant of English to the subcontinent. The seismic effects of imperialism appear not only in the socio-economic life of the people, but in the indigenous dialects, such as Urdu, spoken in the subcontinent (Sebba, 1997). Kirkpatrick (2007, p 95) says that the majority of South Asian writers agree that English is now a language of South Asia and that it can be adapted to suit Indian cultures and tastes. Ruchira Mukerjee, author of *Toad in my Garden*, supports the aforesaid verdict by emphasizing that English is no longer a foreign language but a part of our psyche (D' Souza, 2001, p 148). Similar view can be heard in Pakistan. The novelist Sidhwa (1996) writes: “English ... is no more monopoly of the British. We the excolonized have subjugated the language, beaten it on its head and made it ours.” (p 231)

Likewise the post-colonial writers (those with Urdu as their first language) have been expressing their experiences in the local variety of English. They have ceaselessly blended the Urdu language largely spoken in the subcontinent with English perhaps to indigenize their allegiance. For example, in *Twilight in Delhi*, Ahmad Ali writes, “You seem to have all your *fingers in ghee* [success] these days.” (p 139)

This excerpt shows an admixture of Urdu and English lexemes, which seems to mark another variety of English. We observe this phenomenon across the board into the post-colonial literature of various Muslim writers: Ahmad Ali, Bapsi Sidhwa, Zaibunissa Hamidullah, Hanif Qureshi, Sara Suleri, Muniza Shamsi, Ahmad Ali, and Tariq Rahman. Rahman (2010, p 2) shares the verdict that Pakistani writers with international reputations – Bapsi Sidhwa, Zulfikar Ghose and Ahmad Ali – use some indigenous lexical items and idiomatic turns of speech for artistic reasons. Eventually, a constant indigenization of literature written in English by these writers proof as an impetus for the emergence of Pakistani Variety of English (PVE).

Emergence of a novel variety is a gradual process. However; publication of literary work into foreign language is one of the primary reasons for inception of a new variety. While writing into a foreign language; a writer confronts generally language freedom which causes admixture,

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reduction and simplification of languages and eventual outcome of a new variety (Kachru, 1986). Unlike the simplified diagram below; incarnation of new variety is indeed a complex process.

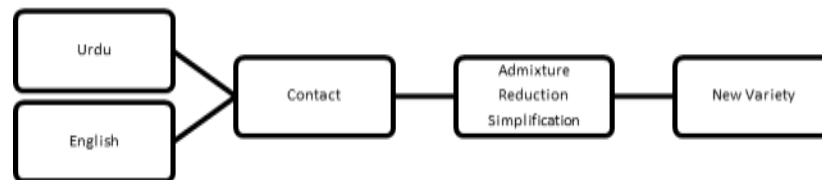


Figure 1.1: Anatomy of Language Contact

Culture-bound registers of source language construct complexity while translating it into the target language. Language and culture are mutually inclusive entities; one can exist concurrently in the presence of another. Therefore translation of local culture through the foreign language perpetuates local colors. The Pakistani post-colonial writers used English language as a mean of explicating local ethos, which resulted into pidginization as well. According to Talat (2002) Pakistani English has gone through the process of pidginization and creolization. She further reveals that English is used as a wide variety of socio-cultural settings together with Urdu and other regional dialects and languages of Pakistan.

Every language is rule governed and cultural specific and eventually restricts the writers to explicate cross cultural conceptions. However, these constraints are observed in the Post-colonial literature for instance; Ahmad Ali in his novel *Twilight in Delhi* illustrates: *zanan khana, mardan khana, rakhail, hakeem* and so on which highlights sociolinguistic limitations of English. Rahman (2010) reinforces the verdict that in Pakistan, the cultural reality is different. It is shaped to a great degree by Islam and Muslim history. Thus lexical items are often borrowed to describe cultural loaded concepts.

Along with this, it is believed by the sociolinguistics that bilingual writers blend cultural coded terminologies since they have choices to do so. One of the suppositions behind this phenomenon is perhaps ideas and signs activated in first language faster than second language or absence of equivalent forms in the second language.

This is apparent from the above mentioned discussion that the Pakistani Post-colonial literature in English marks the beginning of the distinct variety of English, which is characterized by its forms and functions in discourse. Various linguistic features such as semantic, morphological,

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lexical, syntactic, phonological, and pragmatic are unique to this variety. Rahman (2010) divides PVE into four sub-categories: (a) Anglicized English – a variety spoken by Pakistanis who have been exposed to English generally for long periods in the westernized settings, (b) Acrolect – differs from British English in the dimensions of semantics, phonology, syntax, lexis and morphology – it is spoken by Pakistanis who have been educated in English as medium of instruction schools, (c) mesolect – differs markedly from British English – used by Pakistanis who have educated in Urdu as medium of instruction school, and (d) basilect – it is kind of Pakistani English pidgin – used by Pakistanis have not much education. Rahman have used the terms acrolect, mesolect and basilect relatively different from the authors of world Englishes such as Richards.

Another proliferating writer of the world Englishes, Braj B Kachru, refers to Pakistan in his survey of South Asian English on the grounds that ‘the *Indianness*’ in Indian English is to a large extent shared with other South Asian countries – Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka (1983). The concept of South Asia as a linguistic area is also found in other studies (Emeneau, 1958; Masica 1976), and in general only India English has been described on the assumption that the description is valid for Pakistan also. Thus, while agreeing with reservation that there is an ‘Indian English’, Halliday (1964) mentioned that both Indian and Pakistani speakers are expected to conform to it rather than aim at a British or American model. Quirk (1972) mentioned that India, Pakistan and several African countries used fairly stable varieties of English. Past studies, as some of them mentioned above did not investigate PVE in detail expect drawing speculations and generalizations, however the present study explores: (a) Post-colonial literature in English provides impetus for emergence of PVE, and (b) PVE generalizes Urdu phrases to anticipate its various forms and functions in discourse, through a detailed investigation of English literature composed by Pakistani writers of international reputation.

Methodology

As mentioned above, data were collected from the Pakistani English Post-colonial literature: “Bingo” by Dr Tariq Rehman, “Bull and She Devil” by Zaibunissa Hamidullah, “Simple Questions” by Talat Abbasi, “Shahrazad’s Golden Leopard” by Muneeza Shamsie and a novel “Twilight in Delhi” by Ahmad Ali to address the above mentioned assumptions (a and b).

The study followed three steps approach to address the assumptions. Firstly, a list consists of the Pakistani English Post-colonial writers was prepared to lucid few misconceptions: (i) which time line ideally represents the Post-colonial period, and (ii) who are the Pakistani English Post-colonial writers. This ambiguity was resolved by including the period of post-independence and the writers who had cultural and spiritual ties with Pakistan. Among the existing population of the post-colonial writers, the study drew on the above mentioned sample for analysis. This sample was selected on the basis of its representativeness of the variety and variation that was considered useful for analysis.

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Secondly, extensive reading was carried out to locate the elements of literal translation and borrowing in the selected texts. The primary aim of this step was to work out gradually, through interpretations of data what functional and non functional factors together encourage cross-linguistic influence in bilingual settings such as Pakistan.

Thirdly, the measures such as transferability and conformability were considered to ensure validity and reliability in the results. Transferability measure refers to the degree to which the results of the study may be generalized in another context or setting. The present study made attempts to enhance transferability by explicating the research contexts and the assumptions that were central to investigation. Conformability refers to the degree to which the results can be confirmed or corroborated by others. The researcher requested educated native speakers of English to verify forms which are unique to PVE. This approach brought a measure of consistency in the results.

Analysis and Discussion

The analysis shows that the Pakistani English Post-colonial writers have been using Urdu expressions to indigenize their literary work. Thus they mark a new variety of English – popularly known as PVE. In “Twilight in Delhi” Ahmad Ali infuses some idioms which instantiate transliteration such as: (i) You seem to have all your fingers in ghee [success] these days (p.139), (ii) ...heaven and earth made one (p.40), and (iii) When husband and wife are willing, what can the *Qazi* do (p.95). Similar occurrence is elicited while reading short stories. For example; Muneez Shamsie delineates on Urdu phrases transliteration in Golden Leopard: ‘Oh! You are light of my eyes,’ for ‘*tum meri ankhoun ka noor ho*’, and in “Bull and She Devil” Zaibunissa Hamidullah writes: ‘Increase the fertility of soil...’ for ‘*matti ki zerkhaizi ko berhata hia*’. Furthermore, transliteration of Urdu can vividly be noticed in Talat Abbasi’s short story “Simple Question”; ‘but her tongue still so sharp’ for ‘*lakin usski zaban abhi tak bohat taiz hai*’ and at another place in the same story; ‘but it’s like weights are placed on my eyes’ for ‘*lakin aisey jese meri ankhoun pe wazan rakha hua hai*’.

In “Twilight in Delhi” literal translation of fragments and expressions are also observed. For example, ‘blood in his eyes’ for ‘*uss ski ankhoun ma khoon*’, ‘breast of Hindustan’ for ‘*Hindustan ka seena*’, ‘naked swords’ for ‘*nangi talwar*’, ‘Farangis’ for ‘*Farangiyoun*’, ‘Mussalmans’ for ‘*Musalmanoun*’, ‘fell into the hands’ for ‘*hathoun ma girna*’ and ‘Mohurs’ for ‘*Moharoun*’.

Table 1 below indicates Urdu loan words in the selected English literature. Although many of these loan words have their equivalent forms in English but it seems that the writers have been localizing native English for so called artistic reasons. However, English form of the actual phrase or lexis is given in the parentheses.

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Bingo

1- *Talisman* (magic)

2- *Houris* (voluptuous woman)

The Bull and She Devil

1- *Shaitan* (devil)

2- *Lassi* (a drink made from yogurt)

3- *Falsa* (black currant)

4- *Sherbet* (beverage)

5- *Champak* (magnoliaceous tree)

6- *Motia* (Jasmine)

7- *Lota* (ewer)

8- *Shabash* (praise)

Simple Question

1- *Rickshaw* (three wheeled vehicle)

2- *Rickshawallah* (rickshaw driver)

3- *Ustaniij* (female teacher)

4- *Munni* (baby girl)

5- *Dhal* (pulse)

6 *Paan* (Beatle leaf)

7- *Seer* (1 kg weight)

8- *Dhobi* (washer man)

9- *Begum Sahib* (lady of the house)

10- *Rani Mahrani* (queen)

11- *Roti* (a kind of bread)

12- *Dupatta* (a length of material worn as a head covering by women)

13- *Khaki* (mustard brown)

14- *Latrine* (bathroom)

15- *Ammaji* (old lady)

16- *Shalwar* (a kind of loose trousers)

Shahrazad's Golden Leopard

1- *Sarees* (a dress worn by women; consists of several yards of light material that is draped around the body)

2- *Kabab* (a variety of meat)

3- *Shawl* (warm length of material worn as head covering by women)

4- *Adab* (complement)

5- *Takhti* (a wooden board)

6- *Bua* (old lady)

7- *Ayah* (maid)

8- *Maulvi Sahib* (cleric)

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9- <i>Nauzbillah</i> (God forbid)	10- <i>Haram</i> (illicit)
11- <i>Shikar</i> (hunting)	
Twilight in Delhi	
1- <i>Kotha</i> (Donkey)	2- <i>Hakim</i> (herbalist)
3- <i>Burqa</i> (female gown to veil)	4- <i>Maktab</i> (clinic)
5- <i>Sabeel</i> (any drink to distribute among people for free)	6- <i>Saqi</i> (drinker)
7- <i>Faqir</i> (beggar)	8- <i>Painch</i> (judge)
9- <i>Molvi</i> (religious man)	10- <i>Zanan khana</i> (female lounge)
11- <i>Merdan khana</i> (male lounge)	12- <i>Ferangi</i> (English man)
13- <i>Mohar</i> (stamp)	14- <i>Begum</i> (wife)

Table 1.1: Urdu Loan Words in Pakistani English Literature

Moreover, in Bingo, there are redundant registers for example; the word '*Unofficer*' is not found in British English. The prefix un- is attached with the noun 'officer' and a new word is coined. In the same way '*Kiddish*' is formed with the combination of suffix *-ish* and noun kid to make an adjective, which have connotation of 'childish' or something 'immature' in Pakistani context. In the same short story another unusual expression is introduced like; '*most goddamnest*' as an adjective which is not a part of British English. This expression makes the adjective in double superlative order as it is combined with 'most' and secondly with addition of the superlative degree '*-est*'.

It has been argued through analysis and interpretation, that all types of lexical divergences and redundancies; in terms of function, connotation, repetition and transliteration are found interconnected with each other. For example, a number of lexical divergences result from the literal translation of L1 (First Language) expressions but a greater variety of divergences found to a varying degree used by the bilingual PVE writers. The inter-textual variation seems to suggest that as we move away from the norms of English, lexical variations are observed in terms of repetitions, non-specific vocabulary, and usage of obsolete words, odd combinations and atypical phrases. Consequently, these variations manifest the novel variety of English – the Pakistani variety of English. Thus it is found that the Pakistani English Postcolonial writers generalize Urdu phrases to anticipate various forms and functions in discourse.

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Conclusion

This research explores: (a) Post-colonial literature in English provides the impetus for emergence of the Pakistani variety of English, and (b) the Pakistani variety of English generalizes Urdu phrases to anticipate its various forms and functions in discourse. To address these assumptions, the study delineates on qualitative corpus analysis. Extensive reading of the selected corpora: (i) Bingo, (ii) Bull and She Devil, (iii) Simple Questions, (iv) Shahrazad's Golden Leopard, and (v) Twilight in Delhi were carried out to draw on the above mentioned assumptions. It is discovered that the Pakistani Post-colonial literature in English manifests a new variety of English.

As we have discussed above, the Post-colonial writers have indigenized English language by infusing *Urdunized* expressions. There are primarily two reasons to use Urdu loan words in English literature: (a) appropriateness, and (b) transliteration. The writers use intentionally *Urdunized* expressions, which is also called 'theory of appropriateness' to expand the circumference of local readership, and to mesmerize the target readers. Unlike the theory of appropriateness; the writers have been infusing or borrowing *Urdunized* expressions due to devoid of equivalent forms in English. Thus Pakistani literature in English is an offshoot of English in which English language acts as superstate language. If the new variety of English is emerging, then a fresh relationship between nonstandard and standard English is likely, and this has immediate educational implications.

Implications

The study shows that in Pakistan Standard English has been diffusing or adapting other languages or dialects into its ecology. Eventually, it has become language of others. Jenkins (2006) supports this assertion by making a prophecy that within this century, English may lose its position as principal world language to one or more of the languages of these others. The study visualizes this phenomenon from figure 1.2 in which English has been diffusing into Englishes.

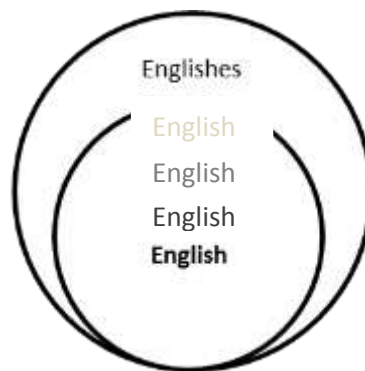


Figure 1.2: Diffusion of English

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If new varieties of English are emerging, then a fresh relationship between nonstandard and standard English is likely, and this has immediate educational implications. English textbooks in countries where English is spoken as a second language are likely to pay much more attention to local varieties of English, and ELT publishers are to provide materials in local varieties of English (Jenkins, 2006, p 205). For Example the novel “Twilight in Delhi”, which reflects local variety of English has been chosen by some universities in Pakistan as compulsory text in Master of Arts in English syllabus. Increasing popularity of the local English writers is primarily due to (a) reflection of local culture, and (b) ease with understanding local variety of English.

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