

## Innovative Syntactic Features of Pakistan English Newspapers

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### Abstract

*The prime focus of this paper is to explore the unique syntactic features of Pakistani journalistic English. Different syntactic changes have been observed in Pakistani newspapers. Pakistani bilinguals have the tendency to make certain changes at syntactic level because of the influence of the mother tongue. These innovations and nativization of syntactic features have been explored by applying the Schneider's (2007) model. Little attention has been given to this important aspect of Pakistani English that is developing parallel with other varieties of English. This brief paper advocates detailed studies on syntactic features of Pakistani English in different genres.*

**Keywords:** *Innovations; Syntactic changes; New Englishes; Newspapers; Pakistani English.*

### 1. Introduction

English as an international language (Trask, 2006) is used in different parts of the world. But at the same time it is undergoing the process of nativization and acculturation through different variations and innovations in many countries including Pakistan. Innovation can be termed as “an acceptable variant” (Bamgbose, 1998, p. 2). Different non-native varieties of English, for example, Pakistani English, Indian English, African English, Singaporean English, Chicano English etc. emerged on the map of World Englishes and have been marked as distinctive because of certain variations and innovations. According to Bamgbose (1998, p. 1) “a non-native English situation is basically an innovative situation involving certain well-known processes of nativization”. Nativization is the process of describing the indigenization and acculturation of the English language in new cultural context and there is “a long tradition of acculturation of non-native languages in South Asia” (Gargesh, 2006, p. 91). The English language is an important component of multilingual non-native English speaking countries particularly subcontinent as “English has been with us in various parts of Asia for almost 200 years” (Kachru, 1998, p. 91). Innovations at syntactic level can be observed in Pakistani English newspapers because “English has been appropriated by its non-European users and changed to reflect their own experiences” (Mair, 2008, p. 235).

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### **Theoretical Framework**

Schneider's (2007) Dynamic Model has been used as a theoretical framework to explain the syntactic innovation in Pakistani English in 'New Englishes' context. He proposed five developmental phases:

1. Foundation
2. exonormative stabilization
3. nativisation
4. endonormative stabilization
5. differentiation

Foundation stage discusses the beginning of English through pidgins and creoles. In the second stage the local community starts indigenizing the English language through certain processes. In the process of 'nativization' different innovations and variations could be observed. The local public normally starts making changes in the colonial language. In endonormative stabilization these variations and nativized forms are encouraged and recognized in the form of codification and grammar books. In the last stage, new varieties within the local variety began to appear.

Nativization is directly related to the innovations and variations created by the bi/multilingual speakers because of the influence of cultural norms and linguistic system of the first language. The discussion in this study is relevant to nativization.

#### **1.1 Research Questions**

- What kind of syntactic changes can be observed in Pakistan English newspapers?
- How are these innovations different from Standard British English?

#### **1.2 Delimitation of Research**

Pakistani English has many variant and nativized features. Syntactic variation is not the only variation in Pakistani English. It varies at phonology, grammatical and pragmatic levels as well. However, it is hard to cover all these aspects in this limited study. This study focuses only on the specific syntactic innovations in Pakistani English newspapers. Secondly, the study does not claim to be representative of Pakistani English and the findings cannot be generalized because only the newspaper data has been used as the title suggests.

### **2. Literature Review**

Certain changes and variations could be observed at different levels in English when it is used as a non-native variety. These new Englishes are getting recognition because of its distinctive features. Pakistani English has certain nativized features which have been identified by the eminent scholars but still a lot of work needs to be done.

Different researchers Bamugadner (1993a, 1998), Baumgardner *et al.* (1993), Rahman (1990), Talaat (1993, 2002, 2003), Anwar & Talaat (2011), Anwar (2012), Mahboob (2004, 2009) and Aziz & Mahmood (2012) explored the phenomenon of Pakistani English from different perspectives. They examined distinctive features of Pakistani English. The most discussed feature of Pakistani English is the use of Urdu borrowing in Pakistani English particularly in newspapers and fiction. However, the syntax of Pakistani English has not received considerable attention. Only a few studies (Rehman, 1990; Baumgardner 1993a; Mahmood 2004; Anwar & Talaat 2011; Anwar 2012) can be found wherein the syntactic variations have been discussed.

Baumgardner (1993a) found verb, noun and adjective complementation very different from British English in Pakistani English newspapers. It was a very comprehensive study on complementation and certain changes were reported at clause and sentence level. However, it was limited in its scope. Moreover, Baumgardner (1993b) proposed that grammar can be taught to Pakistani learners through Pakistani English newspapers. Rehman (1990) discussed Pakistani English in detail and found that certain stative verbs are used differently from British English by Pakistani speakers. Pakistani bilinguals preferably use stative verbs as progressive.

Macarthur (2002) found syntactic variation in Nigerian English. According to him, Nigerian speakers/learners treat uncountable nouns as countable and omit the determiners before nouns. Variations were also found in the use of prepositions, use of tenses and stative verbs in his study.

Mahboob (2004) also examined the significant changes in Pakistani English at morphological and syntactic levels. But he overviewed these changes on the basis of the findings of Rehman (1990) and Baumgardner (1993a). According to Mahboob (2003), Pakistani bilinguals influenced by the Urdu language, make certain changes at the phonological level as well.

Xu (2008) identified syntactic features of written and spoken Chinese English. According to him, these features emerged because of the transfer of characteristics from the Chinese language to English. In written data changes were observed in nominalization and coordination of clause constituents. However, in spoken data, he found a lot of changes at syntactic level mainly because of the influence of mother tongue.

Anwar & Talaat (2011) discussed the variation in Pakistani journalistic English but their prime focus was to examine the variation at grammatical level. They found different features of Pakistani journalistic English which are unfamiliar to the speakers of Standard British English. Word order was also changed in many sentences.

Aziz & Mahmood (2012) analyzed the difference between Pakistani and British English in the use of

ditransitive verb. They made a corpus based comparison and found significant changes in both these varieties particularly in 'print media' which shows that Pakistani journalistic writers prefer the localized forms.

The present study aims to fill the gap by taking into account the certain syntactic categories. These include the use of plural morphemes, tense markings, omission of function words in idioms, position of auxiliaries in reported questions, non-distinctive use of reciprocal pronouns, substitution/addition of prepositions, co-occurrence of connective pairs and structure of compound subject. It is worth-mentioning that the syntactic features discussed in this paper are similar to the findings of Meierkord (2004), Xu (2008), Jenkins (2009) and Dadzie (2004) who found instances of syntactic innovations in their respective studies.

### **3. Research Methodology & Data Collection**

This study is qualitative in its nature and based on the empirical data collected from Pakistani English newspapers. According to Punch, (1998, p. 4) qualitative research "is empirical research where the data are not in the form of numbers". The researchers cannot manipulate the natural occurring process in qualitative research but observe, understand and describe it. So, the aim of this study is to explore and describe the phenomenon of innovation and variation in Pakistani English newspapers. The innovative syntactic features of newspapers are traced manually and highlighted in bold so that the readers could easily recognize these innovative features. The following newspapers (February 2018) have been used as a data for this study:

1. The Dawn (D)
2. The News (N)
3. Daily Times (DT)
4. Business Recorder (BR)

The reason for selecting the newspapers genre is the diversity one can find in the journalistic writing. Newspapers comprise international, national, business, sports, show business district and local news. Moreover, written language is "successfully monitored or edited" (Lowenberg, 1992, p. 109). The newspapers for this study have been selected on the basis of readership and circulation (BBC, 2017) through purposive sampling. In purposive sampling, sampling is done on the basis of the judgement of the researcher (Black, 2010). The researcher has a clear purpose in his/her mind while selecting the sample from the whole population. So, the newspapers selected for this study have been chosen after a careful consideration keeping in view the research norms and objectives. Moreover, newspapers have the wide readership from all spheres of life from all parts of the country. The Pakistani bilingual readers are also influenced by the innovative processes in Pakistani English newspapers and reproduce the same forms accordingly. According to Baumgardner (1993b), Pakistani newspapers can be used to teach grammar to the non-native Pakistani English learners.

#### 4. Data Analysis

This section of the study describes the syntactic innovations in Pakistani English newspapers. All these innovations are considered appropriate in Pakistani non-native context because they do not violate any serious syntactic rule rather certain structures are preferred by non-native Pakistani bilinguals because of the influence of the mother tongue. According to Meierkord (2004), transfer from the first languages by the second language learners results in variations.

##### 4.1 Intransitive Verb

Some verbs are used intransitively in Pakistani English while the native speakers use them as transitive verb. Here are a few examples:

1. The comedians were mostly messing up with politicians in their jokes so the audience really **enjoyed** (STB enjoyed themselves). (16 February, 2018 N)
2. A horse dance had been incorporated into this performance that the audience really **enjoyed** (STB enjoyed themselves). (5 February, 2018 D)

##### 4.2 Use of has/have+got

Sometimes Pakistani bilinguals add 'got' unnecessarily where the native speakers would avoid. For example,

1. He added that **I have got a vision** and a fantastic team to develop Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences and the nation altogether. (11 February, 2018 BR)
2. The complex **has got** a guava orchard and a Sarovar which needs to be preserved. (27 February, 2018 DT)
3. You know that you **have got** a match-winner there either with the ball or the bat. (17 February, 2018 DT)
4. `Here at the bookstall, we **have got** a book on Nizam of Hyderabad, which is the only copy in the world. (2 February, 2018 D)

##### 4.3 Present/Past Perfect

Pakistani bilinguals in some cases prefer to use past perfect tense instead of simple past tense. This feature is common because of the influence of the Urdu language (Anwar & Talaat, 2011). Here are a few examples:

1. We **had tried** to contact one of the officials for seven times, but he did not respond. (17 February, 2018 N)
2. The vehicle **had tried** to speed through a checkpoint close to parliament headquarters, Hussein said. (24 February, 2018 D)

3. Immediately after the Supreme Court Panama case decision last year, Sharif's two main rivals Imran Khan and Asif Ali Zardari **had thought** that the spiral effect of the decision would render Nawaz Sharif politically redundant within days and weeks. (22 February, 2018 N)

#### 4.4 Auxiliary

Sometimes Pakistani bilinguals replace "should" with "must" as is clear from the following examples:

1. **Must** a Judge not, completely, avoid all public confrontations? (4 February, 2018 DT)
2. After all, **must** a judge of the superior courts not portray patience and encouragement for young lawyers, the legs of whom tremble, when they appear before him? (4 February, 2018 DT)
3. **Must** we sacrifice our agenda at the altar of fiscal responsibility? (12 February, 2018 DT)

#### 4.5 Non-distinctive Use of Reciprocal Pronouns

Urdu does not have separate expressions for 'reciprocal pronouns' in comparison with the English language. The reciprocal pronoun 'each other' is commonly used with two antecedents in English while 'one another' is preferred when more than two antecedents are involved (Quirk & Greenbaum, 2000). However, Pakistani bilinguals often fail to make a difference between 'each other' and 'one another' as can be seen in the following examples:

1. He expressed his concern over increasing intolerance in the society, saying the political rivals and workers should tolerate **each other** and learn to co-exist. (11 February, 2018 N)
2. Sarwat and Fahad knew each other since 2003, when they were both young students at their respective universities pursuing degrees of their choice. They liked **one another** but with careers being priority, things fizzled out; or so it seemed until a decade later. (13 February, 2018 N)
3. The couple is supportive of **one another** despite their busy schedule. (13 February, 2018 N)

#### 4.6 Co-occurrence of Connective pairs

In English, certain connective pairs, for example, 'because-so, although-but' are not used together, hence can be found in Pakistani English newspapers as in the following examples:

1. **Although**, he submitted a long list of publication **but** only two of his papers were published in HEC recognised journals. (16 February, 2018 DT)
2. Dr Ashfaq H Khan, former advisor finance ministry and reputed economist, argued that the current account deficit could go up to \$18 billion for the period under review **because** in the last quarter it used to be in the range of 30 to 32 percent, **so** it might go close to \$18 billion. (9 February, 2018 D)
3. I had a service background myself **because** my father had served in the Royal Navy and **so** it wasn't quite as daunting to write on military matters as you might think. (11 February, 2018 D)

4. **Although** life is hard, people get by, **but** there is never enough. (6 February, 2018 DT)
5. She said, It's difficult to get people out of their comfort zone because they've accepted and are living in this garbage, and to shake them out of this and get them out of it is difficult **so** it's a psychological issue too. (11 February, 2018 DT)
6. **Although** the exact cause of death could not be known **but** I can say that the woman died an unnatural death and was sexually assaulted, the doctor added. (28 February, 2018 D)

#### 4.7 Double Subjects

The use of double subjects is commonly observed in the spoken discourse but it can be found in writing as well (Anwar, 2012).

1. **You, the nation** and the entire world see that we have neither closed any road nor attacked any institution or abused anyone. (11 February, 2018 DT)
2. Following this, **we the Pakistani people** will determine this country's future at the ballot box, an opportunity which we have only had a few times since the country was founded. (10 February, 2018 DT)
3. **And we, the laymen**, shouldn't find this comment upsetting. (20 February, 2018 BR)
4. **We the disunited people** must continue to inspire the people of this country to take the first step towards bringing a change. (18 February, 2018 N)
5. **We the people** of Pakistan demand representation we have waited long enough to exercise our right of self-governance through local governments. (9 February, 2018 DT)

#### 4.8 Idiomatic Innovation

Sometimes, Pakistani bilinguals modify English idioms according to their own will. They omit, replace or insert the functional words particularly 'article' and give a local touch to English idioms.

1. The federal government in its reply submitted that leaders and workers of petitioner's party at the behest of their central leadership **took law into their hands** (SBE took the law into their hands) despite warning by the district administration not to enter Islamabad as section 144 was imposed. (28 February, 2018 N)
2. However we have seen all sorts of nominations coming forward for this house that by no **stretch of imagination** (SBE stretch of the imagination) fit this qualification. (12 February, 2018 D).
3. **And last but not the least** (SBE last but not least); is Nawaz Sharif's claim that people have given their verdict in his favour true or false? (28 February, 2007 DT)
4. The 16th Mystic Music Sufi Festival got under way on Friday with music, colours, dance and, last but not **the least** (SBE last but not least), a finale performance by Rahat Fateh Ali Khan. (10 February, 2018 D)

5. **Last but not the least** (SBE last but not least), we have urged the Supreme Court to make public the judiciary's performance-related data. (18 February, 2018 N)

#### 4.9 Non-prepositions Verbs as prepositional

Certain prepositions are used differently in Pakistani English newspapers (Anwar & Talaat 2011). Non-prepositional verbs can be used as prepositional because of the influence of the Urdu language as can be seen in the following examples:

1. Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) officials will also meet IG Sindh Police to **discuss about** the security arrangements. (8 February, 2018 DT)
2. THE World Cancer Day falls on Feb 4 when doctors and other citizens **discuss about** the terminal disease to educate society about how to conquer the killer disease. (4 February, 2018 D)
3. The Board now **comprise of** (SBE comprise) 13 directors including four independent directors (1/3rd of the total number). (20 February, 2018 BR)
4. Customer oriented transactions mainly **comprise of** (SBE comprise) fund transfers, bill payments social welfare payments and cash deposit and withdrawals. (14 February, 2018 N)
5. He is under tremendous pressure to **cope up with** (SBE cope with) the situation. (23 February, 2018 DT)
6. The ability **to voice out** (SBE voice) and to criticise and to check government is constricted and has become more dangerous. (23 February, 2018 BR)

Sometimes prepositions are omitted/substituted by the Pakistani bilinguals because of the influence of the first language. Here are a few examples:

1. He also took a round of the camps and **filled** (SBE filled in) his membership form at a camp in union committee. (6 February, 2018 D)
2. The chief minister said he had noticed that the number of dialysis machines was not sufficient to **cater** (SBE cater for) the needs of kidney patients. (8 February, 2018 N)
3. He said that in the past, the KP government claimed that it will set up small power generation schemes in far flung areas to **cater** (SBE cater for) the energy demand of the particular areas. (3 February, 2018 N)
4. Commander -in-Chief General Muhammad Musa Khan Hazara had implemented the famous "Goonda Act" **to round up** (SBE round off) criminals wanted in heinous crimes. (11 February, 2018 N)

#### 4.10 Reported Questions

Sometimes, there is a slight change in the word order in the reported questions by Pakistani journalistic writers as is clear from the following examples:



1. One such person stated **why should** they be as they are the beneficiaries of any reduction in prices. (16 February, 2018 N)
2. Khan sahib, please tell the people that **where is** your generated electricity. (16 February, 2018 DT)
3. Nawaz asked PTI chairman **where is** his much-trumpeted new Pakistan, saying that people could not see that new Pakistan anywhere. (16 February, 2018 BR)
4. She asked **where were** Articles 62, 63 and 184 (3) of the Constitution when military dictators seized power. (19 February, 2018 N)
5. If the news that things had gone wrong in Paris could be shared on a TV channel, **why could** a press release not be issued to clear up the confusion? (25 February, 2018 D)
6. If, whatever this was, was not finished, **how was** anybody to invade the waters, ever again? (2 February, 2018 DT)
7. Since Pakistanis own the national military, **why should** they not question its policies, especially when they have grave consequences for the citizenry? (11 February, 2018 DT)

#### 4.11 Structure of a compound subject-NP

In some cases first person occurs before the third person. This structure is simply the translation of Urdu equivalents. Here are a few examples:

1. **I and my family members** have shifted to the house of our relatives due to these threats, she said, adding her sisters were unable to go to school. (9 February, 2018 N)
2. Together they recounted the story of the translation, which **I and my research team** heard with fascination. (10 February, 2018 DT)
3. **I and my team** had to take one of the most difficult decisions. (4 February, 2018 DT)

#### 4.12 Pluralization of Uncountable Nouns

Nouns of mass/un-countable category are, sometimes, used differently in Pakistani journalistic English (Anwar & Talaat, 2011). The same has also been observed in this study. For example,

1. Farzana Jan said the community needed comprehensive non-discriminative laws for all public **accommodations**. (23 February, 2018 N)
2. On the question of holding Indo-Pak talks, he said he could only give **an advice** in this regard. (12 February, 2018 N)
3. The distance from the main entrance to the funeral spot was long but nothing seemed to deter people from paying **their respects** to their champion. (14 February, 2018 D)

4. Gen Zia came to pay **his respects**, and Rajiv Gandhi, then prime minister of India, was given permission to fly in to Peshawar. (1 February, 2018 D)
5. By reading these you should be able to mould your words, **behaviours** and body language accordingly. (24 February, 2018 D)
6. He said that hatred and arrogant **behaviours** had divided the society. (17 February, 2018 DT)
7. Punjab`s lab has also been getting **equipments** and machines from Austria and other agencies while the KP`s lab was setup from its own resources. (5 February, 2018 D)
8. One of them, a supplier of telecommunications **equipments**, told the conference he had been waiting six months to get a \$5 million payment for work done for the Iraqi government. (12 February, 2018 BR)

#### 4.13 Unique Phrases

Certain phrases are also used in Pakistani journalistic English which are not in practice in Standard British English. Here are a few examples:

1. On hearing that comment, a **pin-drop silence** descended upon the House. (February 22, 2018 DT)
2. Police are investigating to find as to who was behind the **wall-chalking**. (February 7, 2018 N)
3. The Punjab Higher Education Department has directed the principals of all public sector colleges to ensure strict implementation of annual **casual leave** policy for teaching and non-teaching staff. (1 February, 2018 D)
4. It`s their way of showing to their relatives that they had **no hand** in your decision (13 February, 2018 N)
5. Interestingly, most of the women whose profiles I`ve come across are not the **`burger` types**. (11 February, 2018 D)
6. Last year, the apex court asked the SPSC to announce the **date sheet** of the CCE. (20 February, 2018 N)

## 5. Conclusion

The syntactic innovations in Pakistani English newspapers reflect the local socio-cultural settings. The analysis shows that the main reason of nativization of these syntactic features is the transfer of patterns of the Urdu language. These innovative patterns are variant and should be acceptable as these structures are slight unconventional but do not violate the syntactic patterns of Standard British English. The most important aspect of these above-discussed innovations is that these are intelligible to bilinguals in Pakistan. New Englishes have developed its own linguistic features and Pakistani English in no exception in this regard. It helps us to identify that these syntactic features are shared by many varieties of English. And these varieties have attained the stable position, for example Indian English, Malaysian English, Singapore English etc. However, there is a need of comprehensive study by taking the mutual linguistic/syntactic characteristics of new Englishes into account.

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