



## Pronunciation and Semantic Differences in Pakistani and British English

Mehdi Soomro<sup>a</sup>

<sup>a</sup> M.Phil. Scholar, Institute of English Language & Literature, University of Sindh

Corresponding Author: Mehdi Soomro, Email: mehdysoomro@gmail.com

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<b>KEYWORDS</b>	<b>ABSTRACT</b>
<b>Pronunciation</b> <b>Lexical features</b> <b>Semantic features</b> <b>Pakistani English</b> <b>Interference of language</b>	<p>The study aims to identify the words which vary in pronunciation from Standard British English and also aims to identify the lexical and semantic features of Pakistani English to determine in what ways their usage is different. The informal conversation was recorded for the data.</p> <p><b>1<sup>st</sup></b> The conversation was then transcribed into written form and was listened to carefully several times to find the phonological and semantic deviation from Standard English. The data obtained from the recording was then further analyzed and found that Pakistani English speakers do not pronounce the common words according to the Standard pronunciation. Interference of the first language while speaking in English can be one of the reasons. In addition, they might not be aware of the process such as rhetoric, aspiration, and intonation. Furthermore, the Lexico-semantic dimension of Pakistani English also deviates from British English, in the usage of words. Islamic and Pakistani culture plays a vital role in shaping the lexicon of Pakistani English. The study asserts that Pakistani English has its norms and standards which make it a distinctive variety of English and should be addressed as an acceptable variety of English.</p>

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## Introduction

English is spreading rapidly all over the world. Countries like Pakistan which have their native languages still use English as an official language and it is widely used in the domain of politics, media, judiciary and education. Since English is no longer property of natives, the term World Englishes is used to denote such varieties which are localized and indigenized. World Englishes are legitimate varieties of English and have their norms. These varieties deviate from so-called Standard English which is British English due to the interference of co-existing local languages. So, in a global context, the use of English in a different form under the influence of other languages leads to diverging from a single standard (Jenkins, 2009). Pakistani English on other hand is nativized and institutionalized variety of English. To understand Pakistani English thoroughly, one must be familiar with Urdu and Islamic culture (Baumgardner, 1987). Pakistani English has a further four sub-varieties. The first one is called *Anglicized English*, the variety which is closer to the British Standard usually spoken by highly educated elites who were exposed to RP for a longer period. The second is called *Acrolect*, which is used by Pakistanis who study in an elite school and have little exposure to British Standard and differs slightly in terms of phonology. The third *Mesolect* which comprises of majority of people deviates from Standard in every way, usually spoken by the middle class who have never been exposed to the native variety. The last variety is called *Basilect* which is used by lower staff such as clerks and typists who are not much educated (Rehman, 1990). The existent study asserts that Pakistani English has its norms and standards which make it a distinctive variety of English and should be addressed as an acceptable variety of English. This study concentrates on the phonological deviation of Pakistani English speakers and the different usage of lexical and semantic features of Pakistani English. The data for the study was obtained by recording an informal conversation in English between two educated participants. The first language of both research subjects was Sindhi. The conversation was then transcribed into written form and was listened to carefully several times to find the phonological and semantic deviation in their speech from Standard English. The corpus obtained from the recording was then further analyzed and presented in the finding and discussion section.

### Aims of the Study

There are two main aims of the study:

- The first aim of the study is to identify the words which vary in pronunciation from Standard British English and whether is it due to the influence of the first language or not.
- The second aim of the study is to identify the lexical and semantic features of Pakistan English to determine in what ways their usage is different in Pakistani English and British English.

### Research Questions

1. What kind of Phonological variations can be found in Pakistani English?
2. What kind of Lexico- Semantic variations can be found in Pakistani English?

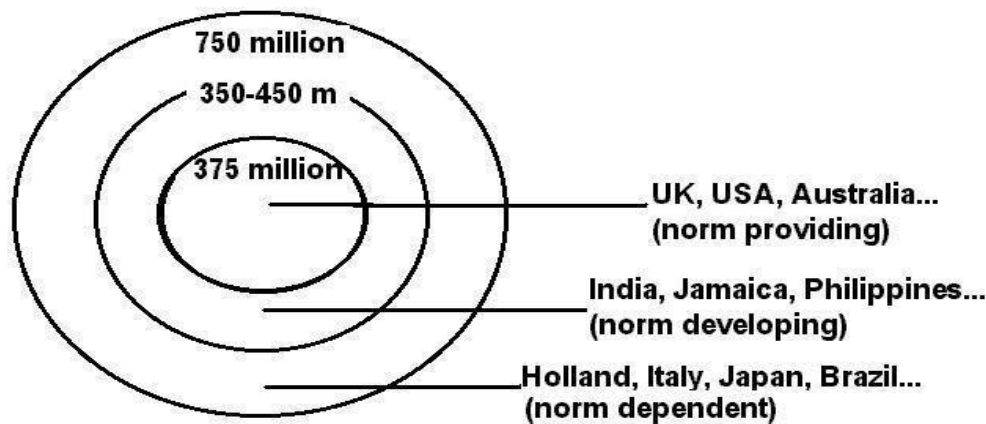
## Literature Review

### Introduction to World Englishes

English is spreading rapidly all over the world. Countries like Pakistan which have their native languages still use English as an official language and it is widely used in the domain of politics, media, judiciary and education. Since English is no longer property of natives, the term World Englishes is used to denote such varieties which are localized and indigenized. World Englishes are the legitimate varieties of English and have their norms. In the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, the issue of World Englishes emerged in the case of rightness and understandability. To tackle such an issue, in 1988 A.D., the conference: Teacher of English to Speakers of Other Language (TESOL) was held in Hawaii and the International Committee of the Study of World Englishes (ICWE) was founded (David Crystal, 2007).

Many theorists studied the concept of World Englishes, but the most prominent model of the spread of English is Baraj Kachru's model of World Englishes, in which he divides language into three circles: The Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and Expanding Circle.

*Fig 1.0 Baraj Kachru's Model of Circle*



**The Inner Circle:** The inner circle represents those countries where English originates, grew and is still the mother tongue or first language. These countries are norm-providing which include United-Kingdom, United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand etc.

**The Outer Circle:** The outer circle represents those countries that remained the colony of Great Britain. In these countries, English is the second and most prestigious language used in every medium of life including education, judiciary, legislation and media. These countries are norm-developing including Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and others.

**The Expanding Circle:** The expanding circle represents those countries where English has no historical or political role. In these countries, English is a foreign language mostly used for

international communication and trade. These countries are norm dependent which including China, Russia, Japan, and others.

### **Lexical and Semantic Variation in Pakistani English**

In all the countries which were once colonized by the British including Pakistan, English interacts with the indigenous languages and is localized in linguistic features such as pronunciation and lexicon (Rehman, 1990). The localized words in the domain of food, clothing, administration, politics, education and art are borrowed from the Pakistani English variety (Baumgardner, 1993).

According to Nihalani et. al. (1979), Indian English and Pakistani English share the lexicon as both countries were once ruled by the British. But some lexical items which Pakistani English does not share with Indian English are related to Islam. Mehboob (2009) believes Pakistani English reflects Islamic values. The Arabic words like “*Masha-Allah*”, “*Jihad*”, and “*Zakat*” are commonly used in Pakistani English (Baumgardner, 1993). Mehboob (2009) also cites a few Islamic words penetrated in Pakistani English such as “*Mujahideen*”, “*Pir*”, “*Khutbah*” and “*Namaz-e-Janaza*”.

According to Weinreich (1953), words can be borrowed, semantically changed, translated, or hybridized. Thus, Pakistani English has also applied these word-formation processes in making its identity. English derivational suffixes are combined with Urdu words such as “*Laathi-charge*”, “*Rickshaw-wallah*”, and “*Kheer-mix*” (Baumgardner, 1993). Words borrowed from local languages such as “*Jirga*”, “*Sain*” and “*Mohajir*”. Some words have different senses in Pakistani English. Mohsin (2009) pointed out words that have different senses in Pakistani English, the word *Safety* is commonly used for Razor, getting *sugar* for the sense of diabetes, and *taking breakfast* represents eating breakfast. She further mentions that she was regarded as a *lady journalist* instead of a journalist. The process of translation is also mentioned by Rehman (1990) where the word *Fast* in British English has different usage in Pakistani English as *Keep fasts* which is a translation from Urdu (Roza Rakhna = Fast keeping). To understand Pakistani English thoroughly, one must be familiar with Urdu and Islamic culture (Baumgardner, 1993).

A study conducted by Jilani & Anwar (2018) on Lexicon-Semantic features of Pakistani English newspapers focuses on the coinage of the new words which are from Pakistani culture to express the prevalent thoughts and affairs in the society and whose direct replacement might not be available in Standard English. The words such as “*Gullu Butts*” refers to a famous negative character that might be alien to other cultures but intelligible to respective culture. Another word that gains popularity in the context of Pakistan, which is quoted many times in English newspapers of Pakistan is *Lota-culture* which depicts the culture of switching political loyalty. The study asserted that many such types of words are prevalent in Pakistani discourse and have achieved the status of institutionalized phrases, which further strengthens the concept of *Nativization and Acculturation* given by Kachru (1992).

## Phonological Variations in Pakistani English

Pakistani English has evolved over course of time through its usage in the domains of academic, administrative, legal and commercial. Some norms regarding pronunciation; unwritten, indistinct existed but were never explicitly discussed (Saleemi, 1985). According to Mehboob and Ahmer (2004), Pakistani English is a rhotic variety of English as most of the language samples they collected pronounced [r] in all contexts. They also further asserted that there is no phonemic distinction between /v/ and /w/ in Urdu. Similar findings discussed by Rehman (1990), that Pashto speakers cannot articulate /v/ for example in “love” [luo]. Such conclusions were also made in a study conducted by Khan (2012) that Pakistani speakers pronounced /r/ and they don’t maintain the difference between /w/ and /v/. Pashto has the glottal fricative /h/ but still Pashto speaker’s use /t/ for /th/ in thank (Mackenzie, 1987).

Shabbir (2013), in his study, found that Pakistani English speakers pronounce /th/ voiced and unvoiced /th/ and /d/ whereas British English has specific sounds from them transcribed as /θ/ and /ð/. Similar findings are stated by Kachru (1992) that Pakistani English speakers use dental stops in the place of RP dental fricatives and examples are [t] and [d] in the north and then [den].

Some researchers argue that variation in pronunciation can be due to the tendency to use spelling as a guide to pronunciation. For instance Derby RP [da:bʊ] PE [debʊ] (Rehman, 1990). Rao (1961) believes that Indians and Pakistanis do not aspirate the stops not only because of differences in spelling but they are also not taught to do so. And the similar position is taken by Khan (2012) in research carried out on phonetic features of Pakistani English and concluded that Pakistani speakers do not aspirate stops in word-initial positions.

Prosodic transfer from the first language also plays role in derivation from Standard English as South Asian languages are syllable-timed whereas English is stress-timed (Nelson, 1982). This applies to Pakistani English as well and gives it a different rhythm than British English. According to Rehman (1990), a Punjabi speaker breaks the consonant cluster by placing the short vowel /ə/ between the sibilant and stop. In examples *speak* [səpi:k] and *stall* [səta:l]. On other hand, the other languages do not have a problem with consonant clusters, because their structure permits these clusters.

Ansari et. al. (2016) conducted a study on the pronunciation of Sindhi speakers of Pakistani English, they concluded that the majority of Sindhi speakers did not have the correct pronunciation of the Standard. They did not have awareness of aspirated allophones and vowel sounds. Participants were not using stress and intonation in their conversation as they were not directly exposed to the native variety. Most of them were pronounced according to the spellings of the word. Many English words are adopted in Sindhi with slight modifications, and they pronounced those words with a Sindhi accent while speaking English.

## Methodology

A qualitative method was used in this research because it is usually described as an interpretative method. An informal conversation in English between two educated participants was recorded to find the phonological and semantic deviation from Standard English.

Both of the participants were male and graduated in the same year from the Institute of English Language and Literature, University of Sindh. The first language of both participants was Sindhi. They both had a similar background in English. Participants were sampled based on convenient sampling.

The participants were briefed about the study before their informal conversation. Their conversation was recorded by the researcher on his phone. The conversation was then transcribed into written form and was listened carefully several times to find the phonological and semantic deviation from Standard English. The data obtained from the recording was then further analyzed and presented in the finding and discussion section.

## Findings and Discussion

### Pronunciation Variation

The following words the researcher believes were pronounced differently from the Standard English by the participants in the recorded conversation.

- **Television:** /t<sup>h</sup>eI, vIʒn/

*“I guess you haven’t watched **television**?”*

The participant pronounced this word deviated from standard in a way that he did not aspirate the alveolar stop; the actual aspirated /t<sup>h</sup>/ was replaced with /t/. This finding was also mentioned in the study by Khan (2012), that Pakistani speakers do not aspirate stops in word-initial positions.

- **Mars:** /ma:z/

*“Why, have humans reached on **Mars**?”*

The researcher believed that this word deviates from Standard because Pakistani English speakers rely more on spelling for pronouncing a word. In the above example the final alphabet “s” is pronounced /z/ by the native speakers whereas participants in this study pronounced this word as /ma: rs/. Another important finding was the rhotic pronunciation of /r/ since they find “r” in spellings. Similar findings were witnessed in different researches mentioned above; Pakistani English is a rhotic variety of English as they pronounced [r] in all contexts (Mehboob, 2004). According to Rehman (1990), variation in pronunciation can be due to the tendency to use spelling as a guide to pronunciation.

- **Riot:** / ‘raɪət/

*“No! There is Wheel-jam-strike due to the **riots** in the city.”*

This word is one of the most mispronounced words in English, and similarly, in the recorded conversation this word was pronounced as /rɪa:t/, which is a deviation from standard pronunciation.

The common reason for such deviation is that they never came across the actual pronunciation of this word and they simply followed the spelling to articulate this word.

- **Chaos:** /keɪns/ **Study:** /stʌdi/ **School:** /sk<sup>h</sup>u:l/

*“I am fed up with this **Chaos**, how people are going to live with it, the **study** will get disturb due to closing of the **school**. Look at this Shaadi-hall, how much loss he will bear due to these strikes”*

The word chaos became an area of concern for the researcher when he heard the participant uttering “Ch” in this word as /tʃ/ instead of /k/ and this is one of the common mistakes which speakers of Pakistani English make. Here they applied similar logic of spelling while pronouncing the word.

The study found a similar kind of deviation in the words like study and school, and that was of the unnecessary addition of the /ɪ/ sound in the beginning. As they pronounced it /ɪstʌdi/ and /ɪsku:l/. Another noticeable deviation was that phoneme /k/ was not aspirated by the speaker.

- **Pizza:** /pi:tsə/

*“Chill, let’s order the **Pizza** since your plan with your friends is cancelled”*

This is another prime example of the most common word and almost every Pakistani English speaker pronounced it wrongly. They pronounced it as /pi:za:/. The most common deviation is missing the aspirated sound of phoneme /p/. Secondly, due to the spelling of the word seeing “z” leads to pronouncing the sound /z/ instead of /s/. Lastly, in Standard English, the last sound of “a” is represented by the short vowel /ə/ whereas we non-native speakers stretch it by using the long vowel /a:/.

- **Boundary:** /baʊndri/ **Climb:** /klaɪm/ **Top:** /tɒp/

*“No, they have secured **boundary** and check post at the beginning. So no one will **climb** the **top** of the wall”*

In an analysis of the recording, the researcher found that the participant pronounced the word Boundary as /bʌndri/ which is a clear deviation from Standard English. And such pronunciation is common among speakers.

The second-word Climb was pronounced as /klaɪmb/. The deviation observed was the addition of the phoneme /b/ which in Standard language is a silent phoneme. Not only the research subject but the majority of the speakers of Pakistani English commit this mistake as they see “b” in the spelling of the word.

Lastly, in the word top, the most common deviation which is already discussed above was again witnessed in this particular word was the aspiration of phoneme /t/. Furthermore instead of phoneme /t/, the participant was adding phoneme /ɔ:/ which makes the pronunciation of the word as /tɔ:p/

- **Finger:** /fɪŋgə/

*“Hey! Before ordering, can you please lit my cigarette with matches as I have hurt my finger”*

This word is most commonly used but completely mispronounced by the majority of Pakistani English speakers. The word is pronounced as /fɪŋgər/. The nasal velar /ŋ/ is replaced by the /n/. Another difference is the rhotic nature of pronouncing /r/ everywhere though after /ə/ the phoneme /r/ is not pronounced.

- **Heart:** /ha:t/     **Finished:** /fɪnɪʃt/

“Your *heart* might be broken seeing back of your car *finished* in front of your eyes.”

This word was pronounced wrongly during the conversation, which leads this word to be placed on this list. The word was pronounced as /hɜ:rt/. The /a:/ was replaced with the sound /ɜ:/ and the common trace of Pakistani English was visible in it that is the rhotic use of /r/ by simply seeing it in spelling.

The second word finished, which was found, deviated in a way that the “ed” at the end of a word was pronounced as phoneme /d/. But in Standard English, it is represented by the phoneme /t/.

### Semantic Differences

- **Pant-Shirt**

*“Hey, you are looking good in this **pant-shirt**. Where are you going?”*

The formation of this word involves the process of compounding, in which two words are joined together to form a new word. And the analogy which they followed was from the traditional word for dresses “*Shalwar-kameez*”. The pant-shirt word might not be famous in native varieties.

- **Hotel**

*“Well, I am going to the **hotel** with my friends”*

The word hotel has a different sense in the native language, a hotel for them is a building where they can have lodging along with meals. But in the Pakistani English sense, the hotel is a replacement word for the restaurant where people go for eating.

- **Wheel-Jam-Strike**

*“No! There is **Wheel-jam-strike** due to the riots in the city.”*

In the above word, the semantic process of translation is used. The word might be coined using the Urdu phrase “*Paiya-jam-hartal*”. This addition to Pakistani English might not be in Standard English. And for understand this term, one needs a contextual background.

- **Shaadi-Hall**



*“Look at this **Shaadi-hall**, how much loss he will bear due to these strikes”*

This word involves the semantic process called *hybrid*, in which two languages are combined to form a new indigenized word. In the above example, Shaadi word is from Pakistani culture and hall from foreign. So instead of saying “hall for marriage”, simply coined the word Shaadi-hall.

- **Ladies’ Finger**

*“Whatever, anything will be better than **roti and ladies’ finger** cooked at home”*

The word ladies’ finger is prominent in South-Asian English including Pakistani English whereas the Standard usage of this word is Okra.

- **Halal and Black**

*“Don’t say like this, it’s bought by **Halal** earning, as your father does not earn **Black**”*

In the word “Halal”, the process of borrowing was used. And it is borrowed from Pakistani and Islamic culture. As mentioned above Pakistani English reflects Islamic values (Mehboob, 2004). There is no immediate replacement for this word in Standard English.

The second word “Black” usually represents the colour, but in the Pakistani context, it represents the money that is earned by malpractice and dishonesty. It might also involve the semantic process of clipping where Black-money was clipped to the word “black”

- **Lady-Doctor**

*“I was lucky enough; there was a **lady-doctor** nearby garage”*

It is a common trace of Pakistani English, to designate gender to a particular profession. Several such examples are there. Mohsin (2009), mentions that she was regarded as a *lady journalist* instead of a journalist. In Standard English, rarely we will find a specific denotation of gender along with the profession.

- **Soft-Corner**

*“I thought you will have **Soft-corner** for them”*

In the above word, the semantic process of translation is used. The word might be coined using the Urdu phrase “naram Gosha”. This might be conventionalized through its usage and might be intelligible to the Natives as well.

## **Conclusion**

According to detailed analysis and observation, it is clear that most Pakistani English speakers pronounce the common words deviant to the Standard pronunciation. Interference of the first language while speaking in English can be the reason or they were not aware of the process such

as rhotic, aspiration, and intonation. Due to this their accent or pronunciation might be unintelligible to the native speakers and are reminded of speaking the wrong English. Furthermore, the Lexico-semantic dimension of Pakistani English deviates from British English, in the usage of words. Islamic and Pakistani culture plays a vital role in shaping the lexicon of Pakistani English. To understand Pakistani English thoroughly, one must be familiar with Urdu and Islamic culture. The study asserts that Pakistani English has its norms and standards which make it a distinctive variety of English and should be addressed as an acceptable variety of English.

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