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**The Science of Narration in Pakistani English: A Case Study of Karachi
You're Killing Me!**

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Abstract

One of the most exciting developments in Pakistan's rapidly expanding literary scene of the last decade has been not only the boom in international publication and distribution but the growing use of Pakistani English. Pakistani English has come a long way in the last six decades from its humble beginnings when it was derided as a 'mongrel' by the custodians of 'propriety' and the powers that be, and today, Pakistan can boast of many internationally acclaimed writers whose narratives are read, debated, lauded, and awarded around the world. This paper will examine the narrative strategies employed in a contemporary Pakistani English crime novel, which also uses the style of reporting as one of its narrative strategies and discusses using it in a persuasive and gritty manner. The use of a reportorial style in engaging readers has been noticed and appreciated by critics and readers but has not been given significant attention in literary commentary. The importance of reports and news writing in our daily lives, and the increasing voraciousness of crime news readers, suggest that it is an effective device which has been deliberately used as a stylistic strategy to engage and persuade both readers and critics. Narratology refreshes literary analysis of the novel by offering an interdisciplinary framework that uses Structuralist theory to analyze discourse within a given text. To this end, methodologies focusing on the narrative and descriptiveness in the novel will be referred to. This paper will primarily use narrative and descriptive analyses to identify and classify various aspects of storytelling strategies used in the novel. The tools of narratology will be used to pay attention to characteristics that have gone unnoticed in the study of narrations of Pakistani English texts, or have been noticed but misunderstood. They will also be used to help us categorize and systematize the storytelling strategies employed in the novel.

Keyword: Pakistani English, Urdu influence, Matrix Language Frame Analysis (MLF), lexical borrowing, code-switching, structural variations, Pakistani Anglophone Literature

Introduction

Pakistani English, as a rising English range, has developed precise linguistic functions encouraged by Urdu, Pakistan's national language. This influence is evident in Pakistani English's unique structural and lexical properties, contributing to its status as a recognized indigenized variety. This variety is distinct from British or American English, reflecting Pakistan's sociocultural context, primarily through structural and lexical adaptations.

Using the Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model, this study examines the degree and processes of Urdu's effect on Pakistani English through a close reading of Karachi, *You're Killing Me!* by Saba Imtiaz. Kenyan author, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, writes

"Language, any language, has a dual character: it is both a tool of communication and a carrier of culture.

(Thiong'o, 1986)

Background of Research

Previous research has demonstrated the broad spectrum of Urdu's influence on Pakistani English, with scholars examining its impact on lexical, syntactical, and phonological features. Baumgartner (1995) first highlighted the integration of Urdu lexical borrowings and grammatical elements, suggesting the evolution of Pakistani English as a regional variety. Talaat (2002) further explored Urdu-English code-switching, emphasizing the challenges of analyzing its dynamic structure. Warraich et al. (2012) focused on Urdu loanwords in journalism, while Anwar (2007) investigated syntactic influences of Urdu-English code-switching in media, showing that these patterns follow consistent grammatical structures. Ahmad's (2014) study of Pakistani English fiction

detailed "Urduized" terms, illustrating how code-mixing reflects unique cultural elements.

Together, these studies offer an attempt to conceptualize the place of Urdu in constructing Pakistani English – yet, unanswered questions pertain to how English assumes different cultural roles in popular novels. Further research has followed from this effort in Pakistani English by developing the study of hybridity in structural and cultural terms. Syed (2019) and Halo et al. (2024) thus used Thematic & Syntactic analysis in Newspapers and University interviews, studying how English cross over through Urdu in syntax & Vocabulary. Many authors fail to steer clear from mere translation, and Jadoon (2022) saw the use of such techniques like hybridization and affixation as authors introduce a Pakistani cultural identity in literature. Halo (2024) has done a similar consideration of the syntactical changes, which Pakistani English shares with Urdu by confirming that these changes are for Indigenization.

These studies establish a historical pattern of how Urdu influenced the linguistic scene, but are mostly limited to qualitative methods and lack extensive use of quantitative or corpus based methodologies. This research therefore seeks to address such gaps in the existing literature by employing a matrix language frame analysis to examine how Urdu shapes the English in the Pakistani novel, ““Karachi, You’re Killing Me!”” through both structural and lexical approaches.

Statement of the Problem

Despite a great deal of work having already been done on Pakistan English, there is a minimal use of the matrix language frame analysis in order to examine the influence of Urdu. Unlike the prior works of Talaat (2002) and Ahmad (2014), who went only up to lexical or grammatical aspects of Urdu, the current study incorporates the structural aspect completely. This research, therefore, aims to plug this gap by analyzing the tense of Urdu and English using the matrix language frame in ““Karachi, You’re Killing Me!”” and attempts to reveal the bilingual conditioning of English as used in Pakistan.

Significance of the Study

The present work will assist in recognizing the authenticity of Pakistani English as a variety that has syntactic features distinct from the generic RP British English; the results shall provide substantial pedagogical implications, especially for teaching of English in Pakistan, where tradition considers local language impact on English learning should be explained for better teaching. Understanding this characteristic of Pakistani English can help a teacher show students that this variety of language is just as valid a way of shaping language as the standard one.

Delimitations of the Study

This study is delimited to analyzing Pakistani English through the lens of the Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model, focusing exclusively on its structural and lexical dimensions as influenced by Urdu in the novel ““Karachi, You’re Killing Me!””. The choice to use only the MLF model limits the scope of analysis to the roles of a dominant “matrix” language (English) and an embedded “guest” language (Urdu) within bilingual code-switching. By adopting this single model, the study narrows its analytical framework to the MLF perspective, excluding alternative sociolinguistics or psycholinguistics models that may offer additional insights into bilingual language interaction. This delimitation allows for an in-depth exploration of the structural and lexical patterns within the specified theoretical framework, aligning with the study’s aim to examine Pakistani English through the structured focus of the MLF model.

Purpose of Study

This study aims to explore the unique narrative voice that results from the L1 influence of Urdu on (PakE) an English variety due to its linguistic reality in Pakistan as a primary

language and use ““Karachi, You’re Killing Me!”” by Saba Imtiaz. Focusing on code-switching, lexical borrowing and some culture-oriented items this study ruminates about the representation of identity, Pakistani social forces and values in literature using PakeE. This research fills the gap in linguistic study of PakeE in fiction and narration settings through MLF based methods so that it can be understood how the unique form of storytelling as a consequence of code-switching and lexical borrowing between Urdu-English makers or words have formed an iconic narrative style appealing to local audiences.

The research specifically intends to examine the role of Urdu lexical borrowing within the establishment a distinct narrative style of PakeE; consider how narrative voice and character expression is impacted through syntax shaped by Urdu; argue whether cultural expressions and locally laden forms/meanings of English can be used to express ‘Pakistani’ identity/cultural context; explore the extent to which code-switching indicates social context or character identity; analyze the source/meaning/effect/type of borrowed word/syntactic pattern/s that add(s) tone, relatable detail, a culturally immersive experience. The present research, thus, aims to contribute to the understanding of PakeE as an indigenous variety of English that is separate from Standard English and which also continues its process of development that reflects significance for Pakistanis in terms of identity and cultural adjustment.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study are to

- Analyse the impact of lexical borrowing on the development of a unique narrative style in Pakistani English literature
- Examine the structural patterns influenced by Urdu syntax within English narratives by Pakistani authors
- Explore how cultural expressions and local semantic nuances shape narrative voice in Pakistani English works
- Identify the role of code-switching in constructing characters’ identities and social dynamics within Pakistani English storytelling
- Investigate the pragmatic functions of language borrowing, including tone-setting and audience relatability, in Pakistani English narratives

Research Questions

The study is focused to address the following questions:

1. How does lexical borrowing contribute to the unique narrative style in Pakistani English, as seen in ““Karachi, You’re Killing Me!””?
2. What syntactic patterns in Pakistani English reflect Urdu influence within narrative contexts?
3. In what ways do cultural expressions and semantic nuances in ““Karachi, You’re Killing Me!”” convey Pakistani identity through English?
4. How does code-switching function within Pakistani English narration to signify identity and social context?
5. What pragmatic functions do borrowed words, phrases, and syntactic structures serve in creating a relatable, locally grounded narrative?

Research Hypotheses

The structural patterns and linguistic choices in ““Karachi, You’re Killing Me!”” reflect an underlying influence of Urdu as a primary language, which shapes unique syntactic and lexical formations within Pakistani English narrative style.

Literature Review

The construction of Pakistani English (PakeE) influenced by Urdu as the L1 has been a

topic of scholarly interest, with both structural and lexical features shaped by Urdu-English interactions being examined. Early works, such as Baumgardner's (1993) overview of English in Pakistan, highlighted the unique sociolinguistic context in which PakE evolved, noting its multilingual foundations and distinct cultural integration. This foundational research underscored the need for linguistic studies that examined specific characteristics of PakE as an emerging variety, distinct from British and American norms.

The Matrix Language Frame (Myers-Scotton and Jake 2009) is a basic framework which furnishes the theoretical basis for understanding how bilingual language processing occurs, with a particular focus on code switching. The model distinguishes between the 'Matrix Language' (ML) as the source of grammatical structure and the 'Embedded Language' (EL) as contributing lexical items. For language contact phenomena, the 4M model was further elaborated through classification of morphemes. Carol Myers-Scotton's influential works, including *Duelling Languages: Formalized in Grammatical Structure in Code Switching* (1993) and *Contact Linguistics: Bilingual Encounters and Grammatical Outcomes* (2013), the MLF model was shown to be applicable to bilingual communication. In addition to intra-sentential switching, syntactic constraints, and expanded its scope to include phenomena such as lexical borrowing and language convergence, her research also highlighted these phenomena. The model was shown to apply to linguistic contexts as diverse as Namba (2004) on bilingual settings, Zabrodskaia (2009) on Russian-Estonian code switching, and Jake et al. (2002) on minimalist adaptations. But MacSwan (2005) suggested theoretical revisions to remedy analytical inconsistencies. Together, these papers show that the MLF model is critical to understanding not only the structural, but also the lexical, and sociocultural aspects of bilingualism.

Earlier work (e.g. MacSwan 2005) has evaluated the MLF model, arguing against its theoretical basis in generative grammar and minimalism frameworks while claiming that it lacks flexibility to capture syntactic variation across different kinds of bilingual contexts. Despite being a frequently used and highly referenced model for research on bilingualism, this gap still exists even in certain sociolinguistic context e.g. Pakistani English (Myers-Scotton & Jake, 2009; MacSwan, 2005). Yet, the structural and lexical dimensions constructed in Pakistani English can be an important source of insight that has yet to receive any attention really, especially when LL1 is analyzed through Urdu.

Halo et al. (2024) have provided more detail on the linguistic features of PakE, and voiced code-mixing and distinctive syntactical construction patterns inspired by Urdu. While their qualitative analysis rooted in interviews revealed colloquial features of PakE that delineates its essence character from other varieties of English. Anwar (2007) elaborates on the structural aspect of code-switching in PakE who has discovered that it exists at both phrase and clause level suggesting rule governed interaction of Urdu and English. Urdu influence has been largely documented in the form of code-switching and lexical innovations. Example 1 Ahmad (2014) studied the phenomenon of code-switching in Pakistani fiction and relates all Urduized expressions to PakE words which are significant features of PakE identity. In terms of grammar, Anwar (2007) examined the code-switching between Urdu and English used by newsprint media while Rasul (2009) elaborated on code-mixing in television programs through discourse studies paradigms foregrounding Aguado et al. Such studies have demonstrated that the impact of Urdu on PakE exceeds local-external lexical borrowing and encompasses even entire sentences and word-formation processes (Halo, 2024).

From the same source as Jadoon (2022), PakE literature has shown an extensive

use of borrowings from the Urdu language which in turn adds a set of culturally standard expressions to the language. As per stated by Qureshi et al. (2023), these borrowed lexical items improve Fill in the cultural inflection and highlight PakE's part in articulating a Pakistan- particular Pakistani flavor Anglophone literary. Discourse used in culture-related words provides a stark example of Imtiaz et al., where use of culture specific vocabulary in PakE highlights the uniqueness of the language (Jadoon, 2022; Qureshi et al., 2023). Syed (2019) & Zainab and Muneer Ur Rehman (2024) have also discussed that code switching is useful in developing PakE and resultant has identified Urdu lexical and syntactic chunks in the written mode which includes textbooks and newspaper. This has become a norm that constructs the language biography of PakE, code mixing Urdu and English in contextual history of Pakistan to find its roots [Syed 2019; Zainab et al. 2024]. Further, using Sudanese Arabic data, Rasul (2009) has addressed the sociocultural factors of code-mixing and pointed out that code-mixed utterances can be employed to index cultural values among its speakers. PakE is known to have been influenced by Urdu as the first language by intervening in its morphosyntax. These problems include several syntactic errors which were present in the work of Masood et al.(2020) which include SVA and use of literal translation from Urdu language. The predictions in Mahmood's (2009) corpus-based study also corroborated these views; the speaker used noun phrase structures in PakE that differed from that of standard BrE.

In phonological variations Abbasi et al. (2017) observed an Urdu-accented PakE thus supporting phonetic changes that set PakE from native speakers of English. However, some of the studies do not support this general observation annotating the degree and range of variation in PakE from SE to the extent and scope as claimed above. Baumgardner (1995) conducted an attitude toward the PakE and found that there is an acceptance of the Pakistani norms, but this in the context of regionality and class difference. Shamim (2019) discussed how and to what extent educational language classrooms affect learners' identity and PakE attitudes to reveal the socioeconomic and cultural factors contributing to its development. Therefore, while much previous research has been conducted which investigates features of the PakE, there remain questions as to the precise nature of the structural/lexical interface between PakE and Urdu. For example, Zaidi (2017) has attempted overviews, or histories, but there has been little discussion of the actual language used. Further, little has been explored about PakE in the light of fiction novels that portray daily use language creativity. Whereas the detailed study of Urduized lexical variations using research databases has been conducted by many authors, including Sarfraz (2021), which investigated Urduized lexical variations in a specific book such as *Twilight in Delhi*, more extensive genre studies have been overlooked.

This is the knowledge gap of the present research as the following study intends to apply the MLF model to construct Pakistani English based on Karachi in the novel ““Karachi, You're Killing Me!”” by Saba Imtiaz. Analyzing this novel from the perspective of the relationship between PakE and Urdu opens the opportunity to discuss the ways in which the present study contributes to understanding the nature of syntactic and lexical features of the variety, as well as to discuss its structural and sociolinguistic characteristics (Myers Scotton & Jake, 2009)

Gaps in the Literature

The literature review of the present study ushers several research gaps involving Pakistani English which have been pointed out by the earlier norms. First, most studies cover written modality in particular, newspaper, official documents and scholarly texts (Talaat, 2002; Warraich, 2012). This approach may not reflect all of the structural and

lexical alternations that can be met in everyday or popularity established literary genres. Secondly, the use of any convenience, purposive or snowball samples (Halo, 2024; Masood, 2020) means that the results are not generalizable. . Third, in relation to lexical transfer, comprehensive studies of syntactic and morphological processes are scanty.

Rationale for the Current Study

This paper fills these gaps by utilizing a Matrix Language Frame approach on the structural and lexical features of ““Karachi, You’re Killing Me!”” by Saba Imtiaz. A novel located in an urban Pakistani environment proves to be a perlite of vista nuance of PakE in the use of code switching, syntactic changes and incorporation of Pakistani inner world Englishes(IWEs). Engaging with material that presents an approximation of modern urban Pakistani culture whilst critiquing PakE allows for a consideration of its encoding more so than its conditional evolution. Thus, this analysis can help to extend the existing literature on PakE as an independent linguistic variety with reference to the effect of Urdu at various linguistic strata.

Research Methodology

To assess the construction of PakE, and particularly the fine details of PakE as evident in the current show ““Karachi, You’re Killing Me!””, the present research made use of a qualitative research approach, and more to the point, adopted the Matrix Language Frame (MLF) variant of the English-adopted, focusing on the city of Karachi. By means of Saba Imtiaz. To choose the code-switching sorts, use of Urdu lexical borrowings and the syntactic structures induced by Urdu being the first language a content material evaluation of the radical turned into carried out. Exemplary features related to the MLF were classified into Matrix language (English) and Embedded language (Urdu). The results were therefore discussed within the wider literature on PakE to explicate its structural and lexical specificity.

Research Framework

The Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model is the theoretical framework used for the analysis of bilingual interactions with regard to the asymmetry between the ML and EL. The ML controls syntactic structures, and the EL offers lexical fillers, which produce mixed linguistic entities. This framework is most useful when analyzing intra-sentential code-switching, lexical borrowing and the issue of grammatical congruence in bilingual situations. To accomplish the research of constructing the Pakistani English, the Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model has been used as the theoretical foundation of this study. The paper using MLF model by Myers-Scotton (1993, 2002) to define the matrix and embedded language; here, English is the matrix language and Urdu the embedded language to analyse how Urdu encodes Pakistani English. The theoretical framework of the MLF model is useful to conceptualize how material from Urdu is inserted into English syntax in Pakistani English and it is identified to be most helpful for analysis of code-switching behaviour. In mapping this framework to ““Karachi, You’re Killing Me!”” the research sought to look at how lexical, structural and syntactic infusion of Urdu contributed towards the formation of this variety of English.

Research Design

A qualitative research design was adopted for this study, involving in-depth textual analysis of ““Karachi, You’re Killing Me!”” to investigate the structural and lexical characteristics of Pakistani English. A qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for exploring complex linguistic patterns and allowing for the nuanced analysis of language features influenced by Urdu. Specifically, a content analysis method was applied to identify instances of code-switching, lexical borrowings, syntactic variations, and structural adaptations in the text. Comparative analysis with British English was conducted to highlight distinct patterns in Pakistani English, focusing on MLF model

parameters.

Data Collection

These records for this look at were sourced from the novel ““Karachi, You’re Killing Me!”” which is then acknowledged as mapping paintings of Pakistani English fiction the industry comprises of younger writers, who translated together alongside the usage of the English and Urdu language, Saba Imtiaz helped to convey it. Certain passages were chosen from the text and only those were considered where there seen the use of Urdu vocabulary or a grammatical part of speech used within an English sentence. This book was chosen because it is written in the urban colloquial style of Pakistani English and gives a true picture of the code switching and Urduization found in Pakistani English.

Sampling

Convenience sampling was employed in the selection of the excerpt from the novel were clear cases of code-switching and lexical interference from Urdu to English was demonstrated. For the analysis, only those passages were selected which possess strong expressions in Urdu, different structural patterns or other lexical factors relevant to the research Though this approach provided a ‘microscopic view’ of all the sections of the annual report, it was highly beneficial when applied within the confines of the MLF model.

Data Analysis

The Matrix Language Frame (MLF) model was used for the analysis as it centered on how the English, being the ML, incorporated Urdu, the EL in the construction of PakeE in Karachi You’re Killing Me! The lexical borrowings, the trends of code-switching, the syntactical features originating from Urdu and the pragmatic and cultural aspects entering into the make-up of PakeE have subtly been discovered in this endeavour. To exemplify how this linguistic interplay has taken place, selected scenes from the novel were examined in order to focus on the five main axes of interlingual contact: first, instances of lexical borrowing, that is, Urdu-origin words and expressions that are integrated in English sentences, Second, syntactic patterns include features imported into English that are characteristic of Urdu etc. Like

1. Lexical Borrowing and Innovative Constructions of Hybrid Forms
2. Structural Patterns Reflecting Urdu Syntactic Influence
3. Exploration of Cultural Implications and the semantic nuances
4. Elements of Code-Switching
5. Pragmatic Functionalism

The language use in “Karachi, You’re Killing Me!” opens an insight of how the Pakistani English evolves from Urdu. In context of the framework of MLF model, English forms the matrix language while Urdu forms an embedded language by contributing into the availability of words, phrases, idioms, and syntactic patterns. It therefore not only builds up a different kind of Pakistani English but also places it into the cultural frameworks familiar to local audience that makes Pakistani English an authentic and legitimate variety.

Validity and Reliability

As discussed in the previous chapters, the construction of Pakistani English using Urdu as an L1 must maintain validity and reliability in order to arrive at consistent findings as seen in Karachi You’re Killing Me! In this sense, the use of existing and generally accepted linguistic concepts such as Framework of Matrix Language (MLF) can be implemented for consistent classification of lexical loans, syntactic changes, and patterns of code switching. Pursuing validity and reliability in advancing construction of the Pakistani English criterion using Urdu as the first language in ““Karachi, You’re Killing Me!”” is crucial to guarantee the result of the analysis. In this sense, the use of

existing and generally accepted linguistic concepts such as Framework of Matrix Language (MLF) can be implemented for consistent classification of lexical loans, syntactic changes, and patterns of code switching.

Ethical Considerations

Critique of cultural and linguistic detail within ““Karachi, You’re Killing Me!”” and other works of Pakistani English is vital in order to maintain the educational and moral rights of Pakistani subjects. If follow-up studies incorporate the reader or author, specially, the researchers have to sign the informed consent form and ensure anonymity of the participants. Due to potential semiotic associations that exist when entering other people’s language, borrowing and code-switching should be studied cautiously to prevent oversimplification and stereotype promotion.

Findings and Discussion

This paper’s examination of ““Karachi, You’re Killing Me!”” with the help of Matrix Language Frame theory reveals the complex relationship between Urdu and English and their part in building a Pakistani Anglophone narrative. This mixed use of language is a manifestation of the linguistic-cultural orientation, socio-semantic environment and storytelling mode of Pakistani English literary works. Analyzing the lexical and structural characteristics of the utterances, this work explores how Urdu ontology intersperses English sentences with cultural richness and credibility. Chapters 2 and 3 therefore underline the creativity rooted in the novel’s voice, and the linguistic in betweenness that establishes Pakistani English as a form.

1. Lexical Borrowing and Innovative Constructions of Hybrid Forms

In *Karachi, You’re Killing Me!*, English serves as the dominant “matrix language,” setting the structural framework of sentences, while Urdu elements operate as embedded language units that add cultural resonance without disrupting English syntax. For example, sentences such as “The Urdu TV channel reporters... get the best space, the biggest table” use English structure with Urdu embedded as an adjective describing the channel, capturing the bilingual landscape of Karachi. Similarly, expressions such as “Ji, my name is Ayesha and I work for the Daily News” showcase English structure with “ji”—a term of politeness in Urdu—interwoven seamlessly without affecting sentence flow. Culinary terms such as “korma,” a traditional dish, are retained in their Urdu specificity within English sentences, as in “Did you reach for the korma at the same time?” This matrix structure enables Imtiaz to build a bilingual Karachi where Urdu terms add cultural depth to an English-dominated narrative.

Another prominent feature is the use of EL insertions via direct borrowings. This entails using culturally familiar terms such as “mehndi” (wedding) or “baji” (elder sister), alongside words like “ji” (yes), which are easily understood by readers familiar with Pakistani culture. Culinary terms like “halwa” (dessert), “roti” (bread), and “biryani” (a rice dish) are also directly embedded into the text, capturing a vivid sense of cultural identity. For instance, in the phrase, “I adjust the dupatta on my head, get off the bench...,” the term “dupatta” (scarf) is seamlessly integrated. Words like “uff” and “bhai” are left untranslated because their cultural significance would be diminished in English, reflecting the natural incorporation of Urdu into the English text.

Imtiaz also employs new word formations by blending Urdu and English into unique expressions that define the linguistic features of Pakistani English (PakE). For example, the term “shawl” is used in a localized context, as in, “Err, I think you may need a shawl.” These new word formations are often shaped by local perspectives, as seen in colloquial expressions such as, “Do you know your t-shirt is soaking wet?” which merges English sentence structure with Urdu tonal influences.

The text further includes blended expressions that integrate idiomatic translations from Urdu into English, reflecting the unpredictable creativity of bilingual practices in Pakistan. Examples like “Let’s take a dholki and chill” highlight this interplay, with “dholki” referring to an event of traditional drumming. These expressions, while framed in English, carry the cultural weight of Urdu, adding richness to the dialogue. Through such turns of phrase, Imtiaz captures the vibrant linguistic identity of her characters, embodying both cultural personality and flair.

Finally, Imtiaz incorporates modified lexical items that reflect the Pakistani context, especially in terms of honorifics and nouns. Simple but dignified terms like “Sahib” for sir and “Bibi” for miss are frequently used, as in “Ayesha bibi, you’re always saying....” Here, “bibi” conveys politeness and familiarity. Similarly, phrases such as “Bakwas,” she mutters, or “bakwas” (nonsense), retain their original phonological essence, adding local color to the text. These adjustments demonstrate how Urdu borrowings introduce cultural and social nuances into English, enriching the language with markers of local respect and identity.

2. Structural Patterns Reflecting Urdu Syntactic Influence

Imtiaz’s use of syntactic borrowing is evident in her variations of Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) structures, which reflect the influence of Urdu syntax on her English prose. Her deictic choices, use of standard and colloquial Urdu, incorporation of Persian and Urdu numeric and aromatic words, as well as verb-subject-object arrangements, reveal the impact of Urdu grammar. For instance, English phrases such as “Get to know Biodata” or “Having done some Dholkis” showcase how Urdu syntax subtly interferes, creating a bilingual rhythm that feels basic or informal in certain utterances. These structures demonstrate how Imtiaz closely emulates the bilingual patterns of her characters’ sentences.

The descriptive embellishment in Imtiaz’s novel draws heavily from Urdu’s stylistic ornamentation, adding rhythm and vividness to Pakistani English. Phrases like “the wretched of the earth” echo Urdu’s *zarb-tars* narrative style, enriching the descriptions with local eloquence and a poetic touch. This ornamentation intensifies the language, adding musicality and heightening emotional depth, creating a literary texture unique to Pakistani culture.

A stylistic phenomenon borrowed from Urdu is the use of reduplication, which Imtiaz adapts into English for emphasis. Similar to how Urdu intensifies adjectives by repetition, Imtiaz employs repeated or half-reduplicated phrases, as in, “I’m so hangry, hangry right now!” This technique not only conveys emphasis but also captures the rhythmic intensity characteristic of Urdu expression.

Imtiaz also integrates indirect translations, which replicate Urdu thought patterns and enrich her prose with bi-cultural authenticity. For example, the phrase “What do you think would’ve happened, na?” incorporates “na” as a confirmation tag, directly mimicking Urdu’s compulsory tag-end structure. These subtle yet effective translations allow Imtiaz to preserve the essence of Urdu while writing in English, reflecting the genuine bilingual and bi-cultural communication of her characters.

3. Exploration of Cultural Implications and the Semantic Nuances

In *Karachi, You’re Killing Me!*, cultural connotations are conveyed through the use of pronouns such as “bhai” (brother), “baji” (elder sister), and “bibi” (miss), which illustrate power dynamics and familial relationships in Urdu-speaking social groups. These terms inform readers and researchers about the culturally appropriate modes of address within the Urdu-speaking population. Imtiaz enhances this cultural tapestry with references such as “bootlegger” (denoting sellers of illegal alcohol in a country where its sale is frowned upon), “ORS” (Oral Re-hydration Solution, a common regional remedy),

and “biryani” (a popular delicacy). Terms like “Shabashi” (a term of approval) are left untranslated, preserving their cultural essence. By incorporating these phrases, Imtiaz gives Karachi a distinct cultural identity and provides a vivid snapshot of the colloquialisms of its townspeople.

Expressions reflecting Urdu norms in an English context are seamlessly interwoven into the dialogues, highlighting the bilingual nature of Karachi’s conversational English. For example, in the sentence, “Uff, Ammi, are these tears of joy?” the Urdu expletive “uff” and the term “Ammi” (mother) are naturally embedded, showcasing how easily Urdu expressions fit into English. This fluid blending of languages underscores the observable influence of Urdu on the English spoken in Karachi, adding depth and authenticity to the narrative.

4. Elements of Code-Switching

Imtiaz’s writing often depicts a Karachi-based bilingual speaker’s cultural cognition through phrase-level code-switching, specifically intra-sentential code-switching, where both English and Urdu coexist within the same sentence. This switching between phrases mirrors the real linguistic behavior commonly heard in Pakistan. For instance, in “Chalo, I’ll see you tomorrow,” the Urdu word “Chalo” (let’s go) is embedded seamlessly into an English sentence. Such arrangements reflect how bilingual speakers naturally shift between languages, often starting in one and transitioning to the other within the same conversational flow.

The interplay between identity and social context is expressed through inter-sentential code-switching, where characters switch languages between sentences, often reflecting emotion or emphasis. For example, in “Let’s just take another route,” frustration is heightened when the driver responds in Urdu: “‘Kya yaar, tum bhi na...’” (What, you too...). Similarly, in “That was so awkward. ‘What was that?’” the initial English sentence conveys the overall sentiment, while the following Urdu interjection amplifies the emotion. By employing this form of code-switching, Imtiaz captures the bilingual reality of Karachi, where each language carries distinct social and emotional connotations.

Tag-switching is another feature of Imtiaz’s prose, where Urdu words or phrases are appended to English sentences, adding sentiment or cultural resonance. For example, “What the hell are you doing, bhai?” incorporates the Urdu word “bhai” (brother), which softens the aggression with a note of brotherly familiarity. This alternating use of Urdu and English allows Imtiaz to portray the bi-cultural conversations of Karachi’s people, where Urdu phrases interject to emphasize, clarify, or personalize English statements.

5. Pragmatic Functionalism

In *Karachi, You’re Killing Me!*, Imtiaz uses pragmatic markers in Urdu not to semantically define the characters or their relationship to the world but to performatively emphasize culturally acknowledged feelings. For example, the use of markers like “uff” allows sub-characters to express emotions that English alone cannot adequately convey. By incorporating such markers, Imtiaz enables her characters to project authenticity and honesty, capturing cultural nuances that are intrinsic to the Karachi milieu.

The contextual influence of Karachi’s social and cultural environment is evident in the retention of terms such as “Aunty,” “burqa babes,” and “shabashi.” These phrases inform readers of the extent to which local culture penetrates everyday discourse, helping Imtiaz depict Karachi’s linguistic diversity in vivid detail. The matrix language frame (MLF) model in the novel illustrates how Urdu, as the embedded language (EL), shapes Pakistani English (PakE) through lexical, syntactic, and morphological intersections. Code-switching frequently involves Urdu vocabulary integrated into English grammatical structures, reflecting the multilingual and multicultural reality of

Pakistan. These lexical borrowings, including colloquial and culturally specific phrases, not only provide realistic dialogue models but also infuse the text with cultural and emotional depth, foregrounding the local flavor of PakE.

In terms of the syntactic level, the interference of Urdu was observed in structures which do not correspond to the patterns of SE: verb-object order, subject-verb agreement, sentence-final particles. These syntactic variations matched with the observations made in the prior literature in identifying Urdu-influenced features in PakE (Talaat, 2002; Masood, 2020). The use of proverbs and idioms in Urdu used in the mix with English to complete the context of the sentence proved the obliterate versatility of the users and the everyday nature of the existence of PakE. The result implies that new norms of PakE are in the range of code-switching that is rule-governed as per the predictions of the MLF model.

The integration of Urdu not only serves as a linguistic tool but also as a marker of identity, which aligns with the sociocultural framework of code-switching in PakE (Baumgardner, 1993; Rasul, 2009). This evaluation contributes to the understanding of PakE as a distinct range with its very own syntactic, lexical, and pragmatic characteristics, maintaining its position as an independent English range fashioned through the multilingual setting of Pakistan.

Limitations

This study has certain limitations:

- One of the main limitations of the study is its reliance on a singular novel, *Karachi, You're Killing Me!*. This limited scope restricts the analysis from capturing the entire spectrum of Pakistani English (PakE) across different registers or spoken language varieties. While the novel provides valuable insights, it does not account for the diversity of PakE found in other texts or conversational contexts.
- The study's qualitative methodology allows for a detailed examination of a specific dataset, enabling nuanced analysis of linguistic features within the novel. However, this approach sacrifices the ability to detect quantitative trends, such as the frequency of code-switching or the intensity of loanword usage, which might be revealed through a broader corpus analysis. This limitation underscores the trade-off between depth and breadth in linguistic research.
- Additionally, the study's focus on urban colloquial PakE raises the possibility that other regional or dialectal variations of PakE may differ significantly from the findings presented. The linguistic characteristics identified in the urban context of Karachi might not fully represent the diversity of PakE in rural areas or among speakers of different sociolects and dialects.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on those findings, future studies should consider the subsequent:

- Expanded textual analysis could enrich the understanding of PakE by broadening the scope to include multiple genres of Pakistani literature as well as spoken registers. By analyzing informal speech, online interactions, and other media, researchers could capture a wider array of linguistic patterns, offering a more holistic perspective on how PakE operates across different contexts.
- Through corpus-based studies, researchers could quantify the distribution of code-switching across various interaction patterns, accounting for differences in age groups and regional styles. By assigning quantitative values to structural and lexical features, such studies could enhance the appreciation of PakE's consistency and variability, creating a clearer picture of its linguistic identity.

- Integrating PakE into educational materials could positively influence the linguistic consciousness and identity of students. Educational institutions in Pakistan might adopt elements of PakE into English learning materials, fostering a sense of pride and ownership, particularly for the educated urban working and studying class. This inclusion could encourage students to embrace their unique linguistic heritage as part of their English language proficiency.
- Future sociolinguistic research might explore how social factors such as gender, socioeconomic status (SES), and regionality shape one's linguistic repertoire and code-switching practices. Such research could provide deeper insights into the social dynamics of PakE, highlighting the interplay between language and identity in Pakistani society.

Conclusion

The establishing of Pakistani English (PakE) has been analyzed in the study with the use of the MLF model, concentrating on Urdu as the first language. The research studied elements of “Karachi, You’re Killing Me!” by Saba Imtiaz to establish that the structure and lexis of PakE borrowed from Urdu, which illustrates that Urdu elements integrated dynamically into the English matrix. It has been established that the PakE variety is not a dilution of the British or American English clones but a distinct form of language that is open to change, and the changes identify a unique sociocultural aspect of Pakistan.

In conclusion, the fact that the development of PakE stems from Urdu shows a complex linguistic construct that connects English and Urdu languages and corroborates the fact PakE exists as a type of English language. The findings bring out PakE as that which can function effectively in communication and portray elements of Pakistani identity that are augmented by the rich sociocultural context of its multilingual environment.

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