

## **The Postgraduate Students and their Teachers' Perceptions of the Use of Pakistani English (PakE) in Pakistani Universities**

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The paper discusses that Pakistani English (PakE) is a unique variety of English because it diverges from the native varieties of inner circle in its many linguistic features like syntax, morphology, lexis, phonology, and pragmatics. The findings from quantitative and qualitative data from two large scale Pakistani universities explore university teachers and students' perceptions of Pakistani English and its development in Pakistan. The paper examines postgraduate students' language problems, such as, pronunciation and spellings etc. which they undergo as outcomes of World Englishes. It also investigates their views towards the issue of addressing Pakistani English in language policy so that suitable remedial measures can be taken for its use in academia and recognition at an international scenario.

**Key words:** *Pakistani English (PakE), world Englishes, language learning difficulties, development of Pake, language policy*

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### **Introduction**

The notion of World Englishes is clearly demonstrated by the model of three concentric circles (Kachru, 2011) and Kirkpatrick's developmental cycles of new varieties of English (2007). English is not a single language anymore but a packet of inter-related tongues, means that notions of having standardised norms of grammar and vocabulary, should be given up in favour of practices that take real account of the communication needs of all the people with the vast range of multilingual backgrounds now using English in the global context (Jenkins, 2007). The previous studies (Baumgardner, 1993; Mahboob, 2004) describe the eventual transformation of

English in India which gave rise to South Asian English (SAsE). Pakistani English is a variety of English used in Pakistan and is loaded with distinctive innovations (Sidwa, 1993; Mahboob, 2009; Rahman, 2011). The main purpose of the study is to inform the policy makers that most of the Pakistanis use Pakistani English (PakE) not British Standard English (BrSE) or American English (AmE). Thus this paper, in an extension of previous research, has worked on postgraduate students and their teachers' perceptions of Pakistani English used in universities so that it can be accepted and developed for use in assessment and curriculum (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Stages of Pakistani English (PakE)

### Research Question

What are postgraduate students and their teachers' perceptions of the use of Pakistani English in universities?

### Review of Literature

This part of the paper explains the notion of World Englishes that there is not just one English in the world but a plethora of World Englishes (WE). This reflection leads to discussion on the development of English in South Asia and how through gradual transformation Pakistani English (PakE) has emerged as a variety of English.

### World Englishes (WE)

The native speakers of English accept that they 'have lost the exclusive prerogative to control its standardisation' (Kachru, 1988, 1991, 1992) as English is acknowledged as an international language. The population of non-native English speakers is considerably larger than its native speakers (Graddol, 1997). Jenkins (2003; 2007) believes that World Englishes are systematic in their own right, and they are institutionalised in communities that have restructured the language incorporating English-using into their identities.

### South Asian English (SAsE)

The British had set their foot in India in the 17<sup>th</sup> century but had to struggle for power till the middle of nineteenth century (Ali, 1993, p.5). The strategy British government adopted to gain

supremacy was through teaching English language to Indians. They apparently considered it their 'moral duty' to convert local people to 'good, bad or indifferent brown Englishmen' by means of English language (Ali, 1993, p.9). English in British India flourished because of its close alliance with economic and social progress. English was learned either through formal schooling or by direct contact with native English speakers. The learners mainly received non-native input in South Asia because most of the English teachers were Indians. The contact with the native varieties of English in India was further reduced after independence in 1947. These aspects lead to evolution, nativisation and institutionalization of South Asian English (SAsE) as a native variety. Therefore, like British era, English language after independence in 1947 kept on playing its authorised role into the socio-political structures of the country (Mahboob, 2004). Pakistani English is a member of the linguistic sub-family of South Asian English which also includes Bangladeshi, Indian, Nepali and Sri Lankan English (Kachru, 1982).

### Pakistani English (PakE)

The work on South Asian Englishes suggests that there is a need to differentiate these varieties from each other. Pakistani English is a non-native variety of English which uses all words available in Standard British English in a relational pattern (Taalat, 2002, p.237). It is heterogeneous because of the socio-economic, educational

background, and first languages spoken by Pakistanis (Baumgardner, 1993; Mahboob, 2004). Pakistani English is one of the less well-researched varieties of English and has its roots laid deep in pre-partition British India (Mahboob and Ahmar, 2004). According to Baumgardner (1993, p. xvi), the idea of Pakistani English as a distinct variety was first mooted in the early writings of Indian linguist Braj B. Kachru, and in later work Kachru (1982, p.362, 1983, p.153, 1983, p.332-7) cites examples of Pakistani English as part of his argument for a South Asian English. Chiefly, existing studies of PakE on lexis, syntax, phonology and morphology focus on its features vis-à-vis Standard British (StBrE) or American English (AmE) rather than investigating the grammar of PakE (Mahboob, 2004).

Similarly, Baumgardner's (1987, 1988, 1993, 1998) discussion of PakE is based on a comparison of PakE with exonormative models of English. His discussion of the acceptability of various syntactic, lexical and morphological innovations in PakE is the only large-scale study of its kind. But the scope of his study did not extend to the investigation of sociolinguistic variation in PakE. Mahboob (2004) presents an overview of PakE's syntax, morphology, lexis and phonology. Rahman's work contributed to corpus planning in Pakistan (Mansoor, 2004). It is important to note that Pakistanis are using three varieties of English which are acrolect (spoken by elite class), mesolect (used by middle class) and basilect (market English used by uneducated class) (Mansoor, 2002). In Pakistan, English and Urdu are used 'simultaneously or alternatively through code switching and code mixing which have become the norms' (Taalat, 2002, p.14).

English in Pakistan interacts with regional languages and is localised in pronunciation, lexicon and syntax (Rahman, 2011). Kachru (1983, p.38) believes that influence of the local languages also leads to hybridisation whereby a local word and an English word combine to form a word or expression. Baumgardner (1993, p.42) further asserts Pakistani English has borrowed freely from the indigenous domains of food, clothing, government administration, politics, education, art and music. He believes that in order to comprehend PakE completely, one must be familiar with Urdu words

e.g., '*atta*' (flour), '*maund*' (a unit of measurement), to cite only a few words which occur frequently.

Kirkpatrick (2007, p.26) views that language varieties reflect the cultures of their speakers which is another cause of difference between varieties. Mahboob (2009, p.175) discusses that English far being a colonising language reflects Islamic values and embodies South Asian sensitivities. He asserts that the relationship between PakE and Islamic and cultural values can be examined through the content and linguistic analyses of the topics on Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), Islam and Hajj in textbooks printed in English. Some common examples of lexical and semantic features of PakE include greetings, e.g. '*Assalam- o -Alaikum*', and words of praise and appreciation, e.g. '*Maasha-Allah*' and '*Alhumd-o-Lillah*' (Mahboob, 2009, p. 182). Sidwa (1993, p.214) also explains that Pakistani English is used by writers 'to add originality and freshness to the writing'. She expresses her view that certain Pakistani words have a tonal quality such as '*badmash*', '*hulla-goolla*', '*goonda*' and these words used in the proper context convey their meaning without recourse to translation.

Rahman (2011) also believes that English in Pakistan is evolving its own identity. This identity is projected and perpetuated by the powerful English-using elite in Pakistan as well as through the pervasive English mass media. It is also reinforced through instructional materials used in Pakistani schools, because Urdu borrowings as well as indigenous lexical and grammatical usages have found their way into locally-produced English textbooks.

## Study Methods

I decided to use the mixed method research which included both quantitative and qualitative methods because an investigation cannot entirely rely on observation. Distinctly, this research is exploratory and encompasses two case studies as I gathered the data from two large scale public sector universities located in Lahore, Pakistan. I constructed two questionnaires and focus group interviews for M.A Education (MAE) students and university staff of the Faculty of Education of selected universities which were Queen Victoria University (QVU) and Bulle Shah University (BSU).

The minor amendments were carried out in both the questionnaires after the pilot study. Questionnaire 1 was designed for M.A Education students. The questions were constructed to measure postgraduate students' perceptions of Pakistani English in universities. Questionnaire 2 was constructed for university teachers teaching M.A Education students. Questionnaire 2 also dealt with university teachers' perceptions of Pakistani English. Two focus group interviews were also constructed; one for the M.A Education students and the other for university teachers from each university. As discussed above, the questionnaires were structured in relation to use of Pakistani English in universities. The focus group interview questions reflected deeply on issues related to Pakistani English. The procedure was that when a trusting relationship was established with the participants, they were willing to provide necessary information about the research subject. The sample size for postgraduate students and university teachers was 451 and 35, respectively. In addition, four focus group interviews of MA Education students and university staff from both universities were recorded. Each focus group interview comprised of six participants. The data of both questionnaires were entered into SPSS Version 19. For analysis, descriptive statistics were used to obtain frequencies for teachers' questionnaires and percentages in whole numbers for postgraduate students' data. The focus group interviews were transcribed. The quantitative and qualitative findings of both universities were compared.

## Findings

**Table 1**

*Views about which English?*

Items	Strongly disagree %		Disagree %		Strongly Agree %		Agree %		Mean	
	QV	BS	QV	BS	QV	BS	QV	BS	QV	BS
	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U
Preference for PakE	3	10	10	9	39	42	45	33	4	4
Interest in British English	31	23	30	38	21	14	13	12	3	3
Influence of American English	27	26	35	35	23	19	10	9	3	3

This part of the paper includes detailed analysis of quantitative and qualitative data. The questionnaires and interviews' findings were synthesised and interpreted. The findings discovered perceptions about different varieties of English in Pakistani Universities, Pakistani English (PakE) as a variety of English, role of universities to develop PakE, addressing the issue of World Englishes in national language policy and challenges facing the development of Pakistani English.

## Views about different varieties of English in Pakistani Universities

The questionnaires and focus group interviews explored participants' feelings and opinions about Pakistani English (PakE) and the extent to which they see it as a new variety of English because it offers an expedient solution to assist students to overcome their hesitation to use English without flinching in the classroom. The language policy document does not include reference to the notion of World Englishes. The students are perplexed about 'which English' is more appropriate for academic writing and speech. Pakistanis are exposed to various varieties of English, such as British English, American English etc. The perceptions of which varieties of English are used in the universities signify that QV's 78% and BS's 67% postgraduate students report that there are variations in the Englishes that are used in Pakistani universities: see Table 1.

Pakistani English. Approximately 70% students of both universities disagree that their teachers speak American or British English: see Table 2.

It is interesting to note that 89% QV students and 82% BS students report that their teachers speak

**Table 2**

*Perceptions of World Englishes (WE) in universities*

Items	Strongly disagree %		Disagree %		Strongly Agree %		Agree %		Mean	
	QV	BS	QV	BS	QV	BS	QV	BS	QV	BS
	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U
Varieties of English in universities	4	8	12	10	44	40	34	27	4	4
Teachers speak Pakistani English	2	4	8	7	49	43	40	39	4	4
Teachers speak American English	33	35	44	28	9	11	10	4	2	2
Teachers speak British English	39	33	40	26	10	14	6	4	2	2

**Perceptions about language problems arising from varieties of English**

It is seen that QVU's 78 % and BSU's 74% MAE students are puzzled by different spellings of

the same words while 82% and 72% M.A Education students of both universities are baffled by deviating pronunciation of the same words: see Table.3.

**Table 3**

*Views about postgraduate students' language problems*

Items	Strongly disagree %		Disagree %		Strongly agree %		Agree %		Mean	
	QVU	BSU	QV	BS	QV	BSU	QV	BS	QV	BS
	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U	U
Confusion arising from different spellings of same words	5	10	13	9	45	44	33	30	4	4
Different types of pronunciation	4	8	11	12	45	42	37	30	4	4

The evidence from focus group discussions also sheds light on language problems caused by variation, 'students are confused of different spellings and pronunciation of same words' (QVS3). The respondent BSS1 explains, 'there are three

varieties of English which are spoken in Pakistan. These are American, British, and Pakistani English'. QVS1 says, 'English is not Pakistanis' mother tongue, they speak English with their own dialects and accents'. BSS1 says, 'we find varieties of

English difficult because our understanding is weak'. BSS5 talks about the problems as, 'varieties create problems in reading, writing, vocabulary and pronunciation. We can't understand which one is the best variety'. Another participant BSS4 gives vent to his feelings, 'we are confused because we read mostly British books but T.V channels are mostly American in Pakistan'. BSS6 claims that M.A students hesitate to respond in English in classroom because of their accents and pronunciation 'we hesitate to communicate with others because of our poor pronunciation'. It can be interpreted that MA Education students' language problems, such as spellings and pronunciation occur because they are not familiar in the variation in varieties of English.

**Perceptions about Pakistani English (PakE) as a variety of English**

The evidence demonstrates participants' beliefs about their preference and acceptance of Pakistani English (PakE). Significantly, it is seen that 13 QV teachers and the same population of University BS report that Pakistanis accept Pakistani English (PakE) as the variety of English: see Table 4.

**Table 4**

Items	Views about Pakistani English (PakE)									
	Strongly disagree %		Disagree %		Agree %		Strongly agree %		Mean	
	QV U	BS U	QV U	BS U	QV U	BS U	QV U	BS U	QV U	BSU
PakE a variety of English	2	1	-	2	8	11	5	2	4	4
Varieties create language problems	2	-	1	5	8	11	3	2	4	4
Universities to tackle with this issue	2	1	3	3	4	6	8	8	4	4
Universities to develop PakE	2	2	2	3	6	10	7	3	4	4
Varieties of English and language policy	2	1	1	2	10	10	3	4	4	4

Interestingly, 84% and 75% MA Education students of universities QV and BS express their preference for Pakistani English (see Table 1). Respondent QVT3 states, 'English is not our language we are trying to communicate in this language as best as we can'. Pakistanis are not native speakers of British and American Englishes, but are using Pakistani English (PakE) as an informant QVS3 says, 'Pakistani English is a language of Pakistan.' Participant BSS1 states, 'we are using Pakistani English. Some examples are 'rail gari', 'shopper' etc'. Informant BST1 remarks:

*'We are not primary users of British and American Englishes.....we use our own English that is*

*Pakistani...Pakistani English is more acceptable than British or American English. In order to enhance learning, we should use Pakistani English'.*

Interestingly, participants feel that they are users of Pakistani English which is different from other World Englishes and they

identify Pakistani English as one of the languages of Pakistan along with the national language and the regional languages. Participant BST6 comments, 'both spoken and written modes of Pakistani English are different from native varieties'. The interviewee BST1 says, 'Pakistani English is accepted because articles written by Pakistani

authors are accepted by the Pakistani community'. BST2 communicates his opinion as 'we have English newspapers and we can say that Pakistani English is different'. As pointed out previously and confirmed by respondent QVT3 below Pakistani English has borrowed many words from Urdu. The word construction is influenced by Urdu language; obsolete words which no longer exist in British Standard English (BrSE) are used and the sentence structure varies from BrSE.

*'Pakistani English can be different regarding speaking skill for instance we say 'shopper' instead of shopping bag. We have modified English but it's not one way traffic, English has modified Urdu too. In Urdu language, many words are borrowed from English. Similarly, we construct words in Urdu that influence our way of speaking English. We are using obsolete words but not many of them. We are confused about American and British spellings. Usually, we accept both of them'.*

Teacher BST3 agrees, 'Pakistani English for use in assessment and instruction is acceptable'. Respondent QVS6 says, 'Pakistani English is being used for teaching in schools and universities. It is easy for Pakistani students'. There are English newspapers, journals, books, and magazines in Pakistani English so it can be claimed that PakE can be used for instruction and assessment in universities to some or even a significant extent.

#### **Views as to whether there is role for universities to develop Pakistani English (PakE)**

Building on this practice, 13 QV teachers and 13 BS teachers acknowledge that universities can play a significant role to develop PakE. 12 QV teachers and 14 BS teachers report that universities should take measures to tackle the problem of issue of varieties of English (see Table 3). Informant QVT4 believes that like other World Englishes Pakistani English can thrive as well, 'there is no harm if we develop our own English. World Englishes like Srilankan English, Indian English etc. are accepted by America and Britain'. Another respondent suggests, 'it should be used in curricula

and syllabi' (QVS6). But respondent BSS3 presents a conflicting view 'I think for assessment we need Standard English' raises an important question of Standard Englishes and the issue of the non-native varieties of English which are assumed to be legitimate with their own norms in some contexts.

#### **Addressing the issue of World Englishes in language policies in Universities**

It is evidently noted that 13 teachers of QVU and 14 teachers of BSU report that the issue of World Englishes should be addressed in language policies so that appropriate steps can be taken to develop Pakistani English (see Table 3). Similarly, focus group interviews also propound that the concept of PakE must be discussed in language policies. Respondent BSS2 asserts, 'the policy makers and politicians should be convinced of developing Pakistani English'. It is important to include the concept of PakE in teacher education and language policy so that awareness is raised and measures can be discussed for its expansion.

#### **Challenges facing the development of Pakistani English (PakE)**

Some responses show that Pakistani English is a new concept and people will take time to accommodate it. Pakistanis acknowledge that British and American Englishes are standard Englishes and Pakistani English is significantly of less value at an international level. The respondent BST3 comments:

*'Pakistanis think that British and American Englishes are standard Englishes and best in the world. They fear that Pakistani English is of no value at an International level/ scenario'.*

Interestingly, PakE has also varieties of English such as Punjabi English, Sindhi English, and Seraiki English, as respondent BST4 says, 'the accent in Pakistan changes at every 20 miles,...even in Pakistan, we have varieties of English i.e. Punjabi English, Sindhi English, Seraiki English etc'.

However, a few constraints have been pointed out that might hinder the progress of PakE. Respondent BST4 reflects, 'the problem is that we lack funding and experts to develop Pakistani English'. BST5 ruminates:

*'People still believe that English is a colonial language and if we promote English, we try to promote colonialism. It's kind of neo-colonialism which is imposed by their agents. Secondly, we lack writers in Pakistani English. Thirdly, the major problem is its acceptance at a global level'.*

Regarding current changing scenario of the country, the language policy in Pakistan is confronted with some significant complexities. For example, English in Pakistan is still struggling to combat internal forces which associate English language with British imperialism. Thus, the perception of Pakistani English as one of the languages of Pakistan is juxtaposed by its connection with colonialism. Keeping in view the current political situation in Pakistan, participant BST6 believes:

*'Pakistani society is rapidly turning to Islamisation and fundamentalism that might act as a resistance to the development of Pakistani English. They might consider it a conspiracy against Muslims and Islam if we promote English in this society'.*

The rapid conversion to Islamisation might act as a resistance to the maturity of PakE. Its expansion might be presumed as a conspiracy against Muslims and Islam as English is still believed as a colonial language and its spreading out might be assumed as a kind of neo-colonialism.

### **Discussion of Findings**

It has previously been argued that World Englishes (WE) is one of the sources of language problems, such as, spellings and pronunciation. The language policy in Pakistan has not reflected over the movement of World Englishes. Regarding English, it does not affirm that along with uses, it also carries markers that identify the users or speakers of that language. The evidence indicates that the development of Pakistani English can also help out students to use English freely as their own language.

It is pointed out in discussion above that South Asian English (Indian English, Pakistani

English, Srilankan English, etc.) emerged because the output which people received was non-native due to scarce exposure to native varieties of English. Some non-native varieties are now considered legitimate and working in the direction of their own standards and norms. Pakistani English has also its notable features which are differentiated from the native varieties of inner circle. Hence, the perceptions indicate that not merely 'which language?' for teaching in universities is an issue for language policy; it should also take into consideration 'which English?' is appropriate to help students to overcome their language problems.

Significantly, many teachers of QVU and BSU report that Pakistanis accept Pakistani English (PakE) as a variety of English (see Table 3) and this finding is supplemented by positive response rate of MA students of both universities about their preference for Pakistani English (see Table 1) and an emphatic claim that Pakistani English is one of the languages of Pakistan. This belief is found to be closely knitted with the issue of multilingualism in Pakistan. Pakistanis are multilingual because besides using national and regional languages, they are using English. English, as perceived, is one of the languages of Pakistan. This contemplation is reinforced by the role of English as a lingua franca. Although, American and British Englishes have wide coverage in Pakistan, the evidence illustrates that most of the MA Education students decline having been influenced by them (see Table 1). This desire for interest in British and American Englishes can be connected to the point about their weak listening comprehension despite far-reaching coverage of native varieties in Pakistan through media, books, etc.

Further, the perceptions reveal that Pakistani English is distinctly differentiated from native varieties and has evolved out of many factors, such as, Pakistani students think in Urdu and then translate those sentences into English. Their reflective faculty operates into Urdu, therefore, the translation from Urdu into English has affected English in Pakistan. As a result of translation from the L1 into L2, 'different sentence structure' is adopted. Pakistanis are still making use of those words which are now considered 'obsolete' in British Standard English. Pakistanis are using

amalgamation of American and British Englishes, for example, spellings of both Englishes are accepted. These varietal variations naturally perplex students. They attempt to follow the rules of Standard British English, but as perceived, are using English unintentionally in the Pakistanised mode. Languages in Pakistan, primarily, English and Urdu are so much localised that it is implausible to disentangle one from the other. This phenomenon automatically finds its association with the notion of indigenisation.

Bringing together the above aspects of argument, it is assumed that in Pakistani education system 'Pakistani English as a medium of instruction and assessment' is being used because of abundant accessibility of English newspapers, journals, books, and magazines in Pakistani English, therefore, it can be used in 'curricula and syllabi'. However, it is apprehended, 'for assessment we need Standard English'. The way native speakers of English express themselves in written and spoken modes, Pakistanis are not able to do so, hence, in order to maintain standard in education system they need British and American models of English. The World Englishes movement has challenged such thinking and many non-native varieties are developing their own standards. Also, it is assumed that given the historical and linguistic processes involved in the evolution of Pakistani English, it is seen as one of the local languages of the country for having an official status and recognition in the language policies. As such, Pakistani English should not be judged in relation to inner circle Englishes.

According to findings, many teachers of both universities propose that universities can think of the way to deal with the issue of varieties of English through teacher education and that it should also be addressed in language policy so that Pakistani English can have recognition and expansion (see Table 4). However, it is perceived that the idea of the development of Pakistani English as one of the local languages of Pakistan is challenged for many reasons, such as, PakE in absence of good writers will have problem of recognition at the global level. The expansion of PakE needs financial and human resources. Pakistanis are under the delusion that English is a colonial language and not their own language. The

development might be alleged as an intrigue and misjudged as a type of neo-colonialism which can be easily aired by the current political state in the country. It is assumed that English is still resisted by religious parties in present day Pakistan. Finally, Pakistan has 'Punjabi English, Sindhi English, Seraiki English etc', that means, heterogeneity of Pakistani English might act as a hurdle in its extension.

### Conclusions and Implications

The research findings describe the postgraduate students' opinions about Pakistani English so that it can be used unflinchingly and enthusiastically in universities. The evidence supports the view that evolution of Pakistani English has occurred. The students think in Urdu, and then translate their thoughts in English; this strategy leads to the construction of distinctive syntax. Sometimes, due to inadequate vocabulary, they borrow words from Urdu to communicate meaning. Also, they are also using mixture of American and British Englishes. The participants express their preference for PakE and presume that PakE can be used for assessment and instruction in universities. The universities should proceed to undertake initiative for endorsing PakE in universities because it is one of the local languages and has made Pakistan a multilingual society.

Some recommendations are:

- The students have preference for Pakistani English so they can be motivated to use it with confidence for formal and informal uses in universities.
- The universities can support the development of Pakistani English (PakE) by utilising it in assessment and curriculum.

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