

DIACHRONIC LINGUISTIC VARIATION IN
PAKISTANI AND BRITISH PRESS
EDITORIALS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY
ACROSS BIBER'S TEXTUAL DIMENSIONS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores diachronic linguistic variations in Pakistani and British press editorials by applying Biber's 1988 multidimensional model of textual variation across five key dimensions. By comparing diachronic data from Pakistani press editorials (1947-2016) and British press editorials (1900-1993), the research highlights linguistic differences stemming from cross-cultural variation and readership demands. Utilizing quantitative and functional methodologies, the analysis reveals distinct linguistic characteristics in both registers, such as variations in informational production, narrative versus non-narrative trends, explicit versus situation-dependent discourse, overt versus covert persuasive expression, and impersonal versus non-impersonal style. The study underscores how Pakistani editorials exhibit unique features influenced by the non-native variety of English, while British editorials demonstrate evolving trends within their native linguistic context. This research also serves as a foundational step towards developing a comprehensive diachronic corpus of Pakistani English and offers insights into the broader linguistic evolution of newspaper editorials.

Introduction

The study of diachronic variations in languages around the world has been a well-established research area. Languages, for instance, Spanish and Portuguese have been the most extensively studied with an availability of large diachronic corpora ranging from 45 million words to one hundred million words. Further, in order to study the diachronic variations in English language and its comparison with diachronic corpora of other languages, the building of English diachronic corpora has received considerable attention during the recent years.

Some studies have also been conducted to analyze the differences between registers diachronically. Such diachronic research ranged from studying grammatical changes in newspaper editorials (e.g., Burt & Bauer, 1996) to exploring linguistic variation in newspaper editorials (e.g., Westin, 2002). Westin and Geisler (2002) conducted a multidimensional analysis of twentieth century British newspaper editorials. Laine and Watson (2014) further studied linguistic sexism in newspaper over the period of five decades. Hyland and Jiang (2016) explored variation of engagement features in academic texts from fifty years. Thus, various studies have been conducted on newspaper language around the world. In Pakistan, however there is hardly any study which focuses on Pakistani English over a period of time. Latif and Chaudhry (2016), for example, studied diachronic linguistic variation in press reportage of British newspapers with the special focus on sports category. There is another diachronic study on the impact of English language on Urdu in terms of borrowing English lexical items and structures (Zobina & Mehmood, 2013).

Hence, the evidence of the process of shaping and reshaping of English in Pakistan over a period of time is presently inconclusive. So, the present study not only describes how the language of editorials varies through different phases of time but also investigates how far the language of Pakistani editorials varies from that of British press editorials diachronically across Biber's 1988 textual dimensions.

This study compares the results of Westin's study with the results of diachronic Pakistani press editorials. Westin (2002) analysed the twentieth century British press editorials diachronically

dividing the time in three periods: Phase 1. 1900-1920, Phase 2. 1930-1950 and Phase 3. 1960-1993. Westin (2002) in his research made a corpus of editorials which were taken from *The Guardian*, *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph* and was named as CENE. The corpus comprised 864 editorials and a half million words. The current study divides Pakistani press editorials in three phases: Phase 1. 1947-1951, Phase 2. 1971-1975 and Phase 3: 2012- 2016 taken from *Dawn*, *The News*, *The Nation* and *Business Recorder*. The corpus comprised 1080 editorials of 496812 words.

Literature Review

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, philology or diachronic linguistics attained more prominence and it made use of comparative and historical approach to study variation of language (Campbell, 2013). Biber and Finegan (1988) took historical texts of eighteenth, nineteenth century and modern contemporary period in order to analyze the linguistic co-occurrence with respect to the basic dimensions of variation. Biber and Finegan (1989), moreover, used Multidimensional approach to draw the historical evolution of written genres of English considering the linguistic variation with respect to three dimensions. The study manifests the manner in which essays, letters and fiction have evolved over the span of the last four centuries.

It is also important to note that Biber and Finegan (1992) further tried to focus on the way five genres namely, personal letters, essay, fiction, and dialogue both in fiction and drama developed from seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth century and from the period known as modern. It is revealed from the study that there is no randomly featured evolution with respect to variation rather an underlying systematic pattern does exist which manifests that the transformation is moving to a great extent to oral linguistic characterization. Pattern does exist which manifests that the transformation is moving to a great extent to oral linguistic characterization.

In addition to language variation analysis which is comparative in nature, the variation with respect to different periods has also been made. Division of corpus into three different time spans which are from 1800-1830, 1850-1870, and 1970-1900 is made by Kyto and Rudanko (2000). For these three periods of time, he selected variety of genres which were drama, trials, letters, fiction, debates, science and history.

A few more studies were carried out in addition to the study of the specific genres, wherein reporting with respect to medical research is made the focus with particular emphasis on the changes. An examination of the causes responsible for the changes over the period of two hundred and fifty years in the rhetoric of reporting linked with medical research and the transformation in language was made by Atkinson (1992). For the sake of carrying on his work, he made analysis based on data taken from two types namely, the linguistic analysis in which the registral aspects were taken into consideration and rhetorical analysis which concentrated on broad genre attributes of the chosen articles. The text analysis system developed by Biber (1988) was used for the purpose of investigation of the samples which were taken from the time period between 1735 and 1985.

Multidimensional framework has further been used to study the variation of language with respect to gender. In a corpus of Nineteenth-Century English (CONCE), Geisler (2003) takes into consideration from this perspective the variation that exists in the letters of women and men which are of personal nature and shows the difference of variation found in both female and male writings. In order to observe the changes in language which are diachronic in nature, studies have been made of other languages in addition to English. Diachronic changes with respect to grammatical structures in Urdu and the frequency of English words has been the focus of a study done quite recently which is titled as Urdu in anglicized world: A corpus based study (Zobina & Mehmood, 2013). It is a corpus based study comprising 30,000 words wherein 15000 words are included which have been taken from magazines that are having their publication from 1995 to 1997. It is found out from the study based on corpus that a tendency is there in Urdu towards diachronic changes and it is manifestation of the fact that the absorption of English words into Urdu is on the increase as compared to a decade earlier and that there is a deliberation on the part of users in the usage of English words even when the proper Urdu correlates are available.

Mahmood (2009) conducted a corpus based analysis of Pakistani English. The study was based on two million words corpus, each taken from British, American and Pakistani English. This study brought into light the aspects which made this variety distinct from American and British varieties of English. It is apparent that newspaper language's diachronic study has not been able to attain attention to a great extent in Pakistan. Foreign linguists on the

other hand seem to be interested in media research such as Burt and Bauer etc. In their work *Watching English Change* (1996) a complete chapter is devoted to three grammatical features' diachronic study i.e., concord with collective nouns, relative clauses and adjectives' comparative and superlative marking and for the purpose the material was taken from the editorials which were published from 1900 to 1985 in *The Times*.

By making use of the analytic approach which is Multidimensional in nature the diachronic study of English newspapers' language of editorials was made. Westin and Geisler (2002) in their work on the editorials of the newspapers of twentieth century investigated diachronic change on the basis of Biber's (1988) Multidimensional framework. By taking five dimensions into consideration i.e. non-narrative versus narrative concerns, informational versus involved production, non-abstract versus abstract style, the extent of referential elaboration and argumentative versus persuasive focus, they made analysis of the editorials of British newspapers of twentieth century. In the light of textual dimensions, he made it clear through a study that was diachronic in nature that editorials of British newspapers became less narrative but more argumentative through twentieth century. The texts developed a style that was non-abstract and depended less on post modification which was complex in nature.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. To describe how the language of editorials varies through different phases of time
2. To investigate how far the language of Pakistani editorials varies from that of British press editorials diachronically across Biber's 1988 textual dimensions.

Methodology

The study mainly used quantitative approach, however, it also used functional approach as it interpreted the statistical analysis to determine the communicative function of press editorials. The methodological steps of data collection and analysis used for the present study were based on Biber's 1988 multifactorial/multidimensional approach to textual variations. The steps involved the selection of newspapers (as discussed above), collection of texts, sampling, conversion of data to computer readable form and compilation of corpus, tagging of the data using Biber's tagger,

computation of raw, normalized and standardized frequencies, identification of sets of co-occurring linguistic features through factor analysis, computation of dimension scores, and analysis of statistically significant difference among three phases. The results drawn from the diachronic data were comparable to Westin’s results as each corpus consisted of half million words and were divided into three phases. Biber’s Multidimensional model serves as theoretical framework for the present study. MD model introduced five textual dimensions consisting of 67 linguistic features (see appendix 1).

Analysis of Variation across Registers

This section contains a description of the five linguistic dimensions, including the quantitative and functional interpretation of Pakistani and British editorials. The comparison reveals linguistic variation across registers and highlights the trends in British and Pakistani press editorials over the years on each of the five linguistic dimensions introduced by Biber (1988).

Linguistic Variation on D1

Dimension one is labelled as ‘Involved vs. Informational production’. Fig.1 given below compared Pakistani and British press editorials diachronically across D1. The comparison reveals that Pakistani and British registers are informational in nature through all the selected periods of twentieth century.

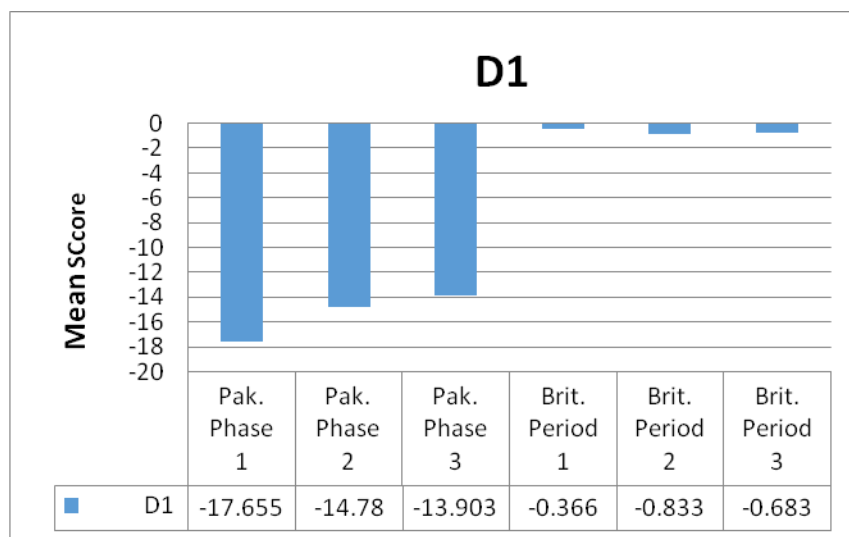


Fig.1 Comparison of diachronic Pakistani and diachronic British press editorials on D1

It is a notable fact that on the first phase of British and Pakistani press editorials, high discourse production has been observed but in British the informational trend has been found on the lowest mean value in phase 1 and there is a steady increase in the next 2 phases in the production of informational discourse, thereby, highlighting a certain pattern in British press editorials over the years taking into account the readership demands and respective culture. On the contrary, phase 1 has shown the highest informational discourse production and there is a steady decline in the informational discourse over the years. The decreasing trend reflects readership demands and cross-cultural variation factors which results in the gradual decline in the discourse production on D1. The differences among the phases in periods of time between Pakistani and British press editorials highlight the fact that there exist linguistic differences between both the registers due to cross-cultural variation factors and readership demands of the respective cultures. The differences also endorse the earlier claims that language of Pakistani press editorials has its unique linguistic characteristics and independent existence. Moreover, Westin in his study of 2002 mentioned the fact that both involved as well as informational linguistic features found in British English editorials and the presence of contractions, hedges, expressions of permissions, possibility and ability have been found in British English fiction as well. Similarly, the features of informational discourse also show marked presence of nouns, adjectives, prepositions marking noun phrase complexity, word length and type token ratio along with varied vocabulary and precise lexical choice in British press editorials. On the other hand, Pakistani press editorials have consistently shown immense presence of informational linguistic features throughout the three phases of Pakistani press editorials over the years. The following example highlights dense presence of informational linguistic features in Pakistani press editorials including immense presence of nouns, adjectives, prepositions marking noun phrase complexity, word length and type token ratio. Nouns and attributive adjectives like *Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's statement, similar subject, transfer of population, Muslim residents, authoritative announcement of the India Government's future policy* highlights informational discourse of Pakistani press editorials:

We commented the other day on Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's statement at a Press conference in Delhi on October, 12. This statement, which was more satisfactory than his previous statements on the similar subject declared that the transfer of population if extended in the rest of

India would become a terrific problem and that “there was no question at any time of any Muslim residents of U.P. being send away unless they expressly desired to go away”. That statement, if it was an authoritative announcement of the India Government’s future policy in respect of the Muslims of U.P. and other provinces, should have been followed up by maximum efforts of the Central and Provincial Governments and their supporters, namely, the leaders of the Congress part, to turn the tide against those who have been working to defend both the means and ends of that policy. (ED,PH.1,DN)

Linguistic Variation on D2

Dimension two is labelled as ‘Narrative vs. Non-narrative concerns’ by Biber (1988). Fig. 2, given below, compares Pakistani and British press editorial registers diachronically and investigates the linguistic differences between periodized data of the both register across D2. The comparison reveals differences between both the registers. As far as British press editorial register is concerned, the first two phases which mean up to 1960, British press editorials produce narrative discourse production in British print media which is in sharp difference with Pakistani press editorials where a steady non-narrative discourse production has been found all over the phases in the periodized data of Pakistani press editorials and these differences account

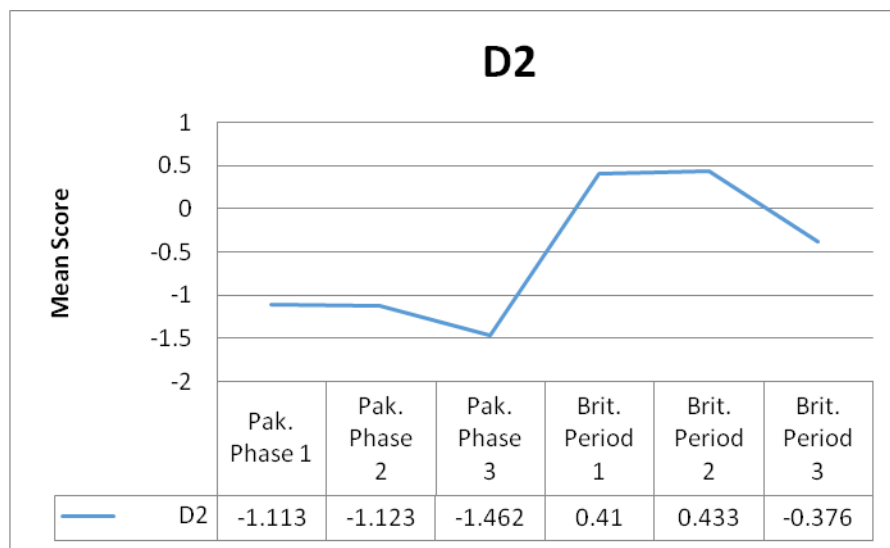


Fig.2 Comparison of diachronic Pakistani and diachronic British press editorials on D2

for cross cultural variation factors between both the registers. Pakistani press editorials appear to produce non-narrative discourse with a steady increase; whereas, on the contrary, the first two phases of British press editorials highlight narrative trend and the

third phase shows non-narrative trend with slight value. The bold words in the following example taken from Westin (2002) highlight low narrative trend of press editorials in British print media:

His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales has had the most providential escape from assassination. As the train in which he and the Princess were leaving Brussels yesterday evening on their journey to Copenhagen was starting, a miscreant who by some unaccountable mischance had been allowed access to the platform stepped upon the foot board of the carriage and *fired* two shots at the Prince at point-blank range. Mercifully the nerve of these ruffians does not always correspond with their wickedness, and, impossible as it seems in the circumstances, both shots missed their intended victim. (DTE. Westin, 2002)

Example given above demonstrates narrative trend in British press editorials including features of past tense verbs, perfect aspect verbs, public verbs and third person pronouns indicate the narrative discourse in British press editorials. Words like *has had, he, were leaving, their journey, was starting, had been allowed, stepped, missed their* indicate narrative discourse in British press editorials. On the contrary, Pakistani press editorials show more tendency towards producing narrative trend in the early phases, however, over the years, this tendency shifts towards producing more non-narrative trend, particularly, in last phase. The following example from Pakistani press editorials, phase 1, OP category, highlights high narrative discourse production in Pakistani press editorials. The example highlights narrative discourse production in the language of Pakistani press editorials in the beginning. The example includes past tense verbs, third person pronouns and perfect aspect verbs: *Captain Hamiko who visited, recorded, he did not find, they considered themselves, who visited India, [t]hey were threatened*. They indicate the presence of narrative discourse in Pakistani press editorials. The results show that the high narrative trend in Pakistani press editorials has changed into non-narrative trend over the years:

Captain Hamiko who visited in the time of Aurangzeb recorded that the general attitude of the Musalmans in life was of righteousness, piety and honesty towards fellow beings and he did not find any other people in the world so correct in the morals. Similar remarks have been made by Sebastian Marique who visited India in the time of Shahjahan. Then Musalmans do not fear anyone except God. They considered themselves responsible to God and God alone or everything they did. Relationship and self-interest were seldom any consideration. They were threatened with death they delivered any judgement against his brother. The Judge decided the case against the Cuzco, his own brother, and met his instantaneous death, the danger of when he had fully realised the

time of signing the judgement. Like the Sillies or the debased sections of Illinois of North India, they never killed woe men or children: nor they attacked patients in hospitals. The Musalmans never disarmed their opponents. (OP,PH.1.DN)

Linguistic Variation on D3

Biber (1988) named dimension three as ‘Explicit vs. Situation Dependent Discourse’. The comparison, given below in Fig.3, highlights the fact that there exist linguistic differences between Pakistani and British press editorials on D3. It is evident from the comparison that Pakistani press editorials remain explicit in nature throughout the phases. However, on the contrary, the first two phases of British press editorials with negative mean values indicate the fact that the discourse in British press editorials is largely situation-dependent in nature. The difference in discourse reflects cross cultural variation between Pakistani and British press editorials. Pakistani press editorials, being the register of a non-native variety, exhibit explicit discourse production in Pakistani print media. On the contrary, British press editorials produce situation-dependent discourse in the first two phases of periodized data. Then, a slight positive mean value has been observed in British press editorials in third period. So, the third phase shows a tendency towards the explicit nature of discourse.

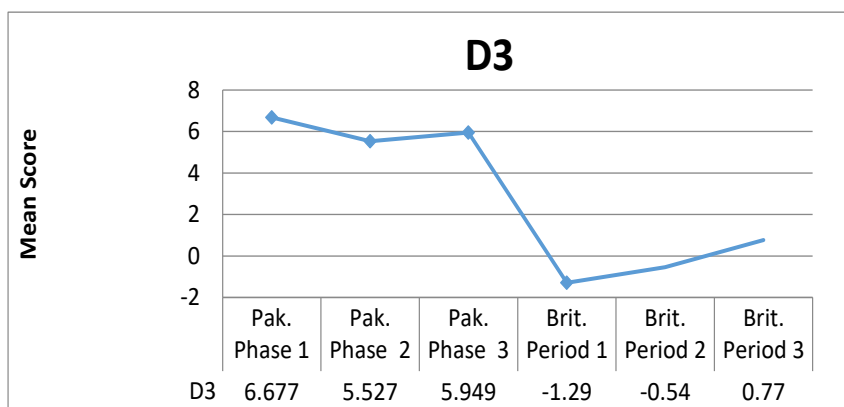


Fig.3 Comparison of diachronic Pakistani and diachronic British press editorials on D3

The comparison shows that British press editorials are situation-dependent in nature, whereas, Pakistani press editorials show explicit discourse production. These significant statistical linguistic differences reveal cross-cultural variation factors between both the registers. The bold words in the following example from Westin’s 2002 study indicate low explicit discourse in British press editorials:

Games establish a commonwealth among those who participate in them, a commonwealth so far ideal in its character that it affords an open career to ability, and leads almost inevitably to the success of merit; a success which occasions no heartburning, and is worn as their acknowledged due by those upon whom it falls. A passage through the outer suburbs of London on any fine half-holiday will show the eagerness with which cricket and other games are practiced wherever opportunity is afforded for them. (TI10E15, Westin 2002)

The example, given above, includes explicit linguistic features in British print editorials. British press editorials exhibit some presence of relative constructions (*wh*-pronouns and pied piping constructions, that is, a relative pronoun preceded by a preposition) at the positive end of the dimension. Moreover, as Biber (1988) mentions, relative constructions are used for noun phrase elaboration and integration of information, while time and place adverbials are used for spatial and temporal reference to the actual physical setting of the discourse. Thus, the example given above, mentions the explicit linguistic features in British press editorials. However, the language of Pakistani press editorials remains highly explicit in nature throughout the selected phases.

The foreign defence ministers of 21 Arab League countries met in Cairo and one important decision they reached was for the establishment of a large- scale Arab arms industry. The initial report mentions Cairo as its location, the move deserves to be lauded in the light of the state of unrest in which the Middle East has to subsist because of the super power policies, instigations and encouragement of the one and the other, which thus keeps the cauldron boiling. The diverse axis with their varying slants mainly survives because of the Arab need to depend on the outside sources for adequate and timely supplies of arms. Egypt's recent experience is of Russia most supplying its requirements for as long as six months which forced Egypt to turn to other sources of supply, has not been in vain. (ED.PH.2.BR)

Example given above is filled with explicit linguistic features i.e., noun nominalizations and especially *wh*-relative clauses providing more elaborated information to the audience. Words like *they reached was*, *unrest*, *which the Middle East*, *instigations and encouragement*, *which forced* demonstrate the explicit discourse in the language of Pakistani press editorials.

Linguistic Variation on D4

Dimension four is labelled as 'Overt Expression of Persuasion'. Fig.4 compares Pakistani and British press editorials over the period of time on D4 and makes it clear that there exist

significant linguistic differences between both the registers. So far as, British press editorials are concerned, it is evident that they produce overt expression of persuasion/ argumentation, whereas, Pakistani press editorials mostly produce covert expression of persuasion/ argumentation during all the years except the second phase where the positive mean score reflects covert production of argumentation/ persuasion. The overt expression of persuasion/ argumentation in British press editorials and the covert expression of persuasion/ argumentation in Pakistani press editorials (excepting phase 2) indicate cross-cultural variation and different readership demands of the print media of both the registers.

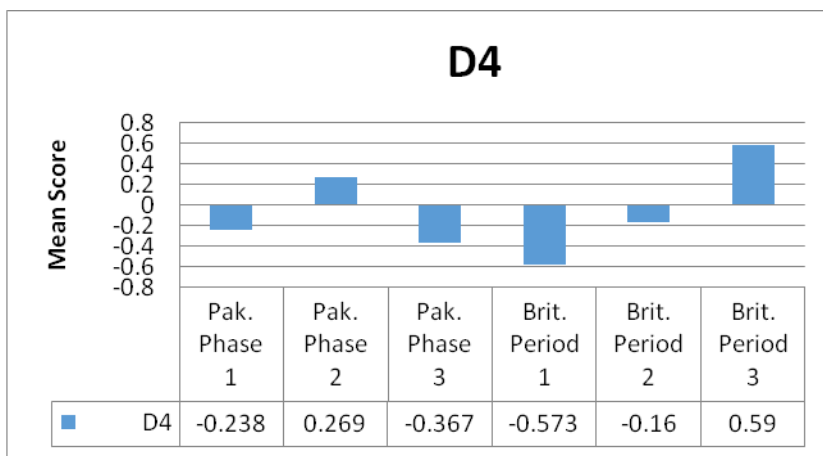


Fig.4 Comparison of diachronic Pakistani and diachronic British press editorials on D4

The bold words in the following example highlights the overt expression of persuasion/ argumentation in British press editorials. This example, from Westin’s 2002 study, is filled with necessity modals and infinitives which are considered the markers of persuasive/argumentative discourse.

The first priority must now be to persuade those nuclear armed parts of the former Soviet Union Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Belarus – to destroy their strategic weapons and become non-nuclear parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. At the same time, pressure must be maintained. (DT93E1)

The comparison between Pakistani and British press editorials makes it clear that Pakistani press editorials have become more argumentative over the years through the phases of periodized data. The example, given below, marks dense presence of infinitives and *if* clauses which are used to build an argument and develop an

opinion in Pakistani press editorials. This tendency increases in the language of Pakistani press editorials over the years.

The sequence of events that has led up to the decision to close Pakistan's diplomatic mission in Calcutta and to ask India to do the same in Dacca should evoke sad sober thoughts in the higher echelons of the Brahmin hierarchy in New Delhi. They have now only themselves to thank if they find that their laboriously planned -and rather smartly executed - adventure in East Pakistan has boomed- ranged on them. (ED,PH.2.DN)

Linguistic Variation on D5

Fig.5 given below compares Pakistani and British diachronic studies on press editorials on D5 which is labelled as ‘Impersonal (abstract) vs. Non-impersonal (Non-abstract) Style’. The comparison indicates significant linguistic differences between the registers. Pakistani press editorials, with positive mean values throughout the three phases, show that they are impersonal in nature on this dimension, whereas, British press editorials are impersonal in the first period, but in second period, they are non-impersonal in nature. The differences justify the fact that there exist significant statistical linguistic differences between Pakistani press editorials and British press editorials on D5. It shows that both the registers exhibit linguistic variation due to cross-cultural variation factors which make the print media of both the registers to use unique linguistic features.

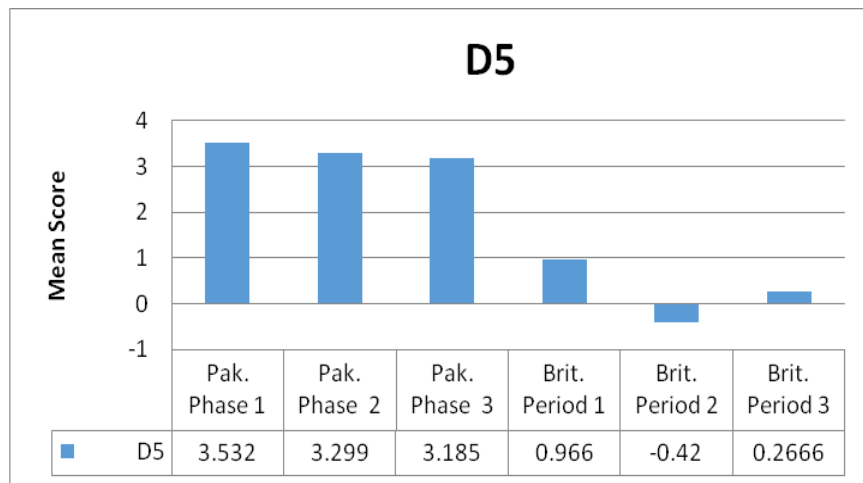


Fig.5 Comparison of diachronic Pakistani and diachronic British press editorials on D5

The italicized words in the following examples taken from Westin's (2002) study exhibit low presence of impersonal discourse in British press editorials:

A state of affairs wholly satisfactory to national culture, to domestic life and to the B.B.C. is disclosed by its research into the habits of tele viewers. They do not, it is established, neglect their reading, letter-writing or social contacts; they are not chained to the house, and even their cinema going is hardly affected. The only sacrifice which the home screen claims is one to be joyfully paid: in television families less time is devoted to domestic duties in the evening. (T114E18, Westin 2002)

The example, given above, discusses the impersonal linguistic features in British press editorials. The most important markers of abstract production are passive constructions (*by* passives and agentless passives) which give a text an impersonal touch. In comparison with the low presence of impersonal linguistic features in British press editorials, Pakistani press editorials include more impersonal linguistic features through all the phases of Pakistani press editorials:

For the last one year or so, the public of Karachi was being told that the Karachi Refugees Sa- (formerly known as Ojha TB Sanatorium) was being revived I was, therefore, surprised to read in Dawn of May 11, that the Executive Committee of the Pakistan Tuberculosis Association decided to take over that sanatorium for utilising half of its premises for the setting up of a BCG Vaccine Laboratory and assigning half of it to the Jinnah Central Hospital, Sanatorium chit understand that the sanatorium in question had an accommodation for about 120 patients. A senator- cannot be called a big sanatorium and to cut a slice even from that can hardly be justified of 120 tied. If the committee is of opinion that BCG is such a remedy against Tuberculosis then I must point out, that this is an entirely wrong notion and the sooner it is removed the better it is Even those who are great advocates of BCG vaccine claim that it is a prophylactic measure against Tuberculosis. According to them only those persons should be vaccinated who are free from Infection which in the car that was found out by Montoux test. (ED.PH.1.DN)

The above given example is a marked example of impersonal trend in Pakistani press editorials as it is replete with impersonal linguistic features like agentless passives, *by*-passives and adverbial adjuncts. Words like *For the last one year, was being told, was being revived I was, therefore, surprised, cannot be called, can hardly be justified, should be vaccinated* render an impersonal stance of reporting to Pakistani print editorials.

Conclusion

This paper discusses linguistic variation between the diachronic study of Pakistani and British press editorials in print media on Biber's 1988 five textual dimensions. On D1, Pakistani press

editorials are highly informational in nature as compared to British press editorials which produce low informational discourse. On D2, both Pakistani and British press editorials registers are found producing non-narrative discourse largely. The comparison further makes it clear that British press editorials also show a slight tendency towards narrative discourse unlike Pakistani press editorials. These differences account for the reasons as both represent different registers of different varieties of English in print media. On D3, the comparison reveals that Pakistani press editorials are explicit in nature throughout the phases of historical data, whereas, British press editorials show a tendency towards producing situation-dependent discourse. On D4, Pakistani press editorials produce covert expression of persuasion/ argumentation, whereas, British press editorials produce overt expression of persuasion/ argumentation. These differences on D4 account for cross-cultural variation factors between both the registers. On D5, the comparison reveals the fact that both Pakistani and British press editorials produce impersonal discourse which indicates objective reporting in the registers of Pakistani and British press editorials. The comparison shows that significant linguistic differences are found between both Pakistani and British press editorials registers indicating that both the registers exhibit their unique linguistic characteristics with respect to their independent varieties of British and Pakistani English.

The specialized corpus of Pakistani English press editorials, used for this study, is a step towards the development of a general diachronic corpus of Pakistani English which gives an impetus to the further research comparing the development of the Pakistani English over time with the diachronic corpora of other English's or indigenous and foreign languages.

The diachronic patterns or trends in editorials of Pakistani newspapers in comparison with British newspapers also portray the picture of linguistic variations within newspapers and overall variation at a large scale. It is also hoped that the present study offers a holistic representation of complex linguistic changes in newspaper editorials during the period of time.

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