

Rashid Mahmood*

Government College University Faisalabad
Pakistan

Sayed Kazim Shah**

Government College University Faisalabad
Pakistan

**CULTURE-SPECIFIC VOCABULARY: A STUDY OF URDU NOUNS IN
PAKISTANI ENGLISH**

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The bilingual speakers quite often feel that the linguistic resources of one language are insufficient to carry the content of their desired expression and they feel that the expression can be best described in terms of their native language. This is mainly due to socio-cultural differences between the two language communities. This study investigates Urdu nouns in Pakistani English in the 2.1 million words corpus of written Pakistani English. Urdu nouns in Pakistani English are used deliberately and purposefully by the speakers and it is interesting to note that this tendency to use Urdu words persists even if their substitutes are available in English. The researcher has studied these items regarding their use by placing them in different categories i.e. religious items, socio-cultural items, items having exact English equivalents and items evoking specific meaning. This research shows how Pakistani English as a non-native variety of English is bound in socio-cultural make up of the community.

Keywords: *Pakistani English, Urdu Nouns, Corpora.*

1. Background

The impulse to convey the desired meaning exactly has always been at the heart of linguistic communication. At times, the linguistic resources of one language fall short to meet the needs of the users of the language. The speakers of non-native varieties of English face this situation quite often, mainly due to the socio-cultural differences between the expressions available in English and their needs to communicate a specific shade of meaning related to social or cultural aspect of their lives. It is a bi-directional

* Government College University Faisalabad, English Department, Allama Iqbal Road, Faisalabad, Pakistan;

** Government College University Faisalabad, English Department, Allama Iqbal Road, Faisalabad, Pakistan; e-mail: kazim.shah@iiu.edu.pk.

phenomenon. In the case of speakers of Pakistani English, English lexical items keep on entering the sphere of Urdu and the process is referred to as Englishization; on the other hand, when Urdu lexical items find their place in Pakistani English, it is referred to as Urduization of English by Baumgardner (1993).

In this study, we have analyzed Urdu nouns which occurred in a 2.1 million words corpus of written Pakistani English (PWE). Data was taken from 29 text categories including news, columns, articles, textbooks, short stories, novels etc. Pakistani users use Urdu nouns in Pakistani English deliberately and purposefully. It has been observed that this tendency to use Urdu words persists even if these words can be exactly and effectively translated into English. 'The choice of an Urdu word instead of an English one in such cases largely depends to a larger extent on the 'deliberate use' (Platt et al., 1984: 89) of Urdu lexis by writers in Urdu to convey shades of meanings (Baumgardner, Kennedy & Shamim, 1993). The examples like 'atta' for 'flour', 'bazaar', for 'market', 'chaddar' for 'cover', 'challan' for 'traffic citation' and 'chowkidar' for 'watchman'/'guard' etc. (Baumgardner, Kennedy & Shamim, 1993) illustrate this tendency of use. Talaat (1988) explores another related phenomenon. "Borrowed into Urdu, these English loan words when used by Pakistani bilinguals speaking English often retain their Urduized meanings." She quotes the examples of the words like 'setting' (Talaat 2002), which is used in Urdu in the meaning of 'prior accord' and when the Urdu speakers use it in English, it retains its Urduized meanings and is used in English in this new meaning as well.

Besides deliberate use, sometimes it is essential to use Urdu words in order to carry the exact socio-cultural or religious content. The problem with these words is that either their exact equivalents are not available or near equivalents do not convey proper meanings. Most of these words are religious or culture-specific terms; these words cannot be found in the English language.

The use of such words renders the expressions exactness, familiarity, clarity, and brevity. The words like 'hazrat', 'imam', 'sunnah', 'barat', 'vadera' etc. explicitly support the argument.

Sometimes such words are used to elaborate exact relationships; the words like 'dauji', 'lalla', 'mamoo', cannot be properly translated. At times, Urdu nouns and noun-noun compounds are also used to evoke particular meanings e.g. 'kaakee', 'guru', 'ittar' etc. All these words have their English equivalents in the form of 'girl', 'master'/'teacher', 'perfume' but as the equivalents can not convey the exact shade of meanings, they are not used.

2. Design of the Research and Methodology

In order to study usage of Urdu nouns in English, the researchers have divided the nouns into four categories for the sake of convenience. The four categories have been chosen according to the use and nature of the words. These categories comprise religious vocabulary, socio-cultural vocabulary, the words which evoke particular meanings and the words which have exact English equivalents. The frequent use of these Urdu nouns in Pakistani English is the proof of indigenization of English by the non-native Pakistani speakers of English.

For this phase of research, all the nouns in PWE were extracted. PWE tagged with Tree Tagger was used to extract the nouns. WordSmith 4 was used to find all the concordance lines of the nouns in PWE. The total singular nouns in PWE are 345,081, and the total plural nouns in PWE are 137,231. WordSmith 4 showed all these nouns in the form of concordance lines. Now these concordance lines needed to be filtered to get the nouns. MS Excel has been used to filter the unnecessary data. Once again WordList tool of WordSmith 4 was used to make word lists and their frequencies were calculated. This WordList removed all the multiple occurrences and replaced them with their frequencies, thus reducing the tokens to types. Now the software could help no more. The sorting of these nouns to get Urdu nouns was done manually. This data comprised of nouns exhibiting different trends. Some of these nouns are deeply soaked into religious sentiment, but others

have a very special cultural shade of meaning. Some Urdu nouns in English are performing the function of filling the lexical gap. The category Urdu Nouns carried nouns from various domains. Putting all these nouns into one category seemed unjust. Hence, Urdu Nouns were further subdivided into four sub-categories:

- a. Religious
- b. Socio-cultural
- c. Nouns evoking particular meanings
- d. Nouns having English equivalents

After placing these nouns into these sub-categories, I supplied English near equivalents of these nouns (where available). The description was given under the heading *Discussion* after each table. The concordance lines of some of the nouns were given to show different spellings, grammatical relationships etc.

All these categories reflect the widespread nature of Englishization of Urdu nouns or Urduization of Pakistani English in almost all the major domains ranging from Religion to Government domains in PWE.

3. Urdu Vocabulary from Religious Domain

Table 1
 Urdu Vocabulary from Religious Domain

Serial No	Urdu Vocabulary from Religious Domain	Frequency	Serial No	Urdu Vocabulary from Religious Domain	Frequency
1	Hazrat	243	31	Hadees	2
2	Imam	122	32	Insha Allah	2
3	Ulema	53	33	Istighfar	2
4	Sunni	52	34	Masha Allah	2
5	Shariah	44	35	Seerat	5

6	Shariat	44	36	Akhirat	1
7	Surah	30	37	Akhirah	2
8	Ameer	23	38	Aqamat	1
9	Mufti	9	39	Bajamat	1
10	Rasool	29	40	Biddat	1
11	Hudood	21	41	Chaand (raat)	1
12	Haram	17	42	Fitrana	1
13	Chehlum	12	43	Imamat	1
14	Sunnah	12	44	Matamdari	1
15	Jamat	6	45	Qasida	1
16	Jamia	8	46	Qirat	1
17	Jumma	8	47	Sarwar-e- konain	1
18	Shura	10	48	Shab-e-barat	1
19	Ashura	7	49	Shahdat	1
20	Hijrah	1	50	Shahahdat	1
21	Umrah	5	51	Sipara	1
22	Tafseer	5	52	Umrah	5
23	Ummat	5	53	Hajj	2
24	Ahadees	4	54	Halal	17
25	Mulla	4	55	Ziarat	4
26	Sharah	4	56	Ummah	129
27	Shoora	4	57	Ashra	3
28	Iftar	2	58	Eid-ul-Fitar	2
29	All-e-atahar	2	59	Eid-ul-Azha	14
30	All-e-rasool	2	60	Istikhara	3

All the words related to religion were placed under this category. These words are either religious terms or they are frequently used in religious context. The words like 'hazart', and 'imam' can have their near equivalents in English in the form of 'saint' or 'religious leader' but English translation is unable to carry the exact religious content. Hence, the writers mix the code and use Urdu words deliberately. Another interesting example is the word 'rasool' which has an almost exact equivalent in English as 'prophet' but PWE users sometimes prefer to use 'rasool' instead of 'prophet'. It does not mean that the PWE users do not use the word prophet rather it would be appropriate to say that they make a choice

between these two words: PWE corpus reveals 749 occurrences of the word 'prophet' whereas the word 'rasool' occurs 29 times only. The word 'jamat' can be exactly translated into English as 'group' or 'class' but in Urdu this word is also used for 'collective prayer'. This word was used in both the meanings in PWE as the concordance lines below show:

N Concordance

1. him. Are women allowed to pray in *jamat*? Is that permissible in Islam?
2. recite incorrectly. When I go in tablighi *jamat* and we have to move from

The word 'haram' was used 17 times in PWE corpus. It is an antonym of 'hallal' and it has an exact equivalent in English as 'unfair' which means 'not right according to a set of rules or principles'. The word 'halal' is also used in three grammatical categories in PWE; as a noun it means 'fair and in keeping with the religion' and as a verb it means 'to slaughter'. It was also used as an adjective. The concordance lines below show both meanings.

N Concordance

1. included shrimp into fish category, they declare it *Halal*, and who do not include it in fish,
2. money. Little Ruzbihan earned everything the *halal* way, by working in a small dingy office
- 3 of dry twigs on her head, said, 'Madam, the men *halal* the chickens.' They all burst out.

The word 'hadees' (2 occurrences in PWE) has another equivalent in the form of 'hadith' (63 occurrences in PWE) which is frequently used in PWE but even then PWE users sometimes use the word 'hadees' in order to be more precise and familiar. The words 'umrah' and 'hajj' are used in PWE,

and have a near equivalent in English – ‘pilgrimage’. ‘Pilgrimage’ might be used for ‘any sacred journey to the shrine of a saint’, whereas ‘hajj’ and ‘umrah’ are specifically used for ‘journey to Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH)’s city’. The Urdu word ‘ziyarat’ is an exact equivalent for ‘pilgrimage’. Here it is essential for PWE users to stick to Urdu expressions because there are no English equivalents.

The word ‘shahdat/shahahdat’ also has two meanings in Urdu; it means either ‘martyrdom’ or ‘to give evidence’. It is interesting to note that in PWE corpus this word was used with two different spellings. Both spelling forms were used to convey the same meaning, i.e. ‘martyrdom’. This spelling variation shows that it is an example of transliteration. There are no fixed and agreed upon spellings; the users are free to invent spellings the way they like, based upon the knowledge and command of the two languages. The concordance lines below show this spelling variation.

N Concordance

1. emphasise Jihad and the reward for *Shahahdat*. Probably Qaris and Arabic
- 2 for Wisaal of the Holy Prophet and *Shahadat* of Hazrat Imam Hassan Mujtaba

The words ‘ulema’ and ‘mufti’ are used in Urdu language to denote a religious scholar with one variation; a mufti can issue a new religious decree whereas an ‘aalam’ (singular of ‘ulema’) cannot do so. In English there are different expressions for such people. ‘Scholar’, ‘priest’, ‘pope’ etc. are the near equivalents. Hence, to carry the exact meanings, Urdu words are preferred to communicate the religious sentiments. The words ‘jumma’ and ‘ashura’ are specifically used for days. The word ‘jumma’ has two meanings; it is the exact equivalent of ‘Friday’ in Urdu and it also stands for ‘mid-day collective prayer’ on Friday. ‘Ashura’ means the ‘10th of Moharam (the first month of Islamic calendar). In English there is ‘Friday’

but only as the name of a day. For 'ashura' there is no word in English at all.

The word 'shura/shoora' is also written with two different spellings. This word has an exact equivalent in English as 'advisory council' but PWE users prefer 'shoora/shura' in order to relate it to Islam.

In Urdu there are specific words for festivals like 'shabe-e-barat', 'eid-ul-fitar', 'eid-ul-azha', which have no equivalents in English. In English, there are words for festivals, such as 'Christmas', 'Easter' etc. It is worth mentioning that Muslim and Christian festivals have their specific names and are observed on specified days. Hence, they do not have any equivalents. The same is the case with the word 'fitrana' which means alms before 'eid-ul-fitar'. In English, there are words for charity and alms but none of these words is even a near equivalent to 'fitrana' which is fixed in amount and specified for the occasion.

In Urdu there are words like 'akhirat' (01 occurrence) and 'akhira' (02 occurrences) for the eternal life after death. English has a near equivalent 'doomsday' (08 occurrences). which was also used by PWE users.

An important point is that most of the above mentioned Urdu words are of Arabic origin because Islam originated in Saudi Arabia. Along with these words there are some exact Arabic expressions which found their place in Urdu vocabulary. The words like 'Insh Allah', 'Mash Allah', 'Istghifar' are exact Arabic expressions and now they are used quite frequently in Urdu and English.

4. Urdu Nouns from Socio-cultural Domain

Table 2
Urdu Nouns from Socio-cultural Domain

Serial No	Socio-cultural	Frequency	Serial No	Socio-cultural	Frequency
1	Dauji	25	15	Qalandar	2
2	Duppta	17	16	Bastee	1
3	Mahram	16	17	Bhatta	1
4	Chottay mammo	13	18	Chudrain	1
5	Sahaba	11	19	Kamdar	1
6	Chaddar	8	20	Non-mahram	5
7	Barat	1	21	Naan-chholay	1
8	Ghairat	11	22	Paratha	1
9	Lassi	5	23	Qaraz-e-hasna	1
10	Lalla	4	24	Samosay	1
11	Mujrah	5	25	Shalvar	1
12	Ajrak	3	26	Tandoor	1
13	Mohallah	3	27	Wadera	1
14	Qawwali	3	28	Vadera	1

The second category is rooted in socio-cultural background of the Pakistani speakers of English. These words are closely related to Pakistani culture and society and frequently appear in PWE. These words were used to denote relationships, locations, titles, food items etc. Some of these words have equivalents or near equivalents in English, but these are not preferred by Pakistani users.

There are words like 'dauji', 'lalla', 'chottay mammo' in Urdu which can be translated in English as 'grandfather' 'brother', 'maternal uncle', respectively, but the exact and explicit meanings are communicated through culture-specific and familiar terms.

The words like 'duppata' and 'chaddar' are highly culture-specific lexical items. These words are used to denote a 'piece of cloth that covers the head and body'. In English society, there is no trend of covering head and body with a piece of cloth. Hence, these words are not found in English. This observation is in line with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that language is a way of determining world view for its speakers: "...individuals being 'at the mercy of' their language which exerts a 'tyrannical hold' over their mind" (Sampson, 1980, p. 89).

The word 'ghairat' has a deeply culture-rooted concept. In English, there is no equivalent for this word or concept. It has remote equivalents in the form of 'ego', 'self-respect' 'rage of honour', but none of these words carries the exact meanings. This word in Urdu has several shades of meaning; e.g. it is used to denote 'protection of one's female family members from other men' and 'honour killing' 'honour' etc. But the English society being an entirely liberal society, does not share this sort of attitude. Hence, every male or female is free to have any kind of relationship with other members of the society.

The words 'mohalla' and 'bastee' can be nearly translated into English as 'block' (living area) and 'small village', respectively. PWE users who follow socio-cultural norms use these words in their English writings by mixing the code.

The words 'lassi', 'paratha', 'samosay' are the names of different Pakistani food items used in the corpus. They convey the exact meanings instead of their English equivalents like 'sandwich', 'petties' etc. The words like 'sahaba', 'chudrain', 'wadera/vadera' are words used for titles of honour in various regional languages of Pakistan. These items are highly related to their societies and cultures. They do not have any equivalents in English. Hence, these are used to convey their literal meanings.

5. Words Evoking Particular Meanings

Table 3
Words Evoking Particular Meanings

Serial No	Words Evoking Particular Meanings	Nearest Equivalents	Frequency
1	Guru	Teacher / Master	14
2	Shaheed	Martyr	37
3	Hurmat	Respect	05
4	Ittar	Perfume	02
5	Momin	Staunch Muslim	02
6	Thanedar	Police Station Incharge	02
7	Paindo	Villager	01
8	Qiyamat	Doomsday	01
9	Havaldar	Sub-Inspector	01
10	Hawaldar	Sub-Inspector	01
11	Thana	Police Station	05

In PWE corpus, there are many words that can be exactly translated into English. It is interesting to note that PWE users prefer the use of these words in spite of having their English equivalents. These words are used to evoke particular meanings. Sometimes, it happens that the equivalent terms in the two languages have somewhat different meanings and concepts, e.g. the word 'paindo' can be translated as 'villager' in English, but 'paindo' has a sense different from that of 'villager'. It is a derogatory term. The word 'villager' does not essentially mean an 'ignorant, uncultured, and uncivilized' but all these concepts are shared by the word 'paindo'. This example can justify the argument that sometimes Urdu words are used to evoke particular meanings.

Here is another example of such usage; the word 'ittar' can be translated into English language as 'perfume', but both words have a slight variation in spite of the fact they denote the same thing. The word 'perfume' means 'some alcoholic fragrant liquid' but 'ittar' is always 'non-alcoholic'. PWE

users who wish to express this contrast prefer the word 'ittar' when they have to emphasize that there is no alcohol.

The word 'shaheed' has an exact equivalent in the English word 'martyr', and both these words were used by PWE users. The word 'shaheed' has 37 occurrences, whereas the word 'martyr' has only 6 occurrences. It is worth mentioning that the word 'shaheed' is sometimes used as the title of some person, e.g. Zulifkar Ali Bhutto Shaheed, Hussein Shaheed, but it is not translated into English and it is treated as part of the name. The word 'hurmat' presents another interesting example; 'hurmat' can be exactly translated into English as 'respect', but in Urdu this word is particularly used with the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and for his respect it is always used as 'hurmat-e-Rasool'. It has been observed that respect has not been used even once in this sense in PWE.

The words 'thanedar' and 'havalder' can be translated into English as 'inspector' and 'assistant sub-inspector', but PWE users like to use the Urdu equivalents, because the word 'thana' is also used in PWE and the 'thanedar' is in charge of a 'thana'. PWE users like to use 'thana' instead of 'police station'.

All these instances are examples of code mixing on the one hand, and on the other, they are a proof of indignization of English in Pakistan.

Table 4
Words Evoking Special Meaning

Serial No	Urdu Words	Frequency	Equivalent Expression in English	Frequency of Equivalent
1	Fauji	02	soldier	64
2	Sharbat	01	Soft drink	01
3	Mohabbat	04	Love	471
4	Keema	04	minced meat	04
5	Mazaar	04	Tomb	51
6	Chowkidar/ Chokidar	07	Guard	46
7	Qasai	03	Butcher	07

8	Tarjuma	03	Translation	35
9	Lootmar	02	Corruption	167
10	Mahurat	02	inauguration	20
11	Masoom	01	Innocent	136
12	Tafaqqauar/ Tafaqquar	03	Meditation	07
13	Tawakkal	02	Trust	165
14	Wasilla	02	Means	779
15	Zaeef	01	Weak	170
16	Atoot	01	inseparable	09
17	Asool	01	Principle	193
18	Begam	01	Madam	30
19	Besharam	01	Shameless	06
20	Mufassirin	01	interpreters	02
21	Faqeer	01	begger	25
22	Shareef	01	Gentleman	50
23	Khanwada	01	Family	801
24	Khairat	01	Alms	06
25	Khuddar	01	self- respecting	01
26	Takdeer	01	Fate	111
27	Talibilm	01	Student	253
28	Thali	02	Plate	16
29	Mujahideen	01	freedom fighters	07
30	Yadain	02	Memories	36

This category comprises words which have exact equivalents in English. The exact equivalents are known to PWE users, but Urdu words are sometimes used to:

1. retain religious context, e.g. 'talwaat' and 'tarjuma', 'masoom',
2. show contempt, e.g. 'besharam', 'lootmar',
3. generate some particular effect, e.g. 'fauji', 'qasai' etc.

The word 'talwaat' can be translated into English as 'recitation', 'tarjuma' as 'translation' but to create religious connotations with the exact equivalents are avoided and the Urdu words are used. The word 'besharam' has an exact equivalent, which is 'shameless', but if the speaker opts for a colloquial derogatory term, the Urdu word is used instead of the English equivalent. It does not mean that English words are always ignored. PWE

corpus reveals the use of 'shameless' (6 occurrences) also. The same is the case with many other English equivalents that have higher frequency of occurrence in PWE corpus than their Urdu equivalents: the words 'qasai', 'fauji' and 'chokidar/chowkidar' (7 occurrences) have their exact equivalents as 'butcher' (7 occurrences), 'soldier' (64 occurrences), and guard (46 occurrences).

6. Conclusion

The use of Urdu nouns in Pakistani English gives it a special indigenous flavour, and to communicate the exact meaning. Religion and culture are essential aspects of any society. Even if a society uses a second language, its members like to keep themselves close to their religion and culture. For this purpose, they need religious terminology. If second language users also belong to the same religion and culture, already available terminology is acquired. But if the second language society has a different religion and culture, the religious terminology is either carried as it is in the second language or it is transliterated.

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