Syllable Patterns of Pakistani English

(Pakistani Resyllabified English)

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Abstract

This research paper is an attempt to describe the syllable patterns of Pakistani English. Second language speakers of a language overwrite the syllabification rules of that specific language. In this process of resyllabification the native accent of that language is far to be achieved. In Pakistan, English is spoken and used at a massive level among masses. This article identifies the extent of change in real syllable patterns when used by Pakistani people. Voice Samples of British speakers and Pakistani speakers have been analyzed using PRAAT software. Data analysis proved the fact that Pakistani non-native speakers of English resyllabify English syllables under the influence of their national language Urdu and other regional languages.

Keywords: Syllable, Syllable templates, Syllabification & Resyllabification, Template Matching, Epenthesis, Deletion.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to describe the phonological and phonetic features of the English language as spoken in Pakistan. It is somehow natural for a speaker that he imitates the patterns of his native language while uttering the words of foreign or some other language. And same is the factor that invokes him to resyllabify the words.

Each language has its own phonology of syllabifying the words and hence different syllable templates. However when a native speaker of a particular language utters some words of any other or foreign language, he modifies the syllables of these words according to the phonology of his native language. So Urdu follows specific templates for syllabification which are different from English templates. This, overwhelmingly, suggests alteration in English words when spoken by Pakistani speaker. This whole process is called resyllabification. Urdu has a greater influence on speaking style of Pakistanis. Urdu has the capacity to induct many words from other languages. The etymology of Urdu words indicates that these words have been picked up from different sources. The Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit contributed strongly in formation of Urdu vocabulary. Later on the colonization period also injected hundreds of words from English into Urdu.

At this point in time, Pakistan has neither the power nor influence to assert its dialects of English as 'different from' but 'equal to' American or British dialects of English, with as much right to exist and be recognized as, say, Australian English. However, at some point in the future, a general Pakistani English might emerge as a recognizable, well-analyzed and academically acceptable dialect.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

It is very important to know about the syllable structures of both Urdu and English languages before further discussion. Here the concept of syllable is also an essential one.

2.1 Syllable

Human speech sounds can be studied in terms of phonemes, classified into vowels and consonants. These phonemes may also be perceived in groups and combinations. The smallest such group is called syllable. Phoneticians have found it difficult to define a syllable in absolute scientific terms.

Physical point of view affirms that "a syllable is an utterance occurring during one chest pulse".

Articulatory point of view defines syllable as "a stretch of utterance containing one peak of sonority".

Phonological point of view states that "syllable focuses on the ways, sounds are combined in individual languages to produce a typical sequence of phonemes".

According to Peter Ladefoged "every single utterance of speech contains at least one syllable".

Combining all the views, we get a somewhat clear picture of syllable which can be read as "a syllable is a sound or group of sounds produced by a single chest pulse and containing a vowel".

2.2 Syllable Structure

Phonologically, a syllable is usually divided into three parts: Onset, Nucleus, and Coda.

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- ➢ *Onset:* It is the opening segment of a syllable and a pre-vowel position which can carry one or more than one consonant. It can be filled by zero, one or more than one consonant. It is an optional part of a syllable.
- ➢ *Nucleus:* It personifies the most sonorous part of a syllable which is almost a vowel. Syllable without vowel as its nucleus only occurs at a marked situation. For a syllable to exist, nucleus is the minimal part.
- ➢ *Coda:* Coda is a post nucleus (vowel) position in a syllable. It can be filled by zero, one or more than one consonant. It is also a secondary part of a syllable.
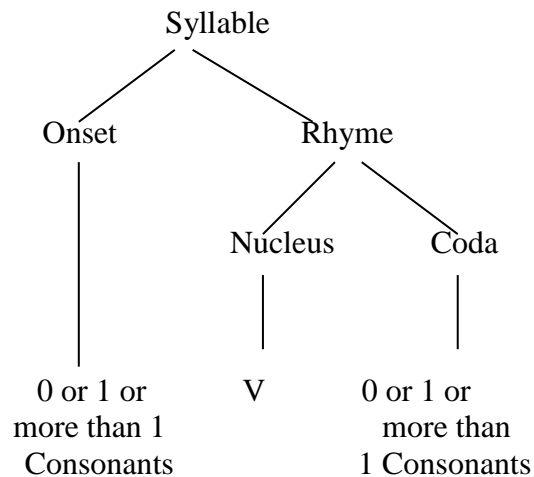
```
                        Syllable

            Onset                   Rhyme

                              Nucleus        Coda


        0 or 1 or            V          0 or 1 or
        more than 1                     more than
        Consonants                     1 Consonants
```

Figure of Syllable Structure

2.2.1 Types of Syllable

There are basically two types of syllables.

- ➢ *Open Syllable:* Open syllables don't carry coda consonant at all hence end up with a vowel.

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> ➤ *Closed Syllable:* Closed Syllables allow at least one consonant at coda position hence end up with a consonant.

2.2.2 Syllable Structure of Urdu

Urdu is the national language of Pakistan spoken and understood by 0.2 billion people as their first or second language in over 20 countries of the world. Urdu belongs to the New Indo-Aryan group of languages that is a sub branch of Indo-European languages. Urdu phonemic inventory consists of 44 consonants, 8 long oral vowels, 7 long nasal vowels, 3 short vowels and numerous diphthongs. Urdu doesn't support more than one consonant at onset position but there are few exceptions where Urdu allows up to two consonants at onset position. While at coda position, Urdu allows two consonants but exceptions include up to three consonants.

The general syllable pattern for Urdu language can be written as

C V C C

2.2.3 Syllable Structure of English

English phonology allows consonant cluster at onset and coda position. At onset position, maximum three consonants can occur while at coda position, maximum four consonants can occur. So the general syllable pattern for English language is

C C C V C C C C

2.3 Syllabification

Syllabification, a process of dividing a phonological representation into a well-defined sequence of syllables, is guided by following well-established rules.

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2.3.1 Syllabification Principles

It is somehow a constraint for any language that it can't go beyond its syllable patterns while forming the syllables except few cases. There are basically three principles which languages normally use for syllabification.

1) Sonority sequencing Principle (SSP)

This principle states that one phoneme, out of the others, in a syllable is more sonorous than others and this phoneme is always a vowel because of its greater measurement of openness sound. As it has been earlier stated that a vowel is also a nucleus and it is merely due to this higher level of sonority. From onset, the sonority rises towards the nucleus and then falls towards coda.
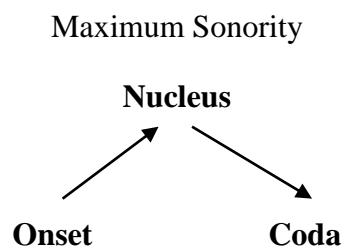
Maximum Sonority

Nucleus

Onset   **Coda**

Figure of Sonority Sequence Principle

The sonority decreases from top to bottom and within each category voiced segments are more sonorant than the voiceless ones. And further in the category of voiced sounds, vowels rank up higher in this sequence of sonority.

Goldsmith believes that SSP is not a universal principle and can be violated. But mostly languages follow SSP. Urdu also follows SSP.

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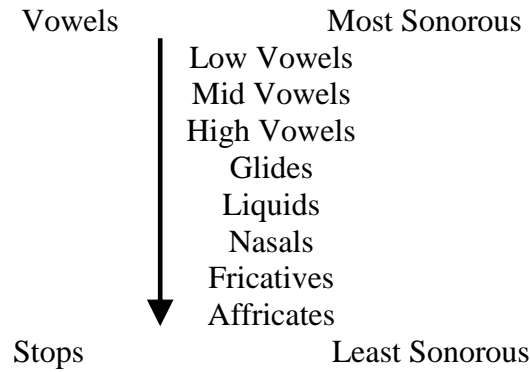 E mail address: slmn@hotmail.co.uk

```
Vowels                    Most Sonorous
              │  Low Vowels
              │  Mid Vowels
              │  High Vowels
              │     Glides
              │     Liquids
              │     Nasals
              │    Fricatives
              ▼    Affricates
Stops                     Least Sonorous
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Figure of Sonority Hierarchy

2) Maximal Onset Principle (MOP)

In case of floating consonants, this principle is observed. The principle states that languages prefer floating consonants to come at onset position than coda position.

3) Maximal coda Principle (MCP)

The followship of this principle can be seen only in case of floating consonants. This principle states that languages prefer floating consonants to come at coda position than onset position. Languages, usually, follow MOP rather MCP.

2.4 Syllable Templates

A language cannot go beyond its syllable patterns in drawing up its syllable templates. Although, we can not generalize this statement because many languages have a tendency to work beyond their set patterns. Syllable templates may be word initial, word medial or at the end. These syllable templates are then used to make syllables and eventually words.

2.4.1 Syllable Templates of Urdu

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Urdu belongs to the family of New-Indo-Aryan languages. Urdu is similar to Hindi in both origin and structure. Urdu phonetics and phonology has diverged from Hindi phonetics and phonology due to strong Perso-Arabic influence on Urdu and the strong influence of Sanskrit on Hindi. According to Saxena, Urdu has the ability to absorb the words and phrases of other languages easily within its own grammatical structure.

Urdu contains a large number of syllable templates that may be word initial, word medial or at the end. These syllable templates are then used to syllabify the words. In order to examine the syllable templates, monosyllabic words were chosen. Given below are the templates which Urdu follows while syllabifying the words.

Syllablle Template	Allowed Word Initially	Allowed Word Medially	Allowed Word Finally
CVC	**A**	**A**	**A**
CVV	**A**	**A**	**A**
CVCC	**A**	**A**	**A**
CVVC	**A**	**A**	**A**
CVVCC	**NA**	**NA**	**A**
CV	**A**	**A**	**NA**

A=Allowed
NA=Not Allowed

Table of Possible Syllable Templates in Urdu

The templates given in the table are basic templates while some derived templates from these basic templates are given below

V, VC, VV, VCC, VVC

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2.4.2 Syllable Templates of English

Like every language English has also syllable templates. As mentioned earlier, English allows maximum three consonants at onset while maximum of four consonants at coda position. This difference of syllable templates between English and Urdu languages initiates a process of resyllabification when the words of English are spoken by a Pakistani speaker. English has following syllable templates.

Templates	Example	Transcription
V	I	**/ae/**
CV	He	**/h**i:/
CCV	Try	/tr**ae** /
CCCV	Stray	/stræ/
VC	Up	/ʌp/
VCC	And	/ǽnd/
VCCC	Ants	/ǽnts/
CVC	Fan	/fǽn/
CVCC	Font	/f ɔnt/
CVCCC	Bands	/bǽnds/
CVCCCC	Sixths	/sɪksθs/
CCVC	Drag	/dræg/
CCVCC	Drags	/drægs/
CCVCCC	Plants	/plænts/
CCCVC	String	/strɪɳ́/
CCCVCC	Strings	/ strɪɳ́s/
CCCVCCC	Splints	/splɪnts/

Table of Syllable Templates of English

2.5 Resyllabification

It is a process in which anyone of the following operations can be performed.

1. *Epenthesis:* Epenthesis is insertion or addition of a phoneme according to the rules of the recipient language. Urdu speakers usually add vowels and glottal stops.

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2. ***Deletion:*** Deletion stands reciprocal to epenthesis. Some phonemes get deleted from a syllable or word, again, according to the rules of recipient language.

3. ***Resyllabification:*** Finally, after epenthesis and deletion, it is ensured that correct syllable has been achieved.

3. PROPOSITION

English is Pakistan's official language. All government documents, military communications, street signs, many shop signs, business contracts and other activities are done in English. The language of the courts is also English. Pakistani English contains many unique terms, as well as terms which are utilized somewhat differently in Pakistan from other world. We have been focusing on Urdu until now but the study of Urdu phonology and its comparison with English phonology is not sufficient for the detailed study of Pakistani English. We must be aware of the differences in the pronunciation of English from one part of Pakistan to another. These differences are attributed to 'interference' from the speaker's mother tongue.

Phonic interference concerns the manner in which a speaker perceives and reproduces the sounds of one language, which might be designated secondary, in terms of another, to be called primary. Interference arises when a bilingual identifies a phoneme of the secondary system with one in the primary system and, in reproducing it, subjects it to the phonetic rule of the primary language.

In acknowledgement of this theory, attention has been paid to primary languages and the way in which their speakers speak English. Pakistani English shares many similarities with Indian English, however since Independence there have been some very

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obvious differences. The description of the phonological features of Pakistani English is different from Indian English since the languages which interfere in Pakistan are different. Because of this, a number of descriptions of Pakistani English with reference to interference from Urdu, Punjabi, Sindhi and Pashto are required.

In context of above situation, we have come to know that most of the Pakistanis are bilingual in the sense that they have the ability to communicate not only in their native language but also in Urdu language.

Now the question is if this bilingual starts acquiring English language, the rules of which language he'll follow?

Pakistan is ethnically a diverse country where 56% of Pakistanis have Punjabi language as their mother tongue. Now the issue is whether Punjabi as mother tongue will influence the process of resyllabification of English words by Pakistani speaker who is also well equipped with Urdu language. This issue can be resolved by the following facts. Element of social prestige plays a vital role in this process of imitation of syllable patterns. We'll have to check it out, whether social prestige is attached to Urdu or Punjabi. Urdu is prioritized in education and is used in a sophisticated environment. When a Pakistani learner starts learning English, he'll follow the syllable patterns of Urdu language because English is also going to get the same prestige level.

5. METHODOLOGY

Besides personal observations, the data was collected through recorded readings of English words by educated Pakistanis whose native languages were Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto and Sindhi. Variations based on sociological or situational factors have not been mentioned

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for ease of description. In order to investigate the changes occurring in the English words spoken by Pakistanis, we not only took audio material but also consulted Oxford dictionary for IPA transcription. Then we compared standard transcription of the words, given in dictionary, with the transcription of the same word uttered by Pakistani speakers.

5.1 Procedure

We analyzed the recorded data of Pakistani English with PRAAT software— standard software used for speech analysis and speech synthesis by phoneticians. This software helped us greatly in the study of spectrograms and eventually in the analysis of syllable patterns of Pakistani English. We can easily identify the insertion (epenthesis) and deletion of phonemes, by the help of spectrograms, which are the necessary processes of resyllabification.

6. RESULTS

6.1 Two Consonants at Word Initial Position:

Our research revealed that Pakistani speaker has a great tendency to inject a vowel between two consonants coming at onset position. This is due to the influence of Urdu language which doesn't allow two consonants at onset position.

For instance the word "GRANT" spoken by a Pakistani will be changed into bisyllabic word with the insertion of a short vowel between two consonants at onset position. With the help of these spectrograms, we can, somehow, verify the insertion of a short vowel between two consonants at onset position, hence different syllable patterns of RP English and PakE.

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RP English transcription: /gra:nt/

Pakistani English transcription: /gə.ra:nt/

We took 50 examples for further investigation of this case and concluded that about 70% of the selected people followed this principle of insertion. Some examples of the words chosen have been given in the following table.

Table of analyzed words

| S. No	English Words	RP Transcription	PakE Transcription
1	groom	/gru:m/	/gru:m/
2	prize	/praɪz/	/pə.raɪz/
3	train	/trein/	/tərein/
4	dress	/dres/	/dres/
5	grant	/gra:nt/	/gə.**rant**/
6	practice	/præk.tɪs/	/pə.ræk.tɪs/
7	fresh	/freʃ/	/fə.reʃ/
8	crime	/kraɪm/	/kə.raɪm/
9	friend	/frend/	/frend/
10	fruit	/fru:t/	/fə.ru:t/
11	class	/kla:s/	/kə.la:s/
12	prime	/praɪm/	/pə.raɪm/
13	prophet	/pr ɔ.fɪt/	/pə.r ɔ.fɪt/
14	traffic	/træ.fɪk/	/tə.ræ.fɪk/
15	flat	/flæt/	/fə.læt/

Here are the two spectrograms of the word 'grant', one (A) uttered by a native English speaker and the second (B), uttered by a Pakistani speaker.

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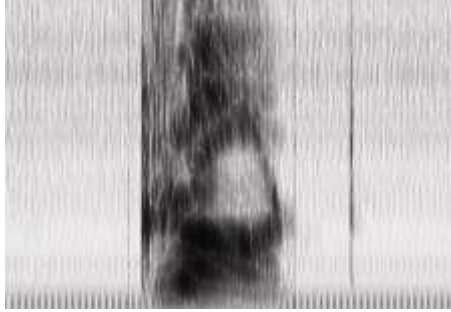
(A)Spectrogram of word 'grant'

(English speaker)
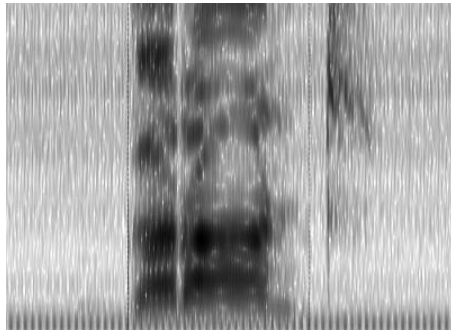
(B)Spectrogram of word 'grant'

(Pakistani speaker)

From the comparison of both spectrograms, the result of changes is evident. Actually, two significant changes are occurring. One is the insertion of schwa (ə) and the second is division of a monosyllabic word into a bisyllabic word.

Now, we justify our results by the following explanation of these diagrams. Firstly we take the insertion of schwa. As we know that the presence of a vowel in a spectrogram can be marked by the two factors:

1. The formants which are unchanged over time and horizontally linear as well can be symbolized as vowels.

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**2.** Due to voicing factor, all the vowels have a large concentration of energy.

Now we come back to the picture (B) where we experience the application of both factors mentioned above.
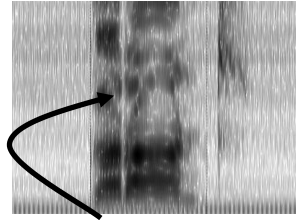
This is the place where the insertion of schwa has taken place. Here we can mark the linearness of the formant and secondly a large concentration of energy due to voicing factor of a vowel.

Next is our case of proving the bisection of a monosyllabic word into a bisyllabic word. Again we go back to the spectrograms to mark this change.

As we know that physical point of view affirms that "a syllable is an utterance occurring during one chest pulse". Hence we had to give a pause while uttering a set of syllables even within one word. Here in the second spectrogram, this pause can be marked easily
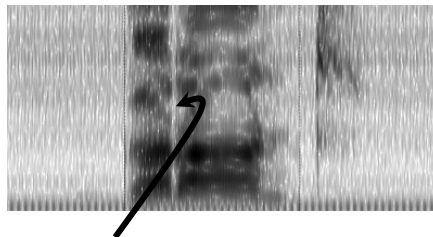
This indicator points out the pause that results in the bisection of a monosyllabic word into a bisyllabic word.

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6.2 Special case of Two Consonants at Word Initial Position with starting Consonant /s/:

If two consonants come at the word initial position and the starting consonant is /s/, then Urdu will attach glottal stop and /I/ before /s/.

This can be illustrated by considering the following examples:

English Transcription: /stju:dnt/

PakE Transcription: /Is.tu:dent/

Due to the greater influence of Urdu on PakE, the speaker adds a glottal stop and /I/ before /s/ and glottal stop is always deleted in Urdu, so its resyllabified transcription is

/Is.tu:.dent/

Again we took 50 examples for further investigation of this case and concluded that about 58% of the selected people followed this principle of insertion of /I/ and deletion of glottal stop. Some examples of the words chosen have been given in the following table.

Table of analyzed words

| S. No	English Words	RP Transcription	PakE Transcription
1	skill	/sk**I**l/	/ **I**s.k**I**l /
2	special	/spe∫l/	/**I**s.pe∫l/
3	scheme	/sk**I**:m/	/**I**s.k**I**:m/
4	sport	/sp ɔ:t/	/**I**s.p ɔ:rt/
5	speak	/sp**I**:k/	/sp**I**:k/
6	store	/st ɔ:r/	/**I**s.t ɔ:r/
7	staff	/sta:f/	/sta:f/
8	scale	/ske**I**l/	/**I**s.ke**I**l/
9	skirt	/skərt/	/**I**s.kərt/
10	style	/sta**I**l/	/sta**I**l/
11	stand	/stænd/	/**I**s.tænd/
12	station	/stei∫**n**/	/**I**s.tei∫**n**/
13	stadium	/ste**I**.diəm/	/**I**s.te**I**.diəm/

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1. 4	speed	/sp**I**:d/	/sp**I**:d/
15	sticker	/st**I**kə(r)/	/**I**s.t**I**.kər/

Here are the two spectrograms of the word 'student', one (C) uttered by a native English speaker and the second (D), uttered by a Pakistani speaker.
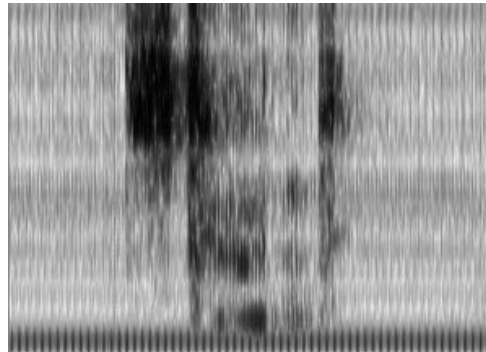

(C)Spectrogram of word 'student'

(English speaker)
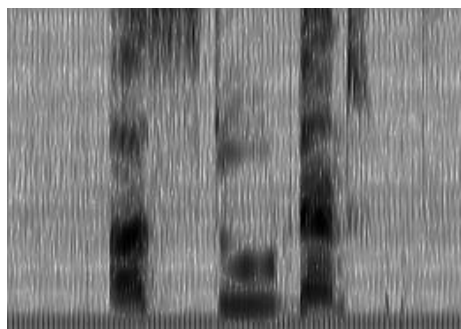
(D)Spectrogram of word 'student'

(Pakistani speaker)

From the comparison of both spectrograms, changes are evident. Actually, two significant changes are occurring. One is the addition of /**I**/ before /s/ and second is the division of the word into three syllables.

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As mentioned earlier, the presence of a vowel can be marked by two ways: Condensation of energy and horizontally linear placement of formants.

Coming back to the picture (D) where we mark the presence of vowel (**I**) before /s/.
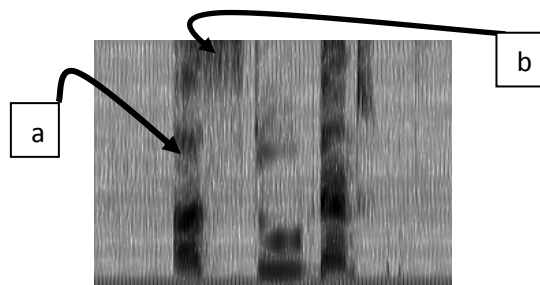
I   s . t u: . den t

In the picture, the point 'a' is signifying the presence of a vowel as we see the linear condensation of energy, while the point 'b' is the rectangle signifying the presence of a fricative and eventually both the sounds combining to make one syllable.

Conclusion

Finally, we can say that PakE differs in many ways from the other dialects of English like British, American, Australian and even from Indian English. Tariq Rahman believes that before 1984 the term PakE was almost unknown and the assumptions in the English speaking circles was that educated Pakistanis use British Standard English. All deviations from it were considered mistakes and once people were made aware that a feature of their writing and speaking was Pakistani, they tried to avoid it altogether. Now there is some awareness that there are non-native varieties of English though in private conversation people still manifest prejudice against PakE and consider it only incorrect English.

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