

English as a Social Symbol of Prestige & Its Impact on Urdu Language Speakers

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Abstract : This paper will discuss the impact of English language on Urdu speakers or level at which change is happening in Urdu language usage and how English is taken as a social symbol of prestige in Pakistan. It will also highlight the factors which cause the excessive use of English vocabulary in their social language. This research will be based on qualitative data from Pakistani social networking sites (SNS). This paper aims to highlight the code-switching and code-mixing and a brief overview of the use of English as a non-native language in Pakistan. All the present data will discuss how abbreviated forms of English words are being used and understood among Pakistani people. Research will be conducted through collecting different chat sessions and status updated by Pakistani people on social networks.

Key words: Bilingualism, English as social prestige, English impact on Urdu speakers, shortened form of English words.

1. Introduction

This paper is interested in describing the flexibility of languages that can be understood with variations and changes as variation in English language due to Urdu language. Language is a tool which a speaker uses to convey his message, his feelings or his knowledge. Pakistani youth are impressed by English language as we know English is known as dominating language in the world as the globalization comes to be internationally used in social media or SNS. According to Crystal [1] non-native speakers use English language more than native people because now- a -days English is in prominent position and millions of non-native speakers use English in all over the world. The Pakistani people have a mind set or social behavior that more they use English the more they will be called modern and educated in the society. People use English in their conversation or daily discourse consciously or sometimes unconsciously. Whenever a language is used in different cultures and social conditions than several semantic, pragmatic, phonetic or syntactic changes take place in that very language. The Pakistani speakers as other non-native speakers has developed a whole new system of expressions or shorted forms of words to fulfill their purposes of communication. They use different types of

code switching, code mixing, abbreviated forms of words or alteration of codes. When two languages come in contact then causes bilingualism that is another way of creativity in Language [2]. This new shape of English language is acceptable or enough to understood on Pakistani social networking sites. Kachru [3] mentioned “ideological, elitist & cultural power of English language. This power can be seen in Pakistan where English is not only a practical necessity but also is considered a language of social prestige, opportunity, success, education, or symbol of superiority of knowledge in Pakistan. That’s why people consciously or unconsciously switch from Urdu to English to impress others or create a prestigious effect because everyone want to show that he is modern or educated one even uneducated people are also using English codes in their daily conversation unconsciously because of the excessive use of English word they know the meaning of words and make use of them. Urdu is the national language while other official language is English in Pakistan. English is the source of literacy and symbol of prestige for educated people who love code-mixing or code-switching to enjoy their knowledge of non-native language.

2. Language change & social media

Language changes with the passage of time because of the constant social aberration due to social media in this avant-garde era that arises through the distinct use of language in a society. That's happening to Urdu language by youngsters who consciously or sometime unconsciously use English on social networking sites (SNS). May be it is considered as a symbol of social prestige in society. SNS allows people to retain mutual sharing to each other on Twitter, Facebook, youtube, what'sApp etc. Because of immense social media sites, youngsters update their status or share their professional, social, informational or situational experiences with their friends as well as with public. Just because of the social media, language is going to change its semantic meaning set by youngsters. Social media is forcefully expanding multilingualism in Urdu society & the interesting thing is that less qualified persons are also acquainted all. Language's change can be defined through three channels as phonetic, syntactic or semantic level. New & novel words are replacing in eccentric grammatical forms [4]. In Pakistan most of the people will say **sorry** or **thank you**, rather than of "muaaf krna" & "shukria", it is done unconsciously or may or may be consciously as English is taken to be socially high prestige marvel in this era because it's a global accepted language to interact to each other.

3. Impact on Urdu speakers

Now words are keep in changing their meaning, getting broader or narrow, positive or negative adequate to entail as metaphor or metonymy. The words change their meanings by the internal or external factors influenced by social usage of a language. These factors are responsible for semantic change in language [5]. Researchers have established various ways to classify these types of change in language. Geeraerts [6] defined a clear cut between Semasiological & onomasiological system. Traugott & Dasher [7] introduced micro or macro level semantic change in a language. Micro-level refers to the change of each word in the light of its self standing history. While at macro-level the semantic changes are frequently predictable in a language or cross-linguistically as well. The frequent use of English words is common on SNS, sometime only expressions as **hmmmm**, **mmmm**, **ymmmm**, **aww** etc are enough to describe a whole post or thing. People try to comment any post in one word or phrase most of the time or sometime only a like is enough to illustrate adoration on Facebook page. Ellison [8] stated that SNS accessed people to manage a public or semi-public profile according to apparatus that is already set. Profiles commonly imply to share photos, information, status such as where he/she is in that particular picture or why? One shares his location, education, personal interest, gender, age, work or institution as well. Life is too fast in

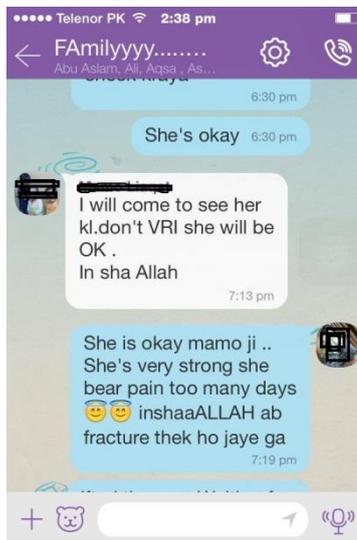
this social media's world and people have low chance to meet to their chums and relatives face to face but now they can keep in touch with them by using SNS. People remain aware about other's and make them aware about his own update existence. So, people comment just in a phrase or sometimes by writing just a word, this is a great semantic change in language that people try to write or say a full abecedarian in just one word. English words are being used in Urdu conversation, songs, films, advertisement, T.V channels or in daily life. Like this code mixing or switching is common in daily routine.

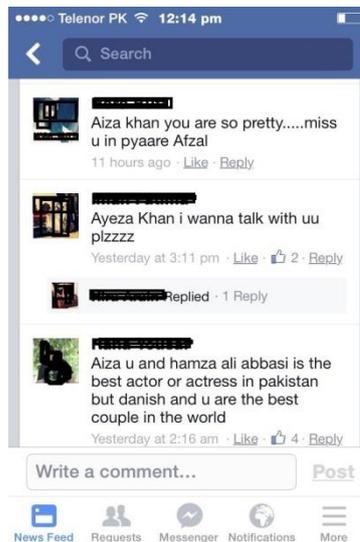
4. Symbol of prestige

Power & status are those qualities which help a language speaker to get much respect, prestige or honor and only a powerful enables a speaker to get higher status in compare to others. That powerful language has prestigious status in society for being famous or international as English or in Pakistan it is being proudly used by the youth or educated people in order to get good status, good job, good business or good education as well. Because of English popularity in Pakistan, people make their wedding or visiting cards printed in English. They use English for advertising their business, even their shop names or their flaxes are in English because people considered it a modern or civilized language. English as mixed shortened language has become a language of upper class, educated people or youngsters in Pakistan. So, English has a charming attraction for the Pakistanis as well as the language of employment or it has become a popular trend in youth to use English in their routine life in order to get esteemed status, power, good job and opportunities with honor in their lives [9]. As we know Pakistan has five major native languages — Punjabi, Pashto, Sindhi, Siraiki and Balouchi while the national language is Urdu. The language used in the circle of power (As the higher bureaucracy, and the officer of the armed forces) is English, since during British rule. Thus, in 1989, the matriculation examination would only be in Urdu in Pakistan. But before the elitist English-medium schools could be abrogated in Pakistan, General Zia was convinced to change his mind, and English was allowed as a medium of Education in some schools (Pakistan Times, 28 October 1987), [10]. English established as a language of power and high social status in Pakistan. It helps to facilitate the entry of the rich and the powerful positions in society, while filtering out the people who are educated in Urdu [11].

5. Methodology and Analysis

The research has followed qualitative method. Exploratory research has been used and discourse analysis is adopted for analyzing the SNS by social media users of Facebook, viber, whatsApp, Twitter and Line.





6. Conclusion

The present study was designed to investigate the excessive use of English in Pakistan by Urdu speakers. This research is based on Pakistani social networking sites (SNS) data. This paper aims to highlight the code-switching and code-mixing and a brief overview of the use of English as a non-native language in Pakistan. All the present data is discussed how abbreviated forms of English words are being used and understood among Pakistani people. Pakistani people are using English in common rather than of using their native language Urdu on SNS. This is because the people have some prestige symbol or social status in their mind to show their personality that they can speak English easily in their daily conversation. That's why people consciously or unconsciously switch from Urdu to English to impress others or create a prestigious effect because everyone want to show that he is modern or educated one even uneducated people are also using English codes because of the excessive use of English in community they know

the meanings or understand English words. English being a popular 2nd language in Pakistan is overlapping largely, as we know English is an international language or means to communicate in all over the world.

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