UCP
Journal of Languages & Literature

Decolonial Feminism and Coalition-Building: The Voices of Household Maids in Rukhsana Ahmad's "A Day of Nuggo"

Aniqa Iqbal, Salma Kalim, Fizza Rehman

Comparative Syntactic Analysis of Subject-Verb Agreement in Urdu and English Language

Zunaira Rehman, Moneeba Habib

Implementation of Pakistan's Language Policy and Marginalization of Sindhi: Teachers' Experiences at a Private School in Sukkur, Sindh

Bahawal Soomro, Kamran Akhtar Siddiqui

Acoustic Analysis of English Lexical Stress in The Disyllabic Nouns and Verbs of Pashto-Speaking EFL Learners

Sultan Muhammad, Salma Khatoon, Abdul Qadir Khan

Half Motherhood and Beyond: Trauma, Schizophrenia and Resistance in Shahnaz Bashir's The Half Mother

Syeda Saba Zahra

Migration and Terrorism in Mohsin Hamid's Exit West

Tahoor Ali

'Allah' in Early Modern England: An Analysis of the Occurrences of the Word in Early English Books Online

Hafiz Abid Masood

University of Central Punjab

(UCP-JLL)
UCP Journal of Languages & Literature

Volume 3
Issue 2

Faculty of Languages & Literature

University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan

Advisory Board

International Members

National Members

- **Dr Wasima Shehzad**
  Dean & Professor
  Department of English, Air University Islamabad
  Email: wasima@mail.au.edu.pk

- **Prof Dr Waseem Anwar**
  Director, International Centre for Pakistani Writing in English (ICPWE), Kinnaird College Lahore
  Email: Waseem.anwar@kinnaird.edu.pk

- **Dr Jamil Asghar Jami**
  Dean & Professor, Faculty of Languages, NUML, Islamabad
  Email: jasghar@numl.edu.pk

- **Dr Fatima Syed**
  Professor and Chair, Department of English, Forman Christian University Lahore
  Email: fatimasyeda@fccollege.edu.pk

- **Dr Uzma Anjum**
  Associate Professor, Department of English, Air University Islamabad
  Email: uzmaraja2000@gmail.com

Editorial

The present issue of the journal brings together a compelling range of scholarly inquiries that reflect the intellectual breadth, critical urgency, and interdisciplinary vitality of contemporary research in language, literature, and cultural studies in Pakistan and beyond. From the lived realities of marginalized communities to the microscopic acoustic properties of speech, from postcolonial trauma to early modern religious discourse, the papers in this issue collectively demonstrate how language and literature remain central to understanding power, identity, and resistance in an increasingly complex world.

The issue opens with Aniqa Iqbal, Salma Kalim, and Fizza Rehman's powerful study of Christian household maids in Rukhsana Ahmad's *A Day for Nuggo*. By mobilizing Maria Lugones's concept of the "coloniality of gender" alongside the framework of "coalition-building" and the idea of "We Story," the authors place at the center of literary analysis a community that is frequently invisible in Pakistani cultural discourse. Their reading does not merely represent domestic workers as victims of class and religious oppression; instead, it highlights their subtle yet significant acts of resistance, solidarity, and self-definition. In doing so, the article advances a decolonial feminist intervention that challenges both literary canons and social hierarchies. It reminds us that meaningful scholarship must account for those whose stories are systematically marginalized, and that literature can serve as a crucial archive of subaltern agency.

From literary resistance, the issue moves into the structural dynamics of language itself with Zunaira Rehman and Moneeba Habib's comparative syntactic analysis of subject–verb agreement in Urdu and English. Their study offers an important linguistic perspective on the difficulties faced by Urdu-speaking learners of English. By demonstrating how Urdu's inflectional complexity contrasts with the more analytic nature of English, the authors shed light on the cognitive and grammatical adjustments required in second-language acquisition. More importantly, their work bridges theoretical linguistics and applied pedagogy, offering insights that can help improve ESL teaching practices in Pakistan. This paper reminds us that language learning is not merely a technical process but one shaped by deep structural differences between linguistic systems.

The question of language becomes even more politically charged in Bahawal Soomro and Kamran Akhtar Siddiqui's exploration of Pakistan's language policy and the marginalization of Sindhi. Through teachers'

narratives from a private school in Sukkur, the article exposes how national language policy, in privileging English and Urdu, reproduces inequalities and erodes the status of regional languages. The sidelining of Sindhi, despite its constitutional and cultural significance, reflects broader socio-political dynamics in which linguistic capital is valued over cultural heritage. By foregrounding teachers' lived experiences, the study brings an important human dimension to language policy debates and makes a strong case for a more inclusive and multilingual educational framework.

The next article, by Sultan Muhammad, Salma Khatoon, and Abdul Qadir Khan, moves from policy and pedagogy to the phonetic realities of language use. Their acoustic analysis of English lexical stress among Pashto-speaking EFL learners offers a fine-grained examination of how stress is produced and perceived. Using duration and intensity as key acoustic markers, the study shows that learners tend to diverge from native English stress patterns, particularly in disyllabic noun–verb pairs. These findings not only contribute to phonetic research but also have direct implications for curriculum design and pronunciation teaching. In a multilingual society like Pakistan, such research is vital for developing pedagogical approaches that are sensitive to the linguistic backgrounds of learners.

The thematic focus of the issue then shifts back to literature, trauma, and subjectivity with Syeda Saba Zahra's analysis of Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother*. By applying Fromm-Reichmann's psychoanalytic theory of schizophrenia, the article offers a nuanced reading of Haleema's psychological disintegration as both a personal tragedy and a political condition. Her identity as a "half mother" captures the unbearable uncertainty endured by Kashmiri women whose loved ones have disappeared in a militarized conflict. Yet the paper does not reduce Haleema to a figure of victimhood; rather, it frames her fractured psyche as a form of silent protest against systemic violence and collective erasure. This study thus contributes to conflict literature by foregrounding maternal subjectivity as a site of both vulnerability and resistance.

Tahoor Ali's reading of Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* continues this engagement with displacement and global crisis, but from the perspective of terrorism and forced migration. Drawing on Deleuzian notions of rhizomatic identity, the article shows how terrorism disrupts not only physical spaces but also the very foundations of selfhood and belonging. Hamid's protagonists, Saeed and Nadia, navigate a world in which borders dissolve but insecurity persists, producing identities that are fluid, fractured, and continually renegotiated. By situating *Exit West* within post-

9/11 literary discourse, the paper illuminates how contemporary fiction grapples with the human consequences of global terror and mobility.

The issue concludes with Hafiz Abid Masood's historically grounded investigation of the word "Allah" in Early English Books Online. Departing from the dominant focus on drama and travel writing, this study adopts a corpus-based approach to examine how early modern English texts engaged with one of the most fundamental concepts of Islam. By analyzing the contexts in which "Allah" appears, the paper deepens our understanding of how early modern England imagined the Muslim God. This work not only enriches the field of early modern studies but also offers a valuable perspective for contemporary discussions about religious representation, misunderstanding, and intercultural contact.

Taken together, the articles in this issue form a rich mosaic of inquiry into how language, literature, and power intersect across historical and contemporary contexts. Whether examining domestic workers in Pakistani fiction, the grammatical challenges of bilingual learners, the politics of language policy, the phonetics of stress, the trauma of motherhood, the dislocations of migration, or the early modern imagination of Islam, each contribution underscores the centrality of language and narrative in shaping human experience. This issue therefore stands as a testament to the ongoing relevance of humanities and social science research in illuminating the struggles, voices, and identities that define our world.

Prof. Dr Khalid Manzoor Butt
Editor-in-Chief
UCP Journal of Languages and Literature

Disclaimer

The UCP Journal of Languages and Literature serves as a platform for scholarly discourse and the dissemination of knowledge within the fields of languages and literature. The views and opinions expressed in the articles published within this journal are solely those of the respective authors. They do not necessarily reflect the views, perspectives, or positions of the Editorial Board or the staff of the University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Pakistan.

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information presented in the articles. However, the Editorial Board and the University of Central Punjab make no representations or warranties regarding the completeness, accuracy, or suitability of the content. Readers are encouraged to exercise their judgment and discretion when interpreting and applying the information contained in these articles.

The UCP Journal of Languages and Literature is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and ethical publishing practices. Any concerns, questions, or requests for clarification related to the content published in this journal should be directed to the respective authors, who bear full responsibility for their work.

We appreciate your understanding of this disclaimer and hope that you find the content within this journal informative and thought-provoking.

Table of Contents

Decolonial Feminism and Coalition-Building: The Voices of Household Maids in Rukhsana Ahmad's "A Day of Nuggo"

Aniqa Iqbal[1*], Salma Kalim[2], Fizza Rehman[3]

Abstract

This paper examines the literary representation of Christian household maids in Rukhsana Ahmad's A Day for Nuggo, shedding light on their struggles and acts of defiance within a deeply stratified society. Drawing on Maria Lugones' theoretical concepts of "coloniality of gender", "coalition-building", and Mafile'o et al.'s concept of "We Story," the study highlights pervasive inequities these women face both as household maids and as members of a marginalized community. It critiques the societal tendency to dehumanize or exalt them as superhumans based on their labor. The study uncovers different forms of resistance, such as "coalition-building", by this marginalized group to challenge oppressive constructs and imposed inferiority. By highlighting the importance of including the narratives of such communities in the scholarship of decoloniality and feminism, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of social issues by centering the marginal groups in such research and literary representations and critiques the (un)conscious oblivion of Pakistani literary writers to focus on these much-neglected representations.

Keywords: Coalition Building, Coloniality of Gender, Christian Community, Household Maids.

Introduction

Considering the context of Pakistani society, Pakistani Feminist literature in English has been observed as tending towards being subtler in representing female household maids. The underrepresentation of such communities in literary works leads to the singularity and universalization

of the feminist agenda, excluding these women from benefiting from these discourses. The scarcity of such representation is due to many factors, as Ayesha Shahid points out, that the writers usually come from a privileged background and do not indulge in household drudgery themselves. Instead, they prefer hiring maids on a full-time or part-time basis (Shahid, 2007). Due to this preference, female writers have been observed turning a blind eye towards representing them in their works. However, largely, these household maids are either depicted through a male lens, focusing more on maids' sexual exploitation, or their representations as pitiable victims, for instance, Daniyal Mueenuddin's "Saleema" or Ahmad Faraz's Urdu poem "Kaneez" (Mueenuddin, 2009; Faraz, n.d.). Stemming from this observation, this research aims to fill the gap by highlighting this void in Pakistani literature in English, where female domestic workers are hardly seen raising their voices. However, one such piece of literature, i.e., "A Day for Nuggo," emerges in Pakistani literature in English that intends to represent this stratum of society that not only enlightens the readers about their woes but also, in return, gives voice to this community in literary works (Ahmad, 2014). Considering the nature of the short story, the research employs Maria Lugones' decolonial feminism as an overarching framework, with concepts such as "coloniality of gender", "complex social construction", "coalition-building", and "women of color" (Lugones, 2007, 2008, 2010; Mendoza, 2016). Additionally, a decolonial approach of "we-story" contributes to debates on marginalized communities' issues that emphasize the importance of their subjective narratives to be included in the larger debates and scholarship (Mafile'o, 2016; Mafile'o et al., 2022). This framework highlights the reclaiming of agency of the Christian community and the household maids who challenge colonial and gendered power structures. The research underscores the potential of resistance and transformation in these peripheral communities while offering new insights into the intersection of decoloniality, gender, and class in Pakistani literature.

The research stems from observing a gap in the literary representation of household maids in Pakistani Literature in English from a non-sexist perspective. The existing representations of household maids are either depicted from the male author's viewpoint and focus more on their sexualized identity, such as in the case of Daniya Mueenuddin's short story "Saleema" and in Urdu literature, Ahmad Faraz's poem "Kaneez", or they are pitied because of their miserable social, economic, and existential circumstances (Mueenuddin, 2009; Faraz, n.d.). This lack of agency in their portrayal led me to realize the scarcity of such narratives where women would raise their voices to address their rights, much like in Kathryn Stockett's American novel, *The Help*. By exemplifying a short

story, "A Day for Nuggo" by Rukhsana Ahmad, the research aims to address this void within Pakistani literature in English and highlights the strength of the voices of these communities and how their inclusion in literary representations can bring a deeper and more diverse approach to society. Furthermore, it will explore how decolonial feminism can offer insights into the suppression of such communities and how they can reclaim their agency through coalition building.

Specifically, the research seeks to address the following questions:

1. How does "A Day for Nuggo" reflect a decolonial feminist perspective by representing the social and colonial gender dynamics that Christian maids encounter, and how they resist by forming coalitions and solidarity?

2. How can including the narratives of female household maids in Pakistani literature in English contribute to the current feminist and decolonial discourses to get a better understanding of social issues?

By answering these questions, this study foregrounds the voices of household maids and interrogates literary silences towards them. Ultimately, this research underscores the potential of literature that can envision and transform social realities rooted in equity and justice.

Rethinking Gender and Power: Lugones's Decolonial Feminist Critique

This literature review examines varying perspectives on decolonial feminism theory and constructs a nuanced perspective to scrutinize the primary text "A Day for Nuggo" by Rukhsana Ahmad. This debate begins with Maria Lugones's seminal work on decolonial feminism, particularly "coloniality of gender" (Lugones, 2008, p.745). To begin with, it is important to understand Quijano's "coloniality of power" to set the tone for the research, from which Lugones draws inspiration for the "coloniality of gender" (Quijano, 2000, p.533; Lugones, 2008, p.745). Coloniality of power primarily critiques the process of racialization that is integral to colonization (Mendoza, 2020, p.14). It assesses the ongoing power mechanism in the contemporary world that constructs particular kinds of thinking and dichotomies to assert and maintain the hegemony and superiority of the former colonizer. Quijano questions the "social classification of the world's population around the idea of race," which he believes is "a mental construction" based on "colonial domination"

(Quijano, 2000, p.533). He coined the term "epistemological reconstruction," which he believes is an act of liberating "the production of knowledge, reflection, and communication from the pitfalls of European rationality/modernity" (Quijano, 2007, p.177). Decolonial thinkers emphasize the need to understand the mechanisms of imposed racialization and gender-related dichotomies on the previously colonized communities, and by resisting this, decolonial philosophers urge the need to speak and present their subjective stance for registering it in the central Western epistemology.

Although the thought was very much there in Quijano's rendering of decoloniality, Lugones furthers this concept and criticizes Quijano's concept for being too limited to focus on gender. She largely relies on Quijano's notion of "coloniality of power", but she complicates it further by incorporating and expanding the meaning of gender (Lugones, 2010, p.745). She argues that gender and sex are historically built and, similar to Quijano's idea of racialization, were imposed on the marginalized communities to retain the hegemony of the dominants. She calls the coloniality of gender an "analysis of racialized, capitalist, gender oppression. (Lugones, 2010, p.747) The notion of gender is not only socially and historically built, rooted in hierarchical dichotomies and sexual differences, but is also reinforced and essentialized to obtain ulterior motives. She believes that "the intersection of gender/class/race (is the) central construct of the capitalist world system of power" (Lugones, 2010, p.746). Lugones critically analyses the experiences of non-White women and people whose intersubjectivity was not only erased but a new kind of categorization was imposed on them, as Mondoza opines that "European constructions of gender introduced internal hierarchies that broke down the solidarity between men and women destroying previous ties based on complementarity and reciprocity" (Mendoza, 2016, p.116). Thus, this division within the gender paved the way to achieve their capitalist goals that adulterated the camaraderie and solidarity within the colonized people. This absence of solidarity is largely felt by the decolonial thinkers; thus, they suggest building "coalition building" and "communal associations" to acknowledge, resist, and reconstruct their subjectivities and epistemologies. (Quijano, 2016, p.20; Mignolo, 2007, p.451)

Maria also sheds light on the eroticization of the colonized, which leads to the notion that they must be civilized because they are sexually wild people. "Colonized females were never understood as lacking because they were not man-like, and were turned into viragos." (Lugones, 2010,

p.744). Along with the eroticization, there was an element of a civilizing mission in the garb of Christianizing them: "The civilizing transformation justified the colonization of memory, and thus of people's senses of self, of intersubjective relation, of their relation to the spirit world, to land, to the very fabric of their conception of reality, identity, and social, ecological, and cosmological organization" (Lugones, 2010, p.745). Maria also talks about the dehumanization process, which played a central role in the colonial project. This process involved shaping the gender norms, mostly how women are seen in relation to the idea of sin and virtue. Christianity's mission was central to it; since they were barbaric, they were to be civilized through this mission. Along the way, their indigenous history and epistemologies were erased (Lugones, 2010, p.745).

Decolonial feminism critiques the outliving of the gender binary and its connection with civil society. As Lugones says, this categorisation is for keeping the governance and hegemony of the elite. This is the reason Lugones stresses the idea that only a critique of colonial and capitalist gender oppression is not sufficient, but rather to resist by transcending the "colonial difference" through coalition building and solidarity: "One does not resist the coloniality of gender alone. One resists it from within a way of understanding the world and living in it that is shared…, providing recognition. Communities rather than individuals enable the doing (Lugones, 2010, p.754). Maria Lugones emphasizes the need for coalition building that is important not only as a way to resist but as a means to reconstruct subjective identity and epistemology because in this way the "sense of responsibility is maximal" (Lugones, 2010, p.755).

Lugones's later work, "Methodological Notes Toward a Decolonial Feminism," further develops her earlier ideas, focusing on the intersubjectivity of "women of color", which constructs the foundation for an "existential, material, (and) social response to the idea of a universal 'woman'". By criticizing the notion of universal woman, she objects that a colonized woman is subjected to the sense of "inferiority to others' superiority" (Lugones, 2011, p.69). This is "inscribed not just in how she is perceived but also in the very complex construction of the social world" (Lugones, 2011, p.70). In this article, too, she emphasizes coalition-building as a critical method for mending the fractures in social constructions of identity and achieving a more subjective and intersubjective understanding of self. "Centering of the colonial further clarifies why coalitional solidarity among Women of Color requires that we both become fluent in each other's histories" (Lugones, 2011, p.72). Her call for decolonial feminism underscores the importance of

challenging these oppressive categories and emphasizes the need for coalition building to resist the imposed inferiority.

Criticism and Reviews of Decolonial Feminism

There are some rebuttals of decolonial feminism, mostly by Afro-American scholars, such as Selamawit D. Terrefe, who suggests that Lugones's decolonial feminist theory marginalizes Afro-American women by aiming at building a coalition of women of color from around the world that ultimately leads to undermining the importance of Black women. In "The Pornotrope of Decolonial Feminism," Terrefe engages with Hortense Spillers's concept of "pornotroping," which refers to the reduction of a person or group to mere flesh, objectified and sexualized. Terrefe contends that decolonial feminism, as articulated by Lugones, leads to the erasure of Black women by failing to center Black women's experiences as foundational to the critique of power structures. The exploitation of black women's bodies during slavery was not only physical but also psychological, and that continues to be a part of the contemporary world (Terrefe, 2020, pp.134-64). Similarly, Emma D. Velez is of the view that Lugones' "linguistic critique" of intersectionality undermines the spirit of decolonial feminism's call for coalition politics, especially between Latin American women and Black women. Briefly speaking, Lugones' "linguistic critique" talks about the language of "intersection" and "interlocking," which perpetuates the binaries of race, gender, sex, etc. (Velez, 2019). At the same time, this categorization further leads to the fragmented self-intact, which has been built on the colonial social construction. Velvez, on the other hand, argues that this linguistic critique is insufficient as it can undermine the coalition of women of colour at the larger level. She argues that a combination of both intersection and fused approaches is necessary to build a coalitional praxis of resistance.

K. Bailey Thomas also critiques Lugone's engagement with Kimberle Crenshaw's theory of "intersectionality" and argues that by indulging in this theory, she is unable to implement the very gist that her own proposed decolonial feminist methodology demands. The article directly cites Lugones' words from her essay "Radical Multiculturalism and Women of Color Feminisms," where she asserts that intersectionality is a "white bourgeois feminism colluding with the oppression of Women of Color" (Thomas, 2020, p.509). Thomas maintains that Lugones rejects the idea that intersectionality can be used as a tool to dissect the dominant hierarchical structure of the white perspective for the decolonial feminist approach. Although she states that her theory of decolonial feminism is for all women of colour, there is a possibility that she excludes Black women

from Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality, which was primarily for Black women. By siding with Crenshaw's notion of intersectionality, Thomas argues that Maria's rejection of this theory leads to the erasure of Black women from her own framework. While Velez's article entirely rejects Maria's intersectionality by saying that it jeopardizes the theory's own call to build a coalition of the oppressed, this article furthers the debate by including Lugones' involvement with Crenshaw's theory and her misinterpretation that may lead to the erasure of Black women from her debate.

Tlostanova et. al. situate decolonial feminism in Sweden, which has a history of a colonial past in North America, the Caribbean, and Africa. They argue that Sweden must explore settler colonialism through a decolonial feminist lens by incorporating the experiences of the Sámi people, an Indigenous group within Sweden. They cite Indigenous feminists such as Karla Jessen Williamson and Rauna Kuokkanen who argue that, despite being a colonizer in the past, colonial gender binaries remain intact in contemporary Sweden, which directly harms indigenous women and marginalized groups (Tlostanova et. al., 2019, p.290). By advocating for the inclusion of Sámi epistemologies, they challenge conventional feminist knowledge production and underscore the importance of coalition-building in the face of various forms of oppression.

Tracie Mafile'o et. al., in "We Story: Decoloniality in Practice and Theory," advocate for a "story-saturated" approach to research methodologies. They argue that conventional Western research methods often distance and dehumanize the very people they are meant to benefit, particularly marginalized groups. The authors advocate for an approach that is decolonial and can ensure "story-saturated" processes. "Owning our stories" is the only way to get culturally relevant results. I found this reference quite useful in building an understanding of the research that is the very thought that the nexus of decolonial feminism seeks. The theory demands an inclusivity of the stories that are not heard. This is also very pertinent to the primary text of the research. Hence, the "story-saturated" approach is the term that is found in decolonial praxis theory. Also, Maria Lugones, by coining the term of decolonial feminism, borrowed the same interpretation, which she associated with feminism (Mafile'o et. al., 2016, p.547).

Finally, Ayesha Shahid's PhD dissertation, *Silent Voices, Untold Stories: Women Domestic Workers in Pakistan and Their Struggle for*

Empowerment, examines the working conditions and legal struggles of domestic workers in Pakistan. Shahid's research sheds light on the underrepresentation of domestic workers in Pakistani literature and the legal system. By exploring the voices of these workers, Shahid's work highlights the importance of bringing peripheral stories to the center, which is the central agenda of decolonial feminist theory. Her research provides a useful context for understanding the struggles of characters like Nuggo in the Pakistani societal context, further grounding the theoretical framework of this review in the lived experiences of domestic workers in Pakistan (Shahid, 2007).

Thus, this critical engagement has explored various dimensions of decolonial feminism, from Lugones's earliest to the latest works on the coloniality of gender, drawing on the expansions offered by scholars such as Velez, Terrefe, and Thomas. The review has also engaged with decolonial feminism in diverse contexts, from Sweden to Pakistan. These sources provide a deeper understanding of the text, its characters, and decolonial feminism in building a coalition to combat with living legacies of colonialism. Also, incorporating the "story-saturated" approach to include direct voices of marginalized people will further enrich the analysis of the primary text.

The Socio-Political Context of Christian Household Maids in Pakistan

The suppression of Christian household maids in Pakistan is rooted in the historical and socio-political factors. The low-caste converts during British rule predominantly practiced Christianity in Pakistan. Many of them were from Dalit backgrounds in Punjab who converted to Christianity in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite religious conversion, they continued to remain socio-economically marginalized (Shakir; Webster). In contemporary Pakistan, Christians constitute around 1.5% of the population, yet they are associated with menial employment such as sanitation work and domestic labor (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2019, p.42). Domestic labor, in particular, intensifies such inequalities because it is mostly performed by female Christians. The discrimination that they face is rooted in religious prejudice and caste-based stigma, which gets reinforced by misleading fundamentalist discourses that regard them "impure" or "unclean" (Malik, 2002, p.37).

The arrangements in households are such that they are expected to use separate utensils, washrooms, or even sit on the floor instead of furniture (Robinson, 2013, p.84). Such exclusion is compounded by their precarious

situation, as domestic work remains unregulated under Pakistani labor law (International Labour Organization, 2010, p.15; Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2019, p.43). Moreover, the gendered dimensions of domestic labor intensify their subjugation, and they remain within the shackles of patriarchal structures while their religious minority status makes them targets of violence, including forced conversions and blasphemy accusations (Mahmood, 2021, p.92). These socio-political realities position Christian household maids within Maria Lugones' "coloniality of gender," where she talks about how gender oppression is inseparable from racialization and economic exploitation (Lugones, 2008, p.745).

Decolonial Feminist Framework: Coloniality of Gender, Coalition-Building, and "We-Story"

The theoretical framework employed for this research is based on Maria Logunes' decolonial feminist key concepts, such as "coloniality of gender", and "coalition building" (Lugones, 2008, 2010), while considering the importance of Mafile'o's notion of "we-story" in the context of the primary text (Mafile'o et al., 2022). The research argues that these decolonial feminist key concepts provide a critical framework to analyse the oppressive and marginalized system operating in Pakistani society that puts the people from the lower strata into such positions that they are constantly battling with existential, social, interrelation, and living challenges. By utilizing these concepts, the study contends that the decolonial feminist lens reveals the pervasive living legacies of colonialism and a way out through "coalition-building" (Lugones, 2010).

"Coloniality of gender" relies on the thought of liberating gender from the parasitic notions of intersubjectivity, which has the potential to undermine the experiences and voices of the marginalized and colonized women living under colonial legacies that further perpetuate violence and oppression within the socio-political spheres (Lugones, 2008). Taking this philosophy further, "women of color" focuses on the "complex social construction" of the self, which positions these women as inferior in social status (Lugones, 2010). However, decolonial feminism calls for rejecting these constructions and reconstructing epistemologies as such that they can enable women of color to reclaim their own narratives and resist the dominance of colonial knowledge systems. The analogy Logunes draws is of the "fractured locus" that leads to the misrepresentation or sans-representation of the marginalized gender in the society that can only be battled with either "coalition building" or "epistemic reconstruction"

((Lugones, 2010; Mignolo, 2007). Additionally, this section intends to bring the arguments of those who have demonstrated the edges and limitations of decolonial feminism to the discussion and analysis of the text (Terrefe, 2020; Thomas, 2020; Velez, 2019). Their critiques will be woven into the text to offer a comprehensive analysis as well as the strengths and challenges of bringing decolonial feminism theory within the boundary of Rukhsana Ahmad's "A Day of Nuggo" (Ahmad, 2014).

Coloniality of Gender and Class: Exploitation of Female Household Maids

A close analysis of the short story opens multiple horizons of how the female household maids in our society are treated, especially when it comes to asking for basic human rights, such as demanding a day off. These "Begums" or "Bajis" (local way of addressing their female employers) hire them as part-time or full-time maids, neglect their basic needs, and treat them as creatures that are either "super-humans", "lacking humanity", or "animals… (who are) uncontrollably sexual and wild" beings. At the same time, they consider themselves as "civilized… (and) fully human" (Lugones, 2008, p.744). This stark contrast between what they think about these people and what they think of themselves is reflected in their practices, behaviours, and communication, which becomes a tool to maintain hegemony to suppress these peripheral people.

This power dynamic is illustrated through the story of Nuggo, a household maid working for Sughra Begum in Lahore. She lives in the villa's servant quarters and, despite an immense workload following the birth of her son, she is expected to work 24/7 for her employer. Meanwhile, her co-worker, Raagni, an employee of the Lahore Municipal Authority, raises concerns about this exploitative setup and encourages Nuugo to ask for a day off. As the narrative unfolds, the Trade Union stages a protest to demand a day off on Sunday instead of Friday, as most of them are churchgoers. The story concludes with the Trade Union's success in achieving its goal. However, Nuugo withdraws from her request, caving in because of the dual pressure from her husband and the facility of residing in Sughra Begum's house.

This tension between employers' privilege and workers' vulnerability is further reinforced by the attitudes of other elite women in the narrative. Sughra Begum's daughter, Raabia's presupposition is much the same about Nuggo, as the latter gives birth to two sons in two years, and the former lectures her on the "value of birth control and the hazards of overpopulating the world" (Ahmad, 2014, p.178). These sorts of practices

have become normative behaviour, where they easily classify these female maids as not among them and have characteristics that are not easily found in their kind of people. Moreover, terms of endearment for these maids are limited to their ability to work with energy and manpower. Likewise, colonized women are also considered "viragos," which means a strong, mannish woman who can do household chores with strength and energy. Sughra Begum's admiration for Nuggo, saying that she "must consist(s) of some superhuman element because she stood steady after delivering the child and started washing sheets that are "white as milk" (Ahmad, 2014, pp.174, 175), reflects upon how Nuggo is being praised based on her ability to work and she becomes Sughra Begum's "virago". Similarly, Raagni's character becomes "a rare breed" because she "acquire(s) tremendous influence amongst the local groups" and despite of her minimal education, her "vast reserves of information about matters" (Ahmad. 2014, p.180) illustrates not only diversity of perspectives in her character but also how such beings are considered "viragos". My research has explored that through these behaviors, they not only justify their violence and exploitation but also retain their hegemony and superiority over such suppressed communities. Such attitudes proliferate social and racial hierarchies and gender dichotomies where one stratum of the society enjoys the upper hand, and the other is subjugated and put into such employments that are physically challenging and laborious (such as street sweepers, household maids), thus the space becomes a place of "colonial difference", which as Lugones describes is a place where this sort of "coloniality of gender" is enacted (Mignolo, 2018, p.ix; Lugones, 2008, p.743). Nuggo, who is the central victim of this "colonial difference", is psychologically not ready to accept whether their demands can be accepted. Her uncertainty towards raising a call for her rights and asking Raagni if she thinks it is "possible for us poor people to change things?" speaks of the societal tendency to consider her identity as a "Subaltern" who is unable to put forth her voice (Ahmad, 2014, p.181; Spivak, 1988, p.271). This research raises a critique of perspectives that consider these household maids as either superhuman or viragos, yet at the same time, they present themselves as civilized and fully human. What I believe is that this mentality gives air to such decisions where considering their basic human rights becomes either an impossible task or an act of high virtue, rendering the employers as benevolent humans.

The functionality of coloniality of gender can be seen from another dimension, that is, the capitalistic streaks in the production of gender, which are based on the division of labour. This dehumanization process involves not only physical violence but also the erasure of knowledge,

practices, and social systems coming from these marginalized communities. Though Lugones gives an example of such an aspect through the colonizer's "Christianizing mission" for civilizing the masses, the text implicitly projects such capitalistic tendencies through the imposition on Municipal Authority for fewer working hours on Friday for the trade wallahs (Lugones, 2011, p.75): "Most of the sweepers in the city were Christians, and the union wallahs all felt that their day off should be Sunday, not Friday, since they were all churchgoers" (Ahmad, 2014, p.181). The Authority's initial rejection of their plea for declaring Sunday a day off becomes an embodiment of the hegemonic streaks of the civilizing mission that propagates its ideology onto the marginalized community. This discussion has delved deeper into the mechanics of social hierarchies that are operating in the form of coloniality of gender and class, and how these further lead to the imposition of oppressive constructs on the Christian community and household maids who are living on the margins.

Decolonial Resistance and Coalition Building: Empowering Marginalized Voices

After discussing in detail, the social hierarchies and their interplay with suppressive and repressive practices of the female employers (Begums and Bajis), and the Municipal Authority of Lahore towards the marginalized Christian community and Christian female household maids, the research intends to unravel further that despite these social inequalities and gender colonial suppression, these marginalized people emerge as a strong force through resistance and "coalition building" and successfully raise a decolonial call for their rights, which get accepted and implemented (Quijano, 2016, p.20). This resistance does not aim at bringing up individual subjectivity but rather consciously acknowledging the "colonial difference" and bringing up other subjectivities through coalition and communal endeavors (Mignolo, 2018, p.ix). As Lugones rightly says, the main task of decolonial feminists starts from "seeing the colonial difference, emphatically resisting her epistemological habit of erasing it", and "begins to learn about other resisters at the colonial difference" (Lugones, 2010, p.752). This conscious acknowledgment of others' presence becomes the first step towards coalition building. Raagni has her own way of dealing with things, which is different from that of Nuggo and Samuel. But Nuggo admires her strong willpower, yet at the same time feels sorry for her not having any husband and child despite knowing the fact that her own family hates her; "Though she felt the greatest admiration for her, at times she also felt sorry for her. Raagni had no children and a

husband who was 'bad' with other women", which became the reason she left him (Ahmad, 2014, p.180). Contrastingly, Samuel, under the influence of Begum Sughra, is highly inclined towards a submissive attitude as he says, "apologise. Go and apologise, Nuggo. For goodness' sake, go. All day Samuel begged her" (Ahmad, 2014, p.186). Together, this multiplicity of perspectives and different natures bring diversity within the Christian community. Despite the difference of opinion, the sense of communal association is there as Nuugo's admiration towards Raagni's firm stance and for her being the driving force behind the whole campaign is one example. Likewise, Raagni acknowledges other people of her community, especially "the private-employed sweepers (who are) not benefitting from the new rule" (Ahmad, 2014, p.182) of taking a day off on Friday, and it troubles her "deeply that large numbers of their community were probably working seven days a week" (Ahmad, 2014, pp.181, 182). Such communal association and coalition building that the characters depict for each other is an integral step towards achieving bigger. Seeing it in the context of the story, being heard by the administrative authorities of Lahore and getting their plea accepted is the ultimate achievement they have gotten so far. All these efforts of resistance are enacted in the "fractured locus," where different histories of resistance to colonialism meet while maintaining the multiplicity of experiences and perspectives. So, the community together accepts each other's differences, and the story itself becomes a fractured locus where the reader can witness the emerging diversity of perspectives.

The character of Raagni is of utmost interest, as she raises a decolonial call asking Nuggo that she "must have a day off in the week" (Ahmad, 2014, p.180). Raising the voice of the marginalized community becomes an embodiment of decolonial praxis theory. The notion of coalition building that is pertinent to decolonial feminism is evident through the Christian community forming a trade union to raise their voices. As Raagni says, "if we stick together, we'll be strong" (Ahmad, 2014, p.180). The result of this coalition is that "the Municipal Board of Lahore caved in and to their sheer, unbelieving delight they found that they had won most of their demands. Chief amongst them was the demand for a holiday on Sunday" (Ahmad, 2014, p.182). There are other small glimpses that the text reveals of the coalition of the downtrodden who always "return to their crumbling and rotting jhuggis to salvage the remains, helping each other cheerfully," and this is the utopian place where "everyone knew everyone" (Ahmad, 2014, p.179). This resonates with Lugones' idealization that we all should be fluent in each other's history. Ahmad's depiction of this marginalized community in her short story becomes a decolonial feminist portrayal of resistance and highlights the importance of the diversity of perspectives

within Pakistani society. Consequently, it was the union's success that resulted in the Lahore Municipal Authority conceding to their demands. It becomes a symbol of the potential for diverse perspectives and their acknowledgment through coalition building that can bring meaningful change in society. Thus, such coalition-building is the kind of resistance that gives agency to these peripheral people to claim their viewpoint.

By indulging in this research, I also point out the deficiency of the representation of household maids in the Pakistani literature in English. Although feminist movements are quite active and agile in addressing the woes and pleas of Pakistani women, there seems to be a gap in the literal representation of such females, particularly in acknowledging their right to a day off. The same critique is raised on the feminist movements that fail to recognize the divergent feminist voices while focusing on "one woman, only one reality" (Lugones, 2010, p.756). Rukhsana Ahmad's short story is one of its kind that talks about the suppressed women directly getting affected by the women of the upper class who claim to be empowering marginalized women, for instance, Raabia's lecturing Nuggo on birth control. However, later in the text, the same Raabia reacts to Nuggo's demanding a day off as she complains to her mother that "they don't deserve all your kindness and generosity, the miserable whining ingrates" (Ahmad 185). I rather believe that Raabia is a prototype of most Pakistani women who hire these maids, especially for full-time jobs, and they are expected to work for them without getting any time off.

The most striking element of the narrative is the contrast between two different scenarios, i.e., the trade wallah's successful demand for a Sunday off from Lahore Municipal Authority, and Nuggo's failed request for a day off from her employer, Sughra Begum. The former's call is not only accepted but also celebrated, while the story ends with a lamenting note as Nuggo succumbs to the pressure of her employer, rejects the idea, and chooses to continue working. This contrast highlights the potential of "coalition building" and solidarity in bringing change. The "trade wallahs" under Raagni's leadership achieve success by building solidarity and communal associations, making their demands stronger. In contrast, Nuggo's reluctance to follow Raagni's instructions isolates her from the power of the coalition. This affirms that decoloniality can be achieved through collective action to maximize the sense of responsibility (Lugones, 2010, p.755; Ahmad, 2014).

Defying Colonial Gender Constructs and Reclaiming Identity

Another factor that makes the characters of this short story distinct is their resistance to the colonial social construction of gender. This resistance is a by-product of the coalition that "women of color" build to bring non-white women into the scholarship of feminism. "Woman of color" is a response to the idea of a universal woman, which potentially blurs the binary of race and gender (Lugones, 2011, p.69). Hence, it demands that despite having a fractured sense of self, women reject the imposed inferiority, which ultimately becomes a tool to attain a coalition of women. Raagni is labelled "evil black bitch" (Ahmad, 2014, p.187) by Samuel, still, she rejects this complex social construction when she says to Samuel that "poorest of the poor we might be but we are happier and more independent than most others" (Ahmad, 2014, p.187). This underscores her sense of self-worth that defies the dominant narratives. Even Samuel envies her "assuredness and swagger" because he remains under the immense influence of Sughra Begum and prefers to be submissive (Ahmad, 2014, p.187). Likewise, the social construction intervenes in considering Nuggo as a "very lucky" woman, for being a mother of two sons, highlighting the building perception of the self; "Tell you the truth, I think Nuggo's very lucky, too; it's always tricky when it's like that. But Bibiji, what a girl!" (Ahmad, 2014, p.175). Along with all these details, the text highlights intersubjectivity within Nuggo's character that she is dark-skinned, Christian, a housemaid, an obedient wife, and a nurturing mother. The same goes with Raagni, but with the addition that she is a divorcee and childless. This intersubjectivity reinforces the multiplicity of selves within their characters and stands in sharp contrast to the concept of the universal woman. This discussion sheds light on how these characters are dehumanized and judged by society, but most importantly, how they reject such imposed inferiority. By rejecting this social construction, they aim to bring to the fore the intersubjectivity of their self, which becomes a way forward towards coalition building among women of colour.

Unveiling Neglected Narratives: 'We-Story' Approach in Literary Representation

For me, the most appealing aspect of working on this research was unravelling the actual stories told by the characters themselves, which amounts to the true spirit of decoloniality. Mafile'o, Tracie, et al. also stress the importance of the "we-story" approach that aims to bring the

diverse subjective narratives of the people (2016). They debunk the Western-based research methodologies, which rely on empirical evidence, as they say that relying on such objective and universal results distances the subjective narratives of people from their own lived experiences. "A Day for Nuggo" however, becomes a decolonial practice that Ahmad constructs, such characters who are putting forth their narratives, and the plot ends by enlightening the reader about the actual experiences, grievances, and priorities of the marginalized Christian community living in Lahore, Pakistan. Nuggo's life is not told about her, but through her, such as her struggles as a domestic worker and also as a mother. After giving birth to her son, she resumes work almost immediately: "Two hours after the baby came she was up washing clothes" (Ahmad, 2014, p.176). Rukhsana Ahmad does not use these details to invoke pity, but to expose the normalized inhuman treatment these women have to face, whose labour is invisibilized under the guise of loyalty or gratitude.

The "we-story" framework reveals how collective narratives emerge from shared oppression and resistance (Mafile'o et al., 2016). The character of Raagni and her strong voice as an activist add another dimension to this subjective collectivism. Raagni tells Nuggo, "'Surely you must have a day off in the week'" (Ahmad, 2014, p.180). This question unravels employers like Sughra Begum, who view domestic workers as "superhuman" while justifying their own superiority through "kindness" and "generosity" (Ahmad, 2014, p.176). Even the strike of the trade union to demand Sunday as a day off for Christian workers is a reassertion of their cultural and religious identity. "Chief amongst them was the demand for a holiday on Sunday for all practising Christians" (Ahmad, 2014, p.182). This collective action mirrors the "we-story" strategy, where individual demands are voiced through communal unity.

Moreover, the story reveals how deeply entrenched social hierarchies are. Nuggo hesitates to speak up and is unable to decide whether to go for Raagni's call or her husband, Samuel's fear of offending Sughra Begum. "She hadn't really considered herself at all," the narrator notes, "but the arguments on either side seemed both convincing and sound to her" (Ahmad, 2014, p.183). This internal conflict embodies the heart of decolonial storytelling. It not only represents one scenario, but also reveals the layers of dependence and shame in the character of Nuggo. Also, when Raabia scolds Nuggo while her baby cries, she abruptly says, "'I'm going now, Raabia Bibi… I won't be working on Sundays anymore'" (Ahmad, 2014, p.185). It is a sentence that reclaims her selfhood, though momentarily. Raabia responds with disdain: "'What a nerve after all

you've done for them'" (Ahmad, 2014, p.185). This very reaction validates the need for alternative narratives that center the marginalized. However, the most important aspect of the short story is its refusal to consider empowerment as equivalent to Nuggo's triumph. When she faces the fear of evacuating the servant quarter, Nuggo concedes: "'All right then, Sarwari. Tell her, I'll return to work tomorrow'" (Ahmad, 2014, p.188). Rukhsana Ahmad's conclusion of this short story does not imply Nuggo's defeat, but rather reflects the harsh material constraints under which such people face an existential crisis. Most importantly, the brief moment of resistance that Nuggo shows becomes the ultimate necessity as per the decolonial call. Thus, Ahmad's narrative becomes a necessary rupture in mainstream Pakistani feminist writing. By centering characters like Nuggo and Raagni, Ahmad resists both epistemic erasure and narrative elitism.

Also, I would like to draw this point to the critique on mainstream Pakistani feminist literary writers, who are unconsciously oblivious to these much-neglected representations and put a lot of focus on the diasporic writing critique, which is, for the majority of the people living in Pakistan is irrelevant. Pertinent to this point, I found one of the finest critiques made by Ayesha Shahid in her dissertation, where she maintains that the dearth of representations of household maids in Pakistani literature is because these writers and researchers "have enjoyed the services of domestic workers but have turned a blind eye to their problems" (Shahid, 2007). Thus, Ahmad's endeavor to write this story becomes an embodiment of the "we-story" that provides ample space for the representation of the Christian community, especially the female housemaids.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this research highlights the dehumanization and marginalization of household maids and the Christian community in "A Day for Nuggo" (Ahmad, 2014). It critiques the societal tendency to consider them either superhuman or lacking humanity, and most of the time, they are praised based on the kind of work they do. While critically analyzing them through the concepts of "coloniality of gender" and "women of color," the study has unravelled different ways through which these marginalized groups have resisted oppressive constructs and challenged the imposed inferiority (Lugones, 2008, 2010). The story itself becomes a "fractured locus" that symbolizes the strength of coalition-building among the Christian community that promotes diversity of perspectives (Lugones, 2010). Finally, the story becomes a platform where

often-ignored voices are embodied through the approach of "we-story" (Mafile'o, 2016). This not only affirms the importance of their subjective narratives being heard but also the outcome of this into a meaningful social change through communal association.

References

Ahmad, R. (2014). *The gatekeeper's wife and other stories*. ILQA Publications.

Faraz, A. (n.d.). Kaneez [Poem]. *In Selected poems of Ahmad Faraz* (Urdu).

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. (2019). *State of human rights in 2019*. HRCP.

International Labour Organization. (2010). *Domestic workers in Pakistan: Informality and vulnerability*. ILO Country Office for Pakistan.

Lugones, M. (2008). The coloniality of gender. *Worlds & Knowledges Otherwise*, Spring, 743–759.

Lugones, M. (2010). Toward a decolonial feminism. *Hypatia*, 25(4), 742–759. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2010.01137.x

Lugones, M. (2011). Methodological notes toward a decolonial feminism. In A. M. Isasi-Díaz & E. Mendieta (Eds.), *Decolonizing epistemologies: Latina/o theology and philosophy* (pp. 68–80). Fordham University Press. https://doi.org/10.5422/fordham/9780823241354.003.0004.

Mafile'o, T. (2016). We-story: Decolonising research practice through relational epistemologies. *AlterNative: An International Journal of Indigenous Peoples*, 12(2), 97–110.

Mafile'o, T., Tamasese, K., & Te Ava, A. (2022). We story: Decoloniality in practice and theory. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 22(6), 547–561. https://doi.org/10.1177/15327086221105666

Mahmood, C. (2021). *Religious minorities in Pakistan: Struggle for identity*. Routledge.

Malik, I. H. (2002). *Minority rights in South Asia: Minority Rights Group International report.* Minority Rights Group International.

Mendoza, B. (2016). Coloniality of gender and power: From postcoloniality to decoloniality. In L. Disch & M. Hawkesworth (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of feminist theory* (pp. 100–121). Oxford University Press.

Mignolo, W. D. (2007). Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality, and the grammar of decoloniality. *Cultural Studies,* 21(2–3), 449–514. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162647

Mignolo, W. D. (2018). Decoloniality and phenomenology: The geopolitics of knowing and epistemic/ontological colonial differences. *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 32(3), 360–387. https://doi.org/10.5325/jspecphil.32.3.0360

Mignolo, W. D. (2020). On decoloniality: Second thoughts. *Postcolonial Studies,* 23(4), 612–618. https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2020.1751436

Mueenuddin, D. (2009). Saleema. *In In other rooms, other wonders* (pp. 1–18). W. W. Norton & Company.

Quijano, A. (2000). Coloniality of power, Eurocentrism, and Latin America. *Nepantla: Views from South*, 1(3), 533–580.

Quijano, A. (2007). Coloniality and modernity/rationality. *Cultural Studies*, 21(2–3), 168–178. https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601164353

Quijano, A. (2016). Bien vivir: Between development and the de/coloniality of power. *Alternautas*, 3(1), 10–23. http://www.alternautas.net/blog/2016/1/20/bien-vivir-between-development-and-the-decoloniality-of-power1

Robinson, R. (2013). *Christians of India*. Sage Publications.

Shahid, A. (2007). *Silent voices, untold stories: Women domestic workers in Pakistan and their struggle for empowerment* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Warwick).

Shakir, M. (1986). *Christians in Pakistan: A study of religious minorities*. Vanguard.

Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the subaltern speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the interpretation of culture* (pp. 271–313). University of Illinois Press.

Terrefe, S. D. (2020). The pornotrope of decolonial feminism. *Critical Philosophy of Race*, 8(1–2), 134–164. https://doi.org/10.5325/critphilrace.8.1-2.0134

Thomas, K. B. (2020). Intersectionality and epistemic erasure: A caution to decolonial feminism. *Hypatia*, 35(3), 509–523. https://doi.org/10.1017/hyp.2020.22

Tlostanova, M., Thapar-Björkert, S., & Koobak, R. (2019). Do we need decolonial feminism in Sweden? *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research*, 27(4), 290–295. https://doi.org/10.1080/08038740.2019.1641552

Velez, E. D. (2019). Decolonial feminism at the intersection: A critical reflection on the relationship between decolonial feminism and intersectionality. *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 33(3), 390–406. https://doi.org/10.5325/jspecphil.33.3.0390

Webster, J. C. B. (2007). *A social history of Christianity: North-West India since 1800.* Oxford University Press.

Comparative Syntactic Analysis of Subject-Verb Agreement in Urdu and English Language

Zunaira Rehman [1*], Moneeba Habib[2]

Abstract

Syntax deals with the combination of words and phrases to construct a sentence. It has been observed that syntax is the core component of linguistics. A significant number of studies are available on syntactic analysis, but limited research is available on comparative syntactic analysis of subject-verb agreement. Therefore, applying a qualitative comparative approach by collecting secondary data, the current study aims to explore the comparative syntactic analysis of subject-verb agreement in Urdu and English. The study highlighted that Urdu is more complex and has an inflectional structure of subject-verb agreement as compared to English, which has a simpler and more analytic structure. This study contributes to the understanding of the challenges faced by Urdu speakers in learning the English language. A number of practical insights are also prescribed for improving ESL pedagogy.

Keywords: Comparative Syntactic Analysis, English Language, Subject-Verb Agreement, Syntax, Urdu Language.

Introduction

Syntax is the pivotal element of linguistics that emphasizes the organization of words and phrases into coherent sentences that make communication possible. Syntax has several components. Among all, Subject-verb agreement (SVA) plays a crucial role in ensuring grammatical accuracy and clarity. It shows the relationship between the subject and verb that is influenced by factors such as number, person, and, in some languages, gender.

[1]MS English Linguistics Scholar, COMSATS University Islamabad
[2] Faculty, Department of Humanities, COMSATS University Islamabad
*Corresponding author's E-mail: zunairarehman42@gmail.com

Urdu and English are common, and they have made a great contribution to linguistics. This notwithstanding, the two languages are different in their syntactic structures. The Urdu language is an Indo-Aryan language that exhibits a high inflectional agreement system in verb phrases. In verb phrases (VP), the verb coincides with the number, person, and gender. In Pakistan, the national language is Urdu, and English is the official language of Pakistan, despite the fact that there are a few languages in the country (Manan and David, 2013).

Moreover, English is widely used in the field of technology, including computer programming and software development (Akram et al., 2021 & 2022). English-language media, such as films, television shows, and music, have a significant influence on global culture. In short, fluency in English has become essential in today's interconnected world, providing individuals with numerous personal and professional benefits (Abdelrady & Akram, 2022).

English, on the other hand, has a simplified system of agreements as it is a Germanic language. English is very much attached to numbers and persons. In English, the verb phrases (VP) also lose their gender role. The differences exhibit a range of linguistic studies, particularly where a second language is involved.

The variations in the Urdu and English language verb phrase's structure bring about some difficulty to the Urdu speakers in learning the English language as a second language. The Urdu language has an immense system of morphological agreement, and it is adaptable in word order. Conversely, the English language has an uncompromising syntactic structure of English. These contradictions may bring about syntactic mistakes that may result in impediments in the learning process, that is, in the rules of subject-verb agreement.

Literature Review

The arrangement of words into phrases and sentences in order to facilitate the knowledge about grammatical processes of different systems of languages is said to be syntax. Syntactic analysis no longer remains at the traditional grammatical conception but has passed over to the Chomsky cognitive revolution. The traditional grammar is concerned with the classification of the syntactic elements as different and discrete units, i.e., nouns and verbs, which failed to offer a satisfactory explanation of the natural processes of language learning (Radford, 2004). Universal Grammar was utilized by Chomsky (1986) to emphasise the I-language as the bestowal of language acquisition by the native speaker in the world.

Chomsky made grammar a study of the mental features when he applied the linguistic theory to the human faculty of language. This paradigm highlights syntax as an issue and emphasizes the constituent role of syntax in the human mind and language use.

As Lashri and Soomro (2013) explained, the Sindhi language has tense, aspect, gender, number, and mood agreement with the subject in every tense. Indo Aryan languages are Sindhi and Punjabi. Subject-verb agreement (SVA) is very important in syntax. It examines how words and phrases are organized in the sentence, making the process of communication easy. It offers an insight into how the sentences are built (Carnie, 2007; Tallerman, 2019).

Additionally, the comparison of the SVA rules in various languages provides an understanding of the interpretation of the variations in the sentence structures. The analysis of sentence structure and syntax indicates grammatical rules common to all languages, and those that belong to a particular language. The comparative studies on languages like Urdu, Sindhi, Lasi, and English shed some light on the differences in the agreement systems and their impact on language learning and teaching approaches (Tallerman, 2019).

Studies on the challenges facing English as a second language (ESL) students in terms of subject-verb Agreement (SVA) have indicated that their first language is a major contributing factor to this issue. Such common mistakes as omission of required elements (such as the absence of third-person singular form of the verb s), incorrect verb forms, and additional words (such as needless auxiliary verbs) can be used. The most frequent among them is the omission of necessary parts. Using an example, the speakers of the Urdu language struggle to use English grammar principles of singular and plural forms as well as auxiliary verb forms because their native language is used in another way (Nurjanah, 2017).

Also, as a scholarly study, it proves that grammar errors can be decreased through teaching methods. The language lessons organized in a structured form have been demonstrated to assist the learners in increasing and decreasing errors. As an example, by means of special grammar drills and language practice in a real-life situation, learners can become more accurate in grammar (Ahmad, 2023; Nurjanah, 2017).

The initial studies on syntax studied structural differences across multiple languages. Sindhi and English languages were contrasted in virtue of their having an ancient linguistic origin, yet they vary in the structures of their syntax. There are certain head-final structures in the Sindhi language, and the word arrangement is subject-verb-object (SVO). On the other hand,

English is a Head first language. The verbs of the Sindhi language denote number, person, and gender in all tenses, whereas the English language has agreement in number and person in the present tense. The Sindhi language has a great number of inflectional systems and considerably presents morphological and syntactic discrepancies between the two languages (Malik, 2019).

Structural flexibility is a contrastive comparison of WH- movement in Urdu and English. It is shown that English is a language with its WH-movement, in which WH phrases have to be positioned in the first place in a sentence to construct questions. On the contrary, in Urdu, WH phrases can be used in different positions without any grammatical consequences. This flexibility shows the syntactic nature of Urdu in contrast to the strict word order nature in English. The Minimalist Program offered by Chomsky is a good resource that creates an awareness of cross-linguistic differences in sentence structure (Ghafar, 2022).

Further analysis of SVA, Lasi, which is a dialect of Sindhi, is compared to English. The analysis has indicated that Lasi verbs indicate number, gender, and person by having different inflexions, e.g., to in masculine singular and ti in feminine singular. These markers change to taa and tiyon in the plural forms, respectively. Since in English there is no distinction in verb agreement based on gender, Lasi incorporates gender-specific endings, especially in past tense transitive structures. This piece of work brought to the fore the morphosyntactic richness of Lasi and its adherence to the linguistic tradition of Sindhi. The analysis was conducted with the help of the X-bar theory proposed by Haegeman, where the results were used to demonstrate the syntactic complexity of Lasi in contrast with English (Azam, 2022).

However, according to these structural analyses, some differences in the verb agreement patterns in Urdu and English exist. All verbs in Urdu exhibit an enhanced degree of agreement, which is able to accommodate variations in number, person, and gender. Comparatively, English verbs have a simpler structure, and they are more concerned with the agreement with the number and person of the subject in the present tense, but do not change in the past and the future. The paper also revealed the complex nature of the Urdu syntactic, which stands out from English (Anwar, 2023).

Moreover, the real-life uses of Subject Verb Agreement analysis were witnessed in ESL learner research. One of the studies studied the syntactical mistakes in English texts among students of Pakistani secondary schools. The comparison is made between students of the

private and government schools, and it becomes apparent that the number of syntactical mistakes that are made by students in the former is less significant. This difference was explained by differences in teaching media and exposure to an English-enriched environment. Mistakes that were common were the misuse of punctuation, tense, definite articles, and the wrong use of words. This study highlighted that language teaching and vocabulary learning are also deeply important to enhance syntactical accuracy (Ahmad, 2023).

In spite of these developments, there have been small studies whose analysis has been entirely based on the comparative syntactic study between the Urdu and English SVA. Though the topic of syntactic distinction is examined in general, the peculiarities of agreement regimes, with both their educational consequences on ESL students, are not thoroughly investigated. Moreover, the majority of the studies concern structural differences or practical issues independently of each other, and they do not combine these two approaches into a holistic framework (Anwar, 2023).

The qualitative research study will focus on analysing subject-verb agreement mistakes committed by non-native English-speaking ESL learners in writing. The findings indicated that omission errors were the predominant type of errors, followed by misformation, addition, and misordering errors. The paper sheds light on the problem that ESL students have difficulty with learning the subject-verb agreement in their texts (Ramzan et al., 2023).

Lastly, the literature review above shows a gap in the study of the comparative syntactic analysis of two languages. This paper seeks to address this gap in the literature that exists by developing a detailed comparative syntactic study of the Urdu and English SVA. It will examine the variations in verb phrases in Urdu and English, and discuss the syntactic variations between the Urdu and English that determine second language acquisition.

The questions of the study are: What are the key differences in verb phrase structures between Urdu and English? And how do syntactic differences between Urdu and English influence second-language acquisition? The study also examines the challenges faced by Urdu speakers who learn English as a Second Language (ESL). It contributes to effective language instructional strategies.

Methodology

A qualitative descriptive approach is used to examine comparative syntactic differences in subject-verb agreement (SVA) between Urdu and English. This is done to determine how the variation in the patterns of agreement affects the second language (L2) acquisition among Urdu-speaking English learners. The study is based on secondary data that includes illustrations and explications of earlier published works on linguistics, textbooks on grammar, and descriptions of Urdu and English syntax. The sources were selected based on relevance, credibility, and linguistic profundity criteria. Only sources that explicitly describe the syntactic form of subject-verb agreement, morphological inflection, and clause structure were included. To compare them, major Urdu grammar sources (e.g., reference grammars and syntax studies) and other standard English syntactic works were reviewed.

Data analysis entails the extraction and comparison of syntactic forms that explain the patterns of SVA in the two languages. All the examples are analyzed with respect to their morphological marking, agreement (person, number, gender), and syntactic positioning. Chomsky's Minimalist Program and X-bar Theory (Chomsky, 1957, 1995, 2005) give the theoretical framework according to which the analysis is conducted, and the relationship between agreement is formed and reflected in the structure. With the help of the current qualitative comparative analysis, this study finds important spheres of syntactic variation that can cause learning problems with L2 in Urdu learners.

Research Objectives:

1. To investigate the key differences in verb phrase structures between Urdu and English.
2. To explore the syntactic differences between Urdu and English that influence second-language acquisition.
3. To describe the challenges faced by Urdu speakers who learn English as a Second Language (ESL).

Data Analysis and Findings

Syntactic and Morphological Differences in Subject-Verb Structures Between Urdu and English:

The verb phrase structures in Urdu and English reflect distinct syntactic and morphological systems that are rooted in their linguistic traditions. Urdu, as an inflectional and synthetic language, encodes subject-verb agreement (SVA) in its verbs for **gender**, **number**, and **person**. In

contrast, English is an analytic language. It employs a simpler agreement system limited to number and person without considering gender. These structural differences are evident in various aspects of verb phrase construction, as illustrated through the examples.

Gender Agreement in Urdu vs. English

In Urdu, verb forms swap to reflect the subject's gender. This is a feature that is absent in English. For example:

Urdu: وہ لکھتا ہے (*Woh likhta hai*, "He writes.")

Urdu: وہ لکھتی ہے (*Woh likhti hai*, "She writes.")

English: "He writes." / "She writes."

In the above examples, Urdu verbs undergo morphological changes (*likhta* to *likhti*) to agree with the subject's gender, while English maintains the same verb form regardless of gender. This distinction often leads to errors among Urdu speakers learning English. It causes overgeneralizing gender markers in English or omitting them altogether.

Number and Person Agreement

Both Urdu and English show agreement in number and person, but the complexity in both languages varies. In Urdu, the verb form changes for singular and plural subjects as well as for different persons:

Urdu: میں لکھتا ہوں (*Main likhta hoon*, "I write.")

Urdu: ہم لکھتے ہیں (*Hum likhte hain*, "We write.")

In English, agreement is limited to the third-person singular in the present tense:

English: "I write."

English: "He writes."

English: "They write."

While English limits the agreement changes to the addition of *-s* or *-es* for the third-person singular. Urdu language uses clear verb forms like *likhta hoon* (I write) and *likhte hain* (We write). This difference results in frequent errors by learners in writing English as *"He write"* instead of *"He writes"* due to the absence of equivalent inflectional rules in Urdu.

Word Order Flexibility

The word order of the Urdu language is subject-object-verb (SOV), which reflects flexibility. Conversely, English follows the word order as subject-verb-object (SVO). For instance:

Urdu: وہ کتاب پڑھتا ہے (*Woh kitaab parhta hai*, "He reads a book.")

Urdu (variation): کتاب وہ پڑھتا ہے (*Kitaab woh parhta hai*, "The book, he reads.")

English: "He reads a book."

In Urdu, moving the object to the beginning (*Kitaab woh parhta hai*) does not change grammaticality, but in English, deviating from SVO order leads to ungrammatical constructions such as *"A book he reads"* instead of *"He reads a book."* This fixed word order in English poses challenges for Urdu speakers, who might incorrectly apply their native language's flexibility to English.

Tense and Aspect Marking

The verbs in the Urdu language include built-in markers for tense and aspect, while English relies on auxiliary verbs. For example:

Urdu (present continuous): میں پڑھ رہا ہوں (*Main parh raha hoon*, "I am reading.")

English (present continuous): "I am reading."

In Urdu, the verb پڑھ رہا ہوں (*parh raha hoon*) integrates both the action (*parh*, "read") and the progressive aspect (*raha hoon*, "am"). English separates these components, requiring the auxiliary verb *am* to indicate tense and aspect. This analytic nature of English often confuses Urdu speakers, leading to errors such as *"I reading"* or *"I am read."*

Past Tense Verb Agreement

In Urdu, past tense verbs exhibit agreement with the object in transitive constructions, whereas in English, the subject continues to govern agreement:

Urdu: اس نے کتاب پڑھی (*Us ne kitaab parhi*, "He/she read the book.")

Urdu: اس نے کتابیں پڑھیں (*Us ne kitaabein parhin*, "He/she read the books.")

English: "He/she read the book." / "He/she read the books."

In the Urdu examples, the verb پڑھی (*parhi*, "read") changes to match the gender of the object (کتاب, feminine) and پڑھیں (*parhin*, "read") agrees with the plural object (کتابیں, books). English verbs, however, do not change based on the object, which can confuse Urdu speakers. It leads to overgeneralizations or omissions in English verb conjugations.

Auxiliary Verb Usage

English relies heavily on auxiliary verbs to form complex tenses and moods. An auxiliary verb is a less prominent feature in Urdu.

As in English: "He is writing." / "He was writing."

Urdu: وہ لکھ رہا ہے (*Woh likh raha hai*, "He is writing.") / وہ لکھ رہا تھا (*Woh likh raha tha*, "He was writing.")

In Urdu, auxiliary verbs like ہے (*hai*) and تھا (*tha*) are used, but their usage is context-dependent and often embedded within the verb phrase. English learners from an Urdu-speaking background may omit auxiliaries (*"He writing"*) or misuse them (*"He are writing"*). It reflects difficulties in mastering this feature for English language learners.

Table 1: *Comparative Analysis of Subject-Verb Agreement (SVA) in Urdu and English*

Feature	Urdu	English	Linguistic Implications for L2 Learners
Gender Agreement	Verbs change according to subject's gender (e.g., وہ لکھتا ہے *woh likhta hai* "he writes" / وہ لکھتی ہے *woh likhti hai* "she writes")	Verbs do not change for gender (e.g., "He writes" / "She writes")	Urdu speakers may overgeneralize gender inflection and produce errors such as *"She write."*
Number and Person Agreement	Verb changes for number and person: میں لکھتا ہوں (*main likhta hoon*, "I write") / ہم لکھتے ہیں (*hum*	Agreement restricted to 3rd person singular in present tense: "I write," "He writes"	Learners often omit *-s* in third-person singular forms due to Urdu's more complex paradigm.

	likhte hain, "We write")		
Word Order	Flexible: Subject–Object–Verb (SOV); elements can move for emphasis	Fixed: Subject–Verb–Object (SVO)	Urdu learners may transfer flexibility, leading to non-standard English structures like *"Books he reads."*
Tense and Aspect Marking	Tense/aspect integrated into verb (e.g., پڑھ رہا ہوں *parh raha hoon*, "am reading")	Tense/aspect expressed via auxiliary verbs (e.g., "am reading")	Learners may omit auxiliaries ("He reading") due to Urdu's synthetic structure.
Object Agreement (Past Tense)	Verb agrees with object in transitive past tense (e.g., کتاب پڑھی *kitaab parhi*, "read the book" [feminine])	Verb does not agree with object (e.g., "He read the book.")	Learners may expect object-based agreement and misapply tense endings.
Auxiliary Verb Usage	Less frequent, often embedded (e.g., ہے *hai*, تھا *tha*)	Essential for tense, aspect, voice (e.g., "is," "was," "has")	Urdu speakers may omit or misuse auxiliaries ("He are writing").

When gender agreement is considered, the verbs used in Urdu change depending on the subject, whereas English verbs do not change. Urdu exhibits more inflectional change than English in the case of number and person agreement. It prohibits modification of the present tense in the 3 rd person singular. In the case of word order, Urdu permits free word order, and in English, the word order is fixed and is SVO. When marking tenses, Urdu includes the tense and aspect markers in the verb phrase, whereas in English, it is the auxiliary verbs. In the past tense rule of object agreement, the Urdu past tense verbs are in agreement with the object, as compared to English, which has subject-verb agreement. The English language depends on auxiliary verbs more in auxiliary verb dependence. It also poses more problems to Urdu speakers.

This paper examined the syntactic and morphological variation regarding the subject-verb agreement in Urdu and English. It offers a point where the issues of learning English by the Urdu speakers are understood.

Influence of Syntactic Differences Between Urdu and English on Second-Language Acquisition:

The syntactic differences between English and Urdu have a great influence on acquiring a second language, particularly when the learners are struggling learners of the Urdu language learning English. Such contradictions that constitute subject-verb agreement, word order, tense marking, and the use of auxiliary verbs may be associated with various problems of English learners. Second language learners have to adjust to a new grammar and grammar patterns. Languages differ syntactically, and this affects language learning. Effective pedagogical approaches need to be formulated, and the typical errors that occur during the acquisition process need to be taken care of.

Gender Agreement Differences

In Urdu, verbs, adjectives, and pronouns are based on the subject's gender, and this inflection is mandatory in every sentence. For instance, verbs in Urdu change for masculine and feminine subjects:

وہ لڑکا کھیلتا ہے (*Woh larka khelta hai*, "The boy plays.")

وہ لڑکی کھیلتی ہے (*Woh ladki khelti hai*, "The girl plays.")

However, English does not mark verbs for gender. The verb form remains unchanged regardless of whether the subject is masculine or feminine.

"He plays."

"She plays."

This difference can confuse Urdu speakers while learning English. They may attempt to apply gender inflection to English verbs. It results in errors like *"She play"* instead of *"She plays."* Additionally, learners may be overly focused on finding gender distinctions in English verbs, where there are none. Such issues arise from the overextension of gender rules from Urdu to English, which can hinder fluency and accurate usage of English verb forms. To address this, ESL instruction must emphasize that gender does not affect verb conjugation in English and help learners understand the concept of neutral verb forms.

Subject-Verb Agreement in Number and Person

Both Urdu and English exhibit subject-verb agreement in terms of number (singular or plural) and person (first, second, third). However, the system in Urdu is far more inflectional than in English. Urdu verbs change for number, person, and gender, and these changes are reflected in all tenses:

میں لکھتا ہوں (*Main likhta hoon*, "I write.")

ہم لکھتے ہیں (*Hum likhte hain*, "We write.")

وہ لکھتا ہے (*Woh likhta hai*, "He writes.")

English, on the other hand, has a simpler system. Verb agreement changes mainly in the present tense for the third-person singular:

"I write."

"He writes."

"They write."

For Urdu-speaking learners of English, this difference can cause errors, particularly with third-person singular forms. Learners may omit the -*s* in the third-person singular, saying *"He write"* instead of *"He writes."* This occurs because Urdu speakers are familiar with more complex verb conjugations in their native language. It leads to overgeneralization or confusion in English. ESL teachers must focus on teaching the third-person singular rule in English. Instructors must help learners understand the limited scope of subject-verb agreement in English as compared to the more inflectional system in Urdu.

Word Order Flexibility

Urdu language allows flexibility in sentence making due to its word order, subject-object-verb (SOV). For instance, the subject, object, or verb can change the position for emphasis or stylistic reasons.

وہ کتاب پڑھتا ہے (*Woh kitaab parhta hai*, "He reads a book.")

کتاب وہ پڑھتا ہے (*Kitaab woh parhta hai*, "The book, he reads.")

English has a fixed subject-verb-object (SVO) word order that does not allow such flexibility. A sentence like *"The book, he reads"* would be grammatically incorrect in English. This difference can lead to errors for Urdu speakers when constructing sentences in English. The incorrect placement of words, the object or adverbial phrase at the beginning of the sentence, results in sentences like *"To the store, he goes"* or *"Books he*

reads." Such errors occur because learners apply the word order flexibility of Urdu to the more structured English syntax. To reduce this, ESL instruction must emphasize the importance of maintaining the standard SVO order in English.

Auxiliary Verbs and Tense/Aspect Marking

Another major syntactic difference between Urdu and English is the use of auxiliary verbs to mark tense, aspect, and modality. In Urdu, verbs are more synthetic and often include tense and aspect markers within the verb itself. As,

وہ پڑھ رہا ہے (*Woh parh raha hai*, "He is reading.")

وہ پڑھ چکا ہے (*Woh parh chuka hai*, "He has read.")

In contrast, English uses auxiliary verbs such as *is*, *am*, *are*, *was*, and *have* to indicate tense and aspect. Like,

"He is reading."

"He has read."

For Urdu speakers, this dependency on auxiliary verbs in English can be challenging. Urdu speakers may omit auxiliary verbs, saying *"He reading"* instead of *"He is reading,"* or *"He read"* instead of *"He has read."* The difficulty arises from the fact that Urdu expresses these grammatical features directly in the verb, while English separates them with auxiliary verbs. To address this, ESL teaching should focus on explicitly teaching the role of auxiliary verbs in English, particularly in tenses such as continuous and perfect tenses.

Past Tense Agreement

In Urdu, past-tense verbs exhibit agreement with both the subject and the object in transitive constructions:

اس نے کتاب پڑھی (*Us ne kitaab parhi*, "He/she read the book.")

اس نے کتابیں پڑھیں (*Us ne kitaabein parhin*, "He/she read the books.")

In English, however, the past tense verb does not change based on the object:

"He read the book."

"He read the books."

This difference can confuse Urdu-speaking learners, who may expect English verbs to change based on the object. They might overgeneralize the concept of object agreement and make errors, such as *"He reads the books"* when they should use the simple past tense form *"read"* for both singular and plural objects. ESL instruction must clear this difference and help learners to understand that English past-tense verbs remain the same regardless of object number.

Table 2: Common SVA-Related Challenges for Urdu Speakers Learning English

Area of Difficulty	Source of Interference	Example Error	Correct Form
Gender inflection transfer	Urdu marks verbs for gender	*She write.*	*She writes.*
Third-person singular rule	Urdu verbs change more freely for person	*He go to school.*	*He goes to school.*
Auxiliary omission	Urdu embeds auxiliaries	*He reading.*	*He is reading.*
Past tense uniformity	Urdu verbs agree with object	*He reads the books yesterday.*	*He read the books yesterday.*
Word order flexibility	Urdu allows object-first order	*Books he reads.*	*He reads books.*

Influence of Word Formation and Overgeneralization

The distinctions in verb phrase construction between Urdu and English can result in particular overgeneralization mistakes. The inflectional system of Urdu, which includes tense, aspect, and subject agreement inserted in the verb, is absolutely different from the more analytic form of English, which depends on auxiliary verbs and simpler inflections. Therefore, speakers of Urdu many times face difficulties with subject-verb agreement and the auxiliary verbs practiced in English. They can create sentences, for example, "He going to school" in place of "He is going to school," or "She don't like" in place of "She doesn't like." These errors occur through the shift of Urdu's grammatical rules when speaking English.

In summary, the syntactic distinctions between Urdu and English notably affect second-language learning, mostly for Urdu speakers acquiring English. The main challenges involve gender agreement, subject-verb

agreement, word arrangement, use of auxiliary verbs, and tense construction. These challenges arise from the distinctions in the morphological problem of Urdu compared to the more analytical structure of English. To challenge these problems, ESL instruction should emphasize precise grammar teaching. Awareness must be given to the simplified agreement system in English, the implication of auxiliary verbs, and the fixed SVO word order. By knowing the syntactic differences between these languages, educators can encourage Urdu-speaking students to overcome repeated mistakes and boost their English proficiency.

Conclusion

The present study concludes that Urdu is a more difficult language as compared to English. English has an analytical system while on the other side, while Urdu has an inflectional system. English follows the verb agreement rules that are dependent upon the number of subjects, while Urdu focuses on gender as well. The main differences between these two languages are difficulties in the usage of auxiliary verbs, gender over-generalization, and mistakes in word order structure. Learners of ESL face a lot of difficulties when speaking English. Speakers of Urdu face syntactic problems in English learning that require specific Instructional strategies.

There should be some explicit strategies to learn the form of verbs in English, word order, and usage of auxiliary verbs. The findings of the study also highlight the significance of comprehensive syntactic differences in ESL. It enhances the skills of learners in better comprehension of the rules of that language and the difficulties of the language. There should be some instructional strategies that consist of activities, class practices, and the use of auxiliary verbs on worksheets. Reinforcement of students is an essential component in learning English as a second language. This study contributes to the understanding of the influence of the Urdu language's syntactic structure on learning English as a second language. A significant number of challenges faced by learners of the English language are also discussed. Practical instructional pedagogy is prescribed to fix such complexities for learners.

References

Abdelrady, A. H., & Akram, H. (2022). An empirical study of the ClassPoint tool application in enhancing EFL students' online learning satisfaction. *Systems, 10*(5), Article 154. https://doi.org/10.3390/systems10050154

Ahmad, A., Shahid, S. H., & Farhat, P. A. (2023). Comparative analysis of syntactical errors in the writings of ESL students at secondary level in Pakistan. *Global Language Review, 8*(2), 203–213.

Akram, H., Abdelrady, A. H., Al-Adwan, A. S., & Ramzan, M. (2022). Teachers' perceptions of technology integration in teaching–learning practices: A systematic review. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, Article 895328. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.895328

Akram, H., Yingxiu, Y., Al-Adwan, A. S., & Alkhalifah, A. (2021). Technology integration in higher education during COVID-19: An assessment of online teaching competencies through the technological pedagogical content knowledge model. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, Article 736522. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.736522

Anwar, B. (2023). Urdu and English verb phrases: A syntactic analysis of sub-categories and verb-agreement relationship. *Journal of Namibian Studies*.

Azam, M., Ali, Z., & Shahida, N. (2022). Subject–verb agreement in LASI and English: A morphosyntactic analysis. *Global Language Review, 7*(2), 37–54.

Carnie, A. (2007). *Syntax: A generative introduction*. Blackwell.

Chomsky, N. (1957). Logical structures in language. *American Documentation, 8*(4), 284–291.

Chomsky, N. (1981). *Lectures on government and binding: The Pisa lectures*. Foris Publications.

Chomsky, N. (1995). *The minimalist program*. MIT Press.

Chomsky, N. (2005). Three factors in language design. *Linguistic Inquiry, 36*(1), 1–22.

Ghafar, A. ul. (2022). *A contrastive analysis of WH-movement in Pakistani national language Urdu and English: A syntactical perspective*.

Lashari, M. (2013). Subject–verb agreement in Sindhi and English: A comparative study. *Language in India, 13*(6), 473–495.

Malik, M. I., & Shah, Z. A. (2019). Comparative analysis of subject–verb agreement in the syntax of Sindhi and English language. *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Studies, 1*(4), 236–241.

Manan, S. A., & David, M. K. (2014). Mapping ecology of literacies in educational settings: The case of local mother tongues vis-à-vis Urdu and English languages in Pakistan. *Language and Education, 28*(3), 203–222. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2013.800549

Nurjanah, S. (2017). An analysis of subject–verb agreement errors in students' writing. *ELT Echo: The Journal of English Language Teaching in Foreign Language Context, 2*(1), Article 13.

Radford, A. (2004). *English syntax: An introduction*. Cambridge University Press.

Ramzan, M., Azmat, Z., Khan, M. A., & Nisa, Z. U. (2023). Subject–verb agreement errors in ESL students' academic writing: A surface taxonomy approach. *Linguistic Forum*. https://linguisticforum.com

Tallerman, M. (2019). *Understanding syntax*. Routledge.

Implementation of Pakistan's Language Policy and Marginalization of Sindhi: Teachers' Experiences at a Private School in Sukkur, Sindh

Bahawal Soomro[1*], Kamran Akhtar Siddiqui[2]

Abstract

Language Policy (LP) plays an extremely crucial role in language management in multilingual contexts. While promoting one language, an LP may disregard or marginalize other (native) languages, creating serious political rifts among communities on linguistic grounds. Given the over-emphasis of LP on English and implicit marginalization of Sindhi, this study investigates the experiences of Sindhi language teachers regarding the implementation of Pakistan's LP and how Pakistan's LP affects the teaching and learning practices of Sindhi language at a private school in Sukkur, Sindh, Pakistan. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews from five purposively selected research participants. Thematic analysis of the data was conducted. It was found that teachers believe that Pakistan's national language policy tends to marginalize regional languages, particularly Sindhi, while promoting Urdu and English as dominant mediums of instruction. The findings also reveal that English is prioritized as the primary language of instruction in schools, followed by Urdu, whereas Sindhi is often sidelined despite its official and cultural status in the province. This paper argues that such marginalization reflects broader socio-political dynamics that favor linguistic capital over cultural heritage. Recommendations are made to ensure a more inclusive language policy that respects the multilingual fabric of Pakistan.

Keywords: Language policy, Sindhi, marginalization, Teachers' experiences, Pakistan.

Introduction

Language has been a political issue in Pakistan. The elite and the powerful decide the status of a language in the country. Whitley (1983) claimed that decisions of language policy are always taken politically with certain ideologies. Therefore, it can clearly be said that language policy has

nothing to do with linguistic issues; rather, it is completely a political issue (Manan et al., 2017). Mahboob (2002) stated that a shift in the use of local languages may represent a shift in the balance of power. He further said that to narrow the gap between the people living in society, English can work as a language of education for all. It shows how the English used their power to implement their language. English and Urdu have been used as languages of the elite, power in all aspects of jobs and education in Pakistan since the partition (Shah & Pathan, 2016).

Rahman (1998) stated that the symbolic significance of Urdu in Pakistan can be attributed to two factors: psychological and political. Urdu has been an effective tool employed by the nation's governing class to maintain national identity, with regional and indigenous languages being disregarded. Urdu's prominence has been challenged by ethnic nationalists, who view their language as the most significant legacy. They see the linguistic policy as killing their languages and identity by permitting one or two cultures to psychologically dominate over all other regional cultures. Since language and culture go together, humans have a close connection to their language because it connects them to their land (Errington, 2008). The history of humans is preserved in their language; loss of a language is loss of history, identity, culture, philosophy, and literature. Therefore, ethno-nationalists consider this killing to be a murder of their history, identity, culture, and literature. Phillipson (1992) considered this killing a genocide of regional languages.

Language policies in Pakistan have failed to prove fruitful as the multilingual language profile of the country was not taken into deep consideration (Abbas & Bidin, 2022). Abbas et al. (2020) stressed the competitive advantage of a strong language by arguing that a language with a greater capital value is seen as an asset. Conversely, it is imperative to consider strategies for preserving the minority languages. The consequences of the state's language policies are that the Sindhi language has lost its status. Because Sindhi language teaching is highly influenced by these hegemonic languages, the mode of communication is either Urdu or English. In fact, teachers discourage the Sindhi language as a mode of instruction. This is because there is no monetary value attached to the Sindhi language in Sindh. For example, Urdu or English is used in the judiciary, business, education, and other spheres of authority. Therefore, teachers in private schools use English as a medium of instruction (EMI) from Nursery and KG onwards (Rustamani & Umrani, 2022). Thus, it has been observed that students' proficiency in Sindhi is low. Students are unable to read and write well, even in government schools (Ahmed &

Shamsi, 2020).

Given the hegemonic nature of Urdu and English in academic settings and low proficiency of private school students in Sindhi, the primary focus of this study is twofold: the influence of Pakistan's language policy on the teaching of Sindhi in Sindh and the experiences of Sindhi language teachers regarding the implementation of Pakistan's language policy at IBA Public School, Sukkur. This study aims to answer the following research questions.

1.   What are the experiences of Sindhi language teachers regarding the implementation of Pakistan's language policy at IBA Public School, Sukkur?

2.   In the Sindhi language teachers' opinion, how does Pakistan's language policy affect Sindhi teaching and learning practices at IBA Public School, Sukkur?

Literature Review

Historical context of Pakistani languages

This section of the study provides an overview of Pakistan's regional languages and the language policy's effects on them. Pakistan had difficulties when it first started out in 1947 with the development of its linguistic policy. Different ethnic groups in Pakistan have expressed a desire to have their languages recognized as national languages. Bengali, which accounted for 54.6% of Pakistan's overall population at the time, and Urdu, which was spoken by only 7%, were two contenders. Mahboob (2002) stated that Urdu was advocated as the national language by Liaqat Ali Khan and Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Mr. Jinnah, in his address in Bengal, said, "It is up to you, the people of this province, to select what would be the official language of your region. Let me clarify, though, that Urdu would be the only language recognized as Pakistan's official state language." According to Mahboob (ibid), Bengalis reacted strongly to Mr. Jinnah's speech, demonstrating against Urdu's designation as the national language. Language, later, proved to be a primary factor in the separation of East Pakistan.

There was a variation in language policy due to a change in political structure. Ayub Khan imposed martial law in 1958. He considered the English language to be a language of modernity. He emphasized that all officers must be well-versed in the English language. Therefore, he made rules for military training that the mode of instruction must be in English,

undermining the value of local languages. Rahman (1996) stated that Ayub Khan united all four provinces into one to avoid provincial borders and set up a powerful central authority. Mansoor (1993) said that a commission was established in 1959 to investigate language-related concerns in Pakistan. The commission recommended that all government secondary schools use Bengali and Urdu as their official languages of instruction. After fifteen years, Urdu was expected to become the language of instruction (p. 10). Furthermore, plans called for Urdu to be the medium of teaching in government schools in Sindh starting in class 6. According to Rahman (1996), Sindhi responded to this choice by managing to obstruct a few of them. Moreover, Haque (1993) stated that East Pakistan broke away from Pakistan in 1971 and became Bangladesh on the international map. Bengali was eliminated in the language policy modification. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto reigned during this time; however, he did not alter the language policy in any way except for Bengali. According to Rahman (1996), in 1972, the political adversaries of Bhutto, including Baluchistan, the NWFP, and the NAP-JUI, backed the adoption of Urdu as an official language. Thus, it was explicitly declared in the 1973 constitution that Urdu, Pakistan's national language, will be an official language in 15 years and until provisions are completed to make Urdu an official language, English will be used as the official language. Bhutto, according to Rahman (1998), recognized the importance of Islam and Urdu as unifying symbols when facing the threat of ethnic division. Therefore, under Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's PPP government, there were no notable modifications made to language policy.

The military commander, General Zia-ul-Haq, ousted this democratically elected administration in 1977 known as a third period under martial law. According to Haque (1993), there was a significant shift in language policy during this time. Urdu was seen as highly valuable and significant. Zia's "Islamization" policy prioritized Islam and Urdu. Mahboob (2002) pointed out that Urdu or any other province-recognized language should be taught in English-medium schools instead of English, as per a 1978 Education Policy. Each province had to choose a single language to be the primary language of instruction. The use of this strategy hurt other ethnic and regional groups, who believed their languages were being disregarded.

General Zia ul Haq encouraged "privatization". As a result, there were many private schools. According to Rahman (1996), General Ziaul Haq was in favor of English instruction at private schools. Students had two options: either take the exam in English or Urdu, and the government approved the use of English in science classrooms. The PPP and PML-N

administrations that took over after General ZiaulHaq died in 1988 did not change the language policy. Nevertheless, during her first time in power, Benazir Bhutto made a few changes. Mahboob (2002) stated that she gave schools the option to begin teaching all courses in English starting in class 1. Additionally, it was recommended that, rather than being covered as a topic in class 6, English be taught as an extra language beginning in class 1. The governments in Punjab and Sindh immediately acted on this ruling.

Later on, in General Musharraf's presidency, English came to be associated with progressivism. It was because General Parvez Musharaf's top priority was to increase foreign investments and grow the economy. To do this, entering the global market was viewed as possible with the use of English.

Language Hierarchy in the Pakistani Education System

According to Mahboob (2002), the absence of corpus planning in Urdu made it impracticable to have Urdu as the sole official language. Due to this, three languages were introduced in Pakistan. English as an official language, Urdu as a national language, and the third one was a regional language. All provinces were directed to choose one regional language as the provincial language. This three- language structure was once again against other regional languages, which were marginalized and lacked market value. Rahman (1996) stated that indigenous languages were ignored in the country for creating a Pakistani-Muslim identity. Rahman (2011) further highlights that the hierarchy of languages in Pakistan reflects socio- economic divisions, where English represents elitism and upward mobility, Urdu symbolizes nationalism, and regional languages are seen as markers of local identity but with little market value. This linguistic stratification continues to affect language-in-education policies.

More recently, Kakar & Kaukab (2023) documented that language textbooks and classroom materials in regional languages are outdated, underfunded, and limited in critical thinking content, compared to those in English and Urdu. Moreover, students studying in regional languages internalize a sense of inferiority, which affects their academic performance and self-esteem. Parents think that if children are good at English at an early age, they will get great exposure, vocabulary, command, and proficiency in English as soon as they complete their matriculation (Manan et al., 2017).

English was added as a subject in class 1 by the National Education Policy (NEP) (2009), along with Urdu and one other regional language. In the math and scientific departments, English served as the main language of instruction. Urdu and English would be the first options, but after five

years, only English would be taught for these courses (p. 28). Thus, although giving regional languages a lot of attention, this policy gives priority to English and Urdu. The statement makes it rather clear that science and math classes should begin teaching in English in class IV. Sindhi, the native dialect of the Sindhis, is being marginalized because of state policies.

Sindhi Language Before and After Partition

The Indo-Aryan language known as Sindhi is spoken in Pakistan's Sindh province. According to Bughio (2001), Sindh is home to eight different languages. Sindhi is the most frequently used language around 52.4%. Urdu 22.6% and Punjabi 7.7% are the most common languages used in Sindh, respectively. The remaining languages are Hindko, Saraiki, Balochi, Pashto, and Brahvi. According to Rahman (1998), the Sindhi language was widely respected before the separation. Sindhi as a subject was offered. Universities promoted it, and schools employed it as a teaching tool. Sindhi was also used in lower-level government, the judiciary, and journalism. Rahman (ibid) claimed that knowing Sindhi made it simple for someone to get work in Sindh. During this time, the Sindhi language held great importance in the country. Only Bengali and Sindhi were indigenous languages.

Moreover, it is claimed that the official languages of Sindh Province were English and Sindhi till 1947. But after 1947, English and Urdu—the language spoken by 7% of Indian-Muslim refugees—were designated as the national tongues. This decision led to a great deal of instability and ethnically motivated violence between the populations that speak Sindhi and Urdu. According to Rahman (2002), the arrival of Mohajirs who spoke Urdu from India into Sindh weakened the language's dominant status in the region. The language, culture, and politics of the Sindhi people were significantly impacted by the migration of Mohajirs who spoke Urdu in Sindh. Sindh was split into two groups: Mohajirs and Sindhis. The language of Sindhi began to give way to Urdu. Urdu gained recognition because of its connection to the "Islamic" identity. Tension arose between Mohajirs and Sindhis as a result. Linguistic and cultural tensions between the Sindhis and Mohajirs became so intense that it twice resulted in language riots: in January 1971 and again in July 1972. The value of the Sindhi language has been diminished as compared to its pre- partition status due to power struggles amongst various communities over linguistic supremacy.

Language Policy and the Marginalization of Sindhi in Schools

Despite Sindhi being one of Pakistan's officially recognized regional languages and the provincial language of Sindh, it remains largely marginalized in educational settings, especially in urban and private-sector schools. The language policy at both national and provincial levels lacks effective enforcement mechanisms for promoting regional languages in practice (Rahman, 2011). Khoso & Memon (2022) found that Sindhi is frequently treated as an optional or symbolic subject, rather than as a core language of instruction. Many schools include Sindhi in their curriculum only to meet policy requirements, with little emphasis on developing proficiency or cultural appreciation. This *tokenistic* inclusion reflects a disconnect between language policy and classroom realities.

According to NEP (2009), Science and Math classes will be taught for five years using English, Urdu, or another official language from the region. It will eventually just be in English. The Sindhi language in the province of Sindh is criticized by this statement. Data from the National Educational Policy (2009) indicate that Sindh is marginalizing Sindhi language instruction. The language of instructions for all science courses must be English. Recent studies reinforce that this policy orientation persists, sidelining Sindhi and other regional languages. Javed & Karim (2024) argue that Pakistan's current educational frameworks still emphasize lower-order skills in regional languages, while advanced thinking and creativity are reserved for English-medium instruction. Similarly, Ali & Rahim (2023) demonstrate how language policy implementation remains biased, even in provinces like Sindh, where Sindhi is officially recognized.

These impacts are the outcome of language placement power dynamics. Bourdieu (1991) stated that language policy can uphold the dominance of privileged groups using educational institutions as a medium. Another way to look at language's role as a primary tool for discrimination in education is through the lens of power hierarchy. In reference to the Sindhi language, this is accurate. There are two issues facing the Sindhi language: the first is from national policy, and the second is caused by the division of Mohajirs who speak Sindhi and Urdu in Sindh.

Jatoi and Chandio (2023) highlight that parents, teachers, and administrators often perceive Sindhi as irrelevant to students' academic and professional futures. As a result, they invest more effort into English and Urdu instruction. This belief reinforces negative language attitudes and reduces motivation to teach or learn Sindhi effectively. Moreover, the lack of updated teaching materials, undertrained Sindhi language teachers, and the absence of pedagogical innovation have further contributed to its decline. Ali & Rahim (2023) note that regional language instruction often

relies on rote memorization and outdated textbooks, making it less engaging for students.

Language is not merely a tool for communication; it is also a carrier of identity, culture, and worldview (Spolsky, 2004). In Sindh, the Sindhi language holds deep historical, literary, and cultural significance, forming the core of the ethnolinguistic identity of its people. Yet, educational institutions have increasingly undermined this identity by privileging Urdu and English over Sindhi. Shah & Laghari (2022) argue that the erosion of Sindhi in classrooms reflects a broader cultural marginalization, where students are discouraged—implicitly or explicitly—from expressing themselves in their mother tongue. This leads to what Fishman (1991) terms "language shift", where younger generations begin to abandon their native language in favor of more dominant ones.

Furthermore, Qureshi (2023) highlights that the absence of culturally responsive pedagogy in Sindhi-medium instruction has caused young Sindhi learners to feel detached from their linguistic heritage. Textbooks rarely include local stories, historical figures, or community values, resulting in a disconnect between language learning and lived experience.

This has deep pedagogical implications: students often fail to see the relevance of Sindhi in their academic journey, and teachers are not trained to use culturally meaningful methods. As a result, the symbolic and functional value of Sindhi continues to diminish, especially in elite or semi-elite schools like IBA Public School Sukkur, which associate success with English proficiency. Kandhro & Shaikh (2024) warn that without strong institutional support, the intergenerational transmission of Sindhi may weaken, putting the language at risk in educational domains. A lack of pride in one's mother tongue also affects students' self-esteem, confidence, and sense of belonging.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study draws on three interrelated constructs: language policy implementation, linguistic hierarchy, and language and identity. Together, they offer a comprehensive lens to understand how state-level decisions impact classroom practices, especially regarding the teaching and perception of the Sindhi language in schools like IBA Public School, Sukkur.

At the core is Spolsky's (2004) model of language policy, which distinguishes between language practices, language beliefs (ideologies), and language management. While policies may appear inclusive on paper,

the actual language practices and ideologies within institutions often diverge, leading to unequal treatment of regional languages such as Sindhi.

The framework also incorporates linguistic hierarchy theory, particularly Rahman's (2004) notion of "linguistic capital", which explains how English and Urdu are privileged in the education system due to their association with power, prestige, and socioeconomic mobility, while Sindhi is viewed as culturally important but academically non-essential.

Lastly, the identity dimension is informed by the work of Fishman (1991) and Norton (2000), who argue that language is a crucial site for identity formation and cultural continuity. The erosion of Sindhi in formal education can be seen as a threat not just to linguistic diversity, but also to students' cultural rootedness and sense of self.

This integrated theoretical framework allows the study to examine the gap between language policy and pedagogical practice, while also considering the emotional, social, and cultural consequences of Sindhi's marginalization in an urban, semi-elite educational context (See figure 1).

Spolsky's (2004) model of language policy

Linguistic hierarchy theory

Pakistan's language policy

language and identity Fishman (1991) and Norton (2000)

> **Impact of language policy on Sindhi**

> **Experiences of Sindhi teachers in Implementation of language policy**
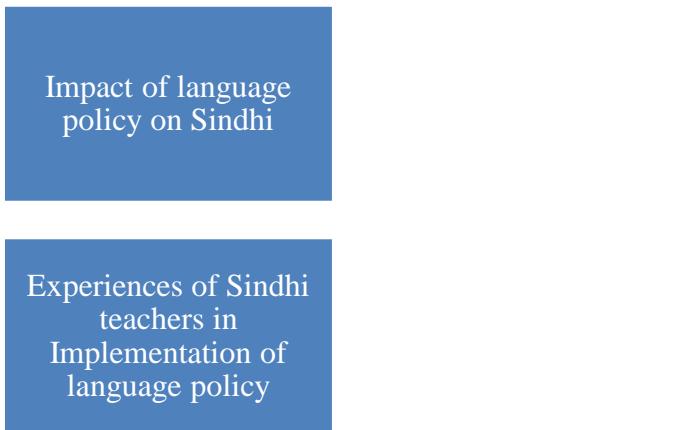
Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature. In qualitative research, a great deal of data is gathered to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon through document analysis and participant perspectives. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research is widely acknowledged and can be applied to any type of methodology, apart from surveys. It consists of observation, documentary material, group interviews, and similar activities.

Data Sources

In order to answer the above-mentioned research questions, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from Sindhi language instructors at IBA Public School, Sukkur. Qualitative research, as Creswell (2013) emphasizes, is particularly suited to uncovering complex social phenomena through rich, contextualized data. It involves methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, allowing researchers to interpret meanings and experiences from participants' perspectives. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to gather data. It contained the following main items:

1. Can you please introduce yourself and describe your role at IBA Public School, Sukkur?

2. At what level Sindhi as a subject is taught? (ECE-1, primary, middle, ninth, tenth, first year, and intermediate)

3. How do you see the language policy and implementation of the Sindhi language?

4. Do your students find the Sindhi subject as easy or difficult, and how is their performance in the Sindhi language?

5. What are some of the challenges faced in teaching the Sindhi language at IBA Public School, Sukkur?

6. Have there been any initiatives or opportunities that have positively impacted the teaching and learning of Sindhi?

7. How do students generally perceive the importance of learning Sindhi within the school environment?

8. How do you think the broader community (parents, local authorities) views the teaching of Sindhi at the school?

Participants

The participants for the study were selected using a purposeful sampling technique. This technique was employed because purposive sampling helps the researcher to select the participants based on his/her knowledge and experiences, which serves the purpose. For interviews, five teachers of the Sindhi language were selected. The study focused on Sindhi language teachers at IBA Public School, Sukkur, with five selected for interviews. The remaining two were excluded due to scheduling conflicts and limited teaching experience. The inclusion criteria required at least one year of teaching experience in the Sindhi language, current employment at the school, and willingness to participate in a recorded interview. Teachers with less than one year of experience or unavailable during the data collection time were excluded. All participants were native Sindhi speakers with bilingual proficiency in Urdu and varying levels of English, which was relevant to understanding their instructional practices and perspectives.

Data Analysis

In this study, data is analyzed thematically. Thematic analysis was used to interpret interview data, identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data. The six-phase process involved familiarization, initial coding, theme development, review, defining, and naming themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Transcripts were read multiple times to gain an immersive understanding of the data. Key phrases and concepts were coded manually, focusing on instructional challenges, pedagogical strategies, and language policy. Themes were refined for coherence and distinctiveness, and each theme was clearly defined and named to reflect its core meaning.

Findings

Endangerment of Sindhi Language

The data gathered from the interviews provides fascinating insights into the situation of Sindhi language education in Sindh, Pakistan, where the primary languages of the country have had a negative influence. A participant (P1) made the following statement regarding the use of language in class:

"The fact is that the Sindhi language and other regional languages are endangered, regardless of the policy in place. Numerous young Sindhi students who are illiterate in their own language serve as proof of this. At IBA Public school, Sukkur, Sindhi and Urdu are taught from the Early Child Education (ECE-1) class, but the mode of instruction is Urdu and English."

The policy's effects include the endangered status of regional languages. Students' proficiency in their mother tongue is low. Because of institutional, they are unable to comprehend their native tongue. However, basic instructions in Urdu and Sindhi are provided. But, pupils who are solely of Sindhi descent perceive the surroundings differently, making it harder for them to comprehend the teachers' instructions. Because they believe others are more intelligent and energetic than them. The same participant reported, "Kids become too quiet and never bother to engage. At the start of class, this makes them feel like they are inferior."

Language Instruction Challenges

Another participant (P2) made the following observation:

"Sindhi language is offered [as a subject] in my school from class 1. Every subject has an English writing style. Starting with class one, Urdu is taught as a subject. In terms of the medium of instruction, English is prioritized in school settings. The inability to communicate in English makes a person feel inferior. Sometimes Urdu is used instead of English. Sindh's educational system has lost so much ground that students are unable to read and write in Sindhi."

This statement shows that English or Urdu is used for communication between teachers and pupils. Instructions from teachers are best delivered in English. Teachers may establish rules requiring students to speak in English. If a pupil speaks a regional language by mistake, he/she is discouraged. Students avoid using Sindhi as a result, making it difficult for

them to concentrate on English. Students' learning is greatly impacted when English is given a lot of attention. It was noted by the participant that "the pupils' proficiency in reading and writing in Sindhi was lacking. They make numerous errors in their mother tongue."

Impact of Language Prioritization

Another participant (P3) stated:

"We start teaching Sindhi in the initial classes. But students are encouraged to read, write, and speak English. Therefore, students' general proficiency in Sindhi, their mother tongue, has been impacted by this."

Even if they begin learning their mother tongue from the start, there hasn't been much of a development in their mother tongue because the emphasis is on having pupils speak, read, and write in English. This indicates that regional language is undervalued in private schools where pupils are not supposed to use their various mother tongues, including Punjabi, Sindhi, Urdu, Seraiki, and Brahvi.

Neglected Language Proficiency

Furthermore, P3, in response to a question concerning whether teaching Sindhi is in danger, said that:
"English and Urdu are currently the most widely spoken languages; they are prioritized over Sindhi. Sindhi's historical stature is declining, and if this tendency continues, the language will suffer tremendously."
Regarding the state of the Sindhi language in Pakistan, the other two individuals (P4 & P5) made similar statements. P4 mentioned, for instance, that:

"In the school, Sindhi is taught as a subject from the very beginning. However, I must be quite honest with you—students' ability to communicate in Sindhi is not given much priority. The only curriculum adhered to is the Sindhi language textbook, which is finished on schedule regardless of whether pupils improve their language proficiency."

Even though Sindhi is taught in the beginning of the course, students do not understand the significance of the language for their future needs. Students are taught Sindhi only to satisfy course requirements; language proficiency development is not prioritized. Since speaking Sindhi is not encouraged, even students read the language to pass the course. As was previously noted, pupils who speak Sindhi (or any other language) are subject to embarrassment. Sindhi is discouraged in all settings, including classrooms, canteens, grounds, and assembly halls. They are pleased with

the students who can converse in English.

Declining Status of Sindhi

Participant (P5) stated:

"The market value of the Sindhi language is the reason behind its poor status. Sindhi no longer has the same status as it did in the past. Because of this, students don't think it's as vital as Urdu and English."

According to a teacher, pupils understand Sindhi language has no commercial value. They are aware that languages such as Urdu and English are widely used in the industry for communication. The standing of the Sindhi language is not as high as it once was.

All teachers showed their concern about the Sindhi language at IBA PSS. Urdu and English are being studied, sponsored, and pushed due to their commercial value. Teachers believe that teaching Sindhi in Sindh would be threatened by the English and Urdu languages; therefore, the language's position is currently under attack. The survival of the Sindhi language is affected by pupils' low level of competency in the language. This is the result of Pakistan's language policy.

Discussion

The research shows that although Pakistan has recognized regional languages, its language policy continues to add to structural inequalities that have marginalized Sindhi in the learning institutions. English and Urdu are predominant in teaching and communication areas with Sindhi playing the role of tokenism with most of its teaching being influenced by curriculum demands. This imbalance is in line with Spolsky (2004) language policy model that argues on harmony between language management, practices, and beliefs. This contradiction is portrayed through the theme of endangerment because the Sindhi-speaking students are frequently alienated in the English- and Urdu-dominated classrooms and feel inferior linguistically. This discrimination is combined with the theory of language and identity by Norton (2000), who assumes that the process of language learning and usage relates to the relations of power and perception of oneself. When students are undermined by their own mother tongue in the school setting, they lose a sense of belonging and confidence in studying, thus gradually neglecting native language in favor of stronger ones.

Linguistic stratification is strengthened by institutional policies, and English and Urdu are perceived as the ways to become a professional,

whereas Sindhi is deemed to be irrelevant. The descriptions given by teachers of fining students who speak Sindhi clearly illustrate the idea of symbolic power as portrayed by Bourdieu (1991) in that the hegemonic linguistic order is naturalized in the daily institutional activity. Conversely, Sindhi is still undermined linguistically as well as economically, whereas it is a culturally important language. The issue of the lack of proficiency is also shown when Sindhi is a subject to be taught, but not the language to be learnt. The low prestige attributed to Sindhi by teachers is attributed to its inability to ensure market prestige, and this is what Rahman (2011) has described: English is a symbol of prestige and mobility, Urdu a symbol of nationalism, and regional languages such as Sindhi are a symbol of local identity but not economic value. The results also show that the Pakistani schooling system maintains language hierarchies that perpetuate the class division and cultural estrangement, which attests to the validity of Bourdieu's (1991) concept of language as the means of reproducing the society.

Conclusion

To sum up, the paper concludes that the language policy applied in Pakistan, including in the case of the IBA Public School Sukkur in the private schools, does not encourage linguistic equity. Although Sindhi has constitutional protection, it is routinely marginalized in any useful educational application because of ideological discrimination and socioeconomic pressure to favor English and Urdu. Such exclusion negatively affects the cultural diversity and integrity of the student identity, and hastens the process of language change in younger generations. To reverse this trend, policymakers and education leaders should go beyond the symbolic inclusion and embrace transformative approaches that can connect Sindhi to cultural pride, pedagogical creativity, and professional worth.

Practically, there should be the use of Sindhi as a medium of instruction in the first grades, which is supported by updated and interactive curricula that involve the use of local narratives (Shah & Laghari, 2022). The culturally responsive pedagogies of the teacher training (Qureshi, 2023) should be used to reconnect the language learning with the identity and community. In addition, the institutional level must also be encouraged to promote Sindhi proficiency through testing, recruitment, and communication in provincial levels. These interventions can reinstate the linguistic and economic capital of Sindhi and can make the language policy consistent with the principles of equity and inclusion that Spolsky (2004) and Rahman (2004) regard as ideals.

Finally, to maintain Sindhi in schooling, there must also be a change in ideology, as well as in the curriculum. Unless English and Urdu are stopped as the only indicators of success, regional languages will keep on declining in the academic arena. Sindhi preservation can therefore not be seen outside the context of linguistic justice, i.e., making certain that all children in Sindh are given an opportunity to learn, think, and speak in the language that best reflects their identity, history, culture, and heritage.

Reference

Abbas, F., & Bidin, S. J. (2022). A critical analysis of language planning and policy (LPP) in Pakistan and its impact on the indigenous languages of Pakistan. *Eurasian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 8*(1), 85–96.

Abbas, J., Zaki, M., & Irfan, M. (2020). Implicit measure of language attitude: Study of Punjabi native speakers using the matched guise technique. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change, 13*(1), 194–206.

Ahmed, M., & Shamsi, M. (2020). Assessment in public schools of Sindh: Practices, trends, and implications. *Global Journal for Management and Administrative Sciences, 3*(1), 211–221.

Ali, Z., & Rahim, M. (2023). Challenges of regional language teaching in public schools of Sindh: A pedagogical perspective. *International Journal of Education and Development, 13*(2), 45–58.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Harvard University Press.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Bughio, Q. (2001). *A comparative sociolinguistic study of rural and urban Sindhi*. Lincom Publishers.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Steps in conducting a scholarly mixed methods study*. Sage.

Dey, I. (1993). *Qualitative data analysis*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203412497

Errington, J. (2008). *Linguistics in a colonial world: A story of language, meaning, and power*. Blackwell Publishing.

Fishman, J. A. (1991). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Multilingual Matters.

Haque, A. (1993). The position and status of English in Pakistan. In R. J. Baumgardner (Ed.), *The English language in Pakistan* (pp. 83–95). Oxford University Press.

Jaspal, R. (2009). *Language and social identity: A psychosocial approach*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Javed, H. M. H., & Karim, D. S. (2024). Alignment between curriculum and textbooks of English language at secondary level: An evaluation of English language curriculum objectives. *SSRN*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.5345088

Jatoi, R., & Chandio, S. (2023). Language attitudes of parents and school management in Sindh: Implications for Sindhi language education. *Pakistan Journal of Linguistic Studies, 5*(1), 78–92.

Kakar, Z. U. H., & Kaukab, S. R. (2023). An in-depth analysis of assessment design: Alignment between Baluchistan English language textbooks and Pakistan national curriculum. *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 11*(4), 4396–4409.

Kandhro, I., & Shaikh, S. (2024). Language shift and loss of identity: A sociolinguistic study of Sindhi youth in urban Sindh. *Journal of South Asian Cultural Studies, 8*(1), 33–47.

Khoso, F., & Memon, A. (2022). Language policy and curriculum neglect: A case study of Sindhi in urban private schools. *Journal of Language and Society, 11*(2), 22–36.

Manan, S. A., Dumanig, F. P., & David, M. K. (2017). The English-medium fever in Pakistan: Analyzing policy, perceptions, and practices through an additive bi/multilingual education lens.

International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 20(6), 736–752. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2015.1080659

Mansoor, S. (1993). Language planning in higher education: Issues of access and equity. *The Lahore Journal of Economics, 8*(2).

Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and language learning: Gender, ethnicity, and educational change*. Longman.

Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford University Press.

Qureshi, N. (2023). Culturally responsive pedagogy and regional language instruction in Pakistan: A missed opportunity. *Educational Review Pakistan, 9*(3), 61–74.

Rahman, T. (1996). *Language and politics in Pakistan*. Oxford University Press.

Rahman, T. (1998). *Language teaching policies in Pakistan*. Sustainable Development Policy Institute.

Rahman, T. (2004). Language policy, multilingualism, and language vitality in Pakistan. In D. Curdt-Christiansen & K. Wei (Eds.), *Language policies in education: Critical issues* (pp. 73–94). Routledge.

Rahman, T. (2011). *From Hindi to Urdu: A social and political history*. Oxford University Press.

Rustamani, S., & Umrani, T. H. (2022). Perceptions of Sindhi intelligentsia towards English language learning. *Progressive Research Journal of Arts & Humanities, 4*(2), 15–28.

Shah, G., & Laghari, N. (2022). Cultural dislocation and language neglect: An ethnographic account of Sindhi students in English-medium schools. *Sindh Journal of Social Sciences, 4*(2), 59–70.

Shah, S. W. A., & Pathan, H. (2016). Representation of Western culture in O'Level English language textbooks. *ELF Annual Research Journal, 18*, 23–42.

Spolsky, B. (2004). *Language policy*. Cambridge University Press.

Whitley, W. (1983). Sociolinguistic surveys at the national level. In C. Kennedy (Ed.), *Language planning and language education* (pp. 68–79). George Allen & Unwin.

Acoustic Analysis of English Lexical Stress in The Disyllabic Nouns and Verbs of Pashto-Speaking EFL Learners

Sultan Muhammad[1*], Salma Khatoon[1], Abdul Qadir Khan[2]

Abstract

Research literature of acoustic studies indicates that non-native speakers of English face difficulty in producing and perceiving English lexical stress contrasts due to certain factors. This study investigates how Pashto-speaking English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners produce lexical stress in English disyllabic nouns and verbs. It focuses on two key acoustic features of stress: duration and intensity. Ten pairs of disyllabic words, presented in context sentences, served as stimuli for data collection. A total of 720 tokens were created from 120 sound samples of the six Pashto-speaking EFL learners, and interactive labeling through FormantPro.praat, descriptive statistics, and One-Sample t-Test were used to analyze data. Results reveal that Pashto-speaking EFL learners tend to lengthen the second syllable and increase the intensity of the first syllable in both nouns and verbs. This pattern deviates from native English stress patterns, suggesting difficulty in acquiring and producing the correct acoustic features. Specifically, the findings indicate that these learners struggle with marking stress shifts that differentiate stressed syllables from unstressed ones in noun-verb pairs. This highlights the need for language teaching and curriculum development tailored to address the specific challenges faced by Pashto-speaking EFL learners and other multilingual communities in Pakistan.

Keywords: Acoustics, lexical stress, English, Pashto, EFL learners

Introduction

Pakistan's linguistic landscape is characterized by remarkable diversity, reflecting centuries of historical and cultural influences. With more than

72 indigenous languages spoken across the country, Pakistan stands as a testament to the richness of human linguistic expression (Hussain, Hussain, & Dar, 2023). This multilingualism is not only a reflection of Pakistan's cultural heritage but also a significant factor in shaping language learning and acquisition processes, particularly concerning English as an L2. The influence of learners' mother tongues on the acquisition of English as an L2 is a well-established phenomenon in language acquisition research. When individuals learn a second language, they often transfer linguistic features from their native languages to the target language. In the case of Pashto-speaking EFL learners in Pakistan, the influence of Pashto on English acquisition is particularly noteworthy due to the divergent stress patterns between the two languages (Khan, Ahmad, & Khuwaja, 2016).

Pashto, like many other languages, has its own stress patterns, which differ from those found in English. In Pashto, stress typically falls on the final syllable of a word. In contrast, English lexical stress placement can vary based on factors such as word category (nouns, verbs) and morphological structure (Fleming, 2021). This fundamental difference in stress patterns poses a significant challenge for Pashto-speaking EFL learners as they navigate the intricacies of English pronunciation and prosody.

The errors in stress placement on pairs of words in English with the same spellings but different meanings, such as "present" (n) versus "present" (v), and "record" (n) versus "record" (v), are common challenges for English language learners, including Pashto-speaking EFL learners in Pakistan. These errors often stem from the learners' native language influence, particularly when the stress patterns in their mother tongue, like Pashto, differ from those in English. In Pashto, stress typically falls on the final syllable of a word, whereas in English, stress placement can vary based on word category (noun versus verb) and morphological structure. Therefore, Pashto-speaking EFL learners may struggle to accurately determine the stress placement in English words that have multiple meanings and functions. For example, in "present" (n), the stress is on the first syllable: PRES-ent (noun meaning a gift or a time period) and in "present" (v), the stress is on the second syllable: pre-SENT (verb meaning to show or to offer).

To understand the challenges of acquiring English lexical stress, an acoustic analysis provides valuable insights. Examining fundamental frequency (F0), duration, and intensity helps identify stress placement patterns in disyllabic nouns and verbs. By analyzing Pashto-speaking EFL

learners' speech production, researchers gain insight into how Pashto's stress patterns influence English lexical stress pronunciation.

Language learning is a very complex phenomenon, and it is a unique human capacity. Language is learned in childhood effortlessly, but when it comes to second language (L2) or foreign language (FL) learning, it gets much more complicated and effortful, especially for adults. Adult learners usually do not learn L2 in the same manner as children. Adult speech differs significantly from child speech. Adults who learn a foreign or L2 are rarely able to speak that language without an accent. The degree of accent varies with respect to different speakers. Different researchers propose different factors for accent, i.e., age, language environment, and the nature of L1, etc. According to Fledge (1995), age makes it challenging for L2 learners to recognize some specific auditorily noticeable differences in the sounds of L1 and L2. This challenge creates a hurdle for them to form new phonemic categories, which may result in the development of a foreign accent. A number of studies have also indicated that perceiving and categorizing foreign sounds inaccurately correlate with foreign accent.

Adult learners encounter more difficulties and more challenges in learning L2 or a foreign language because they already well-developed lexical, phonological, and semantic representations of their L1, which hinder and interfere with the new representation for L2. Although success in foreign or L2 learning is associated with both grammatical and phonological accuracy, it is the inappropriate manipulation of the sound system and stress placement rules of a foreign or L2 language that more often results in communication breakdown. Word stress production is one area of difficulty for EFL learners. Research shows that appropriate word stress placement is more vital for comprehending non-native speech than grammatical correctness (Munro & Derwing, 1995; Munro & Derwing, 1999; Trofimovich & Issacs, 2012). This means that inappropriate placement of stress results in misperception of L2 speech. Zhang, Nissen, and Francis (2008) expressed a similar view, stating that non-native speakers of English often struggle to produce English lexical stress contrasts like native speakers do, which most often results in communication breakdown. This difficulty often stems from L1 interference from one's first language, lack of knowledge about which syllables require stress, and difficulty in phonetically manipulating specific stress correlates. According to Lord (2001), English L2 or EFL learners lack awareness of L2 stress placement rules because teaching rules related to the placement of L2 lexical stress are still neglected in EFL/L2 classrooms. Different researchers indicate that L1 transfer is one of the

main reasons of incorrect L2 stress patterns (Altmann, 2006; Erdmann, 1973; Peperkamp, Vendelin, & Dupoux, 2010; Wang, 2008).

Different researchers have explored the acoustic correlates of English lexical stress, produced by speakers of different languages other than English. Most of these studies have focused on disyllabic English words in which the stress location identifies the word as a noun or verb. Results of these studies consistently indicate that the acoustic correlates of average fundamental frequency F0, intensity, syllable duration, and vowel quality are associated with the perception and production of English lexical stress: stressed syllables have higher F0, greater intensity, and longer duration than unstressed syllables (Zhang, Nissen, & Francis, 2008). No published study was found related to the pattern with which Pashto-speaking learners of English in Pakistan produce and mark lexical stress on disyllabic English words, especially nouns and verbs. The present study is an attempt to explore and analyze the acoustic characteristics of English lexical stress, especially of the two important lexical stress correlates of duration and intensity in the production of lexical stress on the selected disyllabic English nouns and verbs produced by Pashto-speaking EFL learners in Pakistan.

Research Questions

This study had the following research questions:

1. With what pattern do Pashto-speaking Pakistani EFL learners use the stress correlates of duration and intensity to produce and mark lexical stress on the selected disyllabic English pair words (nouns and verbs)?

2. Do Pashto-speaking learners of English use and vary the two stress correlates to mark stress shift and distinguish stressed syllables from unstressed syllables in disyllabic English pair words in the same way as native speakers do?

3. Do statistically significant differences exist in the mean duration and mean intensity of all the first and second syllables across all ten pairs (nouns and verbs) of disyllabic words?

Literature Review

Anderson, Johnson & Koehler (1992) analyzed the correlation between deviance in pronunciation of nonnative students at the levels of syllable

structure, segmental structure, and prosody. They found that pronunciation deviance at all three levels correlated with the experts' ratings of the participants' pronunciation, but prosody had the strongest influence. Archibald's work from 1991 to 2000 on the acquisition of L2 stress by learners of different languages suggested that L2 learners' use of principles of Universal Grammar (UG), correct L2 parameter settings from resetting, and incorrect L1 parameter settings from transfer make up their interlanguages (Archibald, 2000, p. 152). Archibald's (1993) study of learners of Spanish (a variable fixed-stress language), Polish, and Hungarian (fixed-stress languages) provided evidence of transfer of L1 metrical parameters to the acquisition of stress in L2. He also pointed out that if non-native students cannot perceive correct stress placement the way native speakers do, then the input will not 'act as triggering data' for correct L2 parameter setting. This suggests that there is a need to investigate EFL learners' perception and production of stress.

Altmann (2006) studied the effects of the stress properties of native language on the acquisition of primary word stress in L2 in the light of two recent typological hierarchical models of stress: the Stress Deafness Model and the Stress Typology Model. The participants were speakers of Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, French, Turkish, Korean, and Spanish. They were learning English at the advanced level. Results indicated that Arabic, Turkish, French speaking students faced problems in perceiving the location of stress, but their performance was most like native speakers of English in production. Learners with Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Spanish perceived stress. However, their stress production differed from that of the control groups.

Chen (2001) studied the ways Mandarin speakers of English produced sentence stress compared to American English speakers. Results indicated that Mandarin speakers were able to differentiate stressed and unstressed words in terms of F0, duration, and intensity. Results also indicated that though Mandarin speakers were able to identify word stress, the acoustic characteristics of stress were not identical to those of American speakers. They produced stressed words with a higher F0 and shorter duration than American speakers. Mandarin speakers also produced unstressed words with higher F0 and greater intensity than American speakers.

Wang (2008) explored the perception of stress by Mandarin Chinese learners of English and native English-speaking learners. Mandarin speakers' perception of stress significantly varied, like that of native speakers of English, by manipulating the three acoustic cues, but they

relied less on two cues, i.e., duration and intensity, and more on F0, higher than native English learners. Bu and Zhou (2020) explored problems faced by Chinese EFL learners in the acquisition of English stress. They identified wrong lexical stress assignment, prominence of unstressed syllables as stressed ones, and stress on every word as some factors that affect Chinese EFL learners' accent.

Field (2005) studied the role of lexical stress in intelligibility and the lexical allocation by native speakers and nonnative speakers of English. Both native and nonnative speakers responded similarly to the problems of incorrect allocation of stress. For both groups, the extent to which intelligibility was compromised depended greatly on the direction in which stress was shifted and whether changes in vowel quality were involved. The study afforded a number of possible insights into how lexical stress placement contributes to intelligibility. It demonstrated a significant decrease in intelligibility when stress was shifted to an unstressed syllable without an accompanying change of quality. Kaori (2012) looked at the perception and processing of lexical stress by Japanese (JS) speakers. The results indicated JS's perception of lexical contrastive stress at a deeper level than the phonetic surface level, the same like native English speakers. This suggests that JS are sensitive to prosodic information at the same level as NS in the processing of words that contain stress accent. Maczuga (2014) studied the production of German L2 stress by native speakers of English. This study examined the effect of training on the ability of English native speakers who are beginner-level learners of German to produce stress patterns in words from three distinct categories: native German words, German-English cognate words, and words with unstressed suffixes. The results revealed that training improved learners' production of German word stress and raised learners' awareness. Participants were more accurate in their production of native German words and those with unstressed suffixes than they were in their production of cognates.

Kondo's (2007) study examined the production of English lexical stress by Japanese speakers to determine which acoustic features associated with English lexical stress were difficult for Japanese speakers to acquire. Results of this study showed that Japanese speakers had good control of F0, duration, and intensity of stressed and unstressed vowels in English, and they were fluent speakers, but still, they could not achieve native like vowel duration. Zhang et al. (2008) studied the acoustic characteristics of English lexical stress produced by native Mandarin speakers. Ten English and 10 Mandarin speakers participated in the study. Results of this study showed that Mandarin speakers used all the acoustic correlates to

distinguish stressed syllables from unstressed syllables, but still were unable to produce native like stress pattern. Mandarin speakers were found to be significantly different from native speakers in formant patterns.

The review of the selected literature shows that speakers of languages other than English have difficulty in producing and marking native-like lexical stress and distinguishing stressed syllables from unstressed syllables. Second, it also indicates a wide research gap, as no published study was found related to the acoustic analysis of the English lexical stress produced by Pashto-speaking EFL learners. Thus, the present study attempted to fill in this wide research gap by exploring the lexical stress pattern and the use and variation in the use of the two important lexical stress correlates of duration and intensity in the production of English lexical stress by Pashto-speaking learners of English on the selected ten pairs of disyllabic English words (nouns and verbs).

Methodology

As this study attempted to explore the pattern of lexical stress and the acoustic features of duration and intensity correlates in marking stress shift for disyllabic English nouns and verbs by Pashto-speaking learners of English, the exploratory and descriptive research design was employed in this study. A stimulus consisting of 10 pairs of disyllabic English words (nouns and verbs with similar spellings) in context sentences was used for data collection (Appendix A). Praat was utilized for recording data, while FormantPro Praat was employed for marking syllable boundaries, obtaining duration and intensity, and analyzing the data.

Participants

The target population for the present study was L1 Pashto-speaking learners of English, enrolled in the undergraduate English degree program at Hazara University, Mansehra. Six Pashto-speaking undergraduate students of English (three female and three male) were selected through non-random, purposive, and convenience sampling procedures to participate in this study. They were taking an introductory course in Phonetics and Phonology during the time of data collection.

Materials and Procedures

Following the methodology of Zhang, Nissen, & Francis (2008), ten pairs of disyllabic English words were selected as target words. Each pair

consisted of a noun and a verb, having identical spellings. Out of these ten pairs, three pairs (contract, desert, and record) were selected from Zhang et al. (2008). The remaining seven pairs consisted of the following words: conflict, discount, insult, protest, reject, survey, and contest. All ten pairs of nouns and verbs were used in context sentences. The target words were italicized while designing the stimulus for data recording.

The researchers contacted the volunteer students (selected prior to the data recording date) to finalize the day, time, and place with consensus for data recording. Each participant was given the stimulus in printed form prior to the recording. They were asked to carefully read all the sentences. Additionally, one of the researchers instructed them to speak out all the sentences loudly, as naturally as possible, and as they would do in a normal conversation. They were instructed to speak each word three times, marked with A first with stress on the first syllables, where the target words were used as nouns, and the sentences marked with B with stress on the second syllable, where the target words were used as verbs. The participants were required to speak each sentence three times in both cases while keeping their stimulus in front of them during recording. After the instruction session, all participants were asked to wait outside the hall. After all the preparations were made by the second researcher for recording, all participants were called in one-by one. All responses were recorded in a multi-purpose soundproof hall, equipped with audio-visual aids. Praat software was used for all recordings with a 44100 Hz sampling frequency. The laptop was placed approximately half a meter away from the speaker's mouth. All three repetitions of each of the 20 sentences (ten nouns and ten verbs) were saved as individual sound files in WAV format and coded for later analysis, thus obtaining 120 sound files (60 for nouns and 60 for verbs).

Prior to computing mean duration and mean intensity, two more copies of each set of 60 sound files were made, thus totaling 360 sound files (180 for nouns and 180 for verbs), in order to mark syllable boundaries for three repetitions separately. Each set of 180 sound files was kept in four separate folders: one each for marking syllable boundaries of first syllables of nouns, second syllables of nouns, first syllables of verbs, and second syllables of verbs. In total, 720 sound files were obtained and processed. Using Praat and FormantPro (Version 1.0), interactive labeling was performed to mark syllable boundaries for the first and second syllables of all tokens of nouns and verbs, followed by processing all sounds without a pause and getting ensemble files in order to compute mean duration, mean meanduration, mean intensity, and mean meanintensity for all

repetitions of both the first and second syllables of nouns and verbs of all participants, and then for each three repetitions of each of the ten nouns and ten verbs (both first and second syllables) of all six participants. All data were imported to MS Excel sheet for further analysis. This was conducted to obtain an overall and clearer view of the lexical stress produced by Pashto-speaking students of English, their stress shift for disyllabic nouns and verbs, and a clearer picture of their lexical stress and stress shift for each of the ten nouns and ten verbs.

Results

The present study aimed to explore and analyze the pattern with which Pashto-speaking EFL learners in Pakistan produce and mark lexical stress on the selected disyllabic English nouns and verbs and whether or not Pashto-speaking students of English use and vary the stress correlates of duration and intensity in the production of lexical stress contrasts to mark stress shift and distinguish stressed syllables from unstressed syllables in disyllabic English pair words (nouns and verbs) the way native speakers of English do. In addition, the present study also attempted to find out any statistically significant differences in the mean duration and mean intensity of the three repetitions of all participants for the first and second syllables of ten pairs (nouns and verbs) of disyllabic words. Data was analyzed in light of the research questions.

In order to answer the first question, interactive labeling was done to mark syllable boundaries for the first and the second syllables of all 720 tokens of nouns and of verbs, followed by processing all sounds without a pause and getting ensemble files in order to compute mean duration and mean intensity for all the three repetitions of both the first and second syllables of nouns and verbs of all participants using Praat and FormantPro (Version 1.0). Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data.

As indicated in Figures 1 to 4, Pashto-speaking learners of English generally demonstrated a pattern in producing lexical stress and marking stress contrasts on the selected disyllabic English nouns. They tended to exhibit longer duration on the second syllables and higher intensity on the first syllables, except in cases like "record", "discount", and "survey", where the intensity of the second syllables was higher. Similarly, for the selected disyllabic English verbs, participants were found to produce lexical stress and mark stress contrasts with longer duration on the second syllables and higher intensity on the first syllable, with exceptions like "record" and "survey" where the intensity of the second syllables was

higher. These findings suggest that Pashto-speaking EFL learners primarily rely on intensity to mark stress contrasts in nouns and on duration in verbs. However, they seem to encounter difficulty in utilizing duration for nouns and intensity for verbs on the first syllables, indicating potential challenges in accurately producing and marking lexical stress. These observations may point to nonnative pronunciation deviance.
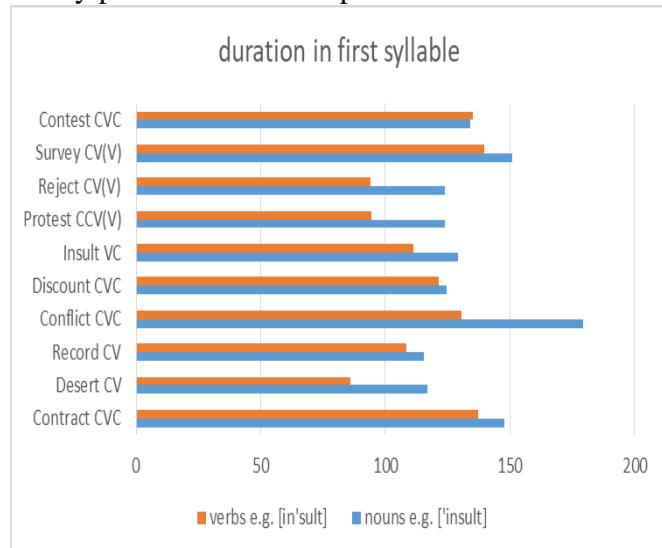
Figure 1: Mean duration (ms) in the first syllable
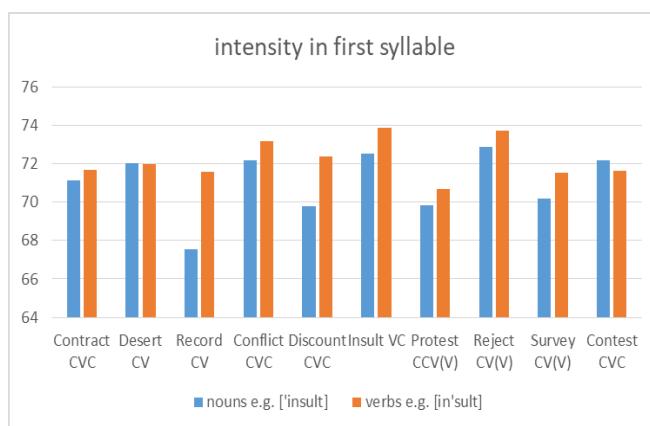
Figure 2: Mean intensity (db) in the first syllable
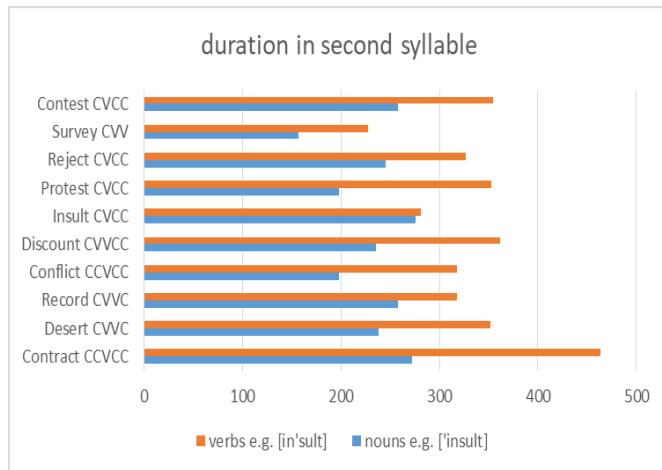
Figure 3: Mean duration (ms) in the second syllable
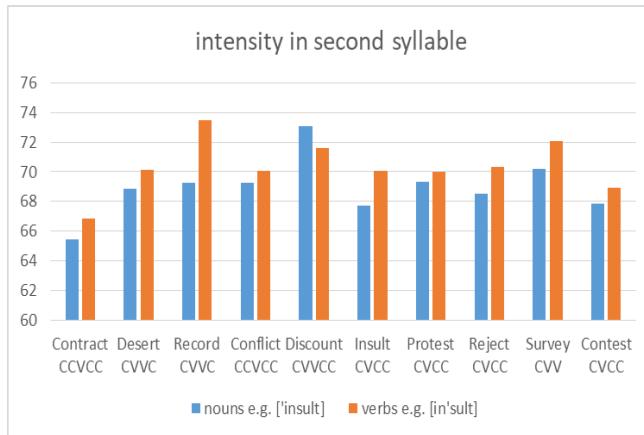
Figure 4: Mean intensity (db) in the second syllable

To address the second question, which aimed to examine the use and variation of stress correlates (duration and intensity) among Pashto-speaking EFL learners in marking stress shift in nouns and verbs and distinguishing stressed from unstressed syllables in disyllabic English words, mean scores for duration and intensity were computed separately for all repetitions of the first and second syllables of the selected nouns and verbs. Table 1 presents the results, indicating notable differences in the mean scores of durations and intensity between the first and second syllables of each of the ten nouns. However, the observed pattern diverges from that typically exhibited by native English speakers in the production of lexical stress contrasts.

Table 1: *Mean duration and mean intensity for the first and second syllables of nouns*

Words	Duration (ms) first Syllables	Duration (ms) second Syllables	Intensity (db) first Syllables	Intensity (db) second Syllables
Contract	147.92	272.05	71.13	65.44
Desert	116.79	238.22	72.04	68.84
Record	115.41	258.09	67.52	69.28
Conflict	179.32	198.36	72.17	69.27
Discount	124.71	235.28	69.77	73.07
Insult	129.24	276.17	72.55	67.73
Protest	124.04	197.86	69.83	69.36
Reject	123.95	245.72	72.86	68.54
Survey	150.96	157.30	70.18	70.23
Contest	134.02	257.72	72.19	67.87

Analysis of the mean scores shows that Pashto-speaking learners of English use and mark lexical stress contrasts on disyllabic English nouns with longer duration on the second syllables and higher intensity on the first syllables, except for the three nouns record, discount, and survey, where the mean density is higher on the second syllables. This suggests that they may face challenges in successfully marking and varying stress contrasts to produce and distinguish stressed and unstressed syllables as native speakers do, specifically with longer duration and higher intensity of the first syllables.

Regarding the use of stress correlates of duration and intensity in the production of lexical stress contrasts by Pashto- speaking learners to mark stress shifts and distinguish stressed syllables from unstressed syllables on disyllabic English verbs, results in Table 2 demonstrate a clear difference between the mean scores of the stress correlates of duration and intensity forthe first and second syllables of the selected verbs.

Table 2: *Mean duration and mean intensity for the first and second syllable verbs*

Words	Duration (ms) first Syllables	Duration (ms)second Syllables	Intensity (db) first Syllables	Intensity (db) second Syllables
Contract	137.17	463.47	71.70	66.88
Desert	86.06	351.99	71.99	70.14
Record	108.35	317.82	71.58	73.51

Conflict	130.53	317.80	73.18	70.10
Discount	121.28	361.55	72.37	71.58
Insult	111.10	281.49	73.88	70.09
Protest	94.46	352.94	70.70	69.97
Reject	93.91	326.84	73.70	70.34
Survey	139.66	227.65	71.54	72.04
Contest	135.11	354.66	71.64	68.91

Analysis and comparison of the mean scores for each of the verbs' first and second syllables indicate that Pashto- speaking EFL learners produce and mark lexical stress on the selected disyllabic English verbs with longer duration of the second syllables and higher intensity of the first syllables, except for the two verbs- record and survey- where the mean scores for the stress correlate of intensity are higher for the second syllables. This unique pattern of lexical stress production and marking does not match the pattern observed in native speakers of English. The acoustic features of their stress pattern for such verbs include longer duration and higher intensity on the second syllables.

Moreover, a simple comparison of mean values of the stress correlate of duration and intensity for the first and second syllables of each of the ten nouns and verbs reveals some phonetic manipulations. This is indicated by the higher mean scores to mark and produce stress contrasts by the Pashto-speaking EFL learners. Thus, analysis of the results suggests that Pashto-speaking EFL learners do use and vary the stress correlates of duration and intensity in the production of lexical stress contrasts to mark stress shift in nouns and verbs and distinguish stressed syllables from unstressed syllables in disyllabic English pair words, but in a manner unique to their speech patterns, rather than precisely mimicking native speakers. Specifically, native English speakers typically use longer duration and higher intensity on the first syllable for disyllabic nouns and on the second syllables for verbs. Overall, the lexical stress pattern of Pashto-speaking EFL learners for disyllabic English nouns and verbs appears to deviate from that of native English speakers.

Although the analysis of mean values for all three repetitions of each of the ten selected verbs and nouns provides us with important information and insights into the pattern of lexical stress among Pashto-speaking learners of English and their utilization of stress correlates such as duration and intensity in marking stress shifts and contrasts in disyllabic English nouns and verbs, drawing an overall clearer picture and reaching candid conclusions is challenging without a systematic analysis and comparison

of data. Therefore, a third research question was necessary in order to determine if there were any statistically significant differences in the mean duration and mean intensity for both the first and second syllables of the ten pairs (nouns and verbs) of disyllabic words. To address this question, mean scores were computed for the stress correlates of duration and intensity for the first and second syllables of all ten pairs of nouns and verbs.

Table 3: *Mean duration and intensity with standard deviation for first and second syllables of nouns and verbs*

|	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Duration (ms)				
Noun first Syllable	180	134.64	37.22	2.77
Noun Second Syllable	180	233.68	65.71	4.89
Verb First Syllable	180	115.82	33.67	2.51
Verb Second Syllable	180	335.62	80.03	5.96
Intensity (db)				
Noun first Syllable	180	71.02	4.33	0.32
Noun Second Syllable	180	68.96	4.26	0.31
Verb first Syllable	180	72.23	4.04	0.30
Verb Second Syllable	180	70.36	3.98	0.29
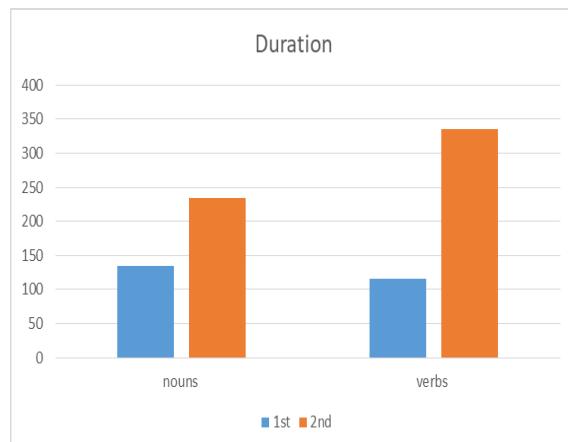
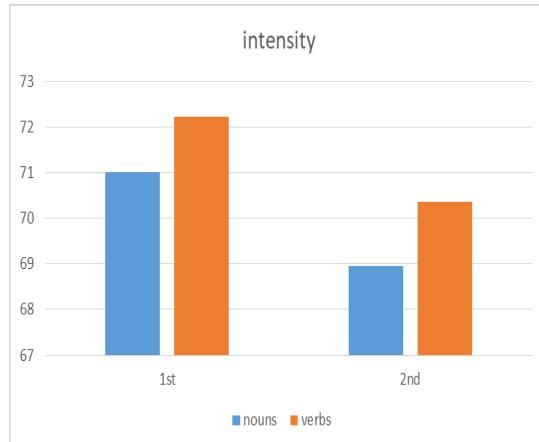**Figure 5: Overall Mean Duration (ms)**

Figure 6: Overall Mean Intensity (db)

Based on the analysis of the statistical values, it is evident that all participants used and varied the stress correlates of duration and intensity to mark stress contrasts on nouns. However, the higher mean duration score (233.68 ms) for the second syllables of nouns as compared to their mean duration score for the first syllables of nouns (134.64 ms) in Table 3 and Figures 5 and 6 indicate some unusual phonetic manipulation of the stress correlate of duration, which might be associated with the effects of others stress correlates in the second syllables. Nevertheless, the slightly lower mean intensity score (68.96 db) for the second syllables of nouns, compared to the higher mean intensity score for the first syllables of nouns (71.02 db), shows that the participants used the stress correlate of intensity to mark stress on the first syllables of nouns more clearly than the stress correlate of duration.

Additionally, the participants were found to be using and varying the stress correlates of duration and intensity to mark stress contrasts in verbs and shift stress from first syllables to second syllables more clearly than in nouns. This helped distinguish the stressed syllables from the unstressed syllables as indicated by the much higher mean duration score (335.62 ms) and slightly lower mean intensity score (70.36 db) for the second syllables of verbs compared to the mean duration and mean intensity scores for the second syllables of nouns (233.68 ms and 68.96 db). However, there seems to be some kind of unusual phonetic manipulation of the stress correlate of intensity in the first and second syllables of verbs, as indicated by the slightly higher means intensity score for the first syllables of verbs (72.23 db) compared to the mean intensity score of the verbs' second syllables (70.36 db). This might be associated with the effect of vowel quality or some other stress correlate of the first syllables of the target verbs.

For a better understanding of the results and to reach a candid conclusion, a One-Sample t-Test was used to determine if the two groups have a similar or different amount of variability between scores. One-Sample t Tests revealed that the second syllables of nouns (M =233.68, SD= 65.71, t=47.70, sig. = 0.00) are produced with longer duration compared to the first syllables (M=134.64, SD=37.22, t= 48.53, sig. = 0.00). Additionally, the second syllables in verbs (M = 335.62, SD= 80.03, t=56.26, sig. = 0.00) were produced with longer duration compared to the first syllables (M=115.82, SD=33.67, t= 46.14, sig. = 0.00).

Table 4: *Comparison of duration and intensity for nouns and verbs' first Syllables with second syllables*

Correlates and Syllables	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Duration (ms)						
Noun first Syllable	48.53	179	.00	134.64	129.16	140.11
	47.70	179	.00	233.68	224.01	243.34
Noun second Syllable				115.82		
				335.62		
Verb first Syllable	46.14	179	.00		110.87	120.77
	56.26	179	.00	71.02	323.85	347.39
Verb second Syllable				68.96		
				72.23		
Intensity (db)				70.36		
Noun first Syllable	219.62	179	.00		70.39	71.66
	216.83	179	.00		68.34	69.59
Noun second Syllable						
verb first Syllable	239.65	179	.00		71.63	72.82
	236.91	179	.00		69.77	70.94
verb second Syllable						

Results in Tables 3 and 4 also show a significant difference in the intensity of the first and second syllables of both nouns and verbs. One-Sample t-test revealed that the first syllables of nouns (M = 71.02, SD= 4.33, t=219.62, sig. = 0.00) and verbs (M=72.23, SD=4.04, t= 239.65, sig. = 0.00) are louder than the second syllables (M=68.96, SD=4.26, t= 216.83, sig. = 0.00) and verbs (M=70.36, SD=3.98, t= 236.91, sig. = 0.00),

respectively. The difference is significant.

The analysis of all the results indicates that the overall use and variation in the use of the two important stress correlates of duration and intensity in the production of lexical stress in nouns and verbs suggest that Pashto-speaking learners of English do not produce lexical stress the same way as native English speakers do. They also mark stress shift in nouns and verbs in order to distinguish stressed syllables from unstressed syllables. The apparent discrepancy in the phonetic manipulation of the stress correlate of duration and intensity in the case of nouns and verbs, respectively, seems to be either due to the influence of the learners' first language or the effects of some other stress correlates in the corresponding syllables.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the pattern of lexical stress production among Pashto-speaking EFL learners on disyllabic English nouns and verbs. It also sought to determine if Pashto-speaking learners of English utilize and vary the stress correlates, such as duration and intensity, to mark stress shifts in nouns and verbs and differentiate stressed syllables from the unstressed ones in disyllabic English pair words. Additionally, the study examined the statistical differences in the mean scores of stress correlates- duration and intensity- across the first and second syllables of all disyllabic nouns and verbs. After analyzing the results, it was observed that Pashto-speaking EFL learners produced lexical stress and marked stress contrasts on the selected disyllabic English nouns with longer duration on second syllables and higher intensity on second syllables, except for 'record', 'discount', and 'survey', where the intensity of the second syllables was higher. Similarly, for the selected disyllabic English verbs, the participants tended to produce lexical stress and marked stress contrasts with longer duration on the second syllables and higher intensity on the first syllables, except for 'record' and 'survey', where the intensity of the second syllables was higher. The pattern of stress variation differed from that of native speakers of English. Consequently, it suggests that Pashto-speaking EFL learners may face challenges in accurately producing and marking lexical stress on disyllabic English nouns and verbs, indicating non-native pronunciation deviance.

Results indicate that Pashto-speaking learners use and vary the stress correlates of duration and intensity to mark stress contrasts in verbs and

nouns, although not consistently. They clearly shift stress from the first syllables to the second syllables in the case of verbs, distinguishing stressed syllables from unstressed syllables. However, they do not consistently shift stress from the second syllables to the first syllables in nouns, making it difficult to distinguish stressed syllables from unstressed ones. Additionally, there is a statistically significant difference in the duration and intensity between the first and second syllables of both nouns and verbs. Second syllables of nouns and verbs exhibit longer duration compared to the first syllables, while the first syllables of nouns and of verbs are louder than the second syllables. The unusual phonetic manipulations observed in the intensity of the first syllables of nouns and the duration of the second syllables of verbs may be attributed to the effects of other stress correlates present in those two syllables.

Thus, the analysis of all results suggests that Pashto-speaking EFL learners (a) produce and mark lexical stress contrasts on disyllabic English nouns and verbs with an unusual pattern compared to native English speakers, (b) they are not fully capable of producing lexical stress contrasts and marking stress shift for both nouns and verbs, though they use and vary the two stress correlates to mark stress contrasts in verbs and nouns, (c) they exhibit clearer and more efficient stress shifting and marking stress in the case of verbs compared to nouns, and (d) there is a statistically significant difference in the duration and intensity of the first and second syllables of both nouns and verbs. Second syllables of nouns and verbs are produced with longer duration compared to the first syllables, while the first syllables of nouns and of verbs are louder than the second syllables. Further research studies need to be carried out to study other stress correlates, such as the fundamental frequency (F0), vowel quality and reduction, and pitch peak; in addition to duration and intensity, to obtain a clearer picture of the acoustic features of English lexical stress among Pashto-speaking EFL learners in disyllabic English pair words (i.e., nouns and verbs).

The study will contribute valuable insights into the interplay between linguistic backgrounds, language acquisition, and pronunciation in the Pakistani context. Moreover, the findings will have implications for language teaching and curriculum development tailored to the needs of Pashto-speaking EFL learners and other multilingual communities in Pakistan.

The findings of acoustic analysis can have significant implications for language teaching and learning in Pakistan. Educators can design targeted

interventions to help Pashto-speaking EFL learners overcome challenges related to English lexical stress acquisition. By raising awareness of the differences between Pashto and English stress patterns and providing targeted pronunciation instruction, educators can empower learners to improve their English pronunciation and communication skills.

To address errors in stress placement, Pashto-speaking EFL learners can benefit from focused pronunciation instruction and practice activities that highlight the differences in stress patterns between English and Pashto. Teachers can provide explicit explanations of stress placement rules in English and offer guided practice exercises where learners can identify and produce the correct stress patterns in pairs of words with similar spellings but different meanings. Additionally, using auditory discrimination tasks and drills can help learners develop their awareness of stress patterns in English words and improve their ability to produce them accurately in spoken language. Overall, by addressing these errors through targeted instruction and practice, Pashto-speaking EFL learners can enhance their pronunciation skills and overcome challenges related to stress placement in English words, ultimately improving their overall proficiency in the language.

References

Altmannl, H. (2006). *The perception and production of second language stress: A crosslinguistic experimental study* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Delaware.

Anderson-Hsieh, J., Johnson, R., & Koehler, K. (1992). The relationship between native speaker judgments of nonnative pronunciation and deviance in segmentals, prosody, and syllable structure. *Language Learning, 42*, 529–555.

Archibald, J. (1992). Transfer of L1 parameter settings: Some empirical evidence from Polish metrics. *Canadian Journal of Linguistics, 37*(3), 301–339.

Archibald, J. (1993). Metrical phonology and the acquisition of L2 stress. In F. R. Eckman (Ed.), *Confluence: Linguistics, L2 acquisition and speech pathology* (pp. 37–48). John Benjamins.

Archibald, J. (2000). Models of L2 phonological acquisition. In B. Swierzbin, F. Morris, M. Anderson, C. Klee, & E. Tarone (Eds.),

Social and cognitive factors in second language acquisition: Selected proceedings of the 1999 Second Language Research Forum (pp. 125–157). Cascadilla Press.

Bradlow, A. R., & Pisoni, D. B. (1999). Recognition of spoken words by native and non-native listeners: Talker-, listener-, and item-related factors. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, 106*, 2074–2085.

Bu, Y., & Zhou, Z. (2020). Study of Chinese EFL learners' problems with stress acquisition. *System, 96*, Article 102392. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102392

Chen, Y. (2000). A study of sentence stress production in Mandarin speakers of American English. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, 109*(4), 1–10.

Erdmann, P. H. (1973). Patterns of stress-transfer in English and German. *International Review of Applied Linguistics in Language Teaching, 11*(3), 229–241.

Field, J. (2005). Intelligibility and the listener: The role of lexical stress. *TESOL Quarterly, 39*(3), 399–423.

Flege, J. E. (1995). Second language speech learning: Theory, findings, and problems. In W. Strange (Ed.), *Speech perception and linguistic experience: Theoretical and methodological issues* (pp. 233–277). York Press.

Fleming, B. P. (2021). Lexical stress in northeastern Pashto. *ICUWPL, 17*, 15–24.

Hussain, C., Hussain, M., & Dar, H. (2023). Linguistic diversity and national identity in Pakistan: Parliament's influence. *Global Language Review, 8*(1), 370–378.

Kaori, S. (2012). Processing and representation of lexical stress and schwa by Japanese speakers: A preliminary study. *Shizuoka University of Art and Culture Bulletin, 12*, 29–37.

Khan, A., Ahmad, M., & Khuwaja, N. A. (2016). Stress placement in English bi-syllabic and tri-syllabic suffixed words and their roots

by Pashto speakers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Pakistan). *International Research Journal of Arts and Humanities, 44*, 59–84.

Kondo, M. (2007). Acoustic realization of lexical accent and its effects on phrase intonation in English speakers' Japanese. In *Proceedings of the 16th International Congress of Phonetic Sciences* (pp. 1649–1652).

Lord, G. (2001). *The second language acquisition of Spanish stress: Derivational, analogical or lexical?* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Pennsylvania State University.

Maczuga, P. (2014). *Production of German L2 stress by native speakers of English* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Calgary.

Munro, M. J., & Derwing, T. M. (1999). Foreign accent, comprehensibility, and intelligibility in the speech of second language learners. *Language Learning, 49*, 285–310.

Peperkamp, S., Vendelin, I., & Dupoux, E. (2010). Perception of predictable stress: A cross-linguistic investigation. *Journal of Phonetics, 38*, 422–430.

Trofimovich, P., & Isaacs, T. (2012). Disentangling accent from comprehensibility. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition, 15*, 905–916.

Wang, Q. (2008). *Perception of English stress by Mandarin Chinese learners of English: An acoustic study* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Victoria.

Zhang, Y., Nissen, S. L., & Francis, A. L. (2008). Acoustic characteristics of English lexical stress produced by Mandarin speakers. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, 123*(6), 4498–4513.

Half Motherhood and Beyond: Trauma, Schizophrenia and Resistance in Shahnaz Bashir's The Half Mother

Syeda Saba Zahra[1*]

Abstract

This research paper explores the re-conceptualization and revision of the idea of motherhood in *The Half Mother* by Shahnaz Bashir (2014). The protagonist, Haleema, is the embodiment of numerous Kashmiri mothers of the 1990s torn between political violence, personal loss, and social desertion. Her cheating husband abandons her when she is pregnant; she finds shelter with her father, Ghulam Rasool Joo, and there she gives birth to her only son, Imran. Her future history is marked by traumatic events, first of all the cruel killing of her father by Indian soldiers, and then the kidnapping of her adolescent son by the same forces. The title of the novel is an indication of her fragmented identity as a 'half mother' who is in a constant state of limbo concerning the fate of her son. The mental consequences of the long-term trauma and solitude are shown when she slowly falls apart emotionally and eventually develops schizophrenia. Her psychosis is an expression of the highly personal price of an unresolved loss and the wider phenomenon of the collective silencing of women in conflict zones. This research study applies the psychoanalytic theory of schizophrenia formulated by Fromm-Reichmann (1959) to analyze the factors that lead to the decline in the mental state of Haleema. Furthermore, it adds to the debate about women in conflict literature by showing how the novel by Bashir reinvents maternal identity as both vulnerable and protesting. Therefore, by placing the experience of Haleema into this theoretical context, this study investigates the overlaps of motherhood, trauma, and mental illness whilst pre-empting the resistance of Kashmiri women to systemic violence.

Keywords: Schizophrenia, Mental Illness, Motherhood, Loneliness, Trauma.

[1] PhD Scholar, Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen, Germany
[*]Corresponding author's E-mail: zahra_syeda@live.com

Introduction

In a harrowing account of the pursuit of motherhood, Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother* (2014) follows Haleema, whose husband cheats on her and then abandons her only three months after their marriage. Haleema seeks refuge in her father's home and gives birth to her only son, Imran. For a short time, the three of them live in peace, until their lives are irrevocably changed by the intervention of the Indian Army. Her father, Ab Jaan, is mercilessly shot by three bullets by the army officers, and later, Haleema's son Imran is abducted as a teenager, while Haleema is left to suffer loneliness and despair on her own. Freida Fromm-Reichmann (1959) states in her model of psychoanalysis that chronic loneliness not only results in emotional pain but also can be deadly, speeding up conditions like Alzheimer's, high blood pressure, heart disease, and schizophrenia. Shulevitz (2013) also supports this argument with the fact that vulnerability to contracting such illnesses is heightened when loneliness is abundantly present. Within this structure, Haleema's relentless search for her son traces Haleema's slow descent from sanity into insanity, where words of comfort or consolation no longer hold a purpose. Her refusal to celebrate Eid, which was coupled with the statement "her Eid would be the return of her son" (p. 179), encapsulates both her shattered motherhood and the intensity of her relentless grief.

The powerful narrative of the novel helps the reader envision all her struggles, living through her experience; the reader stands equally with her in all her efforts, in her pain, and in her destructive isolation, which leads to her death, ending the only bit of hope in the reader's mind. Tragedy upon tragedy befalls Haleema; her tragedies are countless, but she is alone, she has to face the cruel circumstances all by herself because her fate is redecided and rewritten by the Army, depriving her of all her protectors in a war-stricken world. Haleema begins to believe that the things around her respond to her when she talks to them,

> She began talking to herself or to the walls. Sometimes, she would talk to the things that belonged to Imran, crying and wailing alternatively. She would open the dented heirloom trunk and take out his notebooks. She would slowly run her fingers over his scribbles and feel the letters. (p. 69)

This research paper looks at the tapestry of a woman's life as she transitions from mother to mothering to something more than mothering. The quality 'beyond' in her character represents how she, as a mother,

transcends her basic instinct of self-preservation and instead suffers for the love of her only son. Unable to save him from the so-called protectors of the state, she falls to the ground on the dirt road and cries, "I am a perforated soul, my son" (p. 57). This study gives voice to the silent strength of thousands of Kashmiri mothers of the 1990s whose sustenance was possible only through their children. It also conveys the sense of how, for women such as Haleema, the present and the uncertainty of the future become unbearable, and all they have left are memories of the past from which they can only draw a fragile comfort.

The application of Fromm-Reichmann psychoanalytic theory is achieved through a number of analytical steps in an effort to enhance the methodological appropriateness of this study. The initial one focuses on locating narrative points where Haleema displays behavior that is consistent with clinical signs described by Fromm-Reichmann, such as fragmentation of identity, disorganized perception, and withdrawal from external reality. The symptoms are identified by analyzing Haleema's shifting self-perception, her inability to maintain coherent boundaries between past and present, and psychological spaces whenever she confronts traumatic memories. By mapping the symptoms onto the narrative structure in this way, the analysis is no longer limited to the surface-level interpretation, but it creates a methodological gap between the clinical theory and the literary representation.

The second step is to trace these symptoms throughout the text by paying close attention to the speech patterns of Haleema, frequent dream imagery, and dissociative reaction towards violence and displacement. These literary signs are not considered metaphorical embellishments but structural mechanisms that can be used to understand the psychic outcomes of continuous political trauma. By viewing Haleema as incoherent, her sudden silences and hallucinatory memories as symptoms of schizophrenic withdrawal, the research shows that Bashir has coded the trauma into the very fiber of her characterization. The systematic approach to it is necessary to base the psychoanalytic framework on the concrete reality in the novel and to interpret the image created of Haleema as a multifaceted process of psycho-sufferings versus a violent sociopolitical environment that determines her inner reality.

Literature Review

The 1990s are seen as one of the darkest times in the history of Kashmir when curfews, bloodshed, disappearances, and systematic violations of human rights were the order of the day. Women were a disproportionate

target of this violence, as they were subjected not only to humiliation and social vulnerability but also to extreme psychological trauma due to the loss of the person they loved. Human Rights Watch (1993) records how enforced disappearance in Kashmir spawned a state of perennial uncertainty, as women were suspended between hope and despair, incapable of reaching closure. Seema Kazi (2007) goes further to suggest that militarization in Kashmir not only caused physical but also profound mental violence on women; grief, waiting, and uncertainty became part of the daily suffering.

Although Haleema is not harmed physically, because of the loss of her son to forced disappearance, she is affected mentally and emotionally. The fact that she has found herself waiting endlessly, lonely, and psychologically degenerated into schizophrenia speaks of how militarized violence in Kashmir is not only body-attacking, but also mind and identity-attacking, and leaves women like her permanently fractured. "For all such uncertain cases for women whose husbands have disappeared, we will prefix their status with 'Half', Advocate Farooq Ahmad explained'' (p. 142). Unable to resolve the conflict of whether her son was still alive or dead, Haleema becomes a half mother, "So am I a half mother?" (p. 143).

Shahnaz Bashir has attempted to expose the pain, agony, mental instability, misery, and helplessness of thousands of mothers of 1990's Kashmir through the character of Haleema. The tyrannical holders of power always try to silence these stories of helplessness according to their own desires or as it may benefice them. The novel is filled with grim and realistic details of brutalization and mourning in 1990's pre-war Kashmir. Not sure whether to mourn over her son's death, Haleema dies every single moment in his torturous absence. As the novel proceeds, the search for her son begins; the reader expects at every turn that some detail or a word of hope might bring some relief to her broken heart. The author of the novel successfully brings to light the state of fear, desperation, and the threat that the people of Kashmir face even today. The condition of Jammu and Kashmir is still pretty much the same. As *The Kashmir Today* writes, thousands of Kashmiri women are still waiting to see their sons who have been taken as enforced disappearances (2014), and this truth is strongly expressed in *The Half Mother* by Bashir. Haleema lives in this shared pain in the novel; the days of her life are defined by the rise of a desire unknown to rest, an ache in endless suspension. Unraveling, schizophrenic and lonely, her mind is inextricably linked to the collective trauma of hundreds of women, whose

lives have been framed not by what exists, but what hurts desperately unnoticed.

Loneliness has long been recognized as an important psychosocial stressor that can make people vulnerable to serious mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia. Fromm-Reichmann (1959) puts forward the argument that it is not only the lack of social interaction that is considered a real loneliness, but the lack of intimacy, which can be as painful as a physical ailment. Similarly, Cacioppo and Cacioppo (2018) highlight that chronic loneliness has impacts on neurobiological systems that generate stress responses that increase vulnerability to psychiatric disorders. Taken together, these views emphasize the importance of considering the prolonged experience of loneliness not only as an emotional experience but also as a key factor in the development of psychotic symptoms.

In order to place the psychoanalytic reading into a more modern and intersectional context, this work takes into consideration the findings of trauma and feminist theory. The concept of trauma as something that cannot be fully understood at the moment but rather returns in fragmented and deferring ways can be used as a very interesting prism through which to interpret all of the flashbacks that Haleema constantly experiences, her intrusive thoughts, and shattered memories. Indications of feminist trauma research, especially captivity, powerlessness, and dissolved basic trust, also help understand how the mental health issues of Haleema are conditioned by the repressive system of military-controlled power that constantly interferes with her feelings of security and independence. Also, the concept of postmemory is used to suggest how the violence and discontinuities of the Kashmir political arena are transgenerational and can determine the identity of women based on fear, grief, and unprocessed collective trauma inherited. Combined, these theoretical frameworks enrich the psychoanalytic reading by situating the struggles of Haleema, in terms of her psychology, in the wider conceptualizations of the meaning of trauma, gender experience, and historical memory.

Based on this theoretical background, the paper further compares the story of Haleema to the available literature on the Kashmiri women who have been subjected to a longstanding conflict. Analogues of gendered violence, limited mobility, militarized surveillance, and imposed silence point to the conditions that are almost similar to the social and psychological life of Haleema. Reading this literature, it is now obvious that Haleema is not unique with her trauma but that her experiences are prevalent among other women in militarized Kashmir. Placing the novel

in the context of these larger discourses, the analysis highlights both how the figure of Haleema is informed by and contributes to current debates about women suffering, their strength, and the many manifestations of resistance that occur in societies engulfed in civil wars.

In addition, empirical studies have provided evidence for the relationship between loneliness and schizophrenia, and studies have shown that people with a lower social network are at an increased risk for psychotic experiences. Michalska da Rocha et al. (2018) demonstrated that loneliness is significantly correlated with paranoia and hallucinations in schizophrenia spectrum disorders and that social isolation increases symptom severity in these disorders. Further, Lim et al. (2016) note that loneliness amplifies the symptoms (both positive and negative) in schizophrenia while at the same time compromising the quality of life. These results shed light on the vicious circle in which loneliness contributes both to the development of schizophrenia and to its clinical course.

Loneliness, recent research also shows that it not only increases the symptoms of schizophrenia, but it also undermines recovery by inhibiting hope and resilience. Randolph et al. (2025) argue that there are consistently high prevalence rates of loneliness and, in turn, loneliness was associated with worse mental health outcomes and lower life satisfaction among people living with schizophrenia. Hawkley and Cacioppo (2010) also report that loneliness activates biological and psychological processes that make coping abilities worse, which makes it much harder to recover from mental illnesses. These lessons lay a critical structure for understanding Haleema's descent in *The Half Mother*, where isolation and a sense of unresolved grief give way to schizophrenia, reflecting both the individual and the collective wounds of Kashmiri women.

The unconscious world of the imagination, which is commonly the first and only place where a person can find the strength and bravery to do that, is a place where most people find shelter from the harsh realities of life. For Haleema, this imaginary escape takes flight with her lived experience as she becomes the symbolic voice of Kashmir herself. Her words and actions in the novel resonate not just with her but with the collective pain of thousands of her fellow Kashmiris who have been subjected to oppressive regimes for many years. One personal tragedy after another, coupled with the enormous burden of loneliness, gradually destroys her mental balance and thrusts her into schizophrenia. Haleema's psychological disintegration therefore mirrors not just her personal battle,

but also the pain and the ineradicable trauma of an entire community, silenced by conflict.

Chopan (2015) highlights in "Psychic Trauma of a Bereaved Mother" that the loss of her only son is responsible for taking Haleema from sanity to schizophrenia. Schizophrenia is largely a result of extreme loneliness and is a psychological condition in which the emotional pain of losing a child can lead to a wide variety of psychological and physiological problems, such as depression, anxiety, and cognitive and physical disturbances. Haleema begins to talk to the wall, nails, and other things belonging to Imran, "Haleema says she has been talking to walls since ages- perhaps with the cracks and nails too'' (p. 173). People suffering from schizophrenia prefer to be left alone, and they are also fascinated by the idea of suicide.

The mysteriously disappeared Imran creates a deeply poignant narrative that traces the relentless search of a mother to reclaim the only reason of her existence. She has not yet recovered from the tragedy of her father's death when her son is also taken away from her. She remains a half mother for the rest of her life, struggling to find her son to become a complete mother again, "The greatest of suffering brings the greatest of hopes, the greatest of miseries the greatest patience, and the greatest uncertainties lead to the greatest quests" (p. 03).

Research Methodology

The research design used in this study is a qualitative research design because it explores the narrative, psychological, and thematic aspects of *The Half Mother* (2014) by Shahnaz Bashir. The qualitative method is especially suitable in this work since it focuses more on close reading, interpretive depth, and contextual analysis, which is the key to studying the construction of trauma, motherhood, and mental illness in conflict literature. This approach to the novel, which includes paying close attention to its language and narrative holes, figurative imagery, and behavior of characters, makes it possible to have a finer sense of why Haleema is depicted in this or that psychological position and how her fragmentation is a mirror of bigger sociopolitical influences. Qualitative inquiry, unlike the quantifiable results, aims at gathering meanings that are not solely objective but closely linked with the process of meaning-making; this allows the researcher to look at the depth of emotional, cultural, and psychological meaning contained within the text.

The paper is based on primary and secondary data. The key source, *The Half Mother* (2014), offers the main story on the basis of which scenes of psychological disruption, lamenting motherhood, and emotional seclusion are chosen to be discussed closely. This reading is backed by secondary texts such as academic criticism, theoretical discussions, psychoanalytic theories, and scientific research on trauma and loneliness available in academic databases. Particular attention is paid to the concept of loneliness as one of the predisposing factors of psychological deterioration, which is proven by psychobiological studies that reveal that long-term isolation interferes with emotional control and leads to increased susceptibility to such disorders as depression and schizophrenia. The combination of the literary analysis and the results of the research on trauma, feminist theory, and psychological science provides the methodology with a multidisciplinary theoretical base for interpreting the schizophrenia in Haleema's character as a literary element and a mirror of the facts that women in conflict areas live in.

Research Problem

The role of the mother in *The Half Mother* (2014) comes out as a complicated representation of power, pain, and a shattered psyche. The story of a woman whose son is forcefully taken away and whose father is horrendously killed reveals the numerous and quite conflicting roles women must play in militarized communities. Being left by her husband and having to bear the burden of motherhood on her own, Haleema turns into a half-mother who cannot be sure of everything and tries to find the child who is never coming back. The contradiction of how Kashmiri women are at once placed as rebellious spectators of state violence, as agents of family memory, as people deprived of patriarchal agency, and as women unable to stop the repetitive patterns of loss can be seen through her experiences. On this note, the story of Haleema is not a pure identity; it is a negotiation point of roles that the literature rarely keeps together in the same female form. A gradual slip by the mother into schizophrenia, which is characterized by instances such as the mother talking to the dead walls in her lonely house, is an allegorical expression of trauma that has not been resolved, psychic fracture, and extreme isolation.

Loneliness, which is aggravated by political violence and being left by her family, not only serves as a catalyst to her mental breakdown, but also serves as a metaphor of the invisibility of the suffering of Kashmiri women as a whole. Although current research in the conflict zones frequently focuses on trauma, resistance, or gendered violence, they

rarely consider the intersection of these identities in the inner world of one woman. This paper thus aims at filling this gap by examining how Kashmiri mothers are portrayed in literature as composite beings whose identities are protesting, caring, dependent, and suffering at the same time. It also explores the pernicious overlap of solitude and schizophrenia in the novel, by claiming that the psychological breakdown of Haleema is not only a personal tragedy but also a larger statement about the muffled emotionality of women who are subjects of militarized occupation.

Research Questions

1. How does Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother* imagine the maternal subject as both warrior, nurturer, dependent, and sufferer in the socio-political conditions of occupied Kashmir?

2. To what extent does unresolved trauma, compounded by loneliness and loss, precipitate Haleema's psychological deterioration and schizophrenia?

3. How does the story of the 'half mother' complicate traditional gender roles by putting women's resistance and agency at the center of the narrative in the face of militarized violence and patriarchal abandonment?

Analysis

In the quest for her son, Haleema ignores her health, and her health starts to deteriorate, and she develops schizophrenia. At one point, when she has completely lost control of herself in the SSP's office, she grabs a rifle from a guard and holds it to her chest, demanding that he pull the trigger to kill her. As Reichmann (1959) notes, loneliness is so horrifying and uncanny in its quality that those who go through it try to disassociate themselves not only from the memory of it but even from the fear it induces. Haleema's descent into schizophrenia is characterized by her slow distancing from reality; she starts to talk to inanimate objects and expresses a desire for death, a sign of the lack of moral and emotional support essential to survival. Yet amidst her shattering condition, there is hope left inside; every time a knock on the door sounds, her heart shivers with anticipation, believing, "It is him, perhaps, it is him" (p. 112).

There is nothing more isolating than not having anyone to talk to, which is why Haleema relies on her walls, nails, and the things her son owns as stand-ins for human company. Her schizophrenia, exacerbated by the

loneliness and the insomnia, is a manifestation of the many interacting factors that make the symptoms of her disorder much worse, where the overwhelming life experiences are the triggers for the symptoms of her disorder. The only fix for her deteriorating mental health would have been Imran's return, a return that never happens. As a result, she deteriorates and experiences an endless cycle of grief, hope, and psychological disintegration.

Haleema, the half mother, is the representative of countless women of 1990's Kashmir who lost their children, husbands, relatives, and dear ones at the hands of merciless Indian army officers. Haleema's father is brutally killed in front of her eyes, "Three bullets were pumped into Ab Jaan. One in the neck. One in the heart. One in the stomach. The rapid staccato startled the birds in the plum trees" (p. 49). She witnesses the whole scene, slapping her face and her chest; she pulls her hair and begins to mourn over the loss of her father. According to Reichmann (1959), loneliness appears in its real form only when there is a lack of real intimacy.

Haleema's mother passed away when she was only eight years old. Being the only child of her parents, the responsibility of all the domestic chores was put on her shoulders after her mother's death. "Slowly, the chores became a habit; the habit seeped into her and then became a part of her" (p. 10). When she got divorced by her husband, she did not know that she was pregnant. Only a few months after the marriage was over, the news of her pregnancy was no less than a shock for her. Haleema gave birth to a baby boy and tasted the essence of motherhood for the first and the last time in her life. She loved to play with his tiny fists and fingers, "And sometimes for reasons unknown to her as well, paint his tiny fingernails red'' (p. 14). Here, the reader might think that she wanted to have a daughter rather than a son. Had it been a daughter, it would have been easier for Haleema to overcome her mother's absence. Though he looks lesser like Haleema and more like his father, all her life she remains resolute in claiming Imran as hers only, "Ignoring the stark similarities between him and his father, Haleema passionately and desperately lied to herself" (p. 16), this shows her sense of possession and her feeling of security as he will grow up to be the man who would always protect her.

Human suffering is often only incomprehensible to others until they themselves experience a similar thing, and sharing in that pain creates empathy in ways that do not happen otherwise. Haleema goes through such an unbearable ordeal when she sees the brutal abduction of her son by the Indian army officers. In a moment of desperation, Imran screams,

"Ammi! Save me" (p. 55), in which Haleema cries for mercy, calling out, "You killed my father! Give me a companion for I cannot die alone!" (p. 56). This crucial moment becomes the starting point of both the ceaseless search of Haleema and the main plot of the novel, making the text into a story of search in which Haleema and the readers join hands in the hopeless search for Imran across Kashmir. This torture robs Haleema of rest, and in the morning her neighbors notice the effects of her suffering, "Her face was pale and dry like a corpse's" (p. 61).

Once while she is cooking in the kitchen for herself, she is reminded of her time with Ab Jaan and Imran, both of them are gone. Gone with them is the fragrance of her happiness, "The vegetable reminded her of meals with Ab Jaan and Imran. Of happier times. Times full of conversation and laughter" (p. 04). She is reminded of them again and again because their memories never leave her rather those bitter-sweet memories always haunt her. The things around her bring back the memories buried in her mind, she is tired of everything around her; tired of being brave, perhaps.

Haleema begins to think that her life has become useless, the idea of suicide keeps hovering over her mind again and again, but she always gives up on this idea because she knows that how much her life is precious for both herself and her son; both of them do not have any one else but each other. Even after Imran is gone, she begins to imagine him screaming for help, calling her name aloud, calling for water, as he did on the day he was captured. "Water! I couldn't even give him a tumbler of water! But how could I?" (p. 58). Her imagination keeps her guilt alive, she feels restless because of her helplessness and severe loneliness, whereas this loneliness proves to be lethal for her, her health is ruined, and hence, she dies in the end of the novel.

Haleema does not give up as long as she is alive, she goes to see politicians, local reporters, and she also seeks help from the BBC correspondent's office. The news of Imran's disappearance is published in a local newspaper, the headline says, "*Haleema ka Dugna Sadma-*Haleema's Double Tragedy" (p. 78). She reads the newspaper many times, it gives her some kind of relief and she hopefully begins to think that her son would be brought back to her now. Unfortunately, this ray of hope also diminishes as days go by. Her loneliness is not simply a desire for company, any company; she desires the companionship of who she considered hers, Imran.

Women whose husbands disappeared could not be declared widows because no one was sure if their husbands were dead or still alive. "For

all such uncertain cases for women whose husbands have disappeared, we will prefix their status with "Half",' Advocate Farooq Ahmad explained" (p. 142). Unable to resolve the conflict if her son was still alive or dead Haleema becomes a half mother, she remains a half mother for the rest of her life, struggling to find her son to become a complete mother again. Unfortunately, she dies as a half mother.

Haleema goes into the SSP's office and is told that her son might be in the army hospital. This army hospital is situated behind Badami Bagh Cantonment; she visits the hospital and sees many captive young boys and men, fingerless, limbless, hairless, toothless, eyeless, and earless, because of the torture they receive from the army officers during interrogation. Haleema feels moved after seeing this horrible scene and begins to think about Imran, "*Has Imran gone through the same treatment?*" (p. 80). For a moment, she thinks about it and then gives up on this disturbing idea and prays to God for Imran's welfare. She asks everyone in the hospital about Imran, but does not get any clue from anyone. "Time had stopped for her, and now she waited for it to unfreeze itself" (p. 80). Then comes May, the beginning of summer, which is the most difficult time of the year for Haleema's poor lungs. Though the air is fresh, it is filled with pollen and dust particles, making it hard for people with poorly functioning lungs.

Haleema turns to a politician for help in finding her son, a man who is far more complicated than she realizes: "He knew such cases well and treated them mechanically. It was common to listen to the grievances, express great sympathy, and to treat each seeker for help as a potential voter" (p. 81). Haleema shares her tragic story with him, and his assurance that he would "look into the matter" is her only hope. Hence, she starts visiting his house often, and all her expectations are linked with him. However, in a matter of days, the politician displays his exploitative ambitions by stating she must "think about herself too," that she is "wasting her beauty and her time", and that if she really wants Imran to back her, she would need to "spend a little bit of personal time with him". He goes even further to trap her by playing on her desperation, he says that he has already sent a message across to search for Imran and is sure that her son would be with her on the Independence Day, "the tone of his assurance was so convincing that Haleema carelessly rejected the idea of slapping him for his suggestive proposal" (p. 83). Haleema then, without a word, to save her son, sacrifices her self-respect, and walks away only to find that her submission brings her nothing; this increases the depth of her pain.

In search for her lost son, Haleema also loses herself bit by bit with the passage of time. She marks a cross on each day in a calendar that she has to spend without Imran. She sits and keeps counting the cross-marked days until her back becomes sore and her body numb. There is no possible way in which she could enjoy a peaceful slumber. "She had grown habitually insomniac now. Dark brown patches had developed under her eyes. Incipient wrinkles criss-crossed her face, while her cheeks had begun to sag" (p. 84). Haleema's cruel fate makes her look older than her age. Constant struggle and mourning over the loss of her dear ones do not spare her enough time to look after herself. She does not give up even when the SHO suggests that she should give up, rather on the Eid day she goes to visit the place 'Papa 2' where captives are kept, she hopes to find her son there, but she does not get anything from there, but she keeps waiting and waiting, and this waiting does not seem to end anywhere. "Hours passed; she waited and wriggled. Her mouth had dried up. She was feeling thirsty, hungry, and suicidal. Yet each time she thought of death, she felt strictly accountable to life. It was the hope of seeing Imran that made her feel so" (p. 87). In such a worse time, the animal instinct asks her to leave for home, take some rest, eat, drink, and sleep, but the 'beyond' makes her transcend her human limits, where she forgets about her health and herself. She waits a bit longer, but her physical capacity is over-exhausted, and she has no choice but to leave.

On her way back, she meets a woman who is holding her released son on her back, his name is Rehbar, and he is unable to walk on his own because of the constant torture he had to face as a captive in the cell. Rehbar tells her that he knew her son, but then he was shifted to Papa 2 and he never heard about Imran anymore. This news brings hope into her life again: "*Really? What was he saying? How is he? Where is he now?*" (p. 89). Haleema asks him more about Imran, Rehbar tells her, "… he said his mother was alone and whom he was sulking with because she had not come to take him home" (p. 90). These words shatter Haleema's heart, but she does not let it bring her hope down, and she asks him if there is a way she can get there to see her son. Rehbar tells her that there is no way to see Imran, but he also tells her about the barber whose name is Abdus Salam, who had shaved her son's head once. She has to narrate the whole story of her pain to the barber when she sees him. Every time she has to narrate her story to someone who does not know about her, her trauma is aggravated.

> In a way, it was now a strange, a different kind of psychological torture to be compelled to tell her story to anyone from the beginning in proper order, without missing a single detail, till the end. With time she had begun to

> forget details. She would remember them later, after finishing the narration, and would remind the listener of the details she had missed. (p. 94).

The barber tells her that he once saw Imran, then he was shifted to some other place with the other prisoners, and he has no idea where that place could be. He further tells her that Imran was fine when he last saw him.

That night, Haleema dreams of seeing Imran sitting in Abdus Salaam's shop. She approaches him and requests him to come home with her, but his reply breaks her, "You didn't look for me in the places where I was" (p. 98). Haleema tells him that she looked for him everywhere like a 'mad woman', but Imran goes away and disappears into thin air while she keeps shouting his name, asking him to come back. She does not give up and calls his name even louder but, "In an instance, a high barbwire-topped wall comes between Haleema and Imran. She tries to climb the wall, but she slips and tumbles down, hitting the ground", she wakes up all drenched in sweat and she is continuously muttering the following words, "I looked for you! I looked for you everywhere…" (p. 99). Later in the novel, Haleema decides to pay Rehbar a visit again because he is the only one with whom she can talk about Imran, but on her way to his house, she learns from another passenger on the bus that Rehbar has been killed by the Indian army officers. She further tells her that his body was thrown into the forest, and a local shepherd found it. This news shatters all her hopes. Haleema finds not even a single moment's peace after hearing about Rehbar's brutal murder; she is not able to free her mind of the dark thoughts.

Haleema's fate spins in a surprising direction when she meets her estranged husband in a clinic, the man who had cheated on her and had left her at a time of great vulnerability. By this point, she has no feelings for him at all, not even sympathy, because her problems have given her something more to worry about than the collapse of her marriage. Yet beneath the surface, his sudden reappearance unsettles her, reminding her that human beings can never fully remove themselves from their past, regardless of how hard they try to do so. Her feelings of loss as a mother are further intensified when she sees a woman on the street smiling lovingly up at her child, a sight which reminds her of both her bitterness, and her sorrow for the loss of her own child, "It is better to live in a sewage pipe with your son than to live alone in this world" (p. 123).

Sympathy and empathy are crucial elements of human life, but they are not necessarily healing. Sometimes, after repeating the expressions of

sympathy, nothing brings any real solace, and if anything, it just increases the pain. In such situations, one is forced to endure a fixed stare of sympathy without the expectation of healing; this too can be a form of psychological abuse, "empty sympathy felt like alms given in charity, which she despised" (p. 140).

When Haleema realizes that she is not the only one suffering from the loss of her dear ones, there are many others, she decides to form a unified organization to raise her voice and demand justice from the holders of power. The organization is named "Association of Relatives of the Disappeared Persons," and Haleema was made the head of this organization by other people. Haleema and a few others visit a local politician and present their case before him, and he says that the state cannot help them because nobody knows if their missing relatives have already crossed the border; this is something where the state can do nothing for them. Haleema responds,

> We've become beggars, as you can see. Had they been killed by the army in front of us, we would have stayed put and silent throughout our lives, and with no expectations, no hopes, and no despair. But this longing is a pain. An eternal torture. It has not abated for a second. It kills us every day and resurrects us every morning to kill us again. Please feel for us. (p. 151)

As the novel proceeds, a colonel of justice offers her enough financial resources to lead the rest of her life peacefully, but she turns his offer down as it would bring her no solace. She is told by the same colonel that the Major who abducted her son had died, to help her feel a little relieved. Contrarily, this news saddens her even more, as that Major was the only person who could tell her about her son's whereabouts, but he is gone, and gone with him is her last hope of finding her son. Somehow, she musters up the courage and hope again, "*I have to keep hoping, I cannot be defeated like this. I cannot lose him like this. I have to go home and keep waiting. Yes. That is the only thing I have to do.*" (p. 154). Izhar, the BBC reporter in the novel, plays the role of a pivotal supporter for Haleema in her lonesome journey; in his notes at the end of the novel, he writes that he is worried about Haleema's health, "But I know medicines aren't enough. What she needs is company" (p. 163)

Haleema's continuous hope, ironically enough, is what turns out to be her source of suffering and the basis of her perseverance. Consequently, her existence represents the contradiction of endurance created by

desperation, in which the experience of waiting is an act of survival. In this respect, Haleema is a psychological portrayal of millions of Kashmiri women whose power does not lie in their ability to come to terms but in their ability to endure unfulfilled desire. She remains steadfast in her cause to stand up for the people who have lost their loved ones until the end of her life, "Haleema stands, and, supporting her back with her hands, speaks fiercely to the gathering" (p. 164). She tells Izhar that this struggle has become her life, and it has given her a new sense of purpose.

Conclusion

The Half Mother (2014) is a brave declaration of the intolerable loneliness, trauma, and survival of Kashmiri women living under the cycles of political violence, as embodied in Haleema's story. Haleema, rejected by her community but supported by her personal declining strength, is the reflection of some kind of maternal sorrow that is so deep that it not only breaks her psyche but also gives her the strength to live. Not only does her schizophrenia become a clinical effect of the loss, but it also becomes an embodiment of a grief that does not want to be contained. Under the incessant pressure of endless tragedy, her hopes are up and down, but she never gives up her quest for her lost son. In this undying struggle, Haleema changes into a subject of resistance, an average woman whose shattered body and collapsing mind cannot yet acknowledge the end of defeat. In this regard, Haleema is broken by the loss, yet she never becomes broken spiritually; her disillusioned life gets recorded in the history of resilience that is etched in the memory of oppressed people.

Simultaneously, the novel demonstrates the essentiality of literature in voicing narratives that are sought to be suppressed by political systems. In a society where official discourses have rendered suffering invisible and reduced individual experiences to a one-dimensional plane, literature seems to play a significant role in counter-narrative or, to put it differently, one that brings the lives of those who have been elevated into the one-dimensional system into view again. *The Half Mother* reinvents motherhood not as a singular condition but as a complex one, which is shaped by struggle, which makes women fighters, nurturers, survivors, and reluctant reporters of a communal agony. The novel goes beyond recording suffering, because through its account of grief, isolation, and cultural trauma, it challenges readers to face facts that are normally hidden or downplayed in mainstream accounts. In turning individual suffering into collective memory, the text performs an act of protest to make sure that the plight of the women on the fringes is not forgotten or

disapproved. Finally, the novel concludes with a statement of literature as a witness, to maintain, confront, and challenge history by maintaining a place where such voices are oppressed by history.

References

Bashir, S. (2014). *The Half Mother.* Hachette.

Cacioppo, J. T., & Cacioppo, S. (2018). "Loneliness in the Modern Age: An Evolutionary

Chopan, F. A., & Jain. U. (2015). "Psychic Trauma of a Bereaved Mother: A Study of Shahnaz Bashir's *The Half Mother.*" *International Journal of English Language, Literature and Humanities.* Vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 157–163.

Fromm-Reichmann, F. (1959). Loneliness. *Psychiatry: Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes, 22*(1), 1–15. Reprinted in *Contemporary Psychoanalysis, 26*(2), 305–329 (1990)

Goethe, J. W. von. (2012). *The Sorrows of Young Werther.* (Oxford University Press, Trans.). Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1774).

Hawkley, L. C., & Cacioppo, J. T. (2010). "Loneliness Matters: A Theoretical and Empirical Review of Consequences and Mechanisms." *Annals of Behavioral Medicine.* Vol. 40, no. 2, pp. 218–227.

Human Rights Watch & Physicians for Human Rights. (1993). *Rape in Kashmir: A crime of war.* Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/INDIA935.PDF

Lim, M. H., Rodebaugh, T. L., Zyphur, M. J., & Gleeson, J. F. M. (2016). "Loneliness Over Time: The Crucial Role of Social Anxiety." *Journal of Abnormal Psychology.* Vol. 129, no. 6, pp. 611–623.

Kazi, S. (2007). *Between democracy and nation: Gender and militarisation in Kashmir.* Women Unlimited.

Lorca, F. G. (1997). *Blood Wedding.* (G. Edwards, Trans.). Methuen Drama. (Original work published 1933).

Michalska da Rocha, B., Rhodes, S., Vasilopoulou, E., & Hutton, P. (2018). "Loneliness in Psychosis: A Meta-Analytical Review." *Schizophrenia Bulletin.* Vol. 44, no. 1, pp. 114–125.

Randolph, S. B., Ratner, A. M., Kersey, J., Moran, E., Barch, D. M., Rousso, B., & Connor, L. T. (2025). "Exploring the Experience of Loneliness Among People Living with Schizophrenia: A Qualitative Study." *Issues in Mental Health Nursing.* Vol. 46, no. 1, pp. 12–19.

Shulevitz, J. (2013). "The Lethality of Loneliness." *The New Republic.*

Synge, J. M. (1911). *Riders to the Sea.* John W. Luce.

The Kashmir Today. (2024). IIOJK mothers awaiting detained, disappeared sons. *The Kashmir Today.* Retrieved from https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2024/05/12/iiojk-mothers-awaiting-detained-disappeared-sons/

Migration and Terrorism in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*

Tahoor Ali[1*]

Abstract

This article critically analyzes Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West* (2017) from the perspective of terrorism as the primary catalyst for contemporary crises, including forced migration, identity fragmentation, and refugee displacement. In the post-9/11 literary landscape, terrorism and migration have emerged as interconnected phenomena demanding scholarly attention, particularly within postcolonial studies. Through close textual analysis of Hamid's novel, this study examines how terrorism engenders various forms of displacement, physical, psychological, economic, and environmental. The research draws upon the Deleuzian concept of rhizomatic identities expanded by Soren Frank in his book *Migration and Literature* (2008) to study the primary text. This article argues that Hamid's portrayal of protagonists Saeed and Nadia provides a site for analysis that deals with the multifaceted nature of forced migration in the age of global terrorism, revealing how terror fundamentally transforms human identity, belonging, and survival strategies in the contemporary world.

Keywords: Terrorism, Migration, Postcolonial Literature, Identity, Displacement.

Introduction

"Prospective immigrants, please note
Either you will go through this door
Or you will not go through
 [...]
there is always the risk
[...]
Things look at you doubly" (Rich, 1993).

We inhabit what Soren Frank (2008) terms an "age of terrorism," characterized by constant mobility, cultural variation, hybridization, assimilation, and migration. This era witnesses the dissolution of global boundaries beyond mere political rhetoric, where everything from individuals to architecture exists in perpetual motion (Hamid, 2017). The emergence of terrorism has catalyzed a form of neocosmopolitanism, giving rise to what Frank Trommler (2004) describes as a transculturalism that produces "different formulations of modernity" in which many participate globally.

This study analyzes the "postmodern world of uncertainty" (Chambers, 2008), examining the fluctuation of borders, constantly shifting identities, and migration as direct consequences of terrorism through Mohsin Hamid's (2017) novel *Exit West*. Hamid transforms the intimate experiences of his protagonists, Nadia and Saeed, into what *The New York Times* (2017) calls the "convulsive changes overtaking the world." While the novel incorporates elements of magical realism through its fantastical doors, it remains grounded in realist settings, allegorically exploring global dilemmas such as civil conflict, cultural estrangement, and the collapse of national borders. Narnia like doors in the novel are a metaphor for Said's insight that "borders and barriers which once enclosed become prisons," reminding readers that the modern refugee condition is not only political but also existential. The novel suggests that migration is a universal experience— "we are all migrants through time" (Hamid, 2017)—and in doing so reframes terrorism not as a localized threat but as a global force that unsettles love, kinship, and identity as much as it unsettles geography.

The broader significance of this research lies in its exploration of how twenty-first-century literature responds to the twin pressures of terrorism and forced migration. Unlike political or international relations discourse, which often operates within rigid binaries of East versus West, literary texts internalize these conflicts and refract them through the lives of ordinary characters navigating extraordinary upheavals. In *Exit West*, Saeed and Nadia's migration under the circumstances of war and terrorism is not only spatial but relational, as they drift toward and away from each other in parallel with their physical displacements. The instability of their relationship mirrors the instability of modern identities in an age of deterritorialization, suggesting that nothing—from citizenship to intimacy—remains immune to the disruptions of terror. In this respect, Hamid's work exemplifies what Margaret Scanlan (2001) identifies as literature's unique capacity to situate terrorism "within an interlocking grid of time, causality, and history".

Placing *Exit West* within a wider genealogy of terrorism literature reveals how Hamid continues a tradition stretching from Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* (1871) and Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907) to contemporary postcolonial fiction. According to Scanlan (2001) and Haruo Shirane (2002), terrorism literature has always been fraught because attempts to contextualize or analyze violence risk being read as justifications of it. Yet this very tension underscores literature's power: it humanizes the abstract violence of terrorism by locating it in the affective lives of individuals. Hamid follows this trajectory, yet with a distinctively global and transcultural lens, showing how the post-9/11 condition collapses the local and the global, the private and the political. His novel captures what Foucault (2003) describes as the way modern war—here refracted through terrorism—cuts across society as a permanent battlefront, placing everyone, willingly or unwillingly, on one side or another.

Thus, this study positions *Exit West* not simply as a migrant narrative but as part of a larger literary and theoretical discourse that interrogates terrorism as one of the defining forces of modernity. By dramatizing how migration, instability, and fear shape everyday lives, Hamid's novel not only allegorizes the global humanitarian crisis but also redefines literature's role in bearing witness to it. The relationship between terrorism and literature has evolved significantly since what Scanlan (2001) identifies as the emergence of terrorism literature in the nineteenth century. From Dostoevsky's *The Possessed* (1871) through contemporary works by Salman Rushdie, Don DeLillo, and J. M. Coetzee, literary representations of terrorism have consistently sought to contextualize rather than merely condemn. As Shirane (2002) argues, "It is not enough to condemn and fight terrorism: we must understand its causes". The post-9/11 literary landscape has witnessed an unprecedented focus on terrorism's impact on human mobility and identity.

Migration studies have traditionally examined movement through economic, political, and social lenses. However, Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller (2013) in their *The Age of Migration*, note that contemporary forced migration increasingly results from what they term "complex emergencies" involving multiple interconnected factors, with terrorism playing an increasingly central role. Rushdie (2002) argues that "the distinguishing feature of our time is mass migration, mass displacement, globalized finances and industries". This observation finds theoretical support in Frank's Deleuzian (2008) concept of "rhizomatic identity," which suggests that migrant identities function "as a network of multiple

knots and threads that interconnect and proliferate through air; not as a tree but as moss or grass".

Drawing upon the above-mentioned theoretical perspective this study examines the representation of displacement in Mohsin Hamid's *Exit West*. The analysis also draws its insights from Hannah Arendt's essay "We Refugees" (1943), where she highlights how conditions of war and terrorism transform "prospective citizens" into "enemy aliens". In *Exit West*, this paradox is dramatized through the precarious lives of Saeed and Nadia, who, despite their ordinariness, are suddenly marked as strangers and potential threats once violence disrupts their homeland. Alongside Arendt, Edward Said's reflections on exile in *Reflections on Exile* (2001) prove central to understanding the novel's concern with borders and thresholds. Said observes that "borders and barriers which once enclose become prisons", and Hamid subverts this idea through the magical doors that collapse national boundaries while simultaneously exposing the fragility of human belonging in a world of walls and camps. Frank's *Migration and Literature* (2008) further situates the novel within a broader cultural logic of modernity, where migration is not an exception but a defining condition of contemporary existence. Seen together, these frameworks allow us to understand *Exit West* as more than a refugee narrative; it becomes a meditation on citizenship, mobility, and the haunting persistence of exclusion in the twenty-first century. Drawing upon postcolonial literary criticism this reading involves the analysis of the novel's narrative strategies and symbolic structures, with particular attention to its representation of terrorism and migration; the application of theoretical insights from migration and terrorism studies; contextual placement of the text within post-9/11 literary discourse; and comparative reflection with other postcolonial writings that grapple with displacement, exile, and belonging.

Terrorism as Catalyst for Forced Migration

Hamid's *Exit West* presents terrorism not merely as context but as the primary engine driving contemporary forced migration. The novel's unnamed city, deliberately kept ambiguous, universalizes the experience of terror-induced displacement, suggesting that such violence can erupt anywhere. As the narrator observes, the news was "full of war and migrants and nativists. And it was full of fracturing too, of regions pulling away from hinterlands... it seemed that as everyone was coming together, everyone was also moving apart" (Hamid, 2017). The metaphor of a city under siege reflects the reality of many modern nations, where terrorism

destabilizes urban and rural landscapes alike, uprooting populations who once experienced a sense of permanence.

The transformation of Saeed and Nadia's city from a space of belonging to one of terror illustrates what Foucault (2003) describes as a "battlefront [which] runs through the whole of society, continuously and permanently". Terrorism alters the city at every level—from funerals and workplaces to streets and neighborhoods—making ordinary life impossible. The couple's migration through magical doors captures the sudden and disorienting rupture that characterizes forced displacement, allegorizing the contemporary refugee crisis. As Hamid suggests, nothing, not even love, remains immune to the havoc of terrorism. Saeed and Nadia migrate not only across borders but also within their relationship, reflecting how terror unsettles private as well as public life.

Exit West also addresses the broader causes and consequences of migration, showing how they are shaped not only by terrorism but also by governmental control, social expectations, and the migrant's own agency. Hamid constructs migration as a global identity, borrowing Deleuze's concept, Frank (2008) calls it a "rhizomatic identity," crossing nations and cultures while resisting fixed categorization. In the post-9/11 context, terrorism has emerged as a dominant factor shaping migration, yet Hamid focuses less on its origins than on the existential crises it provokes. Terrorism forces individuals into decisions that blur the line between survival and desire, where displacement is both a necessity and a possibility.

This interplay between fear and choice becomes evident after the death of Saeed's mother, killed by a "heavy-calibre round" fired by a militant. Nadia's move into Saeed's apartment after the funeral is not merely a gesture of care; it reveals her own vulnerability and the pervasive insecurity of their environment: "she came to their (Saeed's) apartment for the first time, on the day of the funeral, stayed with them that night . . . and did not spend another night in her own apartment again" (Hamid, 2017). Even before leaving their city, Nadia embodies intra-state migration, negotiating independence in a collapsing society. Her rejection of religious orthodoxy— "her constant questioning and growing irreverence in matters of faith" (Hamid, 2017)—makes her displacement also an escape from cultural restrictions, aligning with Zizek's (2016) argument that family structures and gender norms are core markers of Muslim communities.

Hamid thus positions migration as both a promise and a threat produced by globalization. Martin Heidegger's claim in *Letter on Humanism* that "homelessness is coming to be the destiny of the world" (1977) resonates with this narrative of uprootedness. Salman Rushdie similarly remarks that "the distinguishing feature of our time is, mass migration, mass displacement, globalized finances and industries" (2002). *Exit West* dramatizes this global urgency, capturing multiple forms of migration—conflict-induced displacement, development-induced migration, and disaster-driven flight—while focusing particularly on terror-induced migration as the most pressing dimension of contemporary displacement.

By weaving intimate tragedies like the death of Saeed's mother into the vast machinery of global migration, Hamid shows the phenomenon of terrorism as a major catalyst that dislodges both individuals and entire communities. In doing so, he situates migration not as an isolated crisis but as an urgent, recurring condition of modern existence.

The Dissolution of Identity: From Citizens to Migrants

The novel demonstrates how terrorism fundamentally disrupts what Chalmers A. Johnson (1982) calls the "sine qua non of a society"—the mutual expectations that allow members to orient their behavior toward each other. When militants take control of Saeed and Nadia's city, these structures collapse, transforming citizens into what Arendt (1943) termed "enemy aliens" in their own homeland. What was once familiar becomes threatening, and the inhabitants begin to see one another not as neighbors but as potential risks.

Hamid portrays this transformation through subtle yet haunting details: "They were attending a funeral. Funerals were smaller and more rushed affairs in those days, because of the fighting" (Hamid, 2017). Such disruptions of fundamental social rituals underscore the broader erosion of belonging. Said (2001) reminds us that "borders and barriers which once enclosed become prisons, and in *Exit West*, even spaces of intimacy—like homes, neighborhoods, and family gatherings—become sites of surveillance, violence, and alienation. The novel thus dramatizes the psychological shift from being citizens with rights to displaced migrants defined only by vulnerability, echoing Arendt's insight into the precarious status of the stateless.

Hamid's rendition of Saeed and Nadia as migrants redefines the clash of civilizations, the invention of new worlds, hybrid identities, and

globalization. They are wandering individuals searching for identity and dignity, confronting endless anxiety, ravaging despair, deluded optimism, and jolting absurdity— "fight(ing) like madmen for private existences with individual destinies" (Arendt, 1943). Terrorism appears as a momentary disruption of life in a violent way, yet Hamid also explores human mobility as both an intrinsic desire of being human and a promise of broader global change. Hamid, through his characters, embodies the desire of migration, which both Franks take as the development of moss-like roots.

Nadia, in the novel, before migration becomes the way of survival for both questions, Saeed: "Have you ever travelled abroad? He shook his head. 'I want to.' 'Me too'."

This exchange unravels the innate human desire to crisscross global borders "because earth is moving. And you feel like you're lying on a giant spinning ball in space" (Hamid, 2017). Salman Rushdie, in his book *Shame,* explains this intrinsic human desire for migration:

> "I have a theory that the resentment we Mohajirs engender has something to do with our conquest of the force of gravity. We have performed the act of which all men anciently dream, the thing for which they envy the birds; that is to say, we have flown" (2010).

The urge to satisfy one's wanderlust is always present. But in order to save lives from the clashes of the ruling terror, migration becomes a necessary phenomenon. In the same novel, Hamid, while forming the story of the migration of his protagonist, pens the story of an unnamed accountant in Kentish Town, with all the stable resources required to exist sufficiently and an identity in a place free of militants or car bombings, nevertheless leaves for Namibia through a magical door discovered in his closet. There are no factors like terrorism, hunger, climate change, or economic slump compelling his migration. He is glad to do so, performing that "act which all men anciently dream of" (Rushdie, 2010).

Saeed's father dreams of the same for his son, as the omniscient narrator gives words to his thoughts: ". . . that he had made a mistake with his (Saeed's) career, that he should have done something else with his life, because then he might be able to send Saeed abroad" (Hamid, 2017).

Economic Disruption and Migration

Hamid vividly depicts the economic destruction through the closure of businesses and the collapse of employment structures: "Saeed's boss had tears in his eyes as he told his employees that he had to shutter his business, apologizing for letting them down, and promising that there would be jobs for them all when things improved, and the agency was able to reopen" (Hamid, 2017). This moment reflects how terrorism cripples not only infrastructure but also the bonds of responsibility between employer and worker, dissolving one of the fundamental supports of daily life. Economic disruption appears as a major force inducing migration in the novel.

This economic dismemberment creates what Ted Robert Gurr (2003) identifies as the material dimension of terrorism's impact, forcing migration not merely for physical safety but for economic survival. As Hamid shows, the destruction of businesses, schools, and institutions leaves citizens with no viable path toward stability, compelling them to risk everything in flight. The World Bank (2017) reports that 3.2% of the global population has crossed international borders, with economic instability induced by conflict serving as a primary driver. The recent brain drain in Pakistan in 2024 and 2025 is closely associated with economic instability and disruption, as thousands of young, skilled workers left the country in search of more stable economies. In *Exit West*, economic precarity functions alongside violence as a catalyst for migration, highlighting how terror destabilizes entire social fabrics—making departure not a choice, but the only means of survival.

Terrorism, then, is not confined to the political sphere but directly targets economic structures in order to intensify its disruptive effects. Gurr (2003) criticizes the tendency to analyze terrorism solely as a political phenomenon, arguing that it is equally tied to material gain and economic destabilization. Hamid's narrative echoes this, showing how the shuttering of businesses, looting of shops, and takeover of the city's stock exchange fracture the economic backbone of society. Once economic structures collapse, alienation and uncertainty deepen, accelerating displacement.

In *Exit West*, such economic repression is shown at both micro and macro levels. On the one hand, individuals like Saeed and Nadia lose their workplaces—Saeed's advertising agency, Nadia's office, the battery shop under her apartment—while restaurants and family ventures are looted or abandoned. On the other hand, entire institutions such as the stock exchange fall under militant control, reflecting how terrorism strategically targets the symbols of economic stability. Bruno Frey (2007) observes that terrorism disrupts not only political and social orders but also the

developmental trajectory of economies, forcing states to divert resources toward counterterrorism rather than growth.

Hamid also suggests that economic disruption feeds into the psychology of uncertainty and conspiracy, where conversations revolve around the "status of the fighting, and how to get out of the country" (2017). In a destabilized economy, even those who are not directly attacked face reduced opportunities, unpaid wages, and the impossibility of securing legal means of departure. Migrants thus turn to precarious, unauthorized routes—symbolized by Hamid's "magic doors"—that capture the desperation of those for whom survival outweighs legality. According to Jeffrey G. Williamson and Tim Hatton (2009), unemployment correlates directly with migration flows, and terrorism-induced instability magnifies this trend. Terrorists disrupt economies not only to create fear but also to assert control, to fund their own operations, and to erode public trust in the state's ability to provide security or prosperity. In such conditions, migration emerges as both symptom and response to the economic repression terrorism creates. Ultimately, Hamid's novel demonstrates that controlling migration requires more than border security—it requires addressing terrorism's assault on the economic structures that sustain life itself.

Alienation and Disorientation in the Age of Terror

Iain Chambers (2008) describes the migrant condition as living "between the worlds, between a lost past and non-integrated present". Hamid's protagonists embody this liminal state, torn between memories of their homeland and the uncertainty of their new environments. Their passage through magical doors represents both death and rebirth, a simultaneous ending and beginning that captures the profound psychological transformation of forced migration. This is what Rushdie (2002) calls "disorientation, loss of the East", where the migrant faces not only physical relocation but also cultural estrangement.

In *Exit West*, disorientation is not framed as temporary but as a defining condition of modern existence. The novel suggests that migration is universal, emphasizing that displacement is as much temporal as it is spatial. Even those who never cross a national border experience dislocation through the rapid transformations of terrorism, globalization, and technological change. For Saeed and Nadia, each crossing amplifies their sense of alienation, gradually eroding their shared intimacy as they drift apart. Hamid thus portrays alienation not only as a geographical

consequence of forced migration but as a psychic reality of living in an "age of terrorism," where identities remain unstable, relationships fragile, and belonging perpetually deferred.

Environmental Terrorism and Forced Displacement

An understudied aspect of terrorism's impact involves what J.F. Jarboe (2002) defines as eco-terrorism—the destruction of environmental structures that sustain human life. Hamid depicts this through graphic descriptions of improper burials and environmental degradation: "Some families had no choice but to bury their dead in a courtyard or a sheltered margin of a road... so impromptu burial grounds grew up" (Hamid, 2017). Such images reflect how terrorism accelerates environmental collapse, turning once-stable ecosystems into precarious zones of survival. Improper burials not only symbolize societal breakdown but also physically damage urban environments, producing methane and other greenhouse gases that compromise air quality (Spade, 2013).

Hamid's narrative resonates with that of Camillo Boano, Roger Zetter, and Tim Morris' (2008) "environmental change-conflict-migration nexus," which shows how ecological destruction compels populations to seek refuge elsewhere. In *Exit West*, the sight of corpses, demolished architecture, and ruined green belts forces Saeed and Nadia into a cycle of displacement where the ecological and the political merge. This recalls Arendt's (1943) observation that forced migration occurs when the elemental conditions of life collapse, reducing individuals to "enemy aliens" in their homeland. Thus, Hamid highlights how terrorism and eco-terrorism converge, producing displacement not only by violence against people but by violence against the environment that sustains them.

The Politics of Reception: Nativism and Violence

Hamid deals with the reception of migrants in supposedly safe destinations. The violence Saeed and Nadia encounter in London— "their street was under attack by a nativist mob... a violent tribe, intent on their destruction" (Hamid, 2017)—reflects contemporary anxieties about migration in Western societies. Their presence unsettles nationalist narratives, turning them from refugees into perceived threats.

The novel further critiques the legal and political structures that reinforce this hostility. Trump's 2017 Executive Order 13769, which suspended refugee admissions under the guise of counterterrorism, exemplifies the

institutionalization of fear. Hamid dramatizes this policy logic when he notes that "militants from Saeed and Nadia's country had crossed over to Vienna (2017), but shows that such exceptional cases cannot justify collective suspicion. This reflects Said's (2001) concern that borders, once protective, become prisons that confine migrants into categories of "security risks."

Hamid also emphasizes how this hostility produces psychological displacement. The couple's movement through magical doors does not secure belonging but repeatedly exposes them to Chambers' (2008) "postmodern world of uncertainty," where identities and communities are unstable. Thus, *Exit West* foregrounds the paradox that even in destinations of safety, migrants remain vulnerable to both institutional and mob violence that mirrors the terror they sought to escape.

Rhizomatic Identity and Multiple Belonging

Despite the trauma of displacement, Hamid's characters develop what Frank, borrowing from Deleuze (2008), calls "rhizomatic identity"—a form of multiple belonging that resists simple categorization. Rather than experiencing complete rootlessness, they cultivate what Rushdie (2000) describes as "a kind of multiple rooting". Saeed and Nadia's journey embodies this process: while they lose the stability of their homeland, they simultaneously gain partial affiliations with multiple places, communities, and cultures encountered through the doors.

Technology plays a pivotal role in sustaining this identity. Smartphones allow Nadia to remain connected to global networks, reflecting how migrants inhabit what Zygmunt Bauman (2004) terms "liquid modernity," where ties are tenuous yet transnational. However, Hamid avoids romanticizing such connections. As the novel notes, "the end of the world can be cozy at times" (Hamid, 2017), suggesting that digital intimacy cannot replace the embodied community lost to migration. In this way, Hamid reconfigures exile not solely as loss but also as a form of hybrid belonging.

Implications and Contemporary Relevance

The novel's relevance extends beyond literary analysis to contemporary policy debates. UNHCR (2015) reports that forced displacement has reached historic highs, with 59.5 million people displaced globally. Hamid's narrative transforms these statistics into lived experience,

showing how ordinary individuals endure the extraordinary circumstances of terrorism, war, and flight. By humanizing migration, *Exit West* contests the abstract and securitized language of international relations that too often obscures refugee suffering.

The novel also reflects the post-9/11 climate where terrorism and migration are discursively entangled. According to Manni Crone, Maja Felicia Falkentoft, and Teemu Tammikko (2017), the conflation of refugees with security threats intensified after the November 2015 Paris attacks, leading to restrictive policies across Europe. Hamid illustrates this tension by presenting migrants as subjects caught between survival and suspicion, embodying what Scanlan (2001) describes as literature's power to locate "terrorist subjects within an interlocking grid of time, causality, and history". Ultimately, *Exit West* demonstrates that the migrant condition is not peripheral but central to the twenty-first century. Throughout the novel, Hamid's narrator reminds us that migration is not an exception but the defining experience of global modernity. By situating migration within the overlapping contexts of terrorism, environmental disruption, and political reception, the novel forces us to reconsider contemporary debates on security, belonging, and human rights.

Conclusion

Exit West situates terrorism within the wider humanitarian crisis of global migration, transforming it from an abstract political problem into a lived experience. By focusing on the lives of Saeed and Nadia, ordinary individuals caught in extraordinary upheavals, Hamid dramatizes how terrorism produces forced migration and reshapes identities across cultural and political boundaries. In doing so, the novel resists reductive narratives of a "clash of civilizations" and allegorizes how fear, violence, and deterritorialization shape a global condition of insecurity. Through its blend of realism and magical doors, *Exit West* reimagines terrorism's impact not only on nations but also on love, intimacy, and belonging, demonstrating how literature can register the humanitarian crisis with a depth and complexity often absent from political discourse.

This study has shown that terrorism in contemporary literature functions not as a backdrop but as a complex force reshaping human experience at individual and collective levels. Hamid's use of magical realism—the doors that transport migrants instantly across borders—paradoxically heightens the realism of his portrayal by capturing the disorienting speed and totality of displacement in the age of terror. The novel's contribution

to postcolonial literature lies in its refusal to separate terrorism from its aftermath of migration. Rather than treating these as discrete phenomena, Hamid shows them as interwoven aspects of contemporary global experience. The experience that asserts migration as the dominant condition and result of political doings of the past and present, which has universalized displacement while maintaining attention to the specific vulnerabilities of those forced to flee.

In the present times of accelerated global migration, literature like *Exit West* serves a crucial function in humanizing statistics and policy debates. By presenting terrorism and migration through the lens of individual experience while remaining attentive to structural forces, Hamid's novel contributes to what Said (2001) called the "intellectual mission" of postcolonial literature: to bear witness to displacement while imagining possibilities for belonging in an age of perpetual movement.

References

Arendt, H. (1943). We refugees. *Menorah Journal, 31*(1), 69–77.

Bauman, Z. (2004). *Liquid modernity*. Polity Press.

Boano, C., Zetter, R., & Morris, T. (2008). *Environmentally displaced people: Understanding the linkages between environmental change, livelihoods and forced migration*. Refugee Studies Centre, University of Oxford.

Castles, S., & Miller, M. J. (2013). *The age of migration: International population movements in the modern world* (5th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Chambers, I. (2008). *Migrancy, culture, identity*. Routledge.

Conrad, J. (1996). *Under Western eyes*. Penguin Classics. (Original work published 1911)

Crone, M., Falkentoft, M. F., & Tammikko, T. (2017). *An extraordinary threat: Europe's refugee crisis and the threat of terrorism*. Danish Institute for International Studies.

Dostoevsky, F. (2017). *The possessed* (C. Garnett, Trans.). Aegitas. (Original work published 1871)

Foucault, M. (2003). *Society must be defended* (D. Macey, Trans.). Picador.

Frank, S. (2008). *Migration and literature: Günter Grass, Milan Kundera, Salman Rushdie, and Jan Kjærstad*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Frey, B. (2007). *Dealing with terrorism: Stick or carrot?* Edward Elgar.

Gurr, T. R. (2003). *Peace and conflict 2003: A global survey of armed conflicts, self-determination movements, and democracy*. Center for International Development and Conflict Management.

Hamid, M. (2017). *Exit west*. Riverhead Books.

Hatton, T., & Williamson, J. G. (2009). Global economic slumps and migration. *VoxEU*. https://voxeu.org/article/global-economic-slumps-and-migration

Heidegger, M. (1977). Letter on humanism. In D. F. Krell (Ed.), *Basic writings* (pp. 189–242). Harper & Row.

Jarboe, J. F. (2002, February 12). *The threat of eco-terrorism* [Testimony before the House Resources Committee]. Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Johnson, C. A. (1982). *Revolutionary change* (2nd ed.). Stanford University Press.

Long, D. (2004). *Ecoterrorism*. Facts on File.

Prendergast, C. (2004). The world republic of letters. In C. Prendergast (Ed.), *Debating world literature* (pp. 1–25). Verso.

Rich, A. (1993). Prospective immigrants, please note. In *Collected early poems* (p. 237). W. W. Norton.

Rushdie, S. (2000). Interview with Salman Rushdie. In M. Jussawalla (Ed.), *Conversations with Salman Rushdie* (pp. 189–203). University Press of Mississippi.

Rushdie, S. (2002). *Step across this line: Collected nonfiction 1992–2002*. Random House.

Rushdie, S. (2010). *Shame*. Vintage Canada. (Original work published 1983)

Said, E. W. (2001). *Reflections on exile and other essays*. Harvard University Press.

Said, E. W. (2003). *Orientalism* (25th anniversary ed.). Vintage Books.

Scanlan, M. (2001). *Plotting terror: Novelists and terrorists in contemporary fiction*. University Press of Virginia.

Shirane, H. (2002). Terrorism, culture, and literature. *PMLA, 117*(3), 513–514.

Spade, K. M. (2013). *Of dirt and decomposition: Proposing a place for the urban dead* [Master's thesis, University of Washington]. UW Libraries.

The New York Times. (2017, March 7). *Review: In Exit West, Mohsin Hamid mixes global trouble with a bit of magic* [Book review]. *The New York Times*.

Trommler, F. (2004). The many faces of Germany: Transformations in the study of German culture and history. In *Festschrift for Frank Trommler* (pp. 23–47). Berghahn Books.

Trump, D. J. (2017). *Executive Order 13769: Protecting the nation from foreign terrorist entry into the United States*. *Federal Register, 82*(20), 8977–8982.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2015). *Global trends: Forced displacement in 2015*. UNHCR.

United Nations General Assembly. (2016). *Plan of action to prevent violent extremism (A/70/674)*. United Nations.

World Bank. (2016). *Fragility, conflict and violence overview*. https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/overview

World Bank. (2017). *Migration and remittances: Recent developments and outlook* (Migration and Development Brief 28). World Bank.

Žižek, S. (2016, December 3). Refugees, conservatism, and cultural incompatibility. *The Philosophical Salon*. http://thephilosophicalsalon.com/refugees-conservatism-and-cultural-incompatibility/

'Allah' in Early Modern England: An Analysis of the Occurrences of the Word in Early English Books Online

Hafiz Abid Masood[1*]

Abstract

Since the publication of Nabil Matar's *Islam in Britain 1558-1685* in 1998, much scholarly effort has been devoted to the study of the representation of Islam in early modern English writings. The major focus of such studies has been drama and travel writing. Because of this, our understanding has advanced much concerning approaches to Islam in the period. In recent years, scholars have paid attention to the early modern works dealing with the Prophet Muhammad and the Holy Qur'an in England and have demonstrated the early modern ways of engaging with the figure of the Prophet and the Holy Qur'an. There is, however, a need to look at more deeply at early modern English texts and analyse the content for some fundamental terms and beliefs of Islam. Therefore, this paper looks at the occurrences of the word 'Allah' and its context in early modern English works that are included in EEBO. The paper highlights the depth of our understanding concerning the conception of Muslim 'God' in early modern England.

Keywords: Allah, Early Modern England, Early English Books Online (EEBO), Representation of Islam

Introduction

Allah is the personal and specific name for God in Islam, which signifies the monotheistic foundation of the faith. Since Judaism and Christianity are also monotheistic religions like Islam, they all believe in a single, supreme deity. While these three Abrahamic religions share the same idea of one God, they use different names to address him: Yahweh in Judaism, God in Christianity, and Allah in Islam. The word Allah originates from the Arabic term Ilah, meaning "a god" or "deity." By adding the definite article Al (the) to Ilah, the word Allah came into existence, which translates to "The God". This linguistic evolution reflects the exclusivity

and indivisibility of the divine being, which is a fundamental principle of Islamic faith.

In early modern England, the figure of Allah intrigued English authors and travelers who interacted with the Muslim world, whether through trade, diplomacy, or exploration. Their encounters with Islamic societies familiarized them with the term, which they documented in their writings, often observing its common usage across various contexts, from prayer to everyday dialogue. Early modern texts, especially travelogues, illustrate how English authors endeavored to interpret the term and sought to clarify how Muslims called upon Allah in acts of devotion, legal affirmations, and even informal expressions, frequently drawing comparisons with Christian customs. Analyzing how Allah is depicted in early modern English literature reveals the understandings and misconceptions of Islam during that time, alongside the broader cultural exchanges between the Christian and Muslim realms. This paper aims to unveil the instances and portrayals of Allah in early modern English texts, reflecting the intricate relationship of theology, language, and cultural interaction during a time of increasing global involvement.

Seminal scholars—including Samuel C. Chew, Nabil Matar, Daniel Vitkus, and Matthew Dimmock—have made substantial contributions to understanding representations of Islam and Muslims in early modern English literature, with particular attention to dramatic depictions, captivity narratives, and the phenomenon of "turning Turk." While Chew's foundational work offered broad surveys, later scholars have replaced these with sustained close readings that reveal Islamic representations to be far more nuanced, fluid, and ambivalent than previously understood. John V. Tolan, working on medieval Christian–Muslim relations, has also traced wider historical patterns of anti-Muslim polemics. However, despite extensive research on Muslim figures, cultural practices, the Prophet Muhammad, and Ottoman rulers, the portrayal of "Allah" has been a noticeably understudied area in early modern English writings—a lacuna that warrants attention given the centrality and specificity of the name Allah in Islamic discourse.

This research draws on the digital resources of EEBO to examine the use of the term "Allah." EEBO-TCP provides facsimiles of approximately 125,000 volumes of early English books, giving scholars access to texts otherwise inaccessible due to spatial limitations or fragile physical condition. EEBO is particularly useful because it is searchable by author, title, and publisher; files are available within seconds and may be downloaded for convenience. Using EEBO's resources, this study

employs a mixed-methods approach that combines digital corpus analysis with existing scholarship on early modern English literature to conduct close readings of selected texts. The methodology treats the corpus as an "archive" in the contemporary sense used in literary and historical research.

Analysis and Discussion:

One of the first examples of the use of the word "Allah" is found in Bartolomej Georgijivec's book on the history of Ottoman Turks. The book was translated into English by Hugh Goughe and printed in London in 1569. One of the chapters provides information about the religious rites among the Ottomans, and it starts with a description of the mosque. He calls their place of worship a temple but clarifies that in their language, they call it "Meschit." While describing the design and architecture of the mosques in the Ottoman Empire, the writer suggests that there are no images or pictures displayed in the mosques that show their resemblance to Protestant churches as opposed to the Catholic ones. According to the writer, the mosques have these words written in them:

> *La Illah Illellah. Mehemmet, Iresul, Allab, Taure Bir Pegambir Hath:* which is as much to saye as, their is no god but one, and Mehemmet his prophet, one receatour, and the rest of his Prophets equall. Or these *Fila Galib Illelah,* whiche thuse maye be englished, their is none so stronge as God. (Georgijivec, 1569).

He goes on to describe the Muslim way to call to prayer, where he mentions a "turret of exceeding height," and the person appointed to call for prayer goes up the turret and calls people to prayer by repeating "Allah Hecbar, which doth signify, there is one trewe God." (Georgijivec, 1569). The author also mentions the practice of remembrance (Zikr) among the Turks and says that they repeat "*La Illah Illelah"* shaking their head from right to left and left to right for around half an hour on certain days. This all shows that the author had deep knowledge of Islam and the rites performed by the Ottoman Turks. This also shows that the earliest mentions of the word "Allah" or its derivatives had its origin in the basic formula, viz. La Ilaha Ilallah Muhammad Rasul Allah."

> Georgijivic presents one more example of the use of word Allah among the Turks. When Turks wake up from their beds and come out of their bedrooms, they loudly say "Allah, Allah, Allah" which means "O god, O god, O god." (Georgijević, 1569).

The word Allah occurs in a description of the manner of circumcision among the Turks in a book titled *The Policy of the Turkish Empire* (1597). At the circumcision ceremony, while the guests are having their dinner, the child who has to undergo circumcision is brought among the guests. The surgeon, skillful in his work, takes his position to perform the minor surgery. But before he uses his tools, a Muslim "priest" utters these words: "*La Illah, Illelath Mehemmet Iresul Allah: Taure Begamber Hach:* that is, There is but one onely God, and MAHOMET his Prophet; one Creator, and his Prophets are equall." (Fletcher, 1597). One of the chapters of the book presents the Turkish manner of offering their prayers in great detail, and probably this is the first time that an author has attempted to present a translation of the opening chapter of the Qur'an recited by Muslims in each prayer. The translation closely resembles modern day translation of the chapter Al-Fatiha:

> In the name of the religious and merciful God: praised bee the Soueraigne Lord of the world, the pittifull, the mercifull: The Lord of the day of iudgement. Thee we serue, from thee we looke for helpe. Shew unto us the right way, that which thou hast shewed vnto thy Prophets: not that for which thou art angrie with the wicked. *Amen.* (Fletcher, 1597, 29)

The translations of the Qur'an into Latin existed since the Middle Ages, but the first translation of the Qur'an into English was published in 1649. This translation of the first chapter of the Qur'an is a testimony to the fact that knowledge about the Qur'an existed in England long before the first translation of the sacred text became available for English readers in the form of a book. Fletcher also uses the word "Sabanallah," which the Turks use before starting their prayer and which means *O God bee mercifull vnto vs most miserable Sinners"* (Fletcher, 1597, 29). Another occurrence of the word Allah in the same text is also found in the chapter dealing with prayer. As per the text, the person who is assigned the duty to call for prayer is known as "Meizin," and he "get vp into the towers of their Temples, which are built round in the manner of watch-towers, or lanternes, and are of a wonderfull height: and there they doe sing out aloud a certaine Hymne or Song" (Fletcher, 1597, 27-28). This call to prayer that is characterized as "Hymne or Song" by our author includes repeating these words three times: "*Allah Hethber,"* which means "God is God alone." (Fletcher, 1597, 28). There are clearly many similarities between Georgijivec and Fletcher in their description of prayer, though the latter text is more detailed in its description than the former. The call to prayer in both cases is said to be the repetition of "Allahu Akbar" which Georgijivec transliterates as "Allah Hecbar" and Fletcher as "Allah

Hethber" and their translations also differ as "their [sic] is one trewe God" and "God is God alone" respectively and both are unable to capture the true meaning which should be "God is the greatest."

Richard Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* (1599-1600) includes an anonymous account of annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca and Madina. The word 'Allah' occurs in this description of Hajj. This account is an interesting record of a journey from Alexandria to Hejaz and we find the description of the city of Alexandria, Cairo, the Christians of Cairo as well as the places on the way to Madina and Mecca. In the beginning of the description of the voyage, the author writes about the last meeting between the captain of the caravan and his crew with the "Basha" in his palace who presented gifts to the captain and his team. The Basha also gave to the captain "*Chisua Talnabi,* which signifieth in the Arabian tongue, The garment of the Prophet." (Hakluyt, 1599-1600, 203). The garment was made of silk and in the middle it was embroidered with gold with following words: "*La illa ill alla Mahumet Resullala"* and the translation of these words is given as "There are no gods but God, and his ambassadour *Mahumet"* (Hakluyt, 1599-1600, 203). Rasul here is translated as "ambassador" though Gerogijivec above correctly translates it as prophet.

The anonymous author also describes the well of Zam Zam which he calls "pond Zun Zun" and when the pilgrims go there and "they wash themselues from head to foote, saying, *Tobah Allah, Tobah Allah,* that is to say, *Pardon lord, Pardon lord,* drinking also of that water…" (Haklyut, 1599-1600, 208-209). The expression Toba Allah seems to be an expression that does not sound to be Arabic. The author might have heard this from some non-Arab pilgrims who arrived in Mecca from places like India, Malay archipelago, Safavid Persia and Ottoman Turkey.

Another example of the word "Allah" is found in the description of Medina, specifically when the pilgrims reach a place fourteen miles from the city of Medina. This is a mountain called "*Iabel el salema,* that is to say, the mountaine of health" (Hakluyt, 1599-1600, 211). The pilgrims go up the mountain from where they can have a glimpse of the tomb of Prophet Muhammad. On seeing the tomb, they loudly say the following words: *Sala tuua salema Alaccah larah sul Allah. Sala tuua Salema Alaccah Ianabi Allah, Sala tuua Sale∤ma Alaccha Iahabit Allah:* which words in the Arabian tongue signifie: Prayer and health be vnto thee, oh prophet of God: prayer and health be vpon thee, oh beloued of God." (Hakluyt, 1599-1600, 211). The author correctly characterizes this Arabic expression as the salutation. The same account of pilgrimage is later reproduced by Samuel Purchas in *Purchas His Pilgrimage* (1613).

William Bedwell's *Mohammadis Imposturae* (1615) has an annexure appended to it that gives the meaning of Arabic terms as used by historians. These terms as explained by Bedwell indicate the knowledge of Islamic terms that was possessed by an Arabist in early seventeenth century. Though Bedwell's book displays a strong sense of hatred for Islam, the "Arabian Trudgman" at the end of the book offers useful insights into the early modern English understanding of Islam. The terms include the names of important cities in the Muslim world, the words for titles used in the Islamic courts, the names of months in Hijri calendar, the terms for the pillars of Islam among many other entries. Probably the first use of Islam (as Alesalem) and Muslim as well as Mussliman in early modern England are found in Bedwell. In this context, we find a mention of call to prayer in his entry on prayer under the term "Salie." He mentions that Turks pray six times in 24 hours and he mentions the names of these prayers as Sallie, Sabaha'lhhair, Dahour, Lashour, Mogrubey, and Lashahra (Bedwell, 1615). The caller to prayer is called as Modon which shows a different transliteration of the term form our earlier examples of the word. The Modon "cryeth with a loud voice *Allah cabir, la allah, illa ilellah,* that is, God is almighty, there is no God, but the Lord." (Bedwell, 1615). Bedwell, unlike Gerogijivec and Fletcher above, has rightly added a few more words to the Muslim call for prayer. The earlier writers only mentioned Allahu Akbar is their own transliteration while Bedwell has added the last few words of the call which he has transliterated as "la allah, illa ilellah" by which he meant "La Ilaha Illa Allah" which is both followed by Allahu Akbar and also makes the last few words of the call to prayer.

The testimony of faith or the creedal statement of Islam known as Kalima-e-Tayyaba finds an expression in William Lithgow's travel narrative. One of the sections deals with the description of the Ottoman city Constantinople "together with the customes, manners, and religion of the Turkes, their first beginning, and the birth of MAHOMET; and what opinion the Mahometanes haue of Heauen and Hell." One of the occurrences of the word "Allah" is found quite expectedly in Lithgow's narrative about Muslim call to prayer. Like other authors, he mentions that Muslims don't make use of bells in their mosques (churches) in order to contradict the Christians. Rather they have high "crying men" (Lithgow, 1616, 50). In Lithgow's words:

> when they goe to pray, they are called together by the voyce of crying men, who go vp on the bartizings of their Stéeples, shouting and crying with a shrill voyce: *La illa, Eillala, Mahomet Rezul alla,* that is, *God is a great God, and Mahomet is his Prophet, or other|wise there is but one God.* (Lithgow, 1616, 50).

In the same section, we find a description of Muslim paradise and hell. He talks about seven levels of paradise and says that the name Mahomet is written on seventh paradise near God's name in this manner: "Alla, illa, he, allah, Mahomet Rezul allah" (Lithgow, 1616, 59). According to Lithgow, if a Christian repeats these words, he is either punished with death or forced to renounce his religion.

George Sandys, another early modern traveller to the Ottoman Empire furnishes the details of Muslim call to prayer in a slightly detailed manner. The caller to prayer is called as Tasilmanni by him. He goes up a turret from where he calls the people for prayer in a loud voice "pronouncing this Arabicke sentence "*La Illah Illella Muhemet re sul Allah:* viz. *There is but one God, and* Mahomet *his Prophet."* (Purchas, 1625, 1282-83).

Edward Terry's account of his stay in Mughal India is also included in the same volume of *Purchas His Pilgrimes*. He also displays an impressive knowledge of Islamic culture and tradition in seventeenth century India. He also describes the Muslim manner of praying in their mosques. He calls the mosque as church and praises their beauty and also mentions the "high pinnacles" which are used by the "Moolaas" to go up and call for the prayer. Rather than Mezzin or Modon as we find in other texts, here we find the term "Moolaa" in plural form for the person who calls others for prayer. We find that Terry does not mention Allahu Akbar as part of the call. He only mentions the creedal statement: "*La Alla, illa Alla, Mahomet Resul-Alla:* that is, No God but one God, and *Mahomet* the Ambassadour of God." (Purchas, 1625, 1476).

Terry also narrates a strange anecdote of another English traveller in the Mughal Empire Thomas Coryat, who, once in Agra, "got vp into a Turret, ouer against the Priest, and contradicted him thus in a loude voyce: *La Alla, illa Alla, Hazaret-Eesa Ebn-Alla,* No God but one God, and Christ the Sonne of God…" (Purchas, 1625, 1476). This shows that Coryat clearly knew that Muslims and Christian both had a common belief in the oneness of God but the Christians did not believe in the Prophet-hood of Muhammad. The word Hazaret is a Persianate expression that Muslims used and still use with the names of Prophets. This anecdote also shows the missionary nature of Coryat, though he came to India as a free-lancer and is dubbed as the "English fookeer" by Jonathan Gil Harris. Edward Terry, after narrating this action of Master Coryat highlights that had he done that at some other place in Asia, he would have lost his life because of the torture. "But here" in Mughal India "euery man hath libertie to professe his owne Religion freely, and for any restriction I euer obserued, to dispute against theirs with impunitie." (Purchas, 1625, 1476). Mughal

India was much liberal as compared to Ottoman Empire or Safavid Persia in the eyes of Terry.

The same volume of Purchas contains the account of Ludovico de Varthema's account of his travels in the Middle East in the early sixteenth century. When he arrived in Aden, he was arrested by the locals on charges of being a spy of Christians. He was presented before the Sultan of the region who demanded of him to "say *Leila illala Mahumet resullala*" which he refused to do. As a result, he was sent to prison. (Purchas, 1625, 1491). While he narrates the story of his stay in the prison, he informs his readers that there were two other fellows who were also imprisoned and they planned to pretend to be mad periodically in order to gain the sympathy as the Arabs took mad men to be holy (1492). When it was his turn to be mad, he narrates his mad follies with a fat sheep. He says: "Vnder the colour of madnesse, I laid hand on this sheepe, saying, *Leila illala Mahumet resullala:* which words the *Sultan* before, when I was brought to his presence, willed me to say, to prooue whether I were a *Mahumetan,* or a professed *Mamaluke."* (Purchas, (1625, 1492)

The sheep did not respond to this "mad folly," he asked the company present there whether the sheep was a Jew, Christian or a Mahumetan. He wanted to convert the sheep to Islam so he repeated the creedal statement again. According to Varthema, "And willing to make him a *Mahumetan,* I rehearsed againe the said words, *Leila illala Mahumet resullala* (that is to say) there is one God, and *Mahumet* his chiefe Prophet: which are the words which they speake in professing their Faith." (Purchas, 1625, 1492)

On finding no answer from the sheep, he says that he broke the legs of the sheep with a staff. This story of sheep is an allegory of alleged coercion in Islamic lands to convert non-Muslims to Islam and in case of refusal, the non-Muslims faced the torture. Varthema clearly knew that "*Leila illala Mahumet resullala"* are the words which Muslims speak in professing their faith.

Samuel Purchas has also included a description of Ottoman Sultan's seraglio in the second volume of his *Purchas His Pilgrimes*. The description is an unacknowledged translation of Bon Ottavio's work on Ottoman harem by Robert Withers. In one of the chapters of this description, Withers provides details of the manner of converting to Islam. The paragraph where we find this detail actually deals with circumcision and we learn that circumcision is a rite that Turk children and new Muslims have to undergo. After the circumcision, a new Muslim who

turne from any other Religion and become *Turkes,* who in token that they imbrace the Religion of *Mahomet,* hold vp their fore-finger, saying these words, *La illaheh il Alloh Muhamet resull Alloh,*[transliterated as *Law illawho illaw Allhah ve Muhammed resul Alla* in Bon, 1653] that is, there is but onely one God, and *Mahomet* is his Messenger. (Purchas, 1625, 1610).

What is important in all the above examples of Arabic transliteration of Muslim profession of faith is that not a single transliteration is identical with the other which shows that all these writers had different sources of knowledge for this information.

The word "Allah" is spelled as "Alloh" by this author. He is uniform with this spelling as we find some other examples of the use of this word in the same work. Writing about the place of other prophets in Islam generally, he acknowledges that Muslim respect all the other prophets. In his own words:

> All the Prophets are held in great honour amongst them. They call *Moses, Musahib Alloh,* that is, a *talker with God;* and *Christ, Meseeh, Rooh-lloh,* and *Hazrettee Isaw,* that is, *Messias,* the *Spirit of God,* and *venerable Iesus:* and *Mahomet, Resul Alloh,* that is, the *Messenger of God.* (Purchas, 1625, 1608)

A little later in the same work we have examples of "Subhawn Alloah" and "Alloh Ekber" which mean "God is pure and true" and "God is great" respectively. (1610)

We find the mention of word "Allah" in one of the sermons preached by Mile Smith, the Lord Bishop of Glocester. The sermons were transcribed from the manuscript sources and printed in London in 1632. Smith praises Arnobius and Lactantius, early Christian apologists, and their skill in convincing the non-Christians of the truth of Christian beliefs. Then he discusses Bartholomew Gerogeniez and says that while having a polemical debate with a Turk scholar in 1547, he proved the notion of trinity by citing the example sun which has form, brightness and heat and is still one. According to Smith, on hearing this, the audience who comprised of common 'Turks' was forced to exclaim "Allah, Allah." (Smith, 1632, 50) What is significant in this is that the author does not bother to translate the word Allah for his audience attending the sermon as if they understood the meaning of the word.

Robert Baron's closet drama titled *Mirza: A Tragedy* was based on a story about Persia in Thomas Herbert's travel narrative of his journey to Persia

in the company of English ambassador Sir Dodmore Cotton. At the end of the play, Baron has provided annotation about the important exotic terms used in the play. One detailed annotation, equipped with references from Qur'an and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (which Baron calls Sunè) is about the Muslim idea of paradise. Baron mentions a huge tree in paradise whose leafs have the name of "Mahomet written on it "joyntly with the name of God, running thus, *Le ilche ille allah* Mahumed *razolloa, (i. e.)* There is no other God but the Lord, and *Mahomet* is his Messenger." (Baron, 1647, 245).

Ottavio Bon was a Venetian representative at the court of Ottoman Sultan in Istanbul in the first decade of the seventeenth century. He recorded his observations of the Ottoman life and culture which were rendered into English by Robert Wither around 1620 and Purchas included it in his *Purchas His Pilgrimes*. Bon's work was later published in London in 1653 and was edited by John Greaves and this work is much more detailed as compared to the part included in Purchas. We find some further insight into the place of God in Ottoman religion and culture. Chapter 12 of the book deals with Ottoman religion, their clergymen, sacred times, places and rites etc. The chapter opens with the statement that "the Turks believe in Almighty God" (Bon, 1653, 158). He mentions some of the important terms used by the Ottomans for God. They are "Hoo, Alloh, Tangree, Hack, Hackteawlaw, Alloh teawlaw, Jehawnee awfreen, Hodoy…" Bon has added footnotes to explain these terms along with the mention of the language in which that specific term is used. For example, Alloh is explained as "Arab. God" and Tangree as the word for God in Turkish. Similarly, Hodoy is used as the word for God in Persian. He further writes that Muslims consider God to be the creator of the universe and the forgiver of all virtuous people on the day of judgment. (Bon, 1653, 158) Moreover, God is on the highest heaven and that he has created Hell and Heaven for the eternal life after death. The whole information, specifically the names of God in various Muslim languages is a new addition to our knowledge.

Paul Rycaut's *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (1668) furnishes us some further knowledge of the word among the Turks. The shout "Allah, Allah" was variously used in the harem of the Ottoman Sultan at many occasions. For example, one of the chapters that describes the old queen's conspiracy against Ottoman Sultan Mahomet, we find that the guards of the Sultan go to different chambers to awake their companions and one young man cries loudly "God grant our King ten thousand years of life at which all the Chamber shouted Allah, Allah" (Rycaut, 1668, 17). Similarly, when the royal guards, on the instructions of the Mufti, reach

the Women's lodging to arrest the grandmother of Sultan, outside the chamber, they shout "Allah, Allah" (20) as if they use these words as an announcement that they are about to enter the space only specified for women. The grand mother is reported to have been strangled by a cord and after this, one of the ministers of the Sultan instructs the officers "to produce the Banner of Mahomet" which is reverenced and respected by all the Turks. "The Banner being brought forth with a rich covering, was advanced with great shouts of *Allah, Allah…"* (22). All these examples show that the expression "Allah, Allah" was common among the Turks especially inside the Royal court and careful European observers had picked up this expression and reported it to their readers. What is again to be noted here is the repletion of the expression without explaining the meaning of the expression which shows, as noted above, that early modern reader interested in Ottoman affairs was thought to have a fair idea of the word Allah.

This same expression "Allah, Allah" is reported as the Turk's war cry. The third book of Rycaut's work discusses the details of the Turkish militia. In this part of the book, he states that the Turks "begin their onset with Allah, Allah, and make three attempts to break within the Ranks of the Enemy, in which if they fail, they then make their retreat." (Rycaut, 1668, 185).

There are other examples of the use of the word Allah in Rycaut. One interesting use is once again in the call to prayer. The person responsible to gather people for prayer is called "Emoum" and it is their duty to call people to prayer from top of the minaret repeating these words: Allah ekber, Allah ekber, Eschedu…Ilahe ilaliah we eschedu… Muhammed: cuan Fleie ala Selah heie ala Felah Allah ekber, allah ekber, la Ilahe ilallah; that is, God is great, God is great, I profess that there is no Diety but God, and confess that Mahomet is the Pro|phet of God… (Rycaut, 1668, 108). This is fairly substantial addition to earlier versions of Muslim call to prayer cited in this paper above. This is a compete call as opposed to earlier versions that only mention the first four words in Rycaut's call to prayer. This is how slowly and gradually Englishmen were improving their knowledge of the various aspects of Islam.

Lancelot Addison who spent a few years in Tangier as chaplain wrote a book upon his return from Morocco. In chapter VIII, Addison discusses the Moor's way of praying to God. He mentions the five prayers and then highlights the significance of washing prior to prayer. Interestingly, he uses the "Giamma" for the collective prayer in the "Mosch" (mosque) which reveals his acquaintance with some Arabic terms used by Muslims. (Addison, 1671, 147). He also uses the term "Salah" and explains it as "a

Word that signifies the whole Form of their Prayers." The prayer leader who is called as "Emoum" by Rycaut is called as "Alfaqui" by Addison. The method of prayer is also described in some details and is worth quoting:

> … the Priest begins the Prayer in a Voice moderately elevated, which the People humbly repeat after him. At the pronouncing of *Illah El Gheber,* that is, *God is the great,* they all use an Elevation both of Hands and Eyes to Heaven: at the name of *Mecha,* they all kiss the Ground; but when they mention *Muley Mahumed,* and the Mercies he procures them, they fall prostrate, and upon the sudden, in a kind of Rapture, reassume an erect. When the Priest hath repeated *la illah Mahumed Resul Allah* four times, the *Almuden* dis|misseth the People.

There are some apparent misconceptions here. There is no mention of "mecha" in Muslim prayer, nor is Muley Mahumed's name is mentioned. Illah El Gheber is a transliteration of Allahu Akbar, which is transcribed in a better manner by some earlier authors. Mahumed has replaced earlier Mahomet, which is a little improvement towards better pronunciation of the name of the Prophet.

John Baptista Tavernier, in his *Six Voyages* (1677), describes the religious significance of coinage in the Safavid empire noting, "which upon one side bear the Names of the twelve Prophets of the Law of *Mahomet,* and in the middle this Inscription, *La Illah allah Mahomet resoul Allah, Ali Vaeli Allah:* on the back-side, *The Conquerour of the World,* Abas II. *gives us permission to coyn this Money in the City of* Cashan." (51) There are other occurrences of the same phrase at other places in Tavernier. "*La Illahé Illa Alla, Muhammed Resoul Alla,* That is to say, There is no other God than God, *Mahomet* is sent by God. *Resoul* signifies *sent,* which is the greatest Title given by the *Turks* to their Prophet." (25-26) This occurs in the last part of Tavernier's travels where he describes the Seraglio of the Ottoman Sultan. In the same work, while describing the architecture of the Ottoman Sultan's treasury and the offices, he mentions the following words inscribes on the top of the entrance: "*La Illahé Illa Alla, Muhammed Resoul Alla.*" Here he does not translate the formula as he does earlier and he is aware that these words are "ordinary enough in the mouths of the Turks." (67)

Girolamo Dandini, an Italian Jesuit visited Maronite of Lebanon in 1596 which was recorded by him as his travel narrative. This was translated into French and later into English. The French translator of the Italian version commented on some of the chapters related to Turks and corrected the

errors of Dandini. The Italian writer, in Chapter IV of his book provides details about Muslim prayer and including ablution and the call to prayer. According to him "the *Turks* wash therein the crowns of their Heads, Hands and Feet, before they enter into the Mosque, at the ordinary hours, and particularly in the Afternoon, at which time these Villains invoke their false Prophet, and cry without measure, *Halla, Halla, Chibir, Mehemme Sur Halla; that is to say, God is a great God,* Mahomet *is the Companion of God" (p. 16).* Characteristic of late sixteenth century bias towards Islam, the quotation reveals the author's hatred of Islam by the use of negative expressions such as villains and false prophet. His transliteration of the Muslim call to prayer is both incomplete and incomprehensible. By *Halla*, he probably means *Allah,* and *Chibir* stands for *Akbar* as his translation of this part of the phrase testifies (God is a great God). The second half has similar problems.

Commenting on this chapter, the translator points out many inaccuracies in the description of the Turks, their beliefs, and customs. The translator's transliteration of the Muslim call to prayer is much better than the original author's. He renders it like this: *Allah Ecber,* that is, *God is Great;* then he continues to say for three times, *Esched en allah illah allah, I testifie there is no other God, but God:* then he says again three times, *Eschen en Mohammed resoul allah, I witness that* Mahomet *is his Prophet.* He adds some other Articles, as, *Hai allassalat, God live by Prayer; Hai alaphaleh, Live to Salvation; Allah Ecber, God is Great; L'allah illa, allah, There is no other God but God.(p. 82)* On page 96-97 of the book where we find commentary by the translator, he presents Islam as a copy of Judaism, especially when it comes to the profession of their faith through the axioms of their theology.

The French traveller to the Orient, Jean de Thevenot, also mentions Allah in his travel narrative when he describes the rite of circumcision among Muslims. In this regard, he writes, "…the Turks circumcise not their Children before the age of eleven or twelve years, to the end they themselves may pronounce the words, *La illah illallah Mehemet resoul allah,* that is to say, there is no God but God, *Mahomet* is his Prophet, which is their profession of Faith" (p. 42). About the profession of the Muslim faith, the writer further sheds light in these words: "the Turks bear so great respect to these words, *La illah illallah Mahomet resoul allah,* that if a Christian or Jew should pronounce them, even inconsiderately, before Witnesses, he must absolutely and without remission turn Turk, or be burnt." (43)

In another chapter in the book that deals with the mosques and the method of prayer, Thevenot makes an attempt to transliterate the call to prayer by the Muslims. Here is how he describes it:

> When the hour of any of these Prayers is come (for they whose business it is to mind that, have for that end Hour-glasses, and besides are regulated by the Sun when it shines) a *Muezim,* who is he that calls to Prayers, goes up to a *Minaret* at every Mosque, and stopping his Ears with his Fingers, he sings and crys these words with all his force; *Allah ekber, allah ekber, allah ekber, eschadou in la illah illallah eschadou in Mahomet resoul allah, hi alle sallatt, hi alle fellat, allah ekber, allah ekber, allah ekber, allah ekber, la illah illallah;* which is to say, God is great, God is great, God is great, God is great, shew that there is but one God, shew that *Mahomet* is his Prophet, come and present your selves to the mercy of God, and ask forgiveness of your Sins, God is great, God is great, God is great, God is great, there is no other God but God (49)

Conclusion

This examination of the word 'Allah' in early modern English texts reveals a gradual yet significant evolution in English understanding of Islamic theology and practice. From Bartolomej Georgijivec's pioneering account in 1569 to the more sophisticated observations of late seventeenth-century travellers, we witness a progressive refinement in both transliteration and comprehension of this fundamental Islamic term. The early texts demonstrate that English writers initially encountered 'Allah' primarily through the Muslim profession of faith (Kalima) and the call to prayer (Adhan), which served as the most audible and public manifestations of Islamic devotion.

The chronological analysis reveals several important patterns. First, the transliterations of Arabic phrases containing 'Allah' varied considerably across different authors, indicating diverse oral sources and the absence of standardized orthographic conventions for rendering Arabic into English. Second, translations of these phrases evolved from simplistic renderings to more nuanced interpretations, reflecting deeper engagement with Islamic concepts. Third, by the late seventeenth century, authors like Rycaut and Thevenot provided substantially complete versions of Islamic prayers and practices, demonstrating increased familiarity and accuracy.

Moreover, the frequency with which authors left 'Allah' untranslated in later texts suggests a growing assumption that English readers possessed

basic knowledge of Islamic terminology. This paper thus contributes to our understanding of how early modern England engaged with Islam not merely through dramatic representation or polemical discourse, but through careful, if sometimes imperfect, documentation of lived religious practices. The word 'Allah' served as a linguistic and theological bridge, facilitating cross-cultural comprehension even amid persistent religious tensions and misunderstandings.

Reference

Addison, Lancelot. *West Barbary, or, A short narrative of the revolutions of the kingdoms of Fez and Morocco with an account of the present customs, sacred, civil, and domestic*. Oxfordshire: Printed at the Theater in Oxford, sold by John Wilmot, 1671.

Baron, Robert. *Mirza a tragedie, really acted in Persia, in the last age*. London: Printed for Humphrey Moseley, 1647.

Bedwell, William. *Mohammedis Imposturæ*. London: Printed by Richard Field, 1615.

Bon, Ottaviano. *A description of the grand signour's seraglio or Turkish emperours court*. Edited by John Greaves. London: Printed for Jo. Ridley, 1653.

Chew, Samuel C. *The Crescent and the Rose: Islam and England during the Renaissance*. Oxford University Press, 1937.

Dimmock, Matthew. *New Turkes: Dramatizing Islam and the Ottomans in Early Modern England*. Ashgate, 2005.

Dandini, Girolamo. *A voyage to Mount Libanus wherein is an account of the customs, manners, &c. of the Turks... written originally in Italian by the R.F.J*. London: Printed by J. Orme for A. Roper and R. Basset, 1698.

Fletcher, Giles. *The policy of the Turkish empire. The first booke*. London: Printed by Iohn Windet, 1597.

Georgijević, Bartolomej. *The ofspring of the house of Ottomanno...* Translated by Hugh Goughe. London: Thomas Marshe, 1569.

Hakluyt, Richard. *The principal nauigations, voyages, traffiques and discoueries of the English nation*. London: Printed by George Bishop, Ralph Newberie, and Robert Barker, 1599-1600.

Lithgow, William. *A most delectable and true discourse, of an admired and painefull peregrination....* London: Printed by Nicholas Oakes, 1616.

Matar, Nabil. *Islam in Britain, 1558-1685*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Purchas, Samuel. *Purchas His Pilgrimes*. London: Printed by William Stansby for Henrie Fetherstone, 1625.

Rycaut, Paul. *The present state of the Ottoman Empire....* London: Printed for John Starkey and Henry Brome, 1668.

Smith, Miles. *Sermons of the Right Reuerend Father in God Miles Smith, late Lord Bishop of Glocester*. London: Printed by Elizabeth Allde for Robert Allot, dwelling at the Blacke Beare in Pauls Church-yard, 1632.

Text Creation Partnership. "*Early English Books Online Text Creation Partnership (EEBO-TCP).*" *Text Creation Partnership*, 17 Nov. 2025, textcreationpartnership.org/tcp-texts/eebo-tcp-early-english-books-online/.

Tolan, John V. *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*. Columbia University Press, 2002.

Tavernier, Jean Baptista. *The Six Voyages of John Baptista Tavernier... through Turky into Persia and the East-Indies*. London: 1677.

Thévenot, Jean de. *The travels of Monsieur de Thevenot into the Levant in three parts, viz. into I. Turkey, II. Persia, III. the East-Indies. Newly done out of French*. London: Printed by H. Clark, for H. Faithorne, J. Adamson, C. Skegnes, and T. Newborough, 1687.

Vitkus, Daniel J. *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570–1630*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Manuscript Submission Guidelines:

Authors Guidelines

- **Title:** The title of the article should be bold, centered, and typed in capital letters (in 14 points) in Times New Roman Font.
- **Author(s) Details:** Author(s) details including full name (bold), affiliations, and contact details should be in (12 points) Times New Roman Font and should be centered below the title.
- **Abstract:** All manuscripts must be accompanied by a brief abstract. The abstract should not exceed 150-200 words. It should be properly formatted as justified in italicized text in Times New Roman Font (10 points). It should highlight the Research Background, Methodology, Major Finding(s), and Conclusion in brief.
- **Key Words:** Authors must mention 5-7 keywords. Keywords should be listed alphabetically, separated by commas, and full stops at the end.
- **Page Setup:** The size of the page should have 7 inches Width and 9.5 inches Height with 1- 1-inch margin on all four sides. The header and Footer Layout should be 0.5 inches from the edge.
- **Manuscript:** Manuscripts must in between 4000 – 6000 words (all inclusive). It should be 1.0 line spaced, in Times New Roman font 12 point.
- **Tables and Figures/Images:** All important tables and figures/images should be incorporated into the body of the paper. The heading of the Table should be in Times New Roman, Bold, 12 Points, and 0.25 inches indent (Left). Heading of the Figure/Images Should also be of the same specifications as Tables but below the Image/Figure and Centrally Aligned.
- **References:** All references should be listed alphabetically at the end of the article using APA 7 reference style only.
- **Citations in the Text:** Kindly make sure that every reference cited in the text should also be presented in the reference list and vice versa. Authors should avoid using citations in the abstract of the manuscript.
- **Author(s) Biography:** Every author must submit a brief biography, and a photograph along with the Copyright Agreement form. Footnotes should be numbered consecutively.
- All manuscripts must be submitted electronically at the journal's website:
  http://ojs.ucp.edu.pk/index.php/ucpjll/about/submissions .