

A Contrastive Study of Morphology in Pakistani, Indian and British English

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Abstract

This study compares the morphological features of Pakistani English (PakE), Indian English (IndE) and British English (BrE). All three of these varieties have a common source that gave and continue to give them different morphological innovations (nativization, language contact, and sociolinguistic factors). The paper contrasts prefixation, suffixation, compounding, borrowing, plural formation and verb formation in these languages. Based on corpus examples and previous research in the area, the article discusses how PakE and IndE drift away from BrE because of the interference of indigenous languages (Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi, etc.) and cultural settings. The study adds to the growing body of literature on World Englishes and the on-going development of English in post-colonial contexts.

Keywords

Pakistani English, Indian English, British English, Morphology, Comparative Linguistics, World Englishes

1. Introduction

The international spread of English has led to widespread use and development of both core and noncore varieties that are subject to the influence of local languages and cultures. In South Asia, for instance, Pakistani English (PakE) and Indian English (IndE) have both domestically grown up in terms of linguistic morphology, producing morphological phenomena which distinguish them from British English (BrE), the former linguistic model. While BrE serves as the prescriptive benchmark, both PakE and IndE display regular divergence in formations, inflections, and syntactic constructions as a result of long-term contact with and interference from indigenous languages like Urdu, Hindi, Punjabi and the like [1] Such divergences do not point to mistakes, but to genuine linguistic inventions in a World of Englishes perspective.

The paper provides a morphological comparison of PakE, IndE and BrE paying attention to four critical domains:

- Affixation patterns: The use how prefixes and suffixes are borrowed, modified and novel in PakE and IndE vs, BrE.
- Compounding and hybridisation: An exploration of new compounds and hybrids rooted in native languages.
- Borrowings and calques: A study of the lexical borrowing from native languages and its assimilation into the English morphology.
- Pluralization and verb agreement differences: Observable differences in noun pluralisation and verb conjugation between these varieties.

In order to provide robust analysis, the study employs real corpus data (including the International Corpus of English-ICE-Pakistan, and ICE-India), scholarly literature on South Asian Englishes as well as naturalistic occurrences from media, literature and everyday use. By looking at a systematic comparison of these varieties, the study offers a fresh perspective on the nature of the English of the postcolonial world, and problematizes the view that there is only one "right" English. Moreover, such findings parallel Schneider's (2007) Dynamic Model of Postcolonial Englishes, an approach that offers an explanation of how former colonies, by the process of nativization and endonormative stabilization, develop their language norms. The results will be useful to linguists, teachers and policy makers for understanding the autonomy of PakE and IndE as established varieties on their own right and not simply as offshoots of BrE [2]. Each of these morphological characteristics will be reviewed in the following sections with empirical evidence and comparison examples. In this way, the paper intends to show that PakE and IndE are not mutilation of the English language, but independent, rule-governed varieties with their own sociolinguistic parameters [3].

2. Theoretical Framework

The approach to the analysis of Pakistani, Indian and British English morphology is framed on two defining sociolinguistic paradigms that offer a strong theoretical footing to the process of development and status of postcolonial Englishes. The former, Kachru's (1985) Three Circles Model, is a global categorization into varieties of English, while the latter, the Inner/Outer Circle and Expanding Circle, are used to describe the geopolitical order according to which linguistic norms are determined in a particular setting. According to this model: 1) The IC includes such countries where English is the status of first mother tongue according to model (e.g., UK, USA), and forms traditional norm-

providing centers. BrE, being the original source, can be added to this list and continues to set educational standards throughout the world. 2) The Outer Circle also comprises former colonies where English has a formal or semi-formal status (e.g. Pakistan, India). For any of these, the norm establishes itself; and this occurs precisely at the expense of the Inner Circle norms as the result of extensive contact of a kind with native speakers and cultures. Pakistan English, and Indian English being the major varieties, in this circle are from this circle according to morphological innovation. 3) The Expanding Circle includes countries where English is studied as a second language (such as China and Japan). These countries are a norm-dependent, Inner Circle oriented variety with no strong structural nativization. The Kachru model serves as a useful typology, but it has faced criticism for presenting English varieties in a static way. To remedy this shortcoming the paper further employs Schneider's Dynamic Model of Postcolonial Englishes, which provides a more dynamic, evolutionary model of the development of Englishes in postcolonial settings [4]. Here are five progressive phases covered by Schneider's model:

Foundation: The penetration of English through the first settlers.

Stabilization through Exonorm: Anchored at external standards (e.g. UK).

Nativization: The most crucial and also the most influential stage, in which English restructures (or more properly refunctionalizes) in order to contribute to the influence from the local languages and cultures. This phase explains various structural characteristics of PakE and IndE.

Endonormative Stabilization: The rise of the parochial and the literary.

Differentiation: The genesis of internal regional diversity.

Both PakE and IndE are in the middle of the nativization and endonormative stabilization stages, and yet they have iterative morphological patterns based on their own sociolinguistic environments. For example, the use of Urdu/Hindi affixes in PakE/IndE (e.g., -wallah, -giri) and the reformation of English grammar under South Asian language patterns (e.g., stative verbs in the progressive) are illustrations of this process of nativization. These also collectively lend a theoretical basis to the institutional representation of PakE and IndE, instead of regarding these as impoverished versions of BrE. They also form a basis for the comparison of morphological variation as not merely random deviations, but the expected results of language contact and cultural adaptation. Through the use of these models, the study transcends prescriptive comparisons and looks at how PakE and IndE actually have built up their own linguistic ecosystems with its specific morphological/rhetorical rules and covenants [5].

Subsequent sections will draw on this theoretical background of the models in order to interpret specific morphological features and illustrate how Kachru's and Schneider's models are reflected in the linguistic forms of these varieties of English. This perspective not only affirms the autonomy of PakE and IndE but also helps the field reflect on the issues of linguistic diversity and decolonization in World Englishes [6].

3. Comparative Morphological Features

Comparison of various morphological features is as follows:

3.1 Affixation

The patterning of affixation reveals striking differences between British English (BrE) and South Asian Englishes, demonstrating how language contact fosters morphological creativity. While BrE adheres to standard Germanic and Latinate affixation—using prefixes with conventional meanings (e.g., *unhappy*, *rewrite*), suffixes that maintain part-of-speech consistency (e.g., *quickly* [adverb], *happiness* [noun]), and productivity limited to English roots (e.g., *un- + happy*, not Urdu loans)—South Asian Englishes innovatively blend indigenous and English morphology. Urdu/Hindi-derived affixes like *-wallah* (agentive marker: *rickshaw-wallah*, *chai-wallah*) and *-giri* (behavioral noun suffix: *dadagiri* "bullying," *gundagiri* "thuggery") showcase this hybridity. Similarly, formations like *prepone* (Latin *pre-* + English *pone*, antonym of *postpone*) and *timepass* (calquing Hindi *samay katana*) fill lexical gaps absent in BrE, while innovative prefix usage appears in kinship terms like *co-brother* (husband of one's wife's sister) and *co-sister* (sister-in-law), where BrE relies on phrasal constructions. Double marking for emphasis further distinguishes these varieties, underscoring their systematic divergence from BrE through substrate-influenced, culturally grounded word-formation strategies [7].

3.2 Re-duplication

The next morphological feature under examination is reduplication (repetition), which demonstrates distinctive patterns in South Asian Englishes compared to British English. Examples include phrases like *"Please re-reply to my email"* in Pakistani English (expressing heightened urgency where BrE would simply say *"reply again"*) and creative suffixation like *"tiffinify"* in Indian English (meaning *"to prepare lunch"*, derived from the colonial-era word *tiffin*). These varieties also incorporate calqued affix patterns from local languages, such as the Urdu *izafat* construction seen in terms like *light-wala* (transformed into *bulb-wala* for *"electrician"* in PakE), following the same pattern as *button-wala* or *beggar-wala*. Far from being random errors, these innovations serve important linguistic functions: they fill lexical gaps for culture-specific concepts (e.g., *prepone*), provide morphological economy (condensing phrases into single words like *timepass*), and offer semantic precision for relationship-specific

terms that BrE can only express through longer periphrastic constructions. Corpus studies (such as ICE-India) confirm these forms appear across registers, from casual conversation to newspaper language, demonstrating their institutionalization. Unlike BrE's relatively static affixation patterns, PakE and IndE display remarkable morphological creativity through productive borrowing (integrating Urdu/Hindi elements), analogical extension (applying English rules to new contexts), and innovative compounding. This dynamic affixation aligns with Schneider's "nativization" stage, where English adapts to local communicative needs and develops new grammatical norms. While BrE typically borrows words wholesale (e.g., *pyjama* from Urdu), South Asian Englishes go further by actively incorporating foreign morphemes into their word-formation processes - a hallmark of established Outer Circle varieties. The following section will explore how these principles manifest in compound formation, further highlighting the morphological distinctiveness of these Englishes.

3.3 Compounding and Reduplication

Compounding and reduplication morphology in South Asian Englishes present fascinating cases of how English word-formation rules have been adapted to local communicative needs, demonstrating the distinct morphological identity of Pakistani and Indian English (PakE/IndE) compared to British English (BrE). While BrE follows traditional Germanic compounding patterns—using endocentric compounds (head-final structures like *sunflower*), exocentric compounds (*redhead*), and maintaining transparent semantic relations between constituents—PakE/IndE innovate with culturally specific compounds that fill lexical gaps, such as *cousin-brother* (male cousin), *key-bunch* (keychain, more semantically precise than BrE *keychain*), and *foreign-returned* (a socially marked term for someone who has lived abroad). Hybrid compounding blends English with indigenous languages, as in *policewala* (police officer, from English *police* + Urdu *-wala*) or *godown keeper* (warehouse supervisor, from Portuguese *gudão* via Indian languages). Reduplication serves multiple functions: intensification (*small-small things*, *fast-fast*), disambiguation (*chai-tea* for spiced milk tea), and distributive plurality (*two-two pencils*). Unique structures like right-branching compounds (*notice of meeting*) and verb-object compounds (*tiffin-carrier*) further distinguish these varieties. These innovations fulfill critical roles—lexical gap-filling (*cousin-brother*), semantic precision (*key-bunch*), discourse emphasis (reduplication's rhythmic pragmatics), and cultural conceptualization (reflecting South Asian social norms). Theoretically, these patterns align with Schneider's nativization phase (localizing English morphology), Kachru's creativity paradigm (viewing Outer Circle Englishes as rule-governed, not deficient), and cognitive linguistics (culture-specific categorization) [8]. Their prevalence in educated speech and formal writing confirms their institutionalization, affirming PakE/IndE as autonomous varieties with their own morphological rules, not mere deviations from BrE. See following table 1:

Table 1. Comparative Examples

Feature	BrE	PakE/IndE
Kin term	Cousin [Male]	Cousin-brother
Keyholder	Keychain	Keyholder bunch
Tea	Milk Tea	Chai-tea
Many small things	Lots of little things	Small-small things
Rapidly	Very quickly	Fast-fast

This table 1 shows that South Asian Englishes create distinct lexical items to BrE ones that follow morphological well-formedness conditionings using compounding and reduplication which cater to indigenous communicative exigences.

3.4 Borrowings and Calques: A Cross-Variety Investigation

The interlinguistic borrowing of lexicon between Pakistani, Indian, British, and American English also provides interesting clues regarding the historical genesis and the synchronic linguistic ecology of the various varieties of the English language. Here, we provide a more comprehensive analysis of how these varieties borrow loanwords and calques from indigenous languages, and how these are morphologically integrated and how they function sociolinguistically [9].

PakE has heavy lexical borrowing from Urdu along with many loans from various regional languages (eg., Punjabi, Sindhi). Everyday Vocabulary is as: 1) Bazaar (market): "Let's go shopping at the bazaar." (completely naturalized) 2) Lathi (police baton): "The police lathi-charged" (specifically in the South Asian context) 3) Zamindar: "Indeed do the zamindar system. Administrative Terms are like: 1) Tehsil: "We'll work the documents at the tehsil level." 2) Patwari (land registrar): "Refer price of prices to patwari's records". Cultural Concepts are : 1) Mehndi (henna): "Mehndi is tomorrow" 2) Barat "The barat came at twelve at night". Examples of Hybrid Formations are: 1) Police thana (police station), a mix of English and Urdu 2) Numberdar: From English 'number' and Hindi/Urdu '-dar' (lit holder) meaning 'holder of a number', referring to the village headman.

Hindi loanwords interest English (IndE), IndE may include the following words of Hindustani, with those of Sanskrit or Perso-Arabic origin unlikely to be used even in the most formal contexts. Institutional Terms are as: 1) Crore (ten million): "The budget is 500 crore rupees, 188456-Arvind Adarsh"... expresses '500 crore --"934 crore* (US\$200 million) over five years to improve nutrition and: The brotheCrore=10 million (n=1,2,3,4...=99) Sr. 2) Lakh (one hundred thousand): "His annual salary is 5 lakhs". These linguistic variations have also effected the Social/Political Concepts as:

1) Dharna: "The activists are sitting on dharna." 2) Swadeshi (indigenous products movement). In Religious/Cultural Terms they're like: 1) Worship Durga puja is a common worship in Hinduism) : "We went for the durga puja" Ashram (spiritual retreat). Hybrid Calques are like: 1) Eve-teasing (catcalling): A probably Indian English creation 2) Cousin-sister (female cousin).

BrE has historical loanwords, mainly from South Asia in the colonial period, such as *Fully Nativized Words* like: Pyjama (sleepwear), Shampoo (from Hindi 'chāmpo'), Bungalow (from Hindi 'bangla'). *Culinary Terms* as: Curry (from Tamil 'kari'), Chutney (from Hindi 'chatni'). *Obsolete Colonial Terms* as: Pukka (genuine), Doolally (crazy, from Deolali), Comparative Analysis. PakE/IndE borrowings can be opaque to BrE speakers as lexicalization and comprehensibility of BrE loans on the global market. *Morphological Adaptation* are done as well. South Asian Englishes often retain the original plural forms: "Two lakh rupees" (no lakhs) whereas BrE changes the plurals into English morphology: "Pyjamas" (not pyjama).

To understand *Semantic Fields* we see that PakE/IndE borrowings cover: Governance (tehsil, patwari), Social relations (zamindar, barat), Measurement (crore, lakh). Most BrE loans are confined to Material culture (bungalow), Food (chutney), etc. *Productive Borrowing* could be found in new borrowings as they are being absorbed into PakE/IndE_grp at a steady pace. Processed borrowing from South Asia in BrE is mostly historical. Calquing Patterns include structural calques like "cousin-brother" (from Hindi bhai-like associations) and "eat money" (from Hindi paisa khana, meaning embezzle), phonological adaptations such as "dicky" (car trunk, from Hindi dikki) and "fundas" (fundamentals, in university slang), and semantic extensions like "hotel" used generally for a restaurant (common in South Asia) and "mess" expanded to indicate any dining hall. The sociolinguistic significance of these borrowings lies in their role as identity markers, where loanwords reinforce cultural identity and distinguish South Asian Englishes from other forms of the language, as well as register variation, with most loanwords acceptable in formal environments while some (e.g., timepass, fundas) remain colloquial. Lexical gaps are filled by terms like dharna (which lacks a direct English equivalent) and crore/lakh (addressing numerical needs), reflecting postcolonial power dynamics through systematic borrowing that defies English purism and showcases linguistic negotiation. Theoretically, these patterns support Schneider's Dynamic Model, particularly the nativization stage leading to lexicon borrowing and institutional endonormative stabilization, as well as Kachru's Circles Model, positioning Outer Circle Englishes as norm-developing with innovative variations outside Inner Circle orthodoxy. Contact Linguistics further highlights substrate influence and the non-random nature of borrowing [10]. This study demonstrates that lexical borrowing in South Asian Englishes is not arbitrary but shaped by cultural necessity and linguistic innovation, contrasting with BrE's historical borrowings by showing continuous, productive lexical innovation in PakE and IndE through contact with native languages.

3.5 Pluralization in South Asian Englishes: A Comparison

British English (BrE) pluralization adheres to strict Germanic rules, including regular count nouns with -(e)s (books, cars), phonologically conditioned allomorphs (/s/, /z/, /ɪz/), and irregular plurals like vowel changes (foot → feet), -en endings (ox → oxen), and zero-marked forms (sheep → sheep). Mass nouns typically remain non-count (e.g., *advice*, *information*), even when quantified, though exceptions like *pluralia tantum* (scissors, trousers) and indeterminate nouns (fish → fishes/fish) exist. In contrast, Pakistani (PakE) and Indian English (IndE) exhibit innovations, such as zero plurals with mass nouns (*"two advice," "three intelligence"*), extended plurals (*"new furnitures," "all luggages," "5 staff"*), and measure word constructions (*"two items of clothes," "five heads of cattle"*), influenced by Urdu/Hindi's lack of a strict mass-count distinction. Cognitive reanalysis leads to double marking (*"childrens," "feets"*) and innovative forms (*"biscuit" as a mass noun, "this fruits"*). Sociolinguistically, extended plurals dominate informal speech, while formal writing leans toward BrE norms, with educational attainment influencing usage. Younger speakers drive generational change, institutionalizing some forms (*lakh/lakhs*). Theoretically, these patterns reflect substrate transfer, cognitive recategorization, and endonormative stabilization within World Englishes, challenging the notion of "errors" in favor of systematic variation. Pedagogically, conflicts arise between universal norms and local usage, necessitating context-sensitive assessment and awareness of pluricentric standards. See following table 2:

Table 2. Comparative Examples

Comparative Examples		
Context	BrE	PakE/IndE
Mass noun + number	Some advice	Two advices
Collective noun	Furniture	Furnitures
Measurement	Five million	Five lakhs
Hypercorrection	-	Childrens
Loanword plural	Pyjamas	Lathi (unchanged)

This table 2 illustrates that the process of pluralization in South Asian English is actually a rule-governed phenomenon and it helps to reveal the English morphology to confirm to the local system of linguistic cognition in the speech communities of the South-Asian Englishes. All these changes illustrate the creative and flexible ways in which new Englishes are developing their own grammatical rules, rather than just de-standardizing BrE. The patterns are systematic, functionally motivated, and emergently institutionalised in their communities of speech.

3.6 The Verb Morphology of South Asian English(es): A Corpus-Based Study

The verb phrase in Pakistani and Indian English (PakE/IndE) systematically differs from British English (BrE), reflecting both language contact influences and structural morphosyntactic changes. BrE maintains a conservative Germanic verb system, including tense-aspect distinctions like present perfect (*I have eaten*), past simple (*I ate*), and progressive forms (*I am eating*—restricted to dynamic verbs), alongside strict auxiliary usage (*Do you not know?*), modal auxiliaries (*She may go*), and agreement rules (*He eats*). In contrast, PakE/IndE exhibits innovations such as the extended progressive with stative verbs (*I am knowing him*), perfective overextension (*I've seen him yesterday*), auxiliary omission in questions (*What you want?*), simplified negation (*I not go*), and modal verb shifts (*You should to go*). Tense usage varies, with present-for-future constructions (*I come tomorrow*) and non-standard past forms (*She gone to market*), while agreement rules fluctuate, including third-person -s extension (*I wants to go*) or omission (*She go*). These variations stem from Urdu/Hindi substrate influence, particularly the continuous aspect suffix *-rah-*, and reflect cognitive reanalysis of tense-aspect boundaries. Sociolinguistically, informal registers favor innovative forms, though formal writing increasingly aligns with BrE norms, with education and generational shifts playing key roles—younger speakers more readily adopt and stabilize these features as identity markers. Theoretically, these patterns support language transfer, grammaticalization processes, and cognitive-linguistic event conceptualization, reinforcing PakE/IndE as norm-developing varieties within the World Englishes framework. Functional motivations include aspectual prominence (prioritizing progressive marking), communicative economy (auxiliary omission), and semantic transparency (avoiding perfect/preterite ambiguity). Pedagogically, challenges arise in reconciling standard norms with localized usage, necessitating context-sensitive approaches that acknowledge systematic variation rather than treating deviations as errors due to the fossilization of innovative forms assessment issues [11].

Distinguishing errors from variants. This sheds light on the register-appropriate expectations of materials by developing locally-sensitive curricula and this could be done only by providing awareness of systematic variation See following table 3 :

Table 3. Comparative Examples

Feature	BrE	PakE/IndE
Stative progressive	I know him	I am knowing him
Simple past	I had lunch	I have had lunch
Supplemental questions	Do you like?	You want?
Future of expression	I'll be going	I go tomorrow
Third person-s	She goes	She go/She goes

Table 3 shows that verb morphology in South Asian Englishes forms an internally structured system which patterns on the grammatical framework of English, but that has been recast to accommodate local communicative requirements and modes of thought. Such changes illustrate the dynamic growth of postcolonial Englishes as they codify their own norms rather than strictly departing from BrE norms. The patterns are systematic, based on functional motivations, and institutionalized within their respective speech communities, rather than as erroneous forms produced by learners.

4. Discussion: Making Sense of Morphological Variation in South Asian Englishes

The verb phrase in Pakistani and Indian English (PakE/IndE) systematically differs from British English (BrE), demonstrating influences from language contact and structural morphosyntactic changes, particularly in tense-aspect usage (e.g., extended progressive with statives like *I am knowing*, perfective overextension like *I've seen him yesterday*), auxiliary patterns (omission in *What you want?*, simplified negation in *I not go*), and modal shifts (*You should to go*), reflecting substrate influences from Urdu/Hindi's aspectual systems (e.g., *-rah-* construction) and cognitive reanalysis of event boundaries. Similarly, phonological and morphological variations between PakE/IndE and BrE arise from predictable language-contact dynamics, with Urdu impacting PakE through verbal aspect, head-final compounds (*police thana*), and honorifics (*-sahib*), while Hindi/Sanskrit influences IndE via formal vocabulary (*swadeshi*), reduplication (*small-small things*), and calques (*cousin-brother*). Regional languages further shape these varieties, such as Punjabi's double possessives (*my friend's his house*) in PakE or Bengali light-verb constructions (*give a listen*) in IndE. Morphological simplification is evident in inflectional leveling (*childs*), analytic tendencies (*two advice*), and innovative hybrid formations (*lathi-charge*, *-wallah* agentives), alongside lexical gaps filled by culture-specific terms (*prepone*, *timepass*). Despite shared structures, PakE and IndE diverge lexically—PakE favors Urdu/Persian administrative (*tehsil*) and Islamic terms (*azan*), while IndE adopts Sanskritized (*svayamsevak*) and Dravidian borrowings (*kaapi*). These patterns align with Schneider's Dynamic Model (nativization stage), Kachru's Circles (norm-developing), and language-contact theory (substrate transfer), while cognitive linguistics explains conceptual reorganization (e.g., prototype shifts in noun classes) [6]. Sociolinguistically, such variations serve as identity markers, with register continua from vernacular to formal and generational shifts toward local norms, reflecting resistance to linguistic imperialism. Future trajectories suggest continued divergence, local standardization, and digital dissemination of innovations, underscoring that PakE/IndE are rule-governed systems adapting English to local communicative needs, not deviations from BrE but natural outcomes of World Englishes' dynamic evolution, embodying cultural and cognitive creativity.

5. Conclusion: The Morphological Identity of South Asian Englishes

This contrastive study reveals that Pakistani and Indian English have developed rule-governed, systematic morphological systems that significantly diverge from British English norms, with these variations emerging not from linguistic deficiencies but from language contact, cultural conditioning, and postcolonial innovation. Key findings demonstrate structural autonomy, where morphological patterns—whether in affixation, compounding, or verb morphology—follow consistent, internally motivated rules rather than arbitrary deviations, exhibiting stability across registers. Cultural-linguistic synthesis is evident in innovations like *prepone* and *timepass*, which fill lexical gaps while preserving untranslatable cultural concepts through calques and loans. Developmentally, both varieties show advanced nativization (Schneider's Phase 3) and incipient endonormative stabilization (Phase 4), bolstered by growing institutional and literary recognition. Theoretically, these findings affirm the World Englishes paradigm by validating Outer Circle varieties as autonomous systems, align with postcolonial linguistics in prioritizing creative adaptation over prescriptive norms, and underscore substrate influence through contact linguistics. As these Englishes evolve, they offer linguists a dynamic lens into real-time language change, challenging monolingual frameworks and modeling a pluralistic approach better suited to our interconnected world. Ultimately, their systematic divergence from BrE underscores the resilience and adaptability of postcolonial Englishes as legitimate, culturally grounded linguistic systems.

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