

Cultural Identity in Pakistani Fiction: A Case Study in Pakistani Culture

Shahida Parveen

Department of English Language and Literature, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to find the impact of Pakistani culture in the novels *Three Blind Men* by Safdar Butt and *Ice Candy Men* by Betsy Sidhwa. Culture and language are deeply rooted in each other and bring about certain changes in their process of evolution and change. This study investigates the speech acts and words which are typically used in Pakistani context and they depict Pakistani culture. The study highlights the cultural background and significance of using those words. The study of the selected novel shows that Language and culture are intertwined to such an extent that one cannot survive without the other. Language varies from place to place to which we often called dialect.

Keywords: Impact of culture, Language, novel: *Three Blind Men*

Introduction

Language and culture is inseparable (Byram and Grundy, 2003). This paper aims at the very fact of how culture brings the linguistic changes. The view of culture acknowledged is supported by Alptekin (as cited by Kachru, Kachru and Nelson, 2009) who defines it as “socially acquired knowledge” which shapes the way we perceive things. It also affects how people respond to different aspects of the target culture. With the globalization of English, many varieties of English have emerged. The autonomy of English has gone. All over the world people in ever-increasing numbers are using more and more varieties of English. English has become the language of international communication. Twenty years ago, British English was considered the prestige accent in China and that most students wanted to imitate. Today, American English is the variety that the majority of students want to learn (Kirkpatrick and Xu Xi, 2002). Tomorrow it may be a Chinese variety of English. More importantly, varieties reflect the cultures of their speakers and this is another cause of difference between varieties, as the ways cultural norms are expressed thus differ across varieties. Learning foreign language involves learning its culture (Thansoulas, 2001). cultural conventions are cultural routines. For example, the way people greet and address each other can be considered a cultural convention. The ways people greet each other in British, American and Australian English may differ in remarkable ways.

Br E	How is you?	Fine thanks.
Am E	How are you doing?	(Just) great (thanks)
Aus E	How are you going?	Good thanks.

In these three varieties, it is interesting to note the significant difference in these standard greetings and responses in certain Asian cultures it is customary to greet people by asking the equivalent of “Where are you going?” Or “Have you eaten?” Forms of address also differ in these varieties. Most Australian students address their lecturers by their first names. In American culture, it is normal for students to address academic staff by title and family name. It will be professor Wilson or Doctor Wilson, not Bill or Jane, as in Australia. These examples show how cultural conventions differ and how these differences are reflected in the respective varieties of English. Cultural differences will be reflected in different speech styles. The use of schemas that are appropriate in one culture but inappropriate or unusual when transferred into another can lead a misunderstanding. It is clear that there is wide variation between varieties and variation within variety. In exploitation colonies such as India and Malaysia, the influence of local languages and cultures was greater in the development of local English varieties. (Kachru, 1985). The spread of English has resulted in the development of many varieties of English. English has now multicultural identities (Kachru, 1985). For example, the roles and functions of English differ markedly today even in Malaysia and Singapore, two countries whose historical backgrounds are so closely related that one was actually part of the other at one stage in the past. Culturally distinctive use of greetings, farewells, curses is also present in Indian English as “Sat Sari Akal” (which means God is truth) is a formulaic greeting or farewell. A person unfamiliar with Indian culture would probably not receive this message. The use of will you might be seen as abrupt or even rude in a British context but not so in an Indian one. English was transplanted in Pakistan like most African and Asian countries during the colonial rules. The use of English continued for system maintenance (Haq, 1983). Pakistani English has many similarities with Indian English. However since Independence there have been some very obvious differences. These include unique idioms and colloquial expressions as well as accents. The form and function of English have changed as a result of contact with the languages and cultures of Pakistan. Foreign companies find accent neutralization easier in Pakistan than in India English is Pakistan's official language. The anchorage of English in Pakistan is that the constitution of Pakistan is codified in English (Haq 1983). All government documents, military

communications, street signs, many shop signs, business contracts and other activities are in English. The language of the courts is also English. English is taught to all school level Pakistani students, and in many cases English is also the language used to teach the students other subjects. At College and University level all instruction is in English. Pakistan has a large English language press and (more recently) media. All of Pakistan's major dailies are published in or have an edition in English, while DAWN News is a major English Language News channel. The greatest bulk of changes in Pakistani English are of a less stable kind (Talat, 1990).

Literature Review

The novel *Three Blind Men* by Safdar Butt is clear example of culture's impact on language. There are certain words which are only used in our culture and they have no existence in English language. The objectives of my research are

- To find out the cultural impacts on Language
- To explore the ideology behind giving importance to culture
- To indicate the lists of words and speech acts which are used in Pakistani cultural context?

Several studies of Pakistani English have shown the important role played by the various kinds of word formation. Compounding from English elements is found in such items as wheel cup (hub-cap) and side-hero (supporting actor), with some elements proving to be especially productive: lifter (shoplifter) has generated many new words (car lifter, luggage lifter, book lifter). Urdu and English elements, in either order, are also notable: *khas deposit* ('special deposit'), double roti ('bread').

Pakistani English contains many unique terms, as well as terms which are utilized somewhat differently in Pakistan.

Shopper means a shopping bag, rather than a person who is shopping, the latter is referred to as a customer.

His/her meter has turned means that the person has lost his/her temper. Usually used for a sudden outburst, one which is construed as unreasonable.

Got no lift—received no attention or assistance from someone.

Out of station—out of town

First Class—means top quality; often used by shopkeepers and salesmen to denote good quality.

Tight—high quality, or aesthetically pleasing and desirable. Often to describe physical attractiveness, usually of females, e.g. Ali is going out with a very tight girl.

Miss is used to address or refer to female teachers, whatever their marital status, e.g. Yes, I have done my homework, Miss. Less commonly used to refer to women colleagues or subordinates. Madam is used to address and refer to females in positions of authority, usually a superior, e.g. madam has ordered me to get the figures for last year's sales. Can also be used as a noun, e.g. she is the madam of that department meaning she is the head of the department, without it being derogatory.

Sir is used for a male superior, often combined with their name or used as a noun. E.g. Is Sir in? Or Sir Raza wants to see you in his office as soon as possible.

Drinking a cigarette/cigar—smoking a cigarette. This is due to the verbs for smoking being the same as the verbs for drinking in Urdu and other Pakistani languages. Pakistani English also differs in the manner of requests, greetings, etc from the other varieties of English that speech style reflect their cultural behavior. For example when two people from Pakistan greet each other use to say Assalom o Alaykum instead of Hello and Hi.

In the same way the study of this novel will bring forward such features which are being used independently in cultural context.

Methodology

There is only one kind of sources of data in this research, that is, the dialogues spoken by the characters in the novel *Three Blind Men*. The non English words are selected and their cultural background is discussed. It is observation about the already existed phenomenon. It is the study of those words which are culturally influenced.

Data Analysis

After all the data are collected, the next step is data analysis, where the collected data from the dialogues in the given table and in which meanings they are used interpreted,

Table 1.1 Findings and Discussion

Words showing the impacts of culture	Interpretation
Rohi, beta why don't you ask Saba..... page#16	In Pakistani context beta is used for son or sometime for daughter.
“Oh chacha you are a dangerous man”. Page#19	Younger brother of one's father, in English as uncle.
Coming from a rich zamindar family....page#11	In our culture for owner of large agricultural land .
“Chach salama Laikum ” page#17	Muslim form of greeting.
“Make it quicker, Bhatti sahib ”	Used to address in a respectable way and Mister in English.
“ Baba ”, Waseem stopped him. Page#198	Form of addressing some aged or elderly person.
“Don't worry about it Murad Puttar ” page#21	Puttar is used in meaning of son.
“ Bhaijan ? What are u saying Sobia” page#143	Use to address brother.
But Abbaji ” interjected Murad. Page#21	As in English father, we use Abbaji
Take it easy, Lala . page#93	Lala is used in the meaning of elder brother.
Inshallah , Pervez will get his due desserts soon enough. Page#229	It is used in the meanings of God's willing typically by the Muslims.
There was no mention of Sobia at the haveli or at the dera .page#111	A large house in rural area. Dera where political leaders or the influential people use to sit,
“He is a true Majnu ” page# 25	A man blind in love.asian equivalent of Romeo.
Amma what are you talking about. Page #201	
He told then Sharfu Dada that he was no more in the world of crime. Page# 116	In our culture, it is used in the meanings of gangster or a don.
I cannot understand how such good people were born in the house of such shaitans . Page# 162	In the meanings of devil.
She was reading Namaz five times a day.page#90	Religious duty of Muslims, worship of God.
I like Roohi Bibi . Page #162	
Most things were bought from Juma bazaars . Page #48	A sort of flea market for cheap new and used items.
Moulvi sahib, he said quietly. Page# 43	The head of a mosque.
Now Munshi what's wrong with you? Page#95	A record keeper

Conclusion

The given examples in the table from the novel “ Three Blind Men” show that how culture shaped a language and how certain words become the part of that language. The understanding of a culture and its people can be enhanced by the knowledge of their language. A culture must have at least one language, which it uses as a medium of communication to convey its ideas, beliefs, customs and traditions. Namaaz, molvi, Allah , soym, nikah and many other words which were selected from this novel are representing Pakistani people, their beliefs, their traditions and above all their culture. This study will help the other researchers to explore other such items which truly give different identity to that used language.

References

- Butt, S. (2010). *Three blind men*. Islamabad, Pakistan: Mehtab Publications.
- Kachru, B. B. (1992). teaching world Englishes. *The other tongue: English across cultures*, 2, 355-366.
- Kirkpatrick, A. (2007). *World Englishes Paperback with Audio CD: Implications for International Communication and English Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Rahman, T. (1990). Pakistani english. *Islamabad: National Institute of Pakistan Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University*.
- Haque, A. R. (1982). The position and status of English in Pakistan. *World Englishes*, 2(1), 6-9.
- Kachru, B. B. (1985). The bilinguals' creativity. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 6, 20-33.

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page: <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

Academic conference: <http://www.iiste.org/conference/upcoming-conferences-call-for-paper/>

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

