



English Loan Words in Urdu: A Cross-Linguistic Analysis

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Abstract

This paper considers English's influence on the Urdu language that ultimately became a reason for a shift in Urdu vocabulary. This shift occurred consciously and unconsciously; however, it substantiated the fact that English as a language remained in constant contact with Urdu and impacted Urdu in varied ways under diverse circumstances-both before and after partition. The paper further discusses the attitude of people living in the Subcontinent towards English and the circumstances that gave English its current status in Pakistan. The study also examines the factors that contributed to the inclusion of English lexis as loan words in Urdu and how the phonetic compromises Urdu as a language made on the borrowed words.

Keywords: Language, English, Urdu, loan words, borrowing, influence, contact

Introduction

Contrary to some globally spoken languages, English has been a potential borrower, adapting many words from the old languages. It is said that the present English consists of words and expressions from almost over 120 languages, which were spoken before English (David Crystal, 2010). However, English, as we see it today, is a gracious donor language. It has become the fundamental source of giving its words as loans to the languages spoken worldwide, and Urdu is no exception. It contains several words, phrases, and expressions from the English language. This borrowing has a significant contribution to the present status of Urdu as a language. And this loaning and borrowing of words and combination of words is called the simplest of influences a language can exert on another language.

The main factor causing borrowing between languages is cultural exchange, which may be called cultural borrowing. Whenever the culture is exchanged between two nations, there are chances that the lexical resources will also be borrowed (Edward Sapir, 1921). The linguistic term named 'borrowing' technically refers to adapting of individual words or vocabulary chunks from other dialects. Linguistic borrowing is a natural linguistic feature of a language. Many researches tried to study this phenomenon of linguistic integration of loan words into the language which receives them and adapts to its own phonetic habits (e.g., Volland 1986, Meisenburg 1993, Hall & Hamann 2003, Heinemann 2003, Peperkamp & Dupoux 2003, LaCharité & Paradis 2005).

Out of the over 7000 languages spoken in the world, several come in contact with one another due to social and cultural interaction. This interaction gives rise to the transfer of linguistic features among languages (Kachru, 1989). He further explains that there are primarily two hypotheses that account for the motivation of borrowing. The first is the deficit hypotheses. The first hypotheses presuppose that the language that borrows words or the expressions from the other languages lacks something. The language borrows words, phrases, and presentations to fill these gaps and fits them in to get enriched.

The second hypothesis is based on the supposition that the language's culture from

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which lexical items are being borrowed is comparatively more affluent than the other. And this becomes the prime motivation for borrowing (Kachru, 1994).

As for Pakistan, an array of languages ranging from international to indigenous languages are spoken by the people. For different people belonging to other localities, mother tongues are different, making the country a multilingual country (Rahman, 2006).

Despite being a multilingual community, the sole authority and power is confined to the two major languages-Urdu and English. Out of which, English being a lingua franca and colonizers' language is considered a symbol of authority and power. A sort of sophistication and mannerism appears to be associated with English and those who communicate in English.

Urdu, on the other hand, is considered to be of secondary importance. It is regarded as a prestigious language by those who talk in local dialects. In sum, both English and Urdu have devoured the indigenous languages, and they are lying neglected and forgotten by the political squares, too, and are not linguistically growing. Consequently, they are limited to the small community in which they are spoken and understood.

As for the academic circles, there is a divide between English and Urdu as a medium of instruction.

Ironically, Pakistan's constitution restricts English usage in offices and institutions, but the regulation itself is passed in English. Since English has become the language of the privileged few in Pakistan, English borrowings are always welcomed warmly and embedded so well into Urdu as if they were already a part of it.

English, which is being used as a second or foreign language in Pakistan, was predominantly derived from the colonizers, and it was retained after independence (Schneider, 2007).

Despite the prevailing hatred among the Muslims for the Western policies, English as a language is perceived as a prestigious language which has a global scope and is earning popularity with every passing day. This means the recent damage to Western countries' reputation due to their stern policies could bring no harm to the popularity of their language being used worldwide.

Brief History of Urdu

Urdu, as the language of the Subcontinent dates back to just a few hundred years. If to tell historically, it is rooted in Indo-European languages. The revelation that the word Urdu was used as a substitute for Lashkar (Army) appears to be quite acceptable. Turkish people still use the name Urdu for Lashkar. Right after its birth, Urdu started undergoing substantial changes in its corpus. It started being influenced by the IndoPak languages, and the first language which impacted Urdu was Turkish. However, the influence wasn't that deep and intense. The other languages Urdu was surrounded with at that time also contributed towards its development. To name a few, there were Hindi language, Arabic dialect, Persian, Sanskrit language, and Punjabi. All these were the most developed languages of their time. Out of these, Persian was considered to be the most influential language for Urdu.

The first recorded writing in Urdu in place of Hindi were by Khusroo. He referred to the preamble of his Diwan written in Urdu language as Hindi. Another writing to quote here is of the quotations by Baba Ganj Shakkari. It was composed by a student of Hazrat Nizam-ud-Din Aoliya named Syed Mubarak.

In Subcontinent, Hindi was always referred to as a regional language in the thirteenth century. However, Dakkani, Siraiki, Gujrati, and Punjabi were always looked toward as local titles used for the sake of distinction between locals. In that linguistic environment, Urdu was born, which was a hotch-potch of all those dialects. It was shaped in Delhi and its outskirts. All



the other provinces had their languages. However, the language spoken in Uter Perdesh was called Hindi, present-day Urdu.

Until the Jahangir rule, Urdu was not used as the dialect being spoken in the U.P. The language which was coming into vogue as a result of borrowing from all the local languages was named Rekhta. Before reaching Delhi, Rekhta was quite popular in Deccan and was a fine mix of Hindi, Persian and Arabic languages. By the time it reached Delhi, it had become the language of classical poets like Mir, who wrote his poetry in it. It remained in use in literary circles till Mirza Asadullah Ghalib's period.

In the 17th century, the word Urdu started being used by a few people in limited circles for the language previously known as Rekhta. By the end of the eighteenth century, it was widely known as the language of literary poets and novelists. It was recorded to have originated in the academic circles of Delhi.

After partitioning, Urdu was adopted as the official language of Pakistan. It is still understood and used in some of the Indian provinces. Since it is originated in this region, it is understood by most of the people in South Asian region.

Impact of the Language of Rulers on Urdu in Subcontinent

The British seize the Indian throne; they also founded their colonies almost everywhere in the world. Politically and professionally, they were powerful, and they did not have a competitor. It was during Europe's golden age that great progress was achieved in the science and technology sector. This was the era during which English gained prominence.

It soon acquired the reputation of a completely prepared language to meet the demands of the transforming world quickly. This is the reason why the universal language has achieved its glory. Nonetheless, besides being the kings' language, for some reason, it did not affect Urdu before the partition of India. In the first instance, Urdu was not the Indian sub-continent's national language. It was rather a language used in a specific locality by a limited number of people belonging to a particular religion, Islam. True that Muslims were not a majority there.

Thus, being the dialect of a limited strata the Subcontinent, it never came to confront with English. Moreover, they were the Muslims who were reigning over the Subcontinent prior to the arrival of the British, and it was they from whom the English took away the power, which resulted in the feelings of hatred for the English and English. It made the Muslims stop gaining education in the institutions where the medium of instruction was English. Thirdly, the revengeful colonizers intentionally kept the Muslim majority areas ignorant to be left behind and become the basest strata of the community. Lastly, Muslims themselves wanted to protect their language from being 'corrupted'.

English as an International Language

At the beginning of the 20th century, English was given the status of an international language. A significant number of nations accepted it as an official or second language. Within a short span, it reached the places where it was not introduced before. Given its cosmopolitan lexis, inflectional ease, and natural gender, English gained immense popularity as a lingua franca by the end of the 20th century. Today, almost over fifty percent of the articles, be they technical or scientific, are written and published in English. It is being largely spoken and written around the globe. It may be termed as a truly global language because of the widespread fame it enjoys.

As for the educational sector, it is being taught in schools worldwide as a second or foreign language. There is no school in the world today where English is not being trained as a compulsory



subject. Over 300 million people on Earth use it as their mother tongue.

Over a million use it as an alternative tongue. A vast majority of the Western countries communicate in English as it is their native language. Three hundred million people are estimated to use English as a second language, with a further population of over hundred million who use it proficiently as a foreign language. Any English level, either as a first language, as a second language, or as a foreign language, is open to about 1000 million or one billion people worldwide (2002 by M.S Thirumalai).

It is the language of digital technologies, machines, applications, and information technology (Crystal, 2003). So, in this era of high-tech connectivity and the network, we are left with no other substitute. Languages evolve spontaneously, and it's not a massive issue to borrow certain expressions from other languages since they are also needed to explain items more directly. The need of the hour is to learn how to use English correctly.

Diversity of Opinions about Borrowing in Pakistan

There is a diversity of assumptions among Pakistani people about borrowing English words into the Urdu language.

A section of society believes that it is only due to globalization, and evolution in language is a part of this process and is indispensable. Their attitude towards borrowing is carefree. On the other hand, a few meticulously note each modification in Urdu due to borrowing from English and perceive it as a cultural, linguistic, and societal attack over their mother tongue. According to them, language change is blurring the nation's linguistic identity, which will ultimately blur the cultural and identical boundaries and corrupt their national language.

They think that the young generation is not exposed to the pure Urdu language-hey are instead growing up with a bilingual dialect-a mixture of Urdu and English. The youngsters are so used to mix and switch codes from Urdu to English and this linguistic habit is quite uncomfortable for the elderly.

Stages of Urdu English Encounter

The contact of English and Urdu may be traced in the following three stages:

1. First off, both the languages came in contact with each other when the British tourists started coming to the Subcontinent for trade purposes. That linguistic contact was quite limited, and the words borrowed from English were primarily the names of things purchased and sold by the traders of the nations involved in trading.
2. The next stage started with the beginning of seventeenth century when the East India Company earned an overwhelming control over the politics of the country. The words which were taken as loan in Urdu language at that time through the process of borrowing were mainly the terms related to politics.
3. The final stage started when the English tried to overthrow the throne of the French, the Portuguese, the Dutch from the region and started English as a medium of instruction in educational institutions in the Subcontinent. This proved to be a crucial stage of borrowing, and English hugely influenced the Urdu language.

Right after 1857, the borrowing sped up, and English words, phrases, and expressions were included in the Urdu language at a substantial rate. The British occupation of India after the War of Independence created a rebellious environment in the Subcontinent. As a result, the English rulers completely replaced Persian with English. English was imposed in all the spheres, including academia. Urdu was rendered a mean status as it was considered the language of an ordinary man.



The Muslims reacted against this new regulation as they felt their identity would be lost that way.

It was the time when Hindus started Urdu Hindi Controversy. At this, the Muslims realized that they needed a country of their own to be free to communicate in their language and spend life according to their faith. The age started from the late eighteenth century and is continuing until now. It was the time of massive transference of English words and phrases to Urdu. The same process is continuing even today. Given its global importance, English has become a second language in many countries, not a foreign language. It has become an integral part of the functioning of the nations (D'Souza, 2001).

Different Borrowing Processes

Borrowing can take place in the following three ways:

1. The first way is to directly borrow a word from a foreign language with a slight or no variation in the actual word.
2. The second way is to borrow a word as a translator of such a word that already exists in the initial corpus of the native language.
3. The third way is to blend the indigenous and foreign languages.

This paper is primarily concerned with the first way of borrowing words from the other language. Most of the time, the process of borrowing follows from a dominating to recessive language. When a dialect takes loan of the words from a different language, it makes an attempt to adapt them using those sounds from the native language, close to the borrowed words' sound.

Urdu language is rich in its basic sounds. Therefore, most of the words it borrowed from English are being used in the language in its original form. For instance, state, lens, cell, robot, sofa, doctor, copy etc. However, this adoption of sounds from the native language doesn't mean that English's original words did not undergo any change.

There are always slight to substantial phonetic modifications made to the original words from a foreign language. The same goes true for Urdu. This happens because each language has a unique set of certain peculiarities in the accent that doesn't fit the native phonetic habits. When applied to a borrowed word, these peculiarities try their best to violate as little as possible. In this way, we have developed a sense of phonetic compromises (Edward Sapir, 1921). The following table (Table 1) elucidates a few examples of phonetic settlements. The difference in transcription manifests the change the borrowed words went through:

Table 1. Words Exhibiting Phonetic Change after Borrowings

Sr.#	English words	English Transcription	Urdu Transcription	Phonemic Change
1	Bottle	/'bɒtl/	/'bɒtəl/	/ə/ is added
2	Rocket	/'rɒkɪt/	/'rɒkət/	/ɪ/ is replaced by /ə/
3	Passport	/pɑ:spɔ:t/	/pɑ:spɔ:rt/	/r/ is clearly pronounced
4	Café	/'kæfeɪ/	/'kæfeɪ/	/k/ is unaspirated
5	Cast	/kɑ:st/	/kɑ:st/	no change except unaspirated /k/
6	Agent	/'eɪdʒənt/	/'eɪ'dʒənt/	the second syllable is stressed
7	Bathroom	/'bɑ:θru:m/	/'bɑ:θru:m/	/θ/ is pronounced harder
8	Column	/'kɒləm/	/'kɒlɒm/	/ə/ is replaced by /ʌ/
9	Bulb	/'bʌbl/	/'bʌbʌl/	an extra /ʌ/ is pronounced
10	Parade	/pə'reɪd/	/p'reɪd/	/ə/ is omitted
11	Camera	/'kæmrə/	/'kæmrə/	/k/ is unaspirated



12	Cigarette	/ˌsɪgə'ret/	/ˌsɪgə'rɪt/	/e/ is substituted with /ɪ/
13	Agent	/'eɪdʒənt/	/'eɪ'dʒənt/	second syllable is stressed
14	Easter	/'i:stə(r)/	/'i:stər/	/r/ is clearly pronounced
15	Wrong	rɒŋ	/rɒŋ/	/ŋ/ is prominent at the end
16	General	/'dʒenrəl/	/'dʒernəl/	/r/ is pronounced before /n/
17	Film	/fɪlm/	/fɪləm/	/ə/ is added
18	Minute	/mɪnɪt/	/mɪnt/	/ɪ/ is omitted and /t/ is unaspirated

Urdu's phonetic habits' primary difference in the words borrowed from English is the manners to pronounce sounds. The aspirated sounds become unaspirated when they are adopted as Urdu words. As a result, /r/ is pronounced clearly. Moreover, monophthongs take the place of diphthongs, /ə/ is replaced by /ɪ/, and /ɪ/ is substituted by /ə/. Finally, sometimes the stress is shifted to the other syllable, which brings a difference in pronunciation.

Moreover, countless words that are now thought to be a part of Urdu language are transliterated from English. The truth is that despite the existence of alternatives in Urdu, the speakers are not aware of these substitutes. It is depicted in the following table (Table 2)

Table 2. Transliterated Words

Motor	hanger	cycle	kitchen	camera	phone	lamp	class
fridge	air freshener	hanger	syllabus	line	mic	engine	editor
pencil	conditioner	diaper	glass	school	laptop	plate	media
pen	button	switch	calendar		image	radio	
	charger	miss	station	sofas	scheme		

The study attempts to delineate that the words borrowed from English are mostly nouns and are now being comfortably used in Urdu. A few nouns describing relationships are also borrowed from English. For instance, my uncle, aunt, which has become auntie in Urdu. These words are being used by the young Pakistani generation very commonly in their language. However, their language is observed to be more prosperous, as there are more specific words to call relationships. An example to quote is there is only a single word in English 'grandfather' for paternal and maternal grandfather. However, Urdu puts forth two separate words, 'nana' and 'dada,' to differentiate. The same goes right for the other words, such as 'chacha,' 'khala,' 'phupho.'

Factors Contributing to Borrowings

Policies In the states where English is accepted as a second language, the influence of language on the policies and the corpora becomes integral (D'Souza, 2001). Right after India's partition, the influence of Arabic and Persian on Urdu was no more to be seen. The then government acknowledged the supremacy of English over Urdu and retained it as the second language for the country.

Bilingualism was introduced in academic circles. At that time, Urdu started accepting the influence of English as being an entirely equipped, up-to-date, and rich language of the part rulers. The policies chalked for a newly born country were always English-friendly. Consequently, two parallel streams were started in education-Urdu and English. Both were taught and learned side by side. Since then, the divide between the mediums began, and it still exists in the educational sector and other fields.

With the passing years, the frequency of borrowing from English immensely increased, and Urdu, as it exists today, appears to have a loose footing now in Pakistan. Numerous English



individual lexis, phrases, and expressions have entered in Urdu from English, and some of them are so unknowingly being used as if they were already a part of the Urdu language. English has now seeped into Urdu's roots, and a few words borrowed from English do not appear to have any alternative in Urdu.

Media Another major contributing factor in borrowing is media. This is because print and electronic media facilitates the seeping of English terms and phrases into Urdu. Urdu at present not only have borrowed English nouns but also describing words, adverbs, and verbs. The people are becoming bilinguals as a result of having their access to electronic media in particular.

Today, the data stored in computer systems are mainly in English. Moreover, English has become the only language to describe sports, business, technology, and other fields. This has blurred the boundaries between two languages. Urdu, due to this massive borrowing, has become a version of English.

Social Consciousness According to Albert C. Bough (2010), ".....he is likely to make an effort to adopt the standards of grammar and pronunciation of the people with whom he has become identified....."

English is an international language, and one cannot make progress without learning English has become a primary influencing factor for borrowing. The parents know that survival without learning English is not possible in today's competitive world. Therefore, they expose their children to an environment where English is used as the only mean of communication. This helps them grow with English as their L1. Such children are found speaking Urdu in an English accent.

In sum, English has completely overpowered Urdu now in Pakistan. One can see a complete replacement of Urdu with English in a few circles in Pakistan soon. This social consciousness of the importance of English has hugely caused borrowing from English.

Conclusion

English very much inspired Urdu at the end of the twentieth century. That is why counting English words in Urdu has become practically impossible. The borrowing process is already going on. Currently, because they have close interaction with it, the wealthy class has a craze for English. They travel overseas for higher education and also to enjoy their vacations. When living overseas, they master the English language. They use it entirely or by combining it in Urdu when they return. It, too, has some positives and negatives. Through borrowing a store of words, Urdu enriched its vocabulary. Secondly, Urdu language was quite complicated earlier, but when Urdu started including loan words from English, it underwent a simplification process. This simplification made Urdu's language to cope with the new challenges required to maintain the speakers' attention. English is a language where words such as French, Latin, Greek, Arabic, etc. are borrowed from many other languages.

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