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## **Analyzing the Errors of Basilect Pakistani English: A Phonological Study**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the phonological features of the basilect Pakistani English (PakE), and in particular the determination of systematic deviation in the segmental and syllable level patterns. Through the Error Analysis framework developed by Corder (1974), the spoken data with words frequently used in the English language were put through analysis in order to categorize mistakes as substitution, addition and omission. The results show that interlingual transfer of Punjabi including replacement of interdental fricatives (/θ, ð/ by dental stops (/t k, d k/)), manifestation of the /w/ in /v w/ and vowel shift (lengthening and shortening) are consistent. Also, cluster simplification, epenthesis, and prothesis were quite common, with the effects of L1 phonotactic constraints. The deviations were also related to some orthographic overgeneralization, which pointed to the intralingual learning impacts. Works are examples of words with such systematic patterns, e.g. varaks and though touth. Comprehensively, the paper illustrates that basilect PakE is a sociolect that is rule governed and not a series of mistakes and has important implications in the linguistics and English language teaching.

**Key words:** Basilect Variety, Pakistani English, Error Analysis, Phonological Study

### **Introduction**

Pakistani English (PakE) has its own complex and unique variety because of its historical influence. Social and linguistic parameters have also influence on language. Pakistani English has its own acrolect, mesolect and basilect variety. Amongst them, the basilect variety is the most localized and L1-influenced form of English that is spoken in Pakistan. It is usually spoken by speakers with little exposure to standardised models and influenced by regional phonological models such as Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Saraiki and Balochi. This variety is of considerable sociolinguistic and phonological interest because it gives contribution to the linguistic identity of millions of Pakistani speakers.

Despite an upsurge of interest in the study of the Pakistani English language in the last two decades, the research collected to date has been concentrated mainly on acrolect or educated varieties, with the basilect remaining relatively unexplored. The basilect variety has its own systematic phonological patterns that are usually misunderstood, because this language has influence of regional languages. Some of these features are vowel mergers,



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consonant substitutions, simplifications of clusters, and L1-induced prosodic patterns. A systematic exploration of phonological patterns of PakE is very important to understand the social and cultural heritage of Pakistan because Pakistan is a multilingual country.

This study is undertaken with the goal of investigating the phonological features of the basilect variety of Punjabi background speakers of English. It focuses the influence of L1 on speaking patterns and compares them with Received Pronunciation (RP). The impetus for such a research is not only to identify surface level deviations but also to understand the nature of these patterns in terms of linguistic identity and language contact and the sociolinguistic positioning of English in Pakistan. By recording the basilect variety on the phonology level, this research adds to the on-going discussion of World Englishes, variations in phonology, and postcolonial Englishes.

English in Pakistan has been undergoing a continuous process of transformation ever since it was introduced during the British rule to develop into a localized and nativized linguistic entity. After independence in 1947 English preserved its institutional value in areas like higher education, law, bureaucracy and media (Rahman, 1990) Since Pakistan is a heavily multilingual context and over 70 languages are spoken in the country (Punjabi being the most widely spoken), the English language is mostly learned as a second or third language. This multilingual ecology has made the English people create a unique variety of English known as the Pakistani English (PakE), which has the features which have been acquired due to contact with local languages (Mahboob, 2022).

Baumgardner (1993) emphasizes that Pakistani English contains borrowed words that are taken from Pakistani local languages e.g Punjabi. Within Pakistan, English proficiency levels are quite variable because of inequities of educational resources, socio-economic backgrounds and language exposure. These conditions have produced different sociolinguistic continuums of English usage which are commonly referred to as acrolect, mesolect, and basilect. The basilect variety, which usually develops in people who have restricted access to standardized English instruction, is greatly affected by the speaker's first language (L1). This influence can be seen especially in the forms of phonology, pronunciation patterns and suprasegmental features.

Punjabi, as the L1 of one major section of the population in Pakistan, has a great influence on the phonological patterns of low-proficiency speakers of English. As per research, the phonemic inventory and prosodic structure of Punjabi has a high transfer effect upon the English phonology in particular on those speakers who have not had much exposure to formal English environments. This provides an ideal sociolinguistic space to conduct a study of the basilect variety of Pakistani English from a phonological point of view.

### **Pakistani English as an Emerging Variety**

Pakistani English has grown into an identifiable and valid variety of World Englishes. Scholars such as Schneider (2003) and Kachru (1985) draw attention to the fact that Outer Circle Englishes develop through the processes of nativization, acculturation, and functional expansion. In this reference, Pakistani English has British norms and emerge it with local linguistic varieties. (Mahboob, 2022).

However, PakE is not only a single variety because it has different speakers with different socio-economic status, living area gap and exposure. Acrolect speakers usually highly educated, mesolect speakers often use a localized but intelligible variety. Basilect speakers has strong influence of L1 and they have distinctive phonological patterns. These basilect features comprise vowel mergers, consonant substitutions, loss of aspiration, rhythm differences and localized intonation patterns. Such variation supports



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Schneider's view that postcolonial Englishes develop internal norms based on local ecologies rather than external standards.

### **Understanding the Basilect Variety**

The concept of basilect is derived from creole continuum theory, which refers to the greatest amount of divergence from the socially prestigious standard. In Pakistan, basilect English is developed by speakers who learned English mainly through low quality education, rote memorization and little oral practice. These speakers usually exploit their L1 phonology, which means that they have systematic deviations rather than random errors (Qureshi & Ahmad, 2023). Basilect language features can be reduced vowel inventories, replacement of interdental fricatives of English with dental stops, non-aspirated plosives, and syllable-timed speech - all of which can be associated with the phonological patterns of regional languages such as Punjabi (Hussain, 2020).

Such features make basilect PakE a useful site for linguistic research, especially for studying the development of phonological systems in the context of second language acquisition in multilingual and low exposure situations.

### **Purpose of the study**

Purpose of the study is to investigate the phonological features of basilect variety of PakE. The study focuses on examining the phonological variations of basilect PakE from Received Pronunciation (RP).

### **Research Questions**

How does Punjabi language influence basilect variety of Pakistani English?

What are the prosodic phonological patterns of basilect speakers?

What are the major segmental phonological characters in the basilect variety of Pakistani English?

### **Research Objectives**

To explore the influence of Punjabi language on basilect variety of PakE

To investigate the prosodic phonological patterns of basilect speakers

To analyze the major segmental phonological characters in the basilect variety of PakE

### **Significance of study**

The present study is rather significant in a number of academic, pedagogical, and sociolinguistic ways. To start with, it is a contribution to the expanding literature on Pakistani English (PakE), as it provides one of the scanty examinations of its basilect dialect, which is still under-documented. Although standard or acrolectal forms have been studied in the past, phonological patterns of speakers with minimal exposure to formal English teaching have hardly been examined before. This study addresses a very important gap in the literature of World Englishes and localized phonological variation by systematically describing both segmental and suprasegmental features.

Secondly, the results of this study contribute to the knowledge of how L1 phonological systems (Punjabi, Sindhi, Pashto, Urdu, etc.) influence the pattern of English sounds in the context of multilingualism. These findings are useful to theories of interlanguage phonology, variationist linguistics and second language acquisition, since they can show how the linguistic ecology of a particular area can affect the development of English within postcolonial contexts.



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### Literature Review

It is a universal truth, the two languages coming in contact result in their getting influenced. Each country and society possesses its culture that is unique in nature. The synthesis of the various regional languages is Pakistani English which has various syntax among other characteristics (Rehman, 2004). As a result of the power of these languages Pakistani English is regarded to be a special version of English that is referred to as a non-native one unlike Standard British English. Previous researchers find the differences between Pakistani and British English through their observations. Rahman (2004), Baumgardner (1993) and Mahboob (2004) have provided many details on the lexical, grammatical and phonological characteristics of PakE. However, most of the existing research focuses on the acrolectal or mesolectal speakers. Basilectal varieties have yet to be fully studied, even though they are prevalent among rural and working-class people.

Kachru (1985) gave a practical model of World Englishes that had three concentric circles of English usage: Inner, outer and growing. Each circle exemplifies other forms of functions, patterns of acquisition and diffusion of English in other cultural contexts.

According to Bruthiaux (2010), the model of Kachru has brought a lot of short-hand assistance of the typology of global English contexts. Types of the inner circle have been coded and specified as the assortment of outer and outward circles is experiencing the standardization process. The outer circle deals with the countries where English has either historical or official significance (p.172).

Palwasha & Malik (2025) explores the impact of regional languages on English speaking quality, they focus on pronunciation, stress patterns and pronunciation style. Bilal et al (2011), analyze the distinction between long and short vowels by using minimal pairs and no merger was found.

Zain et al (2025) examines the acoustic analysis of Sindhi speakers on English. They highlight the physiological and sociological features in language production. They find out the potential to improve national curriculum and to introduce English instructions.

Jadoon & Mustansir (2022) explores PakE is developed from contact between Pakistani and English languages, but it is best known for its distinct phonetic and phonological features, study investigates that PakE features are different from standard English features.

The Pakistani English has been indigenized and nativized in consideration of the 1500-year history of language usage (Mahboob, 2004). This is the process nativization ground of deviation of the Pakistani English at various levels. Kachru (1986) said about the use of language It is used by people who apply it in different purposes in many contexts. Functions of English language vary in various circumstances as the systems, administrative questions and traditions, educational policies, social and cultural contexts of language use are not similar to one context to the other (Rehman, 2004). Pakistani English as with others of the English is also different on various levels with the Standard British English. There is a passion to achieve the majority of the best in English that is based with the navy, the air force and the state elites. (Rehman, 2004).

Phonological studies of PakE have identified a number of segmental patterns. According to Rahman (2004), some Pakistani speakers of English tend to merge /v/ and /w/, dentalize /t/ and /d/, and also replace interdental fricatives /th/ and /d/ with dental or alveolar stops. Shackleton (1993) point out that Punjabi speakers commonly substitute L1 vowels: the lowering of /ae/ to /e/ or the monophthongisation of diphthongs. Such replacements are transference of the Punjabi phonological limitations to English.

Studies, specifically at basilect varieties in South Asia reveal similar trends. Fuchs, R. (2023) found strong influence from substrate in the Indian English basilects, especially



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among the rural speakers. These are cluster simplification (school --> ischool), consonant fortition, and vowel reduction avoidance. No specific study has been done of Punjabi background basilectal speakers using both perceptual and acoustic perspectives. This research therefore covers an important gap by supplying empirical data, phonological description and socio-phonetic interpretation for basilect Pakistani English. Ahmar Mehboob (2004) explores the pronunciation style of PakE from the native speakers of Urdu.

Pennycook (2010) explores that English has gone through variations and transformation because it has contact with its regional languages. Talaat (2002, p.14) says that, use of English and Urdu code mixing is a norm now, it is a style of communication to switch between Urdu and English languages (Khalique, 2007). So, like many other postcolonial countries, English in Pakistan come in contact with its regional languages and captures its pronunciation and lexicon (Rehman, 1990). A lot of previous work has been done on PakE but present study will focus on basilect variety of PakE.

### **Phonology of PakE**

Pakistani English has different features of phonology because of its social and political cultural background. Different regional languages in Pakistan also has impact on Pakistani English, for instance, native speakers of Punjabi speak as [ishtart] the word start, measure as [mej^r]. These examples depict that PakE has various variations of spoken language due to the impact of its regional language. 40% of population speak Punjabi as their native language.

Research on Pakistani English phonology shows an array of segmental and suprasegmental features which are divergent from British RP. Segmental differences include vowel mergers (i.e. /i/ - /i:/, monophthongization of diphthongs, substitution of /v/ with /w/ and use of dental plosives for interdental fricatives). Suprasegmental features such as tendency towards syllable timed speech, flatter intonation and non-native stress placement patterns. Studies have reported that Punjabi-influenced English has predictable phonological patterns that are related to Punjabi. (Hussain, 2020). These systematic features show the need for a specific study on basilect Pakistani English in Punjabi L1 speakers.

### **Methodology**

The approach of present study is qualitative, Jacobs et al. (2010) says that qualitative research is done without assumptions. To explore the features of basilect PakE, data was collected from people who have a low socio-economic background and Punjabi as their native language. Their ages were between 20-30 years. To explore the features of basilect variety of PakE, data from 10 people were collected who have low socio-economic background, age between 20-30 years and education was under metric. They speak Punjabi as their first language. The present study followed the Coder's theory of error analysis. Data was collected in the form of recordings. Participants were directed to read a paragraph, few sentences and different minimal pairs. This study focuses on the pronunciation of difference in sounds of /v/, /w/, /t/, /d//r/, and shortening of long vowels. The reading passage that is constructed for the study is focused on to include all key phonemes, targets Punjabi interference features and contains simple vocabulary for low proficiency speakers. Similarly sentence list for reading consists of specific phonological features that are common in Punjabi speakers.



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### Theoretical Framework

#### Error Analysis Theory developed by Corder (1974)

The current paper uses the Error Analysis Theory by Corder as the only theoretical approach to analyzing the phonological deviations of spoken basilect of Pakistani English. One of the most basic concepts in the study of second language acquisition is Error Analysis (EA) according to S. P. Corder and is a systematic, conceptual framework of the study of error analysis, description, explanation, and assessment of errors made by learners. The theory provided by Corder provides a sufficient and proper context on which to examine non-standard English phonological patterns, in this case, the basilect Pakistani English, because of the limited exposure to formal teaching of English and the overwhelming effect of the native language (L1) of the speakers of Pakistani (Punjabi).

Error Analysis (1967) was proposed as an answer to the shortcomings of Contrastive Analysis, when Corder claimed that errors cannot be considered as the indicators of the failure to learn the language, but are the manifestations of the linguistic system (interlanguage) that learners evolve. As Corder says, errors are structured, significant and valuable in learning the inner mechanics of language acquisition. Mistakes also indicate how a learner schemes linguistic knowledge and the hypothesis he/she makes concerning the target language.

According to the model provided by Corder, an error is defined as a deviation that occurs due to incomplete linguistic competence and mistakes are failures in performance. This difference is paramount in the current research as basilect phonological forms are usually systematic and recurrent hence can be said to be competence-based errors as opposed to incidental performance errors.

#### Applicability of the Theory of Spoken Phonology to Spoken Phonological Analysis by Corder

The basilect form of the Pakistani English language has consistent segmental and suprasegmental deviation such as consonantal substitution, failure of interdental fricatives, neutralization of vowels and cluster reduction, timed syllable and weak formlessness. The framework by Corder allows conducting an analytical study of such patterns with the concentration on the nature, frequency, and linguistic origin of deviations.

Since most basilect speakers do not have much formal exposure to English, their phonological systems are influenced by the process of naturalistic acquisition, L1 transfer as well as limited access to standardized models. The Error Analysis offered by Corder gives an opportunity to comprehend the way these influences condition the phonological production by the speakers which is regulated by the rules.

#### Data Analysis

There are a huge variation between basilect Pakistani English and Standard British English at pronunciation level.

#### Participant 1

Word	Basilect pronunciation	Standard pronunciation	IPA
Yesterday	/ˈdʒɛstərdeɪ/	/ˈjɛstərdeɪ/	
Went	/vɛnt/	/wɛnt/	
Brother	/ˈbræθər/	/ˈbrʌðər/	
Weather	/ˈvi:ðər/	/ˈweðər/	



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Warm	/vɑ:rm/	/wɔ:rm/ (rhotic)
White	/vaɪt/	/waɪt/
Closed	/kloʊzɪd/	/'kloʊzəd/
Reached	/ri:tʃæd/	/ri:tʃəd/
Worked	/'wɜ:rkɪd/	/wɜ:rkɪt/
School	/'ɪsku:l/	/sku:l/

As it is seen in the word ‘yesterday,’ there is substitution of consonants, /j/ is replacing with /dʒ/, and ‘went’ has substitute of /w/ as /v/ and double sound of /t/. ‘Brother’ has vowel substitution as ʌ replaces with æ and ð replace with θ. In ‘weather’ replacement of /v/ with /w/ and long vowel sound represents eee. In word ‘warm’ there is substitution of /v/ sound and open vowel sound. The word ‘closed’ stresses on /I /sound, ‘reached’ add one more consonant sound at the end, ‘worked’ also add /i/ sound before last consonants, ‘school’ add /i/ before s.

### Participant 2

Word	Basilect pronunciation	Standard pronunciation	IPA
From	/fræm/	/frʌm/	
Thought	/θɔ:/	/θɔ:t/	
Wind	/waɪnd/	/wɪnd/	
Cold	/'kɔʊləd/	/kəʊld/	
Water	/'vɑ:tər/	/'wɔ:tə/	
Carried	/kraɪd/	/'kæərɪd/	
Young	/jʌŋg/	/jʌŋ/	

In this table error can be found in substitution of æ instead of shaw sound. In word ‘thought’ there is elision of /t/ sound, ‘wind’ word add one more vowel, ‘cold’ also has addition of /ə/ sound, ‘water’ has rhetoric /r/ sound and substitution of /w/ with /v/, ‘carried’ has addition of /r/ sound before vowel and ‘young’ ends on /g/ sound.

### Participant 3

Word	Basilect pronunciation	Standard pronunciation	IPA
From	/fræm/	/frʌm/	
Brother	/'bræθər/	/'brʌðər/	
Went	/wɪnt/	/wɛnt/	
People	/'pi:u:pəl/	/'pi:pəl/	
School	/'ɪsku:l/	/sku:l/	
Cricket	/'krɪkɪt/	/'krɪkət/	
Shopping	/'ʃɒpɪ:ŋg/	/'ʃɒpɪŋ/	
Weather	/'veðər/	/'wɛðər/	

In this table error can be found in substitution of æ instead of shaw sound. ‘Brother’ has vowel substitution as ʌ replaces with æ and ð replace with θ. ‘Went’ has elision of /ɛ/, in ‘people’ there is long vowel added. ‘School’ has addition of /i/, ‘cricket’ has the sound of /i/ instead of /ə/, ‘shopping’ has addition of long vowel and /g/ sound at the end. ‘Weather’ has replacement of /w/ with /v/.



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### Participant 4

Word	Basilect pronunciation	Standard pronunciation	IPA
Went	/vɛntt/	/wɛnt/	
Stop	/'ɪshɪp/	/'stɒp/	
This	/θɪs/	/ðɪs/	
Clear	/klɛər/	/klɪər/	

In 'went' one consonant sound is added and /w/ replaces with /v/, in 'stop' addition of /i/ before /s/ and long vowel is added, 'this' has replacement of /ð/ sound and 'clear' replaces /i/ with /ɛ/.

### Participant 5

Word	Basilect pronunciation	Standard pronunciation	IPA
Threw	/θri:/	/θru:/	
Carried	/'kærd/	/'kærid/	
Cricket	/'kri:kɪt/	/'krɪkɪt/	

There is addition of /i/ in 'threw', ellision of /i/ in 'carried' and long vowel sound of /i:/ in 'cricket'.

### Participant 6

Word	Basilect pronunciation	Standard pronunciation	IPA
Village	/'vɪ:lædʒ/	/'vɪlɪdʒ/	
Stop	/'ɪstɒp/	/'stɒp/	
Shop	/ʃɑ:p/	/ʃɒp/	
Street	/'ɪshtri:t/	/'stri:t/	
Strong	/'ɪstrɒŋg/	/'strɒŋ/	

In 'village' there is long vowel sound twice, 'shop' again has long vowel sound, 'street' has vowel in the beginning and /h/ with /s/, similarly 'strong' starts with vowel sound and ends on /g/ sound.

### Participant 7

Word	Basilect pronunciation	Standard pronunciation	IPA
Wind	/vaɪnd/	/wɪnd/	
Reached	/'ri:tʃærd/	/ri:tʃt/	
With	/wɪθt/	/wɪθ/	
Closed	/'klouzəd/	/'klouzɪd/	

'Wind' has diphthongs, 'reached' has addition of /r/ and shortening of vowel sound, 'with' produces /t/ sound with stresses syllable.



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**Participant 8**

Word	Basilect pronunciation	Standard pronunciation	IPA
Reached	/ri:tʃid/	/ri:tʃt/	
From	/faræm/	/frʌm/	
Works	/vɑ:raks/	/wɜ:ks/	
Friend	/frɛnt/	/frɛnd/	
Those	/dous/	/ðəʊz/	
Before	/br:'for/	/bɪ'fɔ:/	

‘Works’ has replacement of /w/ with long vowel and stressed sound of /r/, ‘friend’ ends at /t/, ‘those’ has /d/ sound and ends at /s/, ‘before’ has long vowel with /r/ sound at the end.

**Participant 9**

Word	Basilect pronunciation	Standard pronunciation	IPA
Would	/vuld/	/wʊd/	
Standing	/'ishtændɪŋg/	/'stændɪŋ/	
Works	/vɜ:raks/	/wɜ:ks/	

‘Would’ has replacement of /w/ with /v/ and pronounce /l/, ‘standing’ has vowel sound in the beginning and /g/ at the end. ‘Works’ has substitute of /w/ with /v/ and addition of /a/ after /r/, so it is cluster simplification.

**Participant 10**

Word	Basilect pronunciation	Standard pronunciation	IPA
Though	/tu:θ/	/ðəʊ/	
Warm	/vræm/	/wɔ:m/	
Water	/'vɔ:tər/	/'wɔ:tə/	
Worked	/vɜ:rkiɪd/	/wɜ:rkɪd/	

‘Thought’ has /t/ sound in the beginning along with long vowel sound and /θ/ sound in the end. ‘Warm’ has diphthongs and prominent rhetoric sound, ‘water’ also has rhetoric sound in the end. ‘Worked’ has substitute of /w / sound and addition of /i/ before end consonant.

It is analyzed that basilectal speakers present organized phonological deviations which fit in the category of errors described by Corder (1974). The most common type of error is substitution, in which interdental fricatives /th, ð/ are replaced by dental stops /t / (e.g., though; this ). Lengthening of vowels is a regular process, which is manifested in the form of shop = shaap and village = willaeg as an influence of the Punjabi long short system of vowels. The addition mistakes are made in the /s/ + consonant clusters which results in the production of ishtreet and ishtop because of the phonotactic limitations of L1 against complex beginnings. Simplification of groups of consonants is indicated in epenthesis in codas (e.g., works → varaks). These tendencies show a high degree of interlingual transfer between English/Punjabi as well as represent typical basilect Pakistani English phonology.



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### Conclusion

This paper has examined the phonological peculiarities of basilect Pakistani English (PakE) based on a detailed analysis of the spoken words of the native Pakistani speakers. Based on the Error Analysis framework by Corder (1974) the study yielded systematic deviations on prosodic features. The analysis revealed the prevalent patterns, namely substitutions, lengthening of vowels, simplification of clusters and prothesis. The major examples of such deviations include works -> varaks and though -> tooth which show how these deviations are expressed in the vernacular language. Basilect Pakistani English adopts phonological patterns, which are systematic and with great influence by the structures of the native language and experience by the learner. These tendencies are objective and predictable. The identification and reporting of these features do not only serve the wider umbrella of the world englishes but also offer more practical uses in the areas of teaching and social linguistics

### Recommendation

The regional variation in Pakistan was not investigated to the full extent; the dialectal variation in basilect pronunciation could be analyzed in the future. Subsequent research might incorporate suprasegmental aspects like stress and intonation and make comparisons between them among basilect, mesolect and acrolect groups of Pakistani English.

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