

The Netspeak of Young Pakistani Netizens

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Abstract

The paper studies the main linguistic features of the Netspeak used by young Pakistani net users in online social network called 'Orkut'. So far, no research has been carried out to study the general linguistic features of Pakistani variety of asynchronous Netspeak. This paper is an attempt to bridge this gap. These linguistic features have been classified into different categories. The analysis of this language and its comparison with the one used by native speakers of English on this network demonstrates that an intriguingly new linguistic variety of Pakistani Netspeak is evolving which is characterized by sets of specific adaptations, in graphology, grammar, semantics, and discourse, to the properties of the technology and the needs of the users.

Introduction

More than three decades ago, Wallwork (1969: 167) observed 'The English with which most of us are familiar, the Standard English is now the language of only a small minority of the world's English speakers'. A brief glance at the works of Shakespeare shows how much, in a relatively short time, English has changed. It is believed that the process of 'Language change is normal and unstoppable, reflecting the normal and unstoppable processes of normal change' (Crystal: 2004: 529). This phenomenon is condemned by many as a result of 'sloppiness' and 'laziness' (Aitchison, 1991: 4). In 1982, Glass in an article appearing in *The Guardian* commented that, 'The standard of speech and pronunciation in England has declined so much... that one is almost ashamed to let foreigners hear it' (cited in Aitchison, 1991: 5). The sounds, syntax, and meanings of all languages are continually changing (Aitchison, 1983). Language variation however, is now seen by many as a universal and a normal phenomenon reflecting the diversity of different cultural and social groups (Crystal: 2004).

Crystal (2001) believes that in the comparative enquiry of language studies we now have four dimensions namely: spoken language vs. written language vs. sign language vs. computer-mediated language. The last category i.e. the Netspeak is a 'development of millennial significance. A new medium of linguistic communication does not arrive very often, in the history of the race'. This new medium of communication has come to stay and 'will doubtless grow in its sociolinguistic and stylistic complexity to be comparable to that already known in traditional speech and writing.' (ibid: 239)

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The term *Netspeak* refers to the language of the internet. Stating this term as 'succinct and functional', Crystal (2001: 17) observes that it 'is an alternative to 'Netlish', 'weblish', 'Internet language', 'cyberspeak', 'electronic discourse', 'electronic language', 'interactive written discourse', computer-mediated communication' (CMC), and other more cumbersome locutions'. He further states that 'speak' involves writing as well as talking and any 'speak' suffix includes the receptive elements, listening and reading. When we speak of Netspeak, we generally refer to the English language used on the internet as English remains the lingua franca of cyber space (Aycock & Buchignani, 1995). Asynchronic Netspeak refers to the language which is not real time. The term *Netizens* on the other hand, refers to the regular citizens of the internet who are also called 'digital citizens', the 'virtual community' and the 'Net generation' (Crystal, 2001: 3-6).

Internet is now emerging as a collection of distinct dialects rather than a homogenous linguistic medium (Crystal, 2001). This paper is an attempt to study the intriguingly new and still evolving linguistic variety of Pakistani Netspeak, characterized by sets of specific adaptations, in graphology, grammar, semantics, and discourse, to the properties of the technology and the needs of the users. The paper studies the main linguistic features which are part of the Pakistani variety of Netspeak in online social network called 'Orkut' which unlike chat rooms is not real time. This paper is an exploratory work and is in no way definitive. So far, no study has been carried out to study the general linguistic features of Pakistani variety of Netspeak. This paper is an attempt to bridge this gap.

Literature Review

Gone are the days when only 'standard languages' were considered to be worthy of being researched, 'At the beginning of the twenty-first century... We are at a transitional point between two eras... we seem to be approaching an era when non-standard usages and varieties, previously denigrated or ignored, are achieving a new presence and respectability within society' (Crystal, 2004: 523). Many linguists believe that the non-standard varieties are reflective of the diversified society and these 'enable groups of people to express their regional or cultural identity, nationally and internationally. These varieties need to be respected and studied, and the points of contrast with the standard language appreciated.' (ibid: 530)

'The Net is an immensely empowering, individualistic, creative medium, as can be seen from the numerous experimental ways in which people use it' (Crystal, 2001: 239). Electronic discourse has been described as 'A collection of abbreviations, acronyms, and phonetic replacements [which] make up a kind of Internet short-hand text that has been dubbed hax0r-speak by some' (Andrew Chong, cited in Talsma, 2004¹)

Crystal (2001: 169-170) finds the electronic discourse 'fascinating' for two reasons: firstly, it provides a domain in which written language is found in its most primitive form

1 <http://www.asu.edu/educ/eps/LPRU/newsarchive/Art4979.txt> retrieved on 1.7.2006

and in spontaneous, unedited, naked state. Secondly, the chatgroups² provide evidence of the remarkable linguistic versatility that exists within ordinary people—especially ordinary young people. On the basis of lexico-graphological distinctiveness, Crystal (ibid) calls the electronic discourse a genuine language variety. This new variety of English has characteristics which closely relate to the properties of its technological context, intentions, activities, and personalities of its users.

Le Page (1986) believes that people create their linguistic system due to their desire to resemble those of the group with which they wish to identify from time to time. Leech (1983: 104) suggests that a number of maxims such as Modesty Maxim, Generosity Maxim and Tact Maxim which are applied in accordance with the Politeness Principle built on Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1975), govern speech behaviour serving the ultimate goal of ‘establishing and maintaining comity’. A new speech community of internet users has evolved predominantly in the last decade which shares the unusual linguistic behaviour of electronic discourse. This community uses their innate ability to accommodate new linguistic situations to a great effect. The members have ‘developed a strong sense of speech community, in attracting people of like mind or interest ready to speak in the same way and ready to criticize or exclude newcomers who do not accept their group’s linguistic norms’ (Crystal, 2001: 170). On the Internet terms from computer technology are being used by people, especially among younger generation to give their talk a ‘cool cutting edge’, e.g., ‘He’s living in Hypertext (i.e. he’s got a lot to hide)’ and ‘Let’s go offline for a few minutes (i.e. let’s talk in private)’ (Crystal. 2001: 19). It has been argued that the repetitive, rumbling, discursive features of electronic conference writing may actually serve the purpose of creating community among its writers, even though that community is short-lived (Davis & Brewer, 1997). Walther (1996) calls this type of community ‘hyperpersonal’ rather than ‘interpersonal’ as the communication seems to transcend the individual exchange, being more focused on the group and/or its textual record.

Coulmas (2005) seconds Gumperz’ (1967: 668) observation that the ‘desire for social assimilation’ and ‘social norms [which] put premium on social distinctness’ are among the causal factors of language change. The desires and the willingness of individuals to adhere to or violate social norms make a difference ‘since it is by virtue of its members having desires and preferences that the speech community creates and perpetuates its language’ (Coulmas, 2005: 7). The Internet users continually search for vocabulary to describe their experiences and to capture the character of electronic world. Crystal (2001: 67) points out that the rate at which the members of this community has been ‘coining new terms and introducing playful variations into established ones has no parallel in contemporary language use.’

Research into writing on computer networks on the internet has studied the implications of technology on Western form of rhetorics (e.g. Bolter, 2001; Johnson-

2 Crystal uses the term *chatgroups* as a generic term for World-wide multi-participant electronic discourse, whether real time or not.

Eiola, 1997; Landow, 1997). Sproull & Kiesler (1991) in their study of e-mail in a corporate context argue that the freedom provided in the form of distances that separate the members of an internet discussion group allows the writers to use rhetorical strategies on the internet they may not feel comfortable using in other contexts. Such rhetorical strategies are used by the writers on internet which they would otherwise not feel comfortable using. Chan (1999) looks at various stylistic and pragmatic functions of code-switching in bilingual internet chatrooms with specific reference to the Chinese-English speakers. He found this device useful for a variety of interactive and communicative purposes like, repair, draw attention, mark topic shift, reiterate, include or exclude interlocutors within the chat room.

As stated earlier, English remains the lingua franca of cyber space (Aycock & Buchignani, 1995). For non-native speakers of English this can be problematic (Warschauer, 2000). Kachru (1997) argues that the English used in the cyberspace is deeply embedded in the culture of its user. Bloch (2004) notes that there has been little research on cyberspace literacy from non-Western perspectives. He points out that a crucial issue for understanding computer-mediated communication (CMC), particularly in English is how non-Westerners negotiate this space and affect its development. He further states that Internet literacy may emerge as a hybridization between the native language of the writer and English embedded in the technology (ibid).

Cyber English used by the Pakistani Netizens is one of the least studied areas. There is a dearth of research even on Pakistani English (Mahboob, 2003). The research that has been carried out on Pakistani English (see e.g. Baumgardner, 1990, 1993, 1995, 1998; Rahman, 1990; Talaat, 1993, 2002) mainly studies the features of Pakistani English in comparison with British and/or American Standard English. A few studies have been carried out about Pakistani net users with reference to the language used in Pakistani online chat rooms and the effect of netspeak on academic English. Imtiaz (2005a) focused upon the expression of culture or the absence of it in the speech of Pakistanis in online chat rooms. She argued that the Pakistani Netizens found this medium to be liberating them from conforming to the constraints traditionally placed on their expression. In another study Imtiaz (2005b) looked at the deviations in the chat conducted online of Pakistani women from that carried face to face. She focused both on social and cultural deviations in the light of Pakistani socio-cultural norms. In these studies Imtiaz found out that women used this medium to express those facets of their personalities and identities which would seem to be unthinkable in face to face encounters due to the repressive Pakistani society. Yasmin (2005) studied the effect of Internet jargons on academic written English language. From her data she concluded that internet jargons are changing the nature of instrumental approach of English language.

Communication on Orkut

The paper deals with the patterns of cyber linguistic features employed by young Pakistani Internet users aged between 18-24. The data verifying the features of communication has been taken from an online social network called Orkut. Through

this paper, we have also tried to find the general linguistic features of Pakistani variety of Netspeak.

Orkut is among such hot spots that provide a social networking online. It is an online platform run by Google that claims to be designed to help users meet new friends and maintain the existing relationships. Similar to Friendster, Zorpia and Hi5, Orkut goes a step further by permitting communities of users. In Orkut the users dip (Crystal, 2001) into the communities because of the active 'Posts' and 'Threads' in them. The network becomes rather more transparent by permitting the users visit to each others profiles and message boards that are termed as 'Scrapbook'. Due to the extrovert ness of this network, there has been seen a flash crowd since its launch in October 2004. The massive surge in traffic has offered a space of interaction to a number of jargonauts that has created a Jargon Gap among the Standard English Speakers and the Weblish or Internet English Speakers.

Methodology

Triangulation of methods was used to collect data for this study. The data was drawn by using the methods of Observation and Survey through questionnaire. The data was collected by visiting online profiles of Orkut users. A list of fifty profiles and 30 Internet users belonging to various parts of the country was acquired. These Internet users were mostly students of college or University. The selection of these 80 Internet users was made using the convenient random sampling technique. In this sample the researchers ensured the participation of people from different areas of Pakistan to get a general picture of language used by the young Pakistanis on internet. A brief questionnaire was also given to the research participants to study their attitudes towards the Netspeak and the reasons for using it. The observation was done online while the Questionnaire were either distributed face to face or sent to the users through email. The participants were informed about the aims, objectives and nature of study before the data was collected from them. Anonymity of the participants has been maintained.

Features of Pakistani Netspeak

The general linguistic features of Pakistani Netspeak are categorized below:

Borrowed Terms

Because of the interaction of people of various ethnicities in the cyber space the internet users also make use of a number of lexical items that are borrowed from other languages and cultures. Such ethnic marks are also present is the communication of the Pakistanis where at times they deviate from their own cultural and religious norms:

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1- adieuZ ~ | [A French term for saying 'Goodbye'] |
| 2- yo man! | [Term from African American English] |
| 3- bonjouR ! | [A French term meaning 'Hello'] |
| 4- hey beru, sup? | [A Gujerati term for 'Brother'] |

Similarly, these terms are also borrowed from the other cultures:

- 5- Kya mamu apun ki yaad vaad nahi aa reli kyaa?Kya apun hi tere ko aise jhaka scrap bhejta rahenga [A mode of speech used in Bollywood movies]
- 6 - Humry kehnaay ko, kuch naheen rehwaat....bus jo likha ,is main kuch ghalat naheen lagat... [A dialect spoken in India, popularized in Pakistan through Bollywood movies]
- 7- She's One amazing gothic angel..BESTEST GOTH FRIEND!!
- 8- pristine virgin!!! hehehe what virgin:P [References from Christianity]

Consonants Simplification

Consonant contraction is a feature of vernacular dialects of English, pretty much evident in the speech of African American English. It also exists in the communication of the Pakistani online users. Such contraction can be a matter of ease in typing or as a sign of trendy speech among the teenagers.

- 9- IF i dint know her...now its jus a helluva time!
[If I didn't know her... now it's just hell of a time]
- 10- brought lotsa smiles on my face [Brought lots of smiles on my face]
- 11- I kinda feel that i've known her for ages.
[I kind of feel that I have known her for ages]
- 12- i duno whr anjum is [I don't know where Anjum is]

Innovative Spellings

Apart from the nonstandard spellings as a mark of varied pronunciations, the cyber users also tend to create new spellings of the words that show a standard pronunciation but non standard spellings. Such an attitude towards the lexical items can either be an attempt of innovation or a reason to overcome the lack of language proficiency.

- 13- ahan..awl ma prayerz wid ya bruv!!!
[Ahan... All my prayers with you, brother.]
- 14- i guess i shudnt scrap u [I guess I shouldn't scrap you]
- 15- how is lyfe goin? [How is life going?]
- 16- i m sure u r aware of da evil deed dun
[I am sure you are aware of the evil deed done]
- 17- oh nyce..but em a li'l younger [Oh, nice but I am a little younger]

Vocabulary

According to Jean Aitchison (1991) when a particular part of a language changes, a coexistence phenomenon of the old and the new form is seen. In cyber space we see coexistence of the old and new forms of lexical items. A wide range of non standard words are seen in cyber space. These words diverge from the standard words in terms of their forms. These words are either contracted or extended. Another possibility is

the alteration in the sounds of some syllable, making them almost alien to the non users of Internet. Such words are often influenced by the regional dialects of English.

Following are the statements that support Baltimorese in their ‘th’ sound. Baltimorese is the dialect of English that has originated from the Philadelphian dialect chain. The native speakers of Baltimorese replace the sound of ‘th’ with ‘f’.

- 18- it was i fink in da month of January [It was I think in the month of January]
19- nefin new at ur sde? [Anything new art your side]
20- did i miss sumfin ? nay-view ? .. [Did I miss something? Any view?]
21- i dunno nuffin ! [I don’t know nothing.]

The following sentences show the pronunciation of African American English.

- 22- i wuz jess now lewkin @ dat VD0 [I was just now looking at that video]
23- ne ways he is a kewl kid [Anyway, he is a cool kid]
24- awL D lyuck! ..hAha @ imaginin’ b0ut preparin fer punjabY!
[All the luck! Haha at imagining about preparing for Punjabi.]
25- trew Luv! hahaha ! [True love! Hahaha!]

Word Extension

The word variation as a result of extension in the original word is represented in the following lines:

- 26- d0do! papers finit0 ? [Dodo (expression to show affection) have you finished the paper?]
27- nuthin yara....u tello....suuuuppp?? [Nothing friend... you tell, what’s up?]
28- I REALLY DUN NEED SICKO PPLARROUND HERE [I really don’t need sick people around here.]
29- p.s tell me ur email addy! [P.S. Tell me your email address.]
30- um... so ... i am getting some cool thingys [I am so... I am getting some cool things.]

Word Contraction

The variation resulting from the over contraction of the original terms is listed in the following examples:

- 31- kratZ to his mama! [Congratulations to his mama.]
32- moi jst bz wid same old univet routine.... [Me (I’m) just busy with same old university routine]
33- ma lil bro’s birthday is also on 2 May. [My little brother’s birthday is also on 2 May]
34- angrazi probs u know [English problems, you know]
35- cyao then ! [See you then!]

Nonce Terms

‘Nonce word’ is a term coined by Crystal (1995) that stands for a lexeme created for temporary use to solve an immediate problem of communication. Nonce-formations are described as ‘running words together into a compound (what a unifreakiversitynerd), or linkingseveral words by hyphens (dead-slow-and-stop computer)’ (Crystal, 2001: 165). Someone attempting to describe the excess water on a road after a storm would use the word ‘fluddle’ as a representation of something smaller than flood but larger than puddle. Such nonce terms are frequently used by the users online and the practice is not merely for the solution of such problems. It is rather for the sake of playing with words since the users often use nonce terms for high frequency words. The users also use hybridization of English and Urdu lexemes.

- 36- n i heard from rabia tht u got nIKKko fieD?
[And I heard from Rabia that you got married?]
37- send me just one pic where u’re not chipkofied with the guys
[Send me just one picture where you are not glued with the guys]
38- it wuz juzz an ainie minnie prob [It was just a tiny problem]
39- how pinDofying ev yew [How conservative of you]

Pronunciation

Orkut Network, like any other online social forum, does not provide communal voicing of the messages making the users spell the words in accordance with the way they feel like pronouncing it in verbal communication. These spellings diverge from group to group due to the difference of pronunciation. These spellings often align with the spellings used in different vernacular dialects of English. Following is the list of such items,

- 40- GUD LuK fa ur Paper.!! ma prayz r alwaYz wid ya....Dun worry!!
[Good luck for your paper. My prayers are always with you. Don’t worry]
41- uh ! yeah .. not fagetting bout r0zy!
[Un! Yeah... Not forgetting about Rozy.]
42- luv ya [Love you]
43- appy bud’day! [Happy Birthday]

Emoticons

The written communication of cyber world differs from the oral communication in a sense that it lacks visual contact. This means that the participants cannot rely on context to make their meaning clear and need a tool of their emotional representation. The limitation was noted early in the development of Netspeak and led to the introduction of Smiles and Emoticons. Emoticons are combinations of keyboard’s characters designed to show human facial expressions. A few emoticons popular among Pakistani Net users are listed below:

- 44- Hopefully will crack GRE on 24th :) [:) = Happy Smiley]

- 45- crossed, the fingers .. ;) , paper yuk hoye ! :/
[;) =Winking & :/=Undecided]
46- :D ih ih ~ sowwie [:D = Grinning Smiley]
47- u want me to leave it :([: (= Frowning Smiley]
48- evrybdy is outta cash already [:|] [:| = Serious Smiley]

Onomatopoeias

Apart from the facial expressions and gestures, Netspeak fails to support the feelings which are so critical in expressing personal experiences and attitudes and maintaining social relationships. The words alone cannot represent the feelings since at many times the words may carry different connotations for different users of the same language. In order to pacify this insufficiency, onomatopoeias are also widely found in net jargon, as it is often necessary to get across an action such as sigh or moan, without having sound capabilities to send the sound itself. Very frequently, Net users will use asterisks to denote such sounds as *sigh* or *moan*.

- 49- *smiles* @ hujat's bday! way too late i m ..
50- hmmm .. perhai kaisi ? *a gust of wind and smiles*
51- love u loads babe *muah*
52- missin yew .. *sniff sniff*
53- kept tin tin .. *yawn*

Reaction Signals

Reaction signals are the meaningless utterances produced as a response. In order to give a more natural touch to the online conversation, the users tend to employ some reaction signals.

- 54- blah blah blah blahummm ermmm..
55- awww wat kan i say
56- ahem ahem . oh um .. GULP ! .. did i say somefin? ..err lessee ..
57- tch tch, Shame on you.....
58- errr....construct a story with the help ov d above outline!

Graphic Play

Cyber English does not support plain orthographic features as used by the standard language. Distinctive use of numerals, alphabets, capitalization, bicapitalization, spellings, punctuation and a number of ways of expressing emphasis constitute the major orthographic or graphological variations of online communication.

There is often no need to use capitalized words or alphabets in a simple written sentence. These features however, are found in the written statements of net speakers. Unnecessary use of punctuation, capitalization and bicapitalization is an evident part of CMC that may be used in order to create ambiguity.

- 59- !m nOt \$(ar3d0v 2mMoRoW cuz !'v3 \$E3N y3\$ErD@Y 'n' !LuV 2daY
[I'm not scared of tomorrow because I've seen yesterday and love today]
- 60- Ht \$pt , Pizzū Hüt , KF! ُؤد Mؤُ M.®ë
[Hot spot, Pizza Hut, KFC and many more]
- 61- 2 H@V3 FUN ,3@TING, \$L33PING, outing & m@@@ny MOR3
[To have fu, eating, outing and many more]
- 62- b3|ieve |n d POLiCy OF g|v3 n tak3..if u r Gud w|d me i m dam gUd 2 u.
[Believe in he policy of give and take, if you are good to me,
I'm damn good to you]
- 63- hi <LLl1
[Oh Allah (the word Allah in the example graphically resembles
this word inArabic)]

Numerals

Numerals are often used instead of alphabets. This may be because of the convenience in typing. Following are a few examples in this regard:

- 64- hope u r f9 [Hope you are fine]
- 65- wow gr8 2 c [Wow, great to see]
- 66- will be w8ing for ur reply [Will be waiting for your reply]
- 67- there is so much more 2 ryte abt ya
[There is s much more to write about you]
- 68- just relaxin a bit b4 skool starts [Just relaxing a bit before school starts]

Acronyms

One reason of language change according to Aitchison (1991: 124) is the 'Ease of effort, in the sense of ease of articulation, is the proposed cause of disruption'. A similar kind of inherent laziness may be the cause of rapid growth of Internet Jargon. Both standard and non standard Acronyms, words formed from the initial letter of each of the successive parts or major parts of a compound term, are used frequently by the users which may be because the users find it convenient to write a few initials instead of writing the whole words.

- 69- BTW how was ur accounting paper? [BTW = By the way]
- 70- t.c..pal!! av peace... [TC = Take care]
- 71- OMG...Mashallah u got married [OMG= Oh my gosh]
- 72- we will inshAllah party asap [ASAP= As soon as possible]
- 73- Saliha a.k.a Shelly (only for her close friends) [AKA = Also known as]

Punctuation

Punctuation in cyber language has become a part of the graphic gaming. The net users do not follow any rules governing the use of punctuation marks. Their absence, presence or repetition depends on the meaning the user wants to convey as well as their mood at that time.

- 74- errrrrr...sice im given life threats...so.... wow! kooooool!
[Er...since I'm given life threats, so ... wow, cool!]
- 75- ...as u have brought the 'issue' on scraps....
[As you have brought the issue on scraps]
- 76- "a bag full'a prayerz N.." umm chocolAdes ehhl!
[A bag full of prayers and... um, chocolates eh!]
- 77- : outa mah mind ?? blunt ?? yaar .. [Out of my mind? Blunt? Yaar]

Grammar

Non standard grammar also constitutes a major area of Weblish which may be because of the poor English of the non native speakers. The use of 'singular' forms of verbs with plural nouns is a feature of African American English and is very common among Pakistani net speakers. Aitchison (1991: 92) calls it a 'Creeping in' phenomenon. 'Syntactic variants often infiltrate the language in an almost underhand way. Sneaking in unseen like a disease...[or] they creep in like a deep friendship which grows unnoticed. On closed investigation, they nearly always steal in a single, vulnerable point in the language, at a place where it is possible to reinterpret the structure in a new way.' [ibid: 92-93]

- 78- hey...hOWz yEw...? [Hey, how are you?]
- 79- Ilma u RoX! [Ilma, you rock]
- 80- how do u doing! [How are you doing?]
- 81- i cant recall ya . who iz ya m8? [I can't recall you. Who are you, mate?]
- 82- hows u doing? [How are you doing?]

Nicks and Names

The conventional laws of spellings of names have diverged towards the westernizing process. The names spelled in cyber space are often deviant from the usual spellings used in Pakistani English.

- 83- Psyraw [Saira]
- 84- Murxa [Murtaza]
- 85- Schezad [Shehzad]
- 86- PhatemaH [Fatema]
- 87- Aicha [Aisha]

Englized Urdu

Dixon (1997) is of the view that every language and every dialect within a language is always in a process of change. The relationships between two adjoining dialects or two contiguous languages, is never static as they may be moving closer to each other in some features. Similar is the case with the Urdu and English as a combination of the two varieties is frequently seen in online communities like Orkut. The users try to assimilate the two languages together in order to be more informal and less conscious of the standard forms of either language.

88- bari jaldi khayal aayeing!!!	[Bari jaldi khayal aaya]
89- exams kaisay hoing?	[Exams kaisay ho rahay hain?]
90- oye jigz yaaar	[Oey, jigger yaar]
91- khairz	[Khair]
92- mewbrookz	[Mubarik]

General Discussion

The demographics of Orkut according to Wikipedia Encyclopedia, show that on this social forum, the proportion of people from countries in which English forms the native language is far lower than those in which the native languages are other than English. Out of seven most popular countries on Orkut, only three (USA, UK and Canada) have native English speakers. With respect to the population of these countries, their presence percentage on Orkut is far lesser than Pakistan's. The linguistic patterns of English used by Pakistani Netizens when compared with those of the native speakers bring to notice those characteristics that make Pakistani variety of Weblish unique and different from the Cyber English of the natives.

Unlike Pakistani cyber jargon, the native speakers' weblish does not show extreme deviations from the Standard English. The native speakers do make use of the consonant simplification but it is very conventional as in the case of words like 'gonna'. These terms are a part of Modern English diction but in case of Pakistani Netizens, we see a further simplification of the already simplified terms. For instance, in example no. 09, the already simplified word 'didn't' has further been simplified into 'dint'.

The innovative spellings of the words that show the pronunciation of that word are entirely a feature of Pakistani users' net jargon. In the similar fashion, the native speakers are introducing no innovative vocabulary. Their language on Orkut shows the normative diction and slang. The words like fink (18), nefin (19), somefin (20) and nuffin (21) are the innovations seen among Pakistani users only.

The graphic play as explained in the above examples (59 to 63) is not employed by native speakers. This feature also qualifies as unique to the Pakistani Cyber English.

Unlike Pakistani net users who frequently use numerals (64 to 68) as a replacement of alphabets and words, the native speakers stringently follow the alphabetical form of numbers when used in a literal context.

The use of punctuation marks is another feature that makes Pakistani Weblish different from the one used by the native speakers. The profiles of most native speakers show a careful use of punctuation marks. In the similar way, the native speakers' language follows the grammatical rules contrary to that of the Pakistani netizens.

Reasons behind the evolution of Pakistani Netspeak

One of the major reasons behind the evolution of Pakistani Netspeak lies in the

age group of its users. Most of the internet users in Pakistan are teenagers and adolescents. Teenagers are considered to be most receptive to language change by acquiring the latest vocabulary and pronunciation (Holmes, 1992) and adolescents 'choose their words in ways that deviate from adult usage' (Coulmas, 2005). Based on the review of literature and views from the participants, the following factors stand out prominently behind the evolution of the Pakistani Netspeak:

Trend

Cyber Linguistics supports the words representing the pronunciation of a native American English speakers. Because of the increasing craze of Hollywood culture, the teenagers and adolescents using the Internet seem to be inclined towards this pronunciation. Evidence that supports this notion is that most of the users employ American pronunciation and not the standard British pronunciation.

Convenience

Similar to the studies of Aitchison (1991) about the procrastination of verbal efforts in terms of articulation to be the basic factor in language change, one can assume that the users of Internet feel the convenience of typing the words that do not carry many characters. In order to avoid much effort, the Net users often contract the words, use numerals and acronyms.

Proficiency

Before assuming any factor to be the possible reason of Internet Jargon, it should be remembered that the users of this language living in Pakistan are not native speakers of English. Besides, the standard of education especially that of English language, that majority of these individuals has received/are receiving is also very low. Not all the users of Internet are teachers and students of universities. A number of software engineers and hackers are not even high school graduates. In such a scenario, we cannot expect every user of Pakistani net community to be proficient in English. Lack of proficiency in English, therefore can further become a cause of Cyber English that provides an umbrella space to its user by rejecting the staunch system of Standard English.

Uniqueness

Uniqueness can be a reason behind the use of Cyber English. Because of the freedom of expression offered by computer mediated communication, one has an open end to come up with their own vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation in order to make them different from others. This attitude might be due to the fact that the virtual space does not allow the users to show their socio-economic status and standard of life. Thus, the only avenue left to create a marked difference among the users is the terms they use in Netspeak to express their selves.

Privacy Maintenance

Code language or cryptolects consists of a particular social network, the members of which are acquainted with the terms of the very code language. As the internet provides only one language of communication and as the social networks do not hold a great privacy, since the users can visit any other's messages, many groups of peers and friends who share the same social network establish a jargon that is mutually understood among the members of the network only.

Expressiveness

English is referential and Cyber English is affective. Standard English in written format does not provide a range of facial expressions and gestures and other such expressions that are frequently being used in the Cyber English. In order to express themselves more effectively, the users are inclined towards using the Weblish.

Conclusion

Among the sociolinguistic causes of language change Aitchison (1991: 106) lists 'fashion', 'foreign influence' and 'social need' as the major ones. We see all these factors influencing Pakistani Netspeak. In the examples cited above, we see different occurrences resulting from language contact of various languages and language varieties as well as 'culture contact'. The Pakistani Net users are activating social meanings and exhibiting their preferences and attitudes through this variety. Their choices demonstrate their compliance with or breaching of linguistic and social norms. In their discourse we are not only witnessing different occurrences resulting from language contact (as listed by Coulmas, 2005: 124) like nonce-borrowing, code-switching, pidginization, mixed discourse and interference but much more. This study cannot be said to be conclusive. As the access to internet grows easier and cheaper we are likely to find many more examples of distinctive features of this variety namely: graphic, orthographic or graphological, grammatical, lexical and discourse. The tale of this emerging variety is far too important to be briefly summarized in one paper. This is just the beginning of the story of a 'little odd' English.

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