Research Article

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English lexical and grammatical preferences in framing media discourse

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Abstract
This paper is a corpus-based analysis of English newspaper reportage of eight South Asian countries: Pakistan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. The objective of the study is to analyse lexico-grammatical patterns between the crime press reportage (CRR) of South Asian countries and explore how they are similar to or different from each other in reporting crime. To achieve this objective, three English newspapers from each country were selected, and a specialized corpus was compiled, which was analysed with reference to the five textual dimensions introduced by Biber (1992 & 2006). This research is significant as hardly any study attempted to find the differences and similarities between the Englishes used in South Asian countries. The comparison indicates that CRR of all the South Asian countries are significantly different from each other in producing informational, explicit, non-argumentative, and abstract discourse. Moreover, while most of the South Asian countries vary in producing narrative discourse, Afghanistan produces non-narrative discourse. The results provided substantial evidence that the English used in each South Asian country counts as a distinct variety.

Keywords: crime reportage, linguistic variation, multidimensional analysis, press reportage, South Asian Englishes

Public Interest Statement

This study may be useful for researchers studying South Asian Englishes, specifically Pakistani English. As the MD model provides a scope to draw an internal and external comparison, it enables the researchers to compare the results of this study with previously conducted studies. The study also allows several comparisons with future MD analyses in both native and nonnative contexts. Press reportage register can further be compared with other registers in Pakistan or South Asia to establish the linguistic identity of Pakistani English.

Introduction

English occupies a prominent place in South Asian countries. South Asian language policies give it a leading position due to its influence on education and cross-cultural communication (Kachru, 2005). South Asia has more speakers of it than the UK and USA combined. In India, the number of English speakers ranges from 200 to 333 million out of a population of over one billion (Crystal, 2004). The number of non-native English speakers is increasing compared to native speakers. Crystal (1996) estimates that the ones in the Inner Circle comprise 320-380 million, in the Outer Circle, 150- 300 million and in the Expanding Circle, 100-1000 million. Similarly, Kachru (2005) claims that there is a 'four to one ratio of non-native English speakers to the native ones' (p. 241). Thus, considering both the role of English and the number of English speakers in South Asia, its prominent position in South Asia cannot be denied.

The countries forming South Asia are Pakistan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. Hickey (2009) asserts that, except for Afghanistan, Nepal, and Bhutan, these countries remained part of the British Empire. English spoken in this area was referred to as South Asian English. British invasion, their education system, and Christian missionaries are considered to be the main factors in the spread of English in South Asian countries. According to Bolton and Kachru (2006), the term South Asian English does not imply linguistic homogeneity nor uniform competence. It encompasses a wide range of regional varieties, including Indian English, Sri Lankan English, and Pakistani English.

Languages all over the world are evolving as a result of global development. English in South Asian countries has grown to acquire different sets of lexico-grammatical preferences and, therefore, can be studied as independent varieties. They are not merely many random geographical or social dialects. Kachru (1994) defines these new varieties in South Asian English as 'the educated variety of South Asian English' (p. 508). Therefore, these varieties are comparable to the other varieties of English: American or British. Yamuna Kachru and Nelson (2006) define British and American English as an 'educated variety codified in grammars and dictionaries' (p. 155). They assert that English has strengthened its place in the linguistic landscape in South Asia.

Several factors influence the English language spoken and written in a particular country. As Kachru et al. (2009) assert, "[a]lthough it is fairly homogeneous across the region, sharing linguistic features and tendencies at virtually all linguistic levels, there are also differences based on various factors" (p. 178). Non-native English-speaking teachers, religions, and local cultures began to adapt and incorporate English into the sub-continent to suit their needs and context better. Kirkpatrick (2010) discusses factors influencing regional English. According to him, a speaker's mother tongue influences their English proficiency. According to Schilk et al. (2012), specific functional and historical differences exist between English spoken and written in South Asia. The historical differences include the colonization which some of the South Asian countries experienced. Hickey (2009) considers the dominance of English in the lives of people of South Asia, excluding countries like Bhutan and Nepal, which were not colonised, "a legacy of British colonialism with its administration and the establishment of English in their educational system" (p. 536). He further adds that South Asia is a 'socio-linguistic'

area that shares 'phonological, syntactic, lexical and stylistic features' to a great extent. There is linguistic variation between the varieties of English in the sub-continent. Many researchers have focused on the indigenized Englishes that emerged. (Krishnaswamy & Burde, 1998; Mehrotra, 1998; Kachru, 1997; Baumgardner, 1996; Ferguson, 1996; Sridhar, 1996; Hartford, 1996; Kandiah, 1996; Bailey, 1996; Verma, 1996; Rahman, 1996).

Some studies compared the linguistic varieties of South Asian countries to British or American English (Sailaj, 2012; Gargesh, 2008; Baldridge, 1995, etc.), but there is hardly any study that looks at the linguistic diversity of South Asian countries. This paper investigates the linguistic variations among various varieties of English used in South Asia, focusing on crime reportage. Instead of focusing on individual linguistic characteristics, this research examines the Englishes used in South Asia using a more comprehensive framework, i.e., Biber's (1992, 2006) multidimensional model.

Literature Review

The discourse of the centrality of 'Standard English' remained dominant over the years. Different researchers gave their opinions about the three circles. While discussing World English, McArthur (1988) considers Standard English a hub in the three circles. He considers Irish Standard English, American Standard English, and South Asian Standard English to be regional varieties. Like McArthur, Akbulut (2020) also believes that English is a nucleus and that non-natives should follow native norms. He added that while teaching the English language in a non-native context, the teachers should follow the established rules of English and not rely on their intuition about language. So, deviations from the 'Standard English' norms were considered inappropriate. Kachru (1991) thinks this view to be representative of native speakers. Modiano (1999) also believes that speakers of EIL (English as an International Language) have a central position in the circle. The inner-circle English remained the yardstick even long after the decolonisation of the world until English in different parts of the world started showing patterns of variation which later resulted in the emergence of new Englishes.

World Englishes are the outcome of different linguistic and cultural variations. Kachru (1992) asserts that due to the process of 'Englishization' and 'nativization', the other languages are affected by English, and English is affected by other languages. World Englishes were the outcome of different linguistic and cultural variations. He further elaborates that in Japan, Hong Kong, and the Philippines, the local languages borrowed the words from English. As far as the process of 'Englishization' is concerned, it even affected the grammar of many languages. For example, the Indian and Korean languages adopted impersonal constructions from English.

Researchers conducted studies on English varieties used in different countries and based on the findings regarded them as distinct from standard English. Kachru et al. (2008) claim that the features of Sri Lankan English are essentially those of southern India. Kirkpatrick and Sussex (2012) use the term 'Lankan English' for English spoken and written in Sri Lanka. Many researchers (Herat, 2006; Vuorivirta, 2006; Gupta, 2006, 1992; Herat, 2005; Gunasekera, 2005; Parakrama, 1995; Kandiah, 1979, 1981, 1996; Fernando, 1977) have attempted to define the unique characteristics of this language variation.

Some researchers have attempted to acknowledge Pakistani English as a distinct variety (Ali, 2018; Alvi et al., 2016; Rahman & Eijaz, 2014; Khan & Shabir, 2012; Mahmood, R, 2009; Mahmood, A. 2009; Anwar & Talaat, 2011; Uzair et al., 2012). However, the findings of these studies are also partial in so far as they either explored internal register variation or compared English used in Pakistan with British or American English.

Where Kachru (1990) considers Indian English to be a separate/ distinctive variety of English based on its linguistic function, Syafrianto et al. (2014) investigate the differences in pronunciation between British English and Indian English. It is observed that Indian English is similar to British English so far as the lexical level is concerned. A considerable body of research concluded that there are some

differences in pronunciation between Indian English and British English (Sailaj, 2012; Gargesh, 2008; Baldridge, 1995, etc). In addition to its comparison with British English, there are some studies (Hassan & Seyal, 2016; Saffee, 2016; Sajjad, 2015; Uzair et al., 2012) that made a comparison of Indian and Pakistani Englishes and analyze the similarities and differences between them.

There are many studies on English in Bhutan (LaPrairie, 2014; Thinley & Maxwell, 2013; Thinley, 2011). However, most of these studies focus on the English education system. There was hardly any study that focussed on the features of English used in Bhutan to see if Bhutanese English is similar or different from British and other Englishes. Regarding newspaper language, Mehta and Dorji (2007) analyse the Bhutanese newspaper, Kuensel, to explore how much it promotes democracy. No such study on Bhutanese English has attempted to establish English used in Bhutan as a separate variety, offering results comparable with the present study's findings.

Hardly any study focuses on Bangladeshi English as a separate variety. Most studies (Sultana, 2014; Islam, 2013; Shrestha, 2013; Ferdousi, 2009) investigated students' attitudes toward learning English or teaching English language skills. Many researchers worked on Maldivian English. Meierkord (2012) asserts that many social changes occur in Maldives, and English is also a part of that change. He added that English is important in transforming society in the Maldives. Gries and Bernaish (2016) and Boyle (2012) state that till now, there has yet to be significant research on English in the Maldives as a distinguished variety.

A few research studies on Nepali English attempted to establish it as a separate variety. According to Shrestha (2013), English is emerging as a separate variety in Nepal due to its spread in different spheres of life. It is known as 'Nepanglish', 'Nenglish', 'Nepalese English' and 'Nepali English'. He considers Nepali English as a separate variety from other South Asian Englishes. Kachru (2005) also considers Nepali English to be a separate variety. Kachru points out that Hindi words are used in significant numbers in South Asian countries, which causes some identity problems for Nepali English speakers. The purpose of Nepali learners learning English is not only to communicate within South Asian countries but also with other countries like the UK, the USA, Australia, and Arabia. So, they do not follow the English rules spoken in South Asia. Several studies conducted in Nepal (Bista, 2011; Giri, 2015; Phyak, 2016) have explored the role and status of English in national language education policies and its use in schools and as a foreign/second language. They discuss how the changing status affects the national curriculum and pedagogical resources. Thus, only a few studies (Shrestha, 2013; Kachru, 2005) focused on Nepali English as a separate variety, and even these studies attempted to explore individual linguistic features in English spoken and written in Nepal to establish it as an independent and separate variety of English.

There are very few studies on Afghan English. Alamyar (2017) considers the war and the insecurities in the country responsible for the destruction of research infrastructure. The insecurities of war hinder the researchers from going to the fields and collecting data. Mushtaq and Baig (2015) conducted a content analysis of Pakistani and Afghani newspapers to explore how the media frames the Pak-Afghan relationship. The results show that while Pakistan media gives positive coverage to the Paki-Afghan relation, Afghan media seems to be critical towards this issue.

Although a significant body of research has been conducted on South Asian Englishes, there is a need to define the variety of English use in each South Asian country as a separate variety. Furthermore, there is a need to compare the varieties of English used in South Asian countries to explore which variety is different from or similar to each other.

Research Methodology and Framework

Biber's (1992 & 2006) Multidimensional model served as the theoretical foundation for the study. This study effectively employed a quantitative data analysis method and further strengthened its findings by providing functional interpretation of dimensions. The use of both these methods enabled the study

to produce accurate and insightful results, making it a valuable addition to the field. Quantitative computational tools were required to identify, tag, and count the co-occurrence of linguistic features in the texts. Further, the linguistic features were normalized. However, the quantitative techniques are insufficient for MD analyses of register variation. Qualitative techniques were utilized to interpret the functional bases underlying the sets of co-occurring linguistic features, as this approach assumes that different texts or variations in texts differ linguistically and functionally. Thus, it interprets the statistical analyses in functional terms. That is, the numerically defined factors are transformed into functionally labelled dimensions. Based on a group of linguistic features that co-occur with frequency in texts and reflect shared functions, the factors were given functional labels so that the co-occurring patterns can be interpreted 'in terms of situational, social, and cognitive functions' (Biber & Finegan, 2004, p. 67). Therefore, quantitative and qualitative methodological techniques were required to find the linguistic co-occurring patterns in the first place and then later interpret these co-occurring patterns in functional terms. It uses statistical factor analysis to recognise the sets of co-occurring features. By identifying co-occurring features and interpreting them through shared communicative function, dimensions provide a comprehensive understanding of a given context.

Newspaper reportage deals with various domains, including sports, arts and entertainment, local crimes and scandals, international conflicts, etc. (Bielsa & Bassnett, 2008). Press reportage has been divided into six sub-categories by Biber (1992): political, cultural, sports, society, spot, and financial press reportage. This study attempted to analyse crime press reportage. The newspapers were selected from all the South Asian countries (Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Nepal) based on wide readership/ circulation and (in some cases) availability of online data.

Table 1 Details of the Corpus

Total No. of words in the Crime reportage corpus (CRC)	1,728,000
Total number of texts	72x24= 1728
Number of newspapers	3x8=24
Total number of countries	8
Average No. of words per text	1000 words

The corpus compilation process involved selecting newspapers from various South Asian countries. Newspapers such as *Dawn, The Nation*, and *The News* were selected from Pakistan, while *Afghanistan Times, Daily Outlook Afghanistan,* and *Khaama Press* were selected from Afghanistan. From Bangladesh, *The Daily Star, The Independent,* and *Daily Observer* made the cut, while *Bhutan Times, The Bhutanese*, and *Kuensel* were selected from Bhutan. Newspapers such as T*he Times of India, The Telegraph,* and *The Hindu* were chosen from India, while from the Maldives, *Maldives Independent, Mihaaru,* and *Maldives Times* were selected. Nepal was represented by *The Himalayan Times, Kathmandu Tribune,* and *The Kathmandu Post*, and *The Daily News, Adaderana*, and *Daily Mirror* were selected from Sri Lanka. The 1728 text files were tagged for different linguistic features using Biber's (1992 & 2006) tag count program, which tags the text files for 150+ linguistic features. All text files were then run through the Biber tagger to assign grammatical categories to the lexical items.

After standardizing all linguistic variables using the z-score formula, we summed the positive-loading features, summed the negative-loading features, and subtracted the negative result from the positive result. This is a precise and effective method that ensures accurate results. The procedure involved several steps, starting with identifying the texts. All 1728 texts were then converted into machine-readable format and cleaned up. The files were then marked up with unique codes, and the corpus was developed. Linguistic features were identified, and the corpus was tagged for these features. The corpus was tagged, the linguistic features were counted or scored, and the raw frequencies or scores

were normalized per 1000 words. After computing dimension scores, ANOVA was applied to the corpus of crime press reportage to identify significant statistical differences among the Englishes used in press reportage of South Asia.

Analysis and Discussion

Table 2 presents the ANOVA results of South Asian CRR on Biber's (1992) five textual dimensions. CRR of most South Asian countries on dimension 1 (Informational vs. Involved discourse) show statistically significant results. The differences between Afghan, Bengali, Bhutani, British, Indian, Nepali, and Pakistani press reportage are statistically significant (the significance value is less than 0.05). The difference between Maldivian and Sri Lankan press reportage is statistically non-significant (the significance value is more than 0.05). On dimension 2 (Narrative vs Non-narrative concerns), the differences between Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka are statistically significant. At the same time, there is no statistically significant difference between Bhutan and Nepal.

Table 2 Variation across South Asia countries with reference to crime news category on five textual dimensions of 92 MD analysis
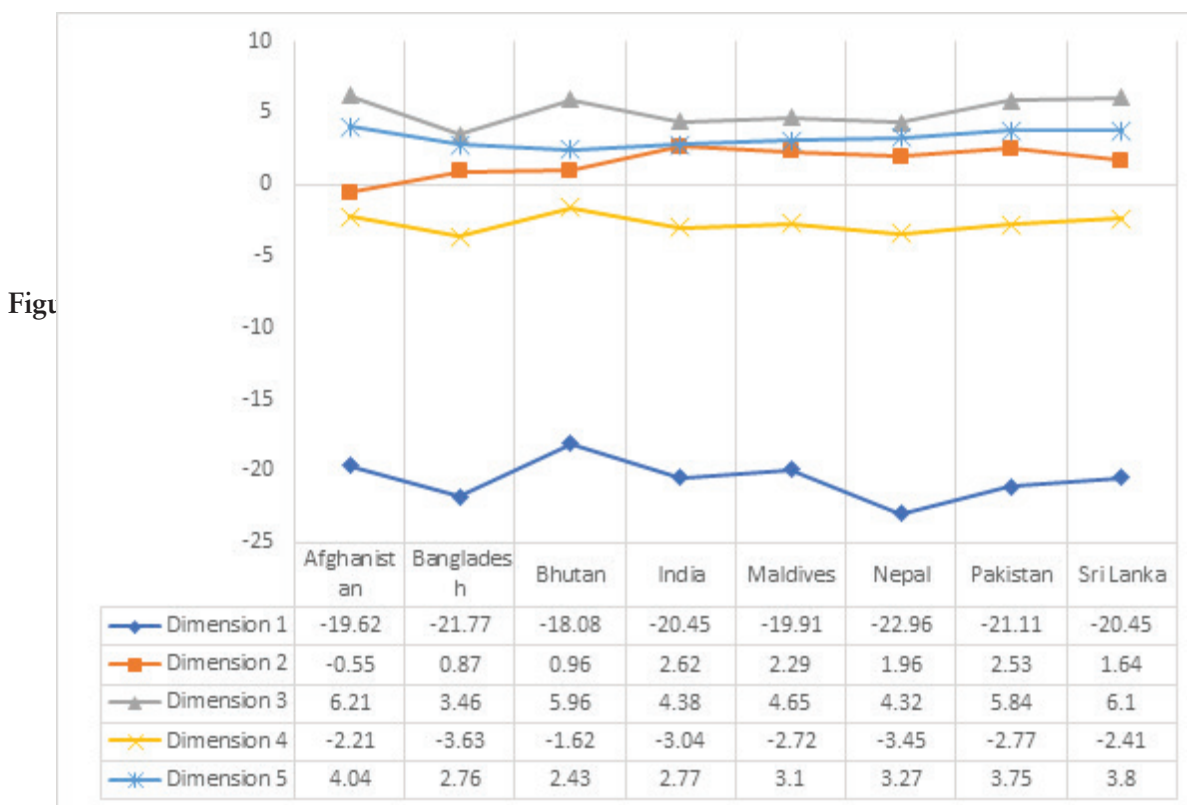
Crime	Dimension				
	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5
Afghanistan	-19.62 ± 0.65k	-0.55 ± 0.23ghi	6.21 ± 0.46bc	-2.21 ± 0.29ij	4.04 ± 0.26cde
Bangladesh	-21.77 ± 0.75q	0.87 ± 0.27f-j	3.46 ± 0.31a-d	-3.63 ± 0.36n	2.76 ± 0.27b-e
Bhutan	-18.08 ± 0.62jk	0.96 ± 0.29efg	5.96 ± 0.36abc	-1.62 ± 0.28hi	2.43 ± 0.22de
India	-20.45 ± 0.55r	2.62 ± 0.25b-g	4.38 ± 0.25a-d	-3.04 ± 0.23n	2.77 ± 0.22b-f
Maldives	-19.91 ± 0.62no	2.29 ± 0.22fg	4.65 ± 0.40a-d	-2.72 ± 0.17l	3.10 ± 0.20b-f
Nepal	-22.96 ± 0.37pqr	1.96 ± 0.23efg	4.32 ± 0.31bcd	-3.45 ± 0.24m	3.27 ± 0.26b-e
Pakistan	-21.11 ± 0.57p	2.53 ± 0.25d-g	5.84 ± 0.32ab	-2.77 ± 0.25m	3.75 ± 0.23cd
Sri Lanka	-20.45 ± 0.53no	1.64 ± 0.35e-h	6.10 ± 0.35a	-2.41 ± 0.28kl	3.80 ± 0.26a-e

Note: The means sharing similar letters in a row or a column are statistically non-significant (P>0.05).

On dimension 3 (explicit vs. situation-dependent discourse), the differences between Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka are statistically significant. Bangladesh, India, and Maldives show statistically non-significant differences from each other. On dimension 4 (Overt expression of argumentation/ persuasion), Afghanistan, Bhutan, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have statistically significant differences from each other. CRR of Bangladesh, in comparison with India, shows statistically non-significant differences. Likewise, there is no statistically significant difference between Pakistan and Nepal. As far as dimension 5 (Impersonal/Abstract vs. Non-impersonal vs. Non-abstract style) is concerned, the differences between CRR of the countries (Afghanistan, Bhutan, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka) are statistically significant from each other, excluding India, Maldives, Bangladesh, and Nepal.

Figure 1 compares the results of CRR of South Asian countries based on 1992 textual dimensions. On dimension 1, positive scores indicate that the specific variety is related to involvedness, whereas negative scores indicate that the purpose of the writing is information-focused. Spalek (2008) identified crime reportage as a rich source of information as its purpose is to convey the nature and extent of crime to the people. The results show that the CRR of South Asian countries produce informational discourse

instead of involvedness, as mean scores of CRR of all the countries fall on negative polarity.

Figu

	Afghanistan	Bangladesh	Bhutan	India	Maldives	Nepal	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
Dimension 1	-19.62	-21.77	-18.08	-20.45	-19.91	-22.96	-21.11	-20.45
Dimension 2	-0.55	0.87	0.96	2.62	2.29	1.96	2.53	1.64
Dimension 3	6.21	3.46	5.96	4.38	4.65	4.32	5.84	6.1
Dimension 4	-2.21	-3.63	-1.62	-3.04	-2.72	-3.45	-2.77	-2.41
Dimension 5	4.04	2.76	2.43	2.77	3.1	3.27	3.75	3.8

On dimension 1, the scores of the CRR of Nepal are maximum on negative polarity with the highest negative mean scores of -22.96 compared with the CRR of other South Asian countries, whereas Bhutan is least informative with a mean score of -18.08. Maldives (- 19.91) and Sri Lanka (- 20.45) have intermediate scores. There is a slight difference between the mean scores of Pakistan and Bangladesh (i.e., -21.11 and -21.77, respectively). In a similar manner, Afghanistan and Maldives show almost similar mean scores on negative polarity (i.e., -19.62 & -19.91). The findings based on mean dimension scores provide evidence that the CRR of South Asian countries is informational rather than involved.

The countries where the crime rate is higher than the others may need to use more informational features to provide detailed information to the readers, considering the readership demands. Although the relationship between crime and media reportage is far from simple (Muncie & McLaughlin, 2001), and various factors affect news reportage, a comparison between crime statistics and crime reportage reveals some interesting findings. NUMBEO (2017) estimates the crime index of Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India to be 67.24, 54.38, and 43.96 respectively. These countries follow the same pattern in producing informational discourse: Bangladesh -21.77, Pakistan -21.11, and India -20.45.

A country with a high crime rate produces more informational discourse for the readers. Among these countries (erstwhile part of the Indian sub-continent), Bangladesh, with the highest crime index rate, is the most informational in producing discourse. Thus, it is interesting to observe that comparing the informativeness of crime reportage and crime statistics of these countries produces consistent results. Other factors, including government policy, freedom of the press, etc., may also influence the informativeness of press reportage in different countries.

The mean scores of Nepali CRR are maximum on negative polarity. The following excerpt is taken from the Nepali newspaper, Kathmandu Post. The *Italicised* words are examples of linguistic features from crime reportage that produce informational discourse.

Smuggling of medicinal *herbs* has increased in *Bajura* in the recent times, according to the District Forest Office. *Plants* like *Padamchal (Noble rhubarb), Chiraito (Felwort), Jatamasi (Spikenard), Lokta (Daphne shrub), Nirmasi (Delphinium),* and *Satuwa (Paris polyphylla)* have been found being illegally exported to different parts of the *country* from different parts of the *district*, DFO *officials* said. *Police* and *DFO officials* recently intercepted nearly 36 tonnes of *Jatamasi in the district at Kolti Airport and Dansanghu village*. (CSNCRKPT25)

The above example contains various linguistic features that contribute to producing informational discourse. These features include several nouns such as *herbs, Banjura, plants, Padamchal, Chiraito, Jatamasi, Lokta, Nirmasi, Satuwa, officials, police, Kolti, airport, Dansanghu* and *village*. Additionally, prepositions like "in" and "from" provide more context for nouns. Moreover, descriptive adjectives such as "medical herbs," "recent times," "different parts", and "DFO officials" are used to provide more detail and specificity to the nouns. All of these linguistic features work together to create a more detailed and informative piece of discourse. The frequent use of these language features suggests that the discourse contains valuable information.

On dimension 2, a significant variation among the sub-genres can be observed. Figure 1 indicates the presence of both narrative and non-narrative discourse in CRR of South Asian countries. Generally, narrative discourse reports past events, and non-narrative discourse presents a first-hand account of the event. Indian and Pakistani CRR have the highest positive scores, i.e., 2.62 and 2.53, respectively, which indicate that their primary concern is narrative. The Maldives, with a mean score of 2.29, is slightly less narrative than India and Pakistan. However, Nepal and Sri Lanka also show narrative concerns with a slight difference in their mean score, i.e., 1.96 and 1.64 on dimension 2. Bangladesh and Bhutan, with mean scores of 0.87 and 0.96, are the least narrative among the countries that produce narrative discourse, Afghanistan, with a mean score of -0.55, is non-narrative. When the present study's findings were compared with Nini's (2015) study on American press reportage, Afghan news reportage was close to American press reportage in producing informational, narrative, explicit, and non-argumentative discourse. An important factor can be the American post-9/11 presence in Afghanistan.

The following example is taken from the Indian newspaper, *The Hindu*. The words in italics are examples of linguistic features that together perform the function of producing narrative discourse.

Myanmar *said* on Monday it *has* detained several police officers over a video shot by a fellow policeman that *shows* them beating Rohingya civilians, a rare admission of abuse against the Muslim minority. Tens of thousands of people from the persecuted ethnic group – loathed by many of Myanmar's Buddhist majority – *have* fled a military operation in Rakhine State, *launched* after attacks on police posts in October. Dozens of videos *have* emerged, apparently showing abuses against Rohingya, but this is the first time the government has said it will take action against *them*. (CSICRTHT1)

One of the prominent markers of narrative discourse is the past tense verb. Present aspect verbs often co-occur with past tense verbs as markers of narrative discourse (Westin, 2001; Biber, 1995). Further, as news stories are impersonal, they are reported using third-person pronouns. The use of first and second-person pronouns suggests that 'the reporter may have drifted into editorialising (Roy, 2009)'. Regarding public verbs, Westin (2001) found them among the linguistic features that occur with the highest frequency in editorials. However, he observed that they used to report rather than narrate. In the above example, past tense verbs like said and launched are in the third person. pronoun like *them, verb-perfect aspects like has and have, and public verbs like the show are* examples of linguistic features that produce narrative discourse.

Discourse is explicit with positive scores on dimension 3, while situation-dependent discourse

is highlighted with negative scores. Figure 5.1 shows that the CRR of all the South Asian countries produces situation-dependent discourse, but there are significant differences in their mean scores on this dimension. The results indicate that Afghanistan (6.21) and Sri Lanka (6.1) show the highest explicit discourse. Bhutan and Pakistan demonstrate slightly less explicit discourse, with mean scores of 5.96 and 5.84, respectively, than Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. On the other hand, the CRR of Bangladesh is the least explicit in discourse production, with a mean score of 3.46. There is a slight difference in the mean scores of Maldives (4.65), India (4.38), and Nepal (4.32) in producing explicit discourse along this dimension. The frequency of *wh* clauses, words for phrasal coordination, and nominalization is quite similar in the CRR of Maldives, India, and Nepal. It is interesting to notice that while the frequent use of *wh* clauses is associated with conversation (Biber & Reppe, 1998) and informal text types (Kachmarova & Shatro, 2017), they are conspicuously frequent in the news reportage of Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. The following text sample is taken from the *Afghanistan Times*. The presence of *wh* clauses like *who has created, which country providing, which country is doing,* and *which resulted into*; words for phrasal coordination like *and* and *but* and nominalization like *humanity* in italics mark the presence of explicit discourse.

> It is like a daylight that *who* has created these terrorists, *and who* supporting and harboring them – *which* country providing them safe shelters, *and* also *which* country is doing lobbing for them. Afghans don't take this bombing as an attack on Daesh terrorists, *but* an attack against *humanity*, *and* moreover to test its deadliest weapon in order to send a message to its rivals in the region. Moreover, through bombing, the US wanted to remove those accusations of supporting Daesh, *and* also it was part of international campaigns for Daesh, *which* resulted into killing of innocent Afghans. (CSACRATT7)

Dimension 4 shows negative scores to varying degrees. All the countries show negative mean scores with no focus on the overt expression of persuasion/ argumentation in CRR. Biber (1992) believes that press reportage reports an event so, '[it] does not involve opinion or argumentation at all' (p. 151). Instead of being persuasive and argumentative, crime reporting needs narration and elaboration. CRR of almost all of the South Asian countries is narrative in nature, so it is quite naturally found least overt in persuasion/ argumentation.

CRR of Bangladesh shows a markedly high non-argumentative style as it has the highest mean scores (- 3.63) on negative polarity. With a slight difference in their mean scores, Nepal (- 3.45) and India (- 3.04) are also found producing non-argumentative discourse. CRR of Pakistan (- 2.77), Maldives (- 2.72), Afghanistan (- 2.21) and Sri Lanka (- 2.41) are also found non-argumentative in discourse production. However, there is a marked difference between the mean CRR scores of Bhutan (- 1.62) and those of other South Asian countries. CRR of Bhutan produces the least non-argumentative discourse. In the following excerpt from the Bangladeshi newspaper, *Daily Star*, third-person pronoun lie *they* and *them* and private verbs like, *said,* and *cried* produce non-argumentative discourse.

> *They* included an AFP photographer who suffered shrapnel wounds to his shoulder and leg, an Associated Press photographer and a reporter working with Al-Jazeera television. Nasir's family members *cried* for help when *they* saw the robbers. Realising that *they* had been detected, the robbers exploded bombs and fled the place. On information that some local Jamaat activists were gathering at the residence of Nur Hossain to plot subversive activities, police raided the house and arrested *them, said* Moniruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Sharsha Police Station. (CSBACRDST25)

The results of Dimension 5 show that the CRR of South Asian countries differs considerably in their degree of abstractness. Afghanistan shows the most Abstract style with the highest mean score of 4.04. Sri Lankan and Pakistani CRR, with mean scores of 3.8 and 3.75, are slightly less abstract than Afghanistan, and further, Maldives (3.1) and Nepal (3.27) are less abstract than Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Bhutan has the lowest mean score (2.43), which shows it has the least abstract style among all the other South Asian countries. Bangladesh (2.76) and India (2.77) are quite close to Bhutan in producing abstract discourse.

The following excerpt is taken from the Afghan newspaper *Khamma Press*. The words in *italics* are examples of the features that produce abstract discourse.

The provincial police chief Gen. Abdul Hamid Hamidi said the minor girl was initially *gang-raped by the men* and was strangled to death. An 8-year-old girl was also gang-raped and was brutally *murdered by a group* of armed men in southern Uruzgan province of Afghanistan earlier this month. The Head of the Criminal Investigation Department Salim Almas confirmed on Sunday that the dead body of the girl was recovered from inside the container *while* the boy was in a state of coma. (CSACRKPT49)

The presence of the passive verb + by like *gang-raped by the men* and *murdered by a group* and subordinating conjunction like *while* highlighting the impersonal or abstract style of discourse production.

This study has laid the foundations based on statistical/ empirical evidence to define the distinction of PE from Indian English and other South Asian Englishes (SAE) , which have long been used as a cover term for the English written and spoken in this part of the world. All the SAE are different from each other regarding the crime category.

Conclusion

The results indicate a considerable difference in the CRR of South Asian press on Biber's 1992 five textual dimensions. The results of the comparison illustrate that CRR of all the South Asian countries are informational, explicit, non-argumentative, and abstract in style to a varying degree. On dimension1, Nepal has been found highly informational and Bhutan, the least informational among other South Asian countries. On dimension 2, all the South Asian countries produce narrative discourse except Afghanistan. India and Pakistan are the most narrative among South Asian countries. Ahmad (2015) observes that the language of crime reportage is an integral part of our daily life with a deep impact on society. CRR of India and Pakistan are the most narrative among other South Asian countries. The reason might be located in the assumption that the audience and readers are interested in the detailed narration of the crime event. On dimension 3, all South Asian countries produce explicit discourse. Afghanistan is the most, and Bangladesh is the least narrative among South Asian countries. On dimension 4, all the countries show non-argumentative discourse. Bangladesh has been found to be more non-argumentative, and Bhutan has been found to be the least argumentative. On dimension 5, again all the countries show abstract style. Afghanistan is the most abstract, and Bhutan is the least abstract among South Asian countries.

The variety of English spoken and written in Pakistan has long been overshadowed under the umbrella term of Indian English, as India is considered the epicentre of English in South Asia (Gries & Bernaisch, 2016). The individualisation of the registers used in Pakistan remained blurred for a long time. Even the studies attempting to establish the identity of Pakistani English as an independent variety compared and differentiated it from British English, or a few took a step further and compared it with American English. Hence, such attempts were not very helpful in liberating Pakistani English from the label of Indian or South Asian English, which the world uses to refer to English used in Pakistan. While

'Indian English' is commonly used as an umbrella term to describe English used in India and Pakistan, the study results show that Pakistani crime reportage (though it is only one register) is markedly different from Indian crime reportage in producing discourse. So, the results provide substantial evidence that each South Asian country has its style of producing newspaper discourse.

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