

LANGUAGE APPROPRIATION AND CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY IN PAKISTANI
ENGLISH LITERATURE: A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF 'MEATLESS DAYS' BY SARA
SULERI

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Original Article

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Abstract

This article analyzes the use of language appropriation for cultural representation and identity construction in Sara Suleri's work 'Meatless Days'. The article employs a narrative analysis method for analyzing the content of the first two chapters of 'Meatless Days'. The framework of Kachru (1983) and Ashcroft (2003) has been used to analyze the strategies of language appropriation that highlight the representation and construction of a separate identity. Most of the strategies of language appropriation like; Glossing, Untranslated words, Syntactic Fusion, Lexical innovations, and Translation equivalence were predominantly found in the text of Sara Suleri. These strategies, on one hand, reflect the degree to which language has been appropriated by the post-colonial writers, and on the other hand, assert their identity. Secondly, the framework also included Bucholtz and Hall (2005) and their theory of identity construction through language coupled with Kachru's Three Circles Model of World Englishes. Suleri creates a unique Pakistani identity by highlighting the various nuances of Pakistani culture like frequent use of local names, first names instead of surnames, honorifics, national cuisines, and religious festivals celebrated in Pakistan. The analysis highlights that Meatless Days is a work that effectively uses language to reclaim and construct a Pakistani identity in terms of culture and language. The study is an academic endeavor towards looking at the language appropriation and identity in Pakistani literature which can be extended to the current literary works in Pakistani literature, and how they are being influenced by the neo-imperialist culture in a globalized world. Moreover, new strategies of language appropriation may be explored through further research in this area, as this study only utilizes the already established strategies of language appropriation.

Keywords: Language Appropriation, Representation, Identity, Pakistani Culture

1. Introduction

Colonization and its ramifications hold an important place in world history as it shaped the socio-political conditions of countries across the globe. The 'colonial mindset' is so engrained in every institution and even dominates the native and indigenous cultures decades after getting physical independence, as the nations became free, but somehow remained mentally colonized and occupied. One of the most important 'Post-colonial Legacy' is that of Post-colonial works of literature that are often written in the very language of the colonizers. Nations across the globe started asserting their identity by using the very language of the 'Empire' by making certain changes and innovations in that very language. The idea of writing back to the empire while celebrating the native and indigenous identity has been manifested by authors like Achebe and Ngugi Wa Thiongo, as well as, linguists like Kachru (1985) contributed to highlighting the new and emerging varieties of English in the countries that were previously colonized.

Pakistan is no exception to the post-colonial world and everything that it entails, including the long-lasting impacts and the resulting responses. Pakistani authors like Alamgir Hashmi, Bapsi Sidhwa, Kamila Shamsie, Mohsin Hamid, Sara Suleri, and others have earned international acclaim and acknowledgment for their works. All of them have used language appropriation in one way or another and it can be defined as 'Appropriation has been defined as a process which alters the language of the center to express the differing cultural experiences' (Khosa et al., 2018, p. 87). It is a specialty and a common feature that runs through the writings of these authors which mold their expression and representation of Pakistani identity with special reference to language, as there are deliberate usages of 'Pakistani' or localized words, phrases, and sentences. Pakistani English literature has played a significant role in building narratives reflecting Pakistani culture and identity. As Sara Suleri's work has been selected for this study, it is imperative to give a brief introduction to Suleri. She is a Pakistani-born American author. She was born in 1953 and spent many years in Pakistan before she moved to the United States. As Suleri was born into a post-partition Pakistan, her writings reflect a pure Pakistani culture. Suleri wrote many important works like 'The Rhetoric of English India' and 'Boys will be Boys'. However, this study focuses on a memoir named 'Meatless Days' in which Suleri recounted her childhood and all of the years spent in Pakistan. She talks in detail about her family and the significant events that happened with her family. The work falls into non-fiction Pakistani English literature as Suleri has made explicit references to Pakistani culture and has used indigenized Pakistani English expressions.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite the previous researches that have already been done upon Pakistani fiction with regard to the idea of the localization of English in Pakistani context, there is a significant gap when it comes to language appropriation and interplay of identities with special reference to Pakistani English and its use in the Pakistani English non-fiction specifically 'memoirs'. Moreover, the text chosen for this study consists of first two chapters from a memoir by Sara Suleri which has not been explored with reference to the above mentioned ideas of language appropriation and its strategies, and the way she plays with a mix of identities, giving prestige and larger space to Pakistani culture and identity.

1.2 Research Questions

Q1: What language appropriation strategies have been employed to represent Pakistani culture in 'Meatless Days'?

Q2: How are indigenous Pakistani English localized expressions used to construct identity in the selected text?

1.3 Research Objectives

- To examine the types of language appropriation strategies used to highlight the localized expressions and construction of identity
- To highlight representation of Pakistani culture as reflected through the language used by Suleri

1.4 Significance of the Study

The study is significant as it highlights how language appropriation is representing Pakistani English and Pakistani culture. The research also discusses how identity construction takes place through language appropriation. The research also highlights how Pakistani English is being promoted by the authors through their non-fiction literature as well.

2. Literature Review

Many researchers have studied Pakistani English from different point of views and theoretical lenses as well. In a study conducted by Ahmed and Ali (2014), a corpus analysis was done through which they explored the impact of Urduised English on Pakistani English Fiction at the lexical level and concluded that the use of 'urduised words' asserted the localization of Pakistani English that is an independent variety with norms of its own. Similarly, another study conducted

by Jadoon (2017) on the 'Pakistanization' of English in the novel 'Kartography' written by Kamila Shamsie concluded that Shamsie made use of "hybrid innovations and lexical borrowing" (Jadoon: p. 1) to show a separate and independent status of Pakistani English as an emerging variety. He also highlighted another important fact that the Pakistani authors use words and phrases from regional and native Pakistani languages without giving any translation or foot notes or supporting notes for the terms used. This highlights that the authors give prestige to their own variety of language rather than following the standard norms.

Likewise, Talaat (1993) has pointed out in her study that there are many lexical variants found in the Pakistani English that are often used in both English and Urdu language and concluded that this intermix of the use of Urdu language and many other Pakistani regional languages in English clearly manifests the underlying process of indigenization of the Pakistani English. Another study by Khosa et al., (2018) focuses on language appropriation in Shazaf Fatima's novel 'How it happened?' The study highlights the strategies used by the author for language appropriation. It also highlights why it is important for the authors to practice language appropriation techniques and explores some new techniques while majorly relying on the ones proposed by Kachru and Ashcroft. Similarly, Jadoon (2018) in his study talks about colonization and how colonizers suppressed the languages of the colonized. He analyzes Roy's novel with special reference to language appropriation and abrogation. His analysis is based on the assertion that through appropriation and abrogation Roy adds a socio-cultural touch to the English. Moreover, he focuses on the phenomenon of writing back to the empire as Roy writes back to the colonial power, not in their language but in a language that is full of socio-cultural and politico-economic realities of post-colonial India. He says that Roy has effectively challenged the western norms and breaks away from the tradition of western dominant and a colonial mindset. He concludes that the novel is written not only in India, but in Indian English as well.

Fanon (1961) in his seminal work 'The Wretched of the Earth' writes about the possibility of hybrid identities and how they can overpower one's native identity where even the "native intellectuals" introduce themselves as, "I speak as a Senegalese and as a Frenchman..." "I speak as an Algerian and as a Frenchman..." (Fanon: p. 218). However, this hybridized identity eventually breaks apart with the realization and urge to go back to one's own culture and leave behind the colonizer's culture. Fanon claims that, "While suddenly the language of the ruling power is felt to burn your lips" (Fanon, p. 220). This reveals that the phase of hybrid identities eventually ends up in the domination and assertion of one's native identity.

3. Research Methodology

The research design chosen for the study is the qualitative in nature. The sample for the study consists of words and phrases from the first two chapters of 'Meatless Days' by Sara Suleri. The method chosen for the analysis is that of Narrative Analysis. The 'Functional Narrative Analysis' is chosen specifically as the method of data analysis for this study. The narrative analysis highlights the purpose of narrative built by the author in her work through language and how it contributes to the formation of identity. As the method chosen for the analysis is that of functional narrative analysis, first part of analysis has been discussed with reference to the functions that a narrative can serve and the second part of the analysis highlights as to how narrative functions construct identity.

So, representational function, as well as, the construction of gendered, ethnic or class identities are the major functions that the narrative possibly serves in the chosen text. The representational function has been discussed with reference to culture and imperialism and strategies of language appropriation. The construction of identities has been discussed with reference to Bucholtz and Hall (2005), and Kachru's Three Circles Model of World Englishes.

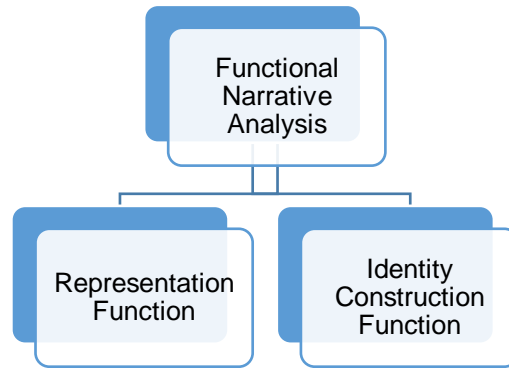


Figure 1: Data Analysis Method

For this purpose, a conceptual framework has been designed which guides the analysis of the text. The conceptual framework comprises of the ideas of 'Culture and Imperialism' put forward by Edward Said (1993). Moreover, it includes the 'Language Appropriation Strategies' as presented by Kachru (1983) and Ashcroft (2003). Additionally, the framework builds on the ideas of language and identity given by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) and Kachru's Three Circles Model of World Englishes (1982). Before the analysis, it is imperative that the concepts in theoretical framework must be elaborated for more clarity and relevance.

3.1. Theoretical Framework

3.1.1 Culture and Imperialism by Edward Said (1993)

Said in his book named "Culture and Imperialism" traces the origins and the development of the colonist empire which propagated its culture while subjugating other cultures. He revealed how the ideas of 'other' 'exotic' and 'barbarous' came to be associated to the indigenous and native cultures, while the elites or colonizers enjoyed prestige in terms of their culture which gave them power over the others. Said explored this inter-relationship between culture and imperialism in his work which also came to be known as a major theoretical premise. With special reference to decolonization, Said specifically highlighted the post-colonial writing of the authors who wrote in the language of the 'imperial power'. With the focus on post-colonial writings, another area of interest emerged that is discussed below.

3.1.2. Language Appropriation

Language Appropriation is a well established idea about the innovations and changes deliberately done by the writers of the colonized nations, who practically write back to the colonial power in the very language, but with some differences. According to Kachru (1983), when the language of the colonizer is transplanted to other regions it starts adapting to the new surrounding, taking up new roles in the newly emerging contexts. This idea resonates with that of language appropriation. Kachru (1983) outlined some important strategies used by the authors to achieve language appropriation. These are given as follows:

1. Lexical innovations
2. Translation equivalence
3. Contextual redefinition
4. Rhetorical and functional styles

In the same manner, Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin (2003) also proposed some strategies of language appropriation by the authors that are given as follows:

1. Glossing
2. Untranslated Words
3. Inter-language
4. Syntactic Fusion
5. Code Switching and Vernacular Transcription

3.1.3 Language and identity

Bucholtz and Hall (2005) proposed a framework for the analyzing identity that is constructed through linguistic interaction. They proposed different views and the principles on the inter-relationship between language, culture and identity. The 'Emergent Principle' put forward by them indicates that identity emerges from the social, linguistic and cultural aspects rather than identity being the driving force behind them. According to Bucholtz and Hall, "Identity is best viewed as the emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore as fundamentally a social and cultural phenomenon" (2005, p. 588). Moreover, this principle when compared to previous approaches also indicates that identity is not just a psychological construct that is manifested in people's behavior. In fact, it is socially constructed through the 'language' itself.

3.1.4 Kachru's Three Circles Model of World Englishes

Kachru (1982) also talked about a similar idea of how language and identities are co-related in his Three Circles Model in which the "Inner circle" consisted of the ENL countries with their specific identity as norm providing countries. The "Outer Circle" consisted of ESL countries which included the nations formerly colonized by the British Empire, known as the norm dependent varieties. The "Expanding Circle" consisted of the nations that were never colonized but English is spoken as EFL there. Kachru with his focus on the ESL varieties highlighted the fact that how language and identities are intertwined in a broader context of power relations as evident from the norm providing and the norm dependent binary. However, his model also highlights that the ESL is nonetheless equally significant as he ascribes a separate status to it which means that different varieties of Englishes exist carrying respective identities of their speakers.

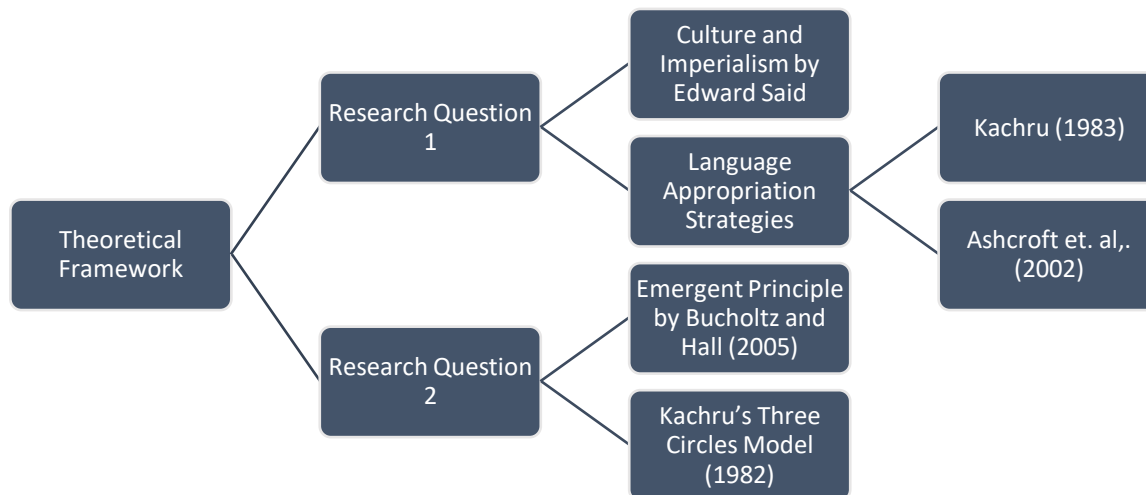


Figure 2: Theoretical Framework for the study

4. Data Analysis and Findings

With reference to Edward Said's idea of 'Culture and Imperialism', the colonizers maintained their hegemony by representing their culture as superior and civilized while labeled the colonized cultures as inferior, barbarous and exotic. This representation was mostly done through language and literature and general discourse as well. The formerly colonized nations realized this cultural imperialism and revolted against the very tradition by using the language of the 'Empire'. In Sara

Suleri's 'Meatless Days', there are many references to the Pakistani culture and traditions, as well as, beliefs of the Pakistani people. She has promoted the very culture through English language but has made many innovations and changes to the language itself. She has employed some of the 'language appropriation strategies' as highlighted by Ashcroft and Kachru. The underlying spirit in Suleri's writings comes from the very philosophy of cultural imperialism and her assertion and manifestation of Pakistani culture as a counter narrative. She has effectively appropriated the language to 'represent' Pakistani culture in her work as evident from the table below which shows the instances of language appropriation.

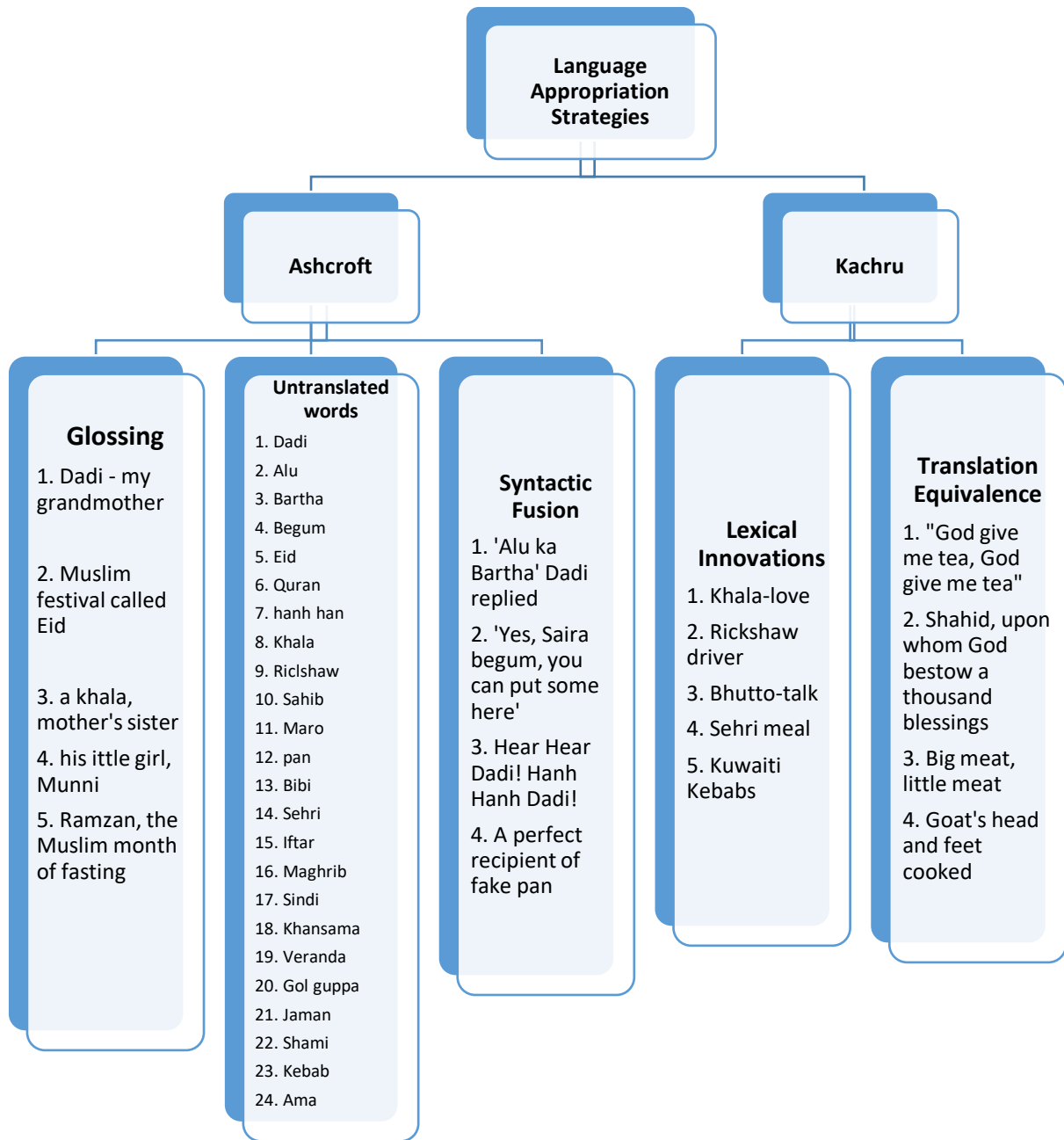


Figure 3: Strategies of language appropriation used by Sara Suleri

4.1.1 Glossing

Glossing as identified by Ashcroft as a strategy of language appropriation has been effectively used by Suleri in the text. Glossing with reference to language appropriation means that a single idea is expressed by putting together words from different languages. One word or phrase often describes the other phrase in another language or else explains it. Suleri has meticulously utilized glossing throughout her text with some specific examples as given in the Figure 1. The Urdu language words are often coupled with their English alternatives or else an explanation in English is given about a certain term like 'Dadi'. This is intentionally done on part of author as a means of representation of true Pakistani identity that is being reflected through the use of Urdu words. The author could have easily gone for simple English words instead of putting together words from Urdu language. This act on part of Suleri highlights the function that the narrative performs when these words are seen with reference to the whole text and the context. As mentioned earlier, Suleri has made use of the term 'Dadi' followed by 'my grandmother'. This use of the word Dadi that is glossed with grandmother makes the Pakistani culture tangible to be seen and absorbed by the readers and hints at use of these words in a variety that is growing in Pakistan as Pakistani English.

Secondly, Suleri makes use of the word 'Eid' in order to represent another important aspect in the Pakistani life. She adds 'Muslim Festival' before the word Eid which represents the importance and centrality of the said festival in the lives of the Pakistanis. She highlights 'Eid' as a term that is of magnitude to be used in an English text, while creating a stronger narrative for the Pakistani culture. In the same manner, she writes about "Ramzan, the Muslim month of fasting", here Suleri has explained the importance, as well as, the sanctity of the month of 'Ramzan' for Pakistanis as well as Muslims in general. She builds a narrative that is highly motivated for the achievement of a collective Muslim and a national identity, as well as, a vocal proof Pakistani English that can assimilate all of these ideas affectively. Similarly, she writes "*a khala*, mother's sister" which also reveals the different honorifics used as a part of Pakistani culture for various relations on the maternal and the paternal side. Hence creating a narrative, that represents a true Pakistani cultural spirit. In Another instance, Suleri makes use of the "Munni" that is glossed by "his little girl", this glossing also highlights the use of a very commonplace Urdu word 'munni' that is used for a girl who is younger or a little girl. This again reflects the Pakistani context in its another dimension of calling little girls and boys with generic names like 'munni' or 'munna' respectively.

4.1.2 Untranslated Words

Another important strategy of language appropriation is that of using untranslated words of one's language in the language of the colonizer. Suleri has used a lot of words in her work which are written without any translations. The words like "Alu", "Bartha", "hanh", "sehri", "iftari", "maghrib" used by the author very explicitly show the free flow of Urdu words in the written English text, hence making it a hybrid variety that is serving a representational function of a separate variety of the language, that is Pakistani English, as well as, the people who use and speak it. Additionally, Suleri has made excessive use of the term "Begum" and "Begum Sahib" and "Bibi" which are the terms used to refer to a woman out of respect and for the woman who belongs to a higher stratum of society. These words are again a representation of a typical Pakistani society and they seem to have easily made their place into the written text in English again reflecting the difference and hybrid nature of the English itself. Suleri has also expressed her thoughts about the events using the names of different food items like "Gol guppas", "Pan", "Jaman", "Shami Kebab" etc. These are some of the staple and traditional dishes and eatables in almost every Pakistani household. Suleri has effectively used these names to bring the rich Pakistani culture to the forefront and reassert the identity through the language itself.

4.1.3 Syntactic Fusion

Another language strategy utilized by Suleri is that of Syntactic Fusion in which the Urdu words are fused in the sentences that follow English syntactic structure, hence revealing a complex nature of relationship between both of these languages and the emergence of a new variety that is representing the Pakistani culture in its diversity. Suleri uses syntactic fusion at interesting

moments like, "Alu ka Bartha, Dadi repeated with wonderment and joy;" Here an Urdu phrase has been fused with the overall English syntactic structure, thus reflecting a different sentence structure, of a newly emerging variety, that is, Pakistani English. In a similar manner, the phrase that follows is uttered by Dadi as she says, "Yes, Saira Begum, you can put some here". This phrase is important as it reveals how an Urdu Noun Phrase (NP) has been added easily into a sentence that follows English syntactic structure. This also hints at the easy and smooth growth of a Pakistani English variety that mirrors Pakistani culture and emphasizes Pakistani identity. Moreover, in another instance there is another worth noting syntactic fusion where two phrases are written together as: "Hear, hear, Dadi! Hanh, Hanh, Dadi!" In this expression, there is a reflection of Pakistani culture and the style of conversation between Dadi and her grandchildren. The phrase also adds insights into how the narrative highlights the innovations of Pakistani English. Similarly, there is a phrase about a little girl who was "a perfect recipient of a fake pan". The phrase again has overtones of syntactic fusion as an Urdu word 'pan' acting as an NP, is a part of a Prepositional phrase (PP)(of a fake pan), and get an Adjective (fake) before it. The phrase is easily intelligible and there is no error of grammar or syntax apparently.

4.1.4 Lexical Innovations

As highlighted by Kachru (1983), lexical innovations are often related to changes in words or associating new terms with a certain word to convey complete contextual information. Suleri has employed some lexical innovations in her work as well. She uses the expression of "khala-love" for his nieces which is an innovative use of the words 'khala' and 'love'. She links both of these terms together to reflect Pakistani culture and show the flexible nature of Pakistani English as a variety. Likewise, she utilizes the term "rickshaw-driver" in her writing which again gives a cultural and contextual aspect to the driver as rickshaw is a part of a Pakistani society and a word that has easily travelled into Pakistani English. Additionally, she also makes use of term "Bhutto-talk" which is again a compounding of a name of Pakistani politician with all its associated contexts of Pakistan's political culture. The term Bhutto-talk is of great significance as it reflects how Pakistani English can easily put forth its narrative for representation of a separate cultural context. Another interesting lexical innovation on part of Suleri is that of "sehri meal" where she combines a religious obligation with an everyday life activity, hence bringing it in the domain of an activity that is important to Pakistani people in the language that they best understand. This innovation is representative of the narrative of a separate culture and language that Suleri want to represent. Suleri has made another innovation of "Kuwaiti kebabs" which indicates the Pakistani use of possessive as in 'Kuwaiti'. Besides, the term is a coinage on part of Suleri as she gives it as an alternative to "Shami kebabs". Hence, all the lexical innovations propagate Pakistani English which is a representative of a Pakistani culture and society.

4.1.5 Translation Equivalence

Another widely known strategy of language appropriation is that of 'Translation Equivalence' which means that proverbs or idioms or other expressions are simply translated to their nearest possible equivalents. This strategy often results in quite interesting expressions like the one used by Suleri as, "goat's head and feet cooked" which is actually the translation equivalent of a famous and widely consumed dish in Pakistan named as "Siri Paye". Likewise, she writes about beef as "big meat" and mutton as "little meat". These equivalents directly correspond to a Pakistani context and efficiently represent it as beef is often called as 'bara gosht' while mutton is known as 'chota gosht'. Another very important representation of Pakistani culture is affirmed through the words of Suleri's Dadi when she says, "Shahid, upon whom God bestow a thousand blessings". This little prayer is again a translated equivalent of how elders send blessings and prayers upon their children in grandchildren in Pakistani culture. Lastly, another expression that is very significant is that of "God give me tea, God give me tea" as it is translated equivalent of a desperate prayer to God that he will provide the needed thing. This sort of prayer is typical of Pakistani people who often say it out loud using the similar words. Hence, the translation equivalents also propagate the Pakistani English variety by acting as a perfect representation of a Pakistani culture.

4.2 Language and construction of Identity

As functional narrative analysis also deals with the construction of identity, this section will analyze how identity is constructed in Sara Suleri's 'Meatless Days'. As already highlighted by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) identity is constructed through language and social reality and not vice versa. The analysis will focus on how the ESL nations are constructing their separate identities in comparison to English identity. Sara Suleri's work puts great emphasis of construction of identity, especially a Pakistani identity through the very use of language. In various instances she has denied ENL countries as norm providing and brings forth ESL countries dictating their own norms through language that leads to construction of their separate identities.

Firstly, the use of 'Honorifics' by Suleri are significant in the construction of a Pakistani identity as the honorifics reflect a deviation from the normative English honorifics or names used for indicating familial and other relationships. Honorifics like, Ama, Dadi, Khala, Begum, Bibi, Abba etc have this ingredient of Pakistani identity and culture which is constructed successfully by Suleri using the language. These honorifics mark the diversity and level of respect towards each and every relation whether it is familial or social relation.

Secondly, Suleri has used the names of the people that are a kernel ingredient of a Pakistani identity. The author's name often mentioned as 'Sara Bibi' is highly indicative of a Pakistani identity that is constructed and reconstructed throughout in 'Meatless Days'. Likewise, the names of her siblings like Iffat, Tillat, Nuzhat, Shahid, and Irfan, all of these names have Pakistani socio-cultural roots that build an identity deeply rooted in the dynamics of Pakistani culture and society. Moreover, Suleri never uses 'surnames' that are used in formal English. She mentions the first names of her siblings and other people as well which again constructs a Pakistani identity reinforced by the Pakistani English that allows these sorts of usages. Moreover, Suleri has made explicit topographic references to names of places in her autobiography as well. The mention of cities of Pakistan like, Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi also hints at identity closely related to the geographical roots. She also makes reference to a house on 'Khurshid Alam road' which again highlights her Pakistani identity. Moreover, an important point in the construction of identity is her comment on 'Bagh e Jinnah' that was previously known as Lawrence garden. This is important in terms of construction of a Pakistani identity as the identity is being reclaimed from the colonizers and constructed again with reference to Pakistani context.

Likewise, Suleri mentions many eatables and cuisines savored and consumed by Pakistani people like, 'shami kebab', 'alu ka bartha', 'gol guppas', 'jaman' and foods with 'Sindi tastes'. These and many other references reinforce Pakistani culture and in return constructs a separate Pakistani identity. In a similar manner, Festivities have been mentioned by Suleri which are mostly Muslim festivals deeply woven in the Pakistani society and identity. The repeated references to Eid (especially Eid ul Azha) and Ramzan at once construct a Pakistani Muslim identity in one's mind. She also throws light on the 'sehri' and 'iftari' that are a part and parcel of a Pakistani Muslim identity. Moreover, Suleri also makes reference to the supplications on part of her 'Dadi' and her rosary. Similarly, the mention of 'maghrib' prayer specifically and prayers in general again add to the construction of identity that is different from that of colonizers as Kachru's ESL varieties are different from that of colonizers. The use of honorifics and names related to religious and social context and identity reveals a separate identity and existence of Pakistani people apart from the colonizers and their language, culture and identity. Similarly, the use of religious symbols and discussion of religious festivals again sets Pakistani people apart from the colonizers or English people in general. Suleri's narrative successfully functions to construct and reaffirm identity using language, embedded in the socio-cultural context, as a tool for the process and goal of identity construction itself.

Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that Suleri has aptly applied the strategies of language appropriation in her memoir. She has represented a true picture of Pakistani culture and society by building up narrative that revolves around the representation of Pakistani culture

through language appropriation being named as Pakistani English. Likewise, Suleri has effectively used the language to construct Pakistani identity and the identity of Pakistani English as a separate variety of English. For further studies, it is suggested that new strategies of language appropriation may be explored within Pakistani English Literature, as this study only focused on the already established strategies of language appropriation.

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