

## **Format Variation in Business Communication: A Corpus-Based Study of Pakistani Business Letters**

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**ABSTRACT:** *Business is the soul of economic system of human civilization. It requires a lot of correspondence for effective communication and progress. Business letter is an important part of business communication. Due to ever increasing importance of English language in Pakistan and variation that it carries, it was thought necessary to study this language in business context. The present research intends to investigate the format variations in business letters in Pakistani context and the nature of these variations. It focuses on the following parts of business letter: Heading, letter head and date, inside address, salutation, body, complimentary close, signature area, and reference section. Layout styles of letters: Block, Modified block, Semi block, indented, and AMS simplified styles are also observed. The data has been taken from various banks, universities, private and government institutions of Pakistan. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been adopted to analyze the data. Qualitative work includes in depth study, the quantitative analysis will produce frequency lists and statistically significant results and on the basis of these results, the differences have been seen in depth. It is a corpus-based research. It identifies the features of Pakistani English used in these letters regarding the format. The current study also compares and contrasts the traditional formats of written communication and the newer communication styles developing as a result of the exploding technology. In spite of certain similarities, Pakistani business English letters exhibits certain unique features entirely different from British English letters and these features may be termed as features of Pakistani English. Pakistani business letters reveal native trends and the influence of indigenous culture.*

## 1. Introduction

Business letters are an important part of business communication. They are highly important in business dealings because:

- Letters provide a permanent, written record of a business transaction
- Letters represent a commitment on the part of the writer
- Letters that are carefully planned can create goodwill

When a message is complicated, and the writer wishes to reduce the possibility of confusion, a letter can provide clear documentation of his or her position. Similarly, a letter is ideal when the recipient of a message needs time to study it

### 1.1 Background and current situation

English is a tool that opens windows to the world, unlocks door to opportunities and expand human minds to new ideas. The fast increase in the globalization of the international market is forcing companies to pay more attention to this international language. Talbot (2009) maintains, "Increasingly, English language is the language of choice used in multinational gatherings. It may not be the predominant language of the group, but is the most likely to be understood by the majority – at least at a basic level – so becomes a powerful tool for communication and inclusion" (p.xiii).

### 1.2 Theoretical Undercurrents of World Englishes

Before explaining the nature of present research in detail it is important to present a review of varieties of English. The plural form 'Englishes' is used to stress the diversity to be found in the language today, and to emphasize that English is no longer the property of one single nation. The term 'World Englishes' was promoted by Kachru.

Jenkins (2006a) presents some characteristics of the term world Englishes:

Firstly, it serves as an "umbrella label" covering all varieties of English worldwide and the different approaches used to describe and analyze them. Secondly, it is used in a narrower sense to refer to the so called new Englishes in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean (Kachru's outer circle)...Thirdly, it is used to represent the pluricentric approach to the study of English associated with Kachru and his colleagues, and often referred to as the Kachruvian approach, although there is considerable overlap between this and the second interpretation of the term. (p. 159).

The discussion about regional norms for English usage around the world has become more realistic and less didactic. Distinctions are being made between national and international language uses, and localized varieties are no longer considered as necessarily deficient. Several trends are influencing this process namely,

increasing number of non-native speakers and development of non-native English literatures. The complex functions of English across cultures suggest that discussion of international English presents only part of the picture. More serious cross-cultural research on English usage and regional norms is necessary for a real understanding of the issues and solutions.

### 1.3 Pakistani English:

Now in Pakistan English has become part and parcel in every field. Hassan (2004) maintained

English is used everywhere in Pakistan, in planning, requisitioning, preparing projects, banking, industry, justice, commerce, international trade, aviation and government. At a social level one will find more wedding invitations written in English than in Urdu, though this is one area where tradition tends to dominate. Drafting is nearly always done in English (p. 21).

Before undertaking the discussion, it is important to describe that research on Pakistani English is too little to determine its status and position. Rehman (1990) highlighted this issue that the researchers who worked in this field gained little achievement because they are working on isolated level of grammatical and lexical items, ultimately it raises many uncertainties about the position and status of PE. Furthermore it is not having sufficient recognition among users of Pakistani English. There are variants in Pakistani English but are limited in number. Pakistani news papers, journals, magazines and all other written texts have the evidences of these variations. But no dictionary or detailed grammar can be produced out of the list. Rehman has identified four sub-varieties of Pakistani English, based on phonological and grammatical features alone. Another fact is that changes in Pakistani English are not stable because they are not result of long historical and cultural contacts with Pakistani Languages. Pakistani English is not a well defined variety because it is still in process of making. Nevertheless, various studies reveal that British English still has considerable influence in its former colonized countries, a Pakistani norm is also begin to emerge. This trend is most evident in typical Pakistani features of English such as Urdu borrowings, Urdu-English hybrids, and local morphological and syntactic innovations. (Baumgardner, 2007). Hassan (2004) rightly said

The phenomena of interference are well known. It leads to the numerous dialects of English which are encountered round the world, even in areas which are now almost a hundred per cent English speaking, such as Scotland, Wales or Ireland. Some regional dialects of English have become so different that they almost qualify to be called different languages...It is inevitable that English, when it is exposed to the languages of Pakistan, will be bend and twisted into several dialects of Pakistani English. These dialects will contain

‘Pakistanism’ peculiar to different areas of the country (p.54).

Rehman (2002) said that English is viewed as a language of snobs. Hassan (2004) also agreed “Pakistanis who wish to be known as superior and well educated will often introduce English into their Urdu, Punjabi etc”. Moreover, the ‘elitist’ based schools reveal a negative attitude to the Pakistani variety of English. For this Rehman has suggested that we must abolish ‘elitist’ based approach to English and it should be taught as a subject, to make it accessible to all people, instead of a medium of education in schools. Pakistani English should be treated with the same respect among its own speaker. Pakistani English can be considered as the variety in its own right. The major reason is that it fulfills all the conditions of ‘convergence’, in spite of extreme diversity in variation across different sub-varieties and the only reason why convergence cannot be shown to have taken place is lack of research. The convergence has taken place through translation and code-mixing. Talaat (2002) maintained that these are the social functions of English in Pakistan.

Pakistani texts in English are likely to be more redundant than elliptical. Translation and code mixing are two major factors to make them redundant. The wish of the Western Academics that the written language especially printed languages should be ‘edited’ for redundancies, inaccurate expressions, loose structures, repetition, emotional or moral tone, is merely a desire for hegemonic control of the (cultural) ‘other’. It is unrealistic. For not all writing among native speakers confirm to one ‘ideal norm’ (Kachru, 1999). Due to multilingualism and cultural plurality, the variations are likely to be greater among non-native speakers (Reynolds, 1991). Freedom from editing of any kind is the most important point that Pakistani English shows of acculturation in the context in Pakistan. There are various economic and socio-cultural reasons for absence of editing in Pakistan and the implication that it has for acculturation in the non-native context. Pakistani English does have certain well defined features and use enmeshed in various ways in social and cultural ways of our life. These features arise partially in response to the context, which causes the difference of code usage.

The present research highlights Pakistani English features by analyzing the differences in business English letters format in Pakistan. It is a corpus based project for which 1000 letters have been collected from different organizations and institutions of Pakistan. There is no doubt that “Pakistani users of English judge their own performance of English against a ‘norm’ of English language use” (Talaat, 2002). But the fact is that Pakistani users use a ‘norm’ of their own without being conscious of it. The present study is an effort to explore such norms existing in format of Pakistani business English letters.

## 2. Significance of the research

Communication is a process of transmitting and receiving verbal or non verbal message. Letters are the traditional form of business messages. Letter writing is crucial to the success of every professional. Without letter-writing skills, the professional’s effectiveness is stymied.

Successful professionals know the importance of effective letter writing. The sender of letter cannot have a good business relationship with receiver if he does not know what he is trying to tell him in a letter. Ineffective letters are a waste of time and money. This realization should be enough to convince every professional of the need to be a good letter writer. Letters may not seem like the crux of one’s business. Effectively written letters can increase the quality of working relationships and decrease wasted hours and money.

Business letter writing is an important part of business communication in Pakistan. Being its status of a co-official language of Pakistan, English language is mostly used at different institutional and administrative levels especially for official correspondence and communication. Therefore, there is a requirement to study the format of business letters and to discover the differences occurring in the adopted version of format. Much work has been done on variant patterns of Pakistani English regarding its use in newspaper, magazines and legal documents but the specific area of business letters has been somewhat neglected. The present research is an effort to identify the features of Pakistani business English letter format. The present research is the first corpus based study of Pakistani business English letters. This study can reveal the deviant patterns of format in Pakistani business English letters. On the basis of these deviations, the present study can strengthen the view that Pakistani English is an independent variety of English. Moreover, the present research will open new horizons for the future researchers and it will lay down the foundation for further study in this least researched area in Pakistan.

## 3. Delimitation of the research

This research is based on 1000 Pakistani business letters. These business letters were collected over a period of one year from banks, universities, private and government institutions of Pakistan. The letters were collected from different cities of Pakistan which were written to different business and social organizations. Of these letters, 231 were of banks, 270 were of universities, 302 were of government institutions and 197 were of private institutions. The focus of this research is just on two aspects of Pakistani business letters: firstly, letter style; and secondly, parts of letters.

#### 4. Why Corpus Analysis

The analysis is based on corpus of one thousand Pakistani business English letters. Corpus Linguistics is a new discipline starting in 1950. It aims to draw a universal conclusion by conducting a descriptive research on a large amount of language material. Corpus linguistics is in-depth in nature as it analyses the original texts. To study the language change there is a need to develop a corpus of Pakistani business letters for an effective empirical research projecting results of real language in use. A corpus based study is required for this research to strengthen its real life affectivity and results. Furthermore, research analyses based upon *Qualitative* and *Quantitative* methods can be carried on with the help of corpus linguistics. In this research the purpose to compile corpus is to provide the basis for more accurate and reliable description of how language is used and structured in Pakistani business letters.

#### 5. Research Design

The present study is a descriptive research of exploratory nature on the format of business letters in Pakistan. Both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used to conduct the study. Qualitative analysis has been used for in depth study and to employ expressive language in describing observations, while quantitative method has been used to produce frequency list and significant statistical results. The theoretical structure of the present study is based on world Englishes. Corpus has been used as the research methodology. The similarities and variations in the use of different letter style and the parts of the letter have been notified.

##### 5.1 Compilation of corpus

A corpus is a systematic and balanced collection of representative samples of actual language use. Corpus is defined in the Collins COBUILD (1995) dictionary as “a large collection of written or spoken texts that is used for language research”. It is a body of written or spoken material upon which a linguistic analysis is based. As Francis (1982) defines corpus as “a collection of texts assumed to be representative of a given language, dialect, or other subset of a language, to be used for linguistic analysis” (P. 7). Belief in this approach to linguistic analysis leads automatically, to the use of corpora.

In the earlier corpus-based studies, there has been the overwhelming belief amongst many corpus creators about the large corpora that ‘biggest is best’. As Sinclair (1991) emphasized the need for large corpora in these words: “The only guidance I would give is that a corpus should be as large as possible and keep on growing...In order to study the behaviour of words in texts, we need to have available quite a large number of occurrences”

(p. 18). On the other hand, Leech (1991) disagrees with this, and opined “To focus merely on size, however, is naive” (P. 10). He is of the view that, the copyright issues, unbalanced inclusion of written texts and non-availability of software are the factors involved in justifying that biggest is not necessarily best. But the advent of specialized corpora strengthened the value of smaller corpora. Kennedy (1998) said “A huge corpus does not necessarily ‘represent’ a language or a variety of a language any better than a smaller corpus” (P. 68). Small corpora can be very helpful, and it can also present a ‘balanced’ and ‘representative’ picture of a particular area of the language (Murison-Bowie, 1993, P. 50). Recently there is a fast developing recognition of a need for smaller or specialised corpora. Howarth (1998) also pointed out that larger corpora is useful for analysing the native speaker speech, while smaller corpora is good for analysing the language of non-native language speakers (P. 34). So, the need for smaller corpora - analysing particular areas of the language - has been acknowledged.

- This specialized corpus was compiled to identify the features of Pakistani English in business letters format.
- This specialized corpus has been named ‘Pakistani Business English’ (PBE). Data was collected from various banks, factories, Government, Semi Government and private offices. Some of the sources of data collection have been listed here under:
  - Higher Education Commission of Pakistan, The Bank of Punjab, Habib Bank Limited, National Bank of Pakistan, National University of Modern Languages, G.C. University Faisalabad, National Textile University, Sitara Textile Mills, Sitara Chemical Industries Private Limited, State Life Insurance Company, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited, The Agha Khan University, King Edward Medical University, Lahore, Al-Zamin Lease Company Limited, Nishat Mills Private Limited
- After collecting the data was categorized into four types on the basis of their availability :
  - a. Banks
  - b. Government non-academic institution
  - c. Government academic institution
  - d. Private institutions.
- After their categorization all letters were tagged. The text categories have been labelled according to the names of the institutions and a tag was assigned to each text for easy retrieval and recognition of the text. Letters collected from the banks were tagged as BNKPE, it stands for Bank Pakistani English.

Letters from Government non-academic institutions were tagged as GOVT PE NA, it shows Government Pakistani English Non Academics and letters collected from Government academic institution were tagged as GOVT PE AC, it denotes Government Pakistani English Academics. Lastly letters from private sources i.e. factories, mills, offices; companies etc. were tagged as PVT PE, it represents Private Institutes Pakistani English. After doing this, all the letters were assigned a particular number e.g. BNKPE 0001 and this numbering continued up till PVTPE1000. The corpus is named PBE i.e. Pakistani Business English.

- Mostly the data was in photocopied form; however some original printed copies were also included, therefore Abbey Five Reader 8.0 was used to convert hard data into soft form.
- Data was scanned.
- After scanning, the data was converted into soft copies for software analysis.
- These soft copies were arranged into Microsoft office word files categorically.
- Once the letters have been gathered, a decision has to be made on what aspects of letters format would be used for inclusion in the corpus. At first, the data was thoroughly analyzed and was delimited to two aspects of the letter; firstly, letter styles; and secondly, parts of the letter.
- The investigation was carried on these two aspects. Firstly, Block, modified block, semi block, Ams simplified were analyzed in letter styles. And secondly, in parts of the letter, letterhead, date, inside address, salutation, Body, complimentary close and signature area, optional parts; File number, subject line, copy notation, enclosure notation, mailing notation, extended zip code etc were examined.

Once specifications have been made as to the content of the corpora, the data has to be actually collected and entered into the computer. The data was represented on a spread sheet where their variations and changes were recorded. After analyzing the data it was represented on Microsoft Office Excel 2010. The following table shows its presentation on the excel sheet.

**Letter Style**

	Block	Modified Block	Semi Block	AMS
BNKPE0001	Yes	No	No	No
BNKPE0002	No	Yes	No	No
BNKPE0003	No	Yes	No	No

The results were statically calculated and percentages were deduced. The analyzed percentages were presented graphically in the form of 'pie charts'.

## 6. Data Analysis

Business English is related to ESP therefore the language of business letters to be clear, crisp and to the point. It seldom allows subjective digressions. Its expressions are mostly formulaic and to the point. Every letter has two distinct divisions:

- Form
- Body

Form is related to the format of the letter, its appearance and its parts while the body of the letter is related to the content of the letter, its language. This analysis deals with the format of one thousand business letters of Pakistan.

### 6.1 Pakistani Business Letters

This is an account and analysis of format used in a corpus of 1000 English business letters in Pakistan. Bovee and Thill said (1995) "Over the centuries certain conventions have developed for the format and layout of business documents..., conventions vary from country to country, and even within the United States, few hard and fast rules exist." (p. 618).

Many organizations even develop variations of standard styles to suit their own needs, adopting the style that's best for the types of messages they send and for the kinds of audiences that receive them. So, the format of these business letters demonstrates some of the distinguishing features of Pakistani business English letters.

#### 6.1.1 Letter Style

The letter style of most of these Pakistani business letters is different from the prescribed pattern of the course books, as shown in table number 5. In order to satisfy the target readers, there is a need to understand the writing conventions. Although in Pakistani letters are arranged in full block, modified block and semi block style, but the majority of the writers are using their own way of formatting the letters. There are 485 instances of this new style.

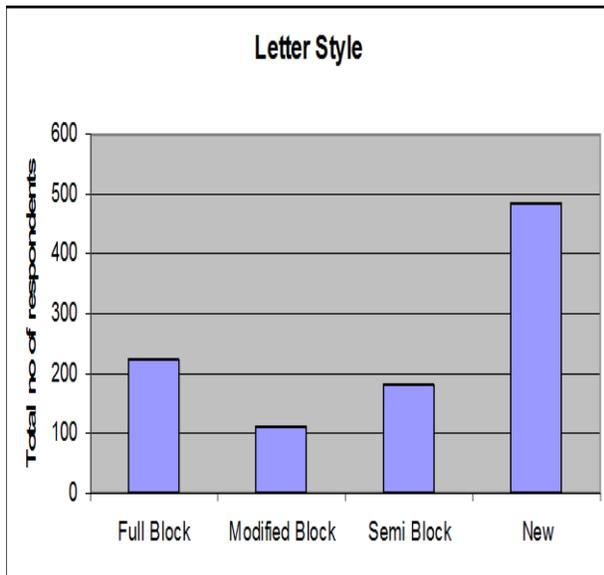
The basic letter parts are almost same but the ways of arranging them is different. The letter styles in Pakistani business letters are more numerous and diverse as compared to those in British or American English. The most common formats used in Pakistani business letters are described as under:

1. Each letter's part begins at the left margin but the 'date' begins at the horizontal center of the

- page or is placed so that it ends near the right-hand margin.
- 2. Each letter parts is placed at the left margin except the ‘Signature block’ starts near the center of the page or is placed near the right-hand margin with paragraphs indented.
- 3. ‘Inside address’ is placed after ‘body’ at the end of the letter, on the left-hand side.
- 4. Letter starts from the left-hand side and ends at the right-hand side, with 1st paragraph indented and the rest at the left margin.
- 5. Punctuation style is neither standard nor open; a different style is used where a comma is used after salutation and complimentary close.

So, we find that their formats vary in the way paragraphs are indented, in the way letters parts are placed and in punctuation style.

Even in the same organization different formats are used. This shows that Pakistani business letters writers do not follow the conventions completely, for the document layout and presentation. This is clearly seen in the nature of letter styles found in over 48 percent of these letters. All business letters have certain elements in common, but there are differences in style.



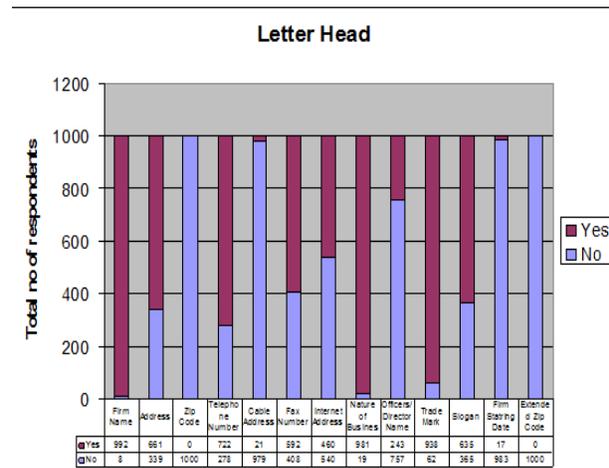
Letter Style	Frequency	Percent
Full Block	222	22.2
Modified Block	110	11.0
Semi Block	183	18.2
New	485	48.5
Total	1000	100

**6.1.2 Parts of letter**

Most of business letters have the following parts.

- 1) Heading
- 2) Letter head and date
- 3) Inside Address
- 4) Salutation
- 5) Body
- 6) Complimentary close
- 7) Signature area

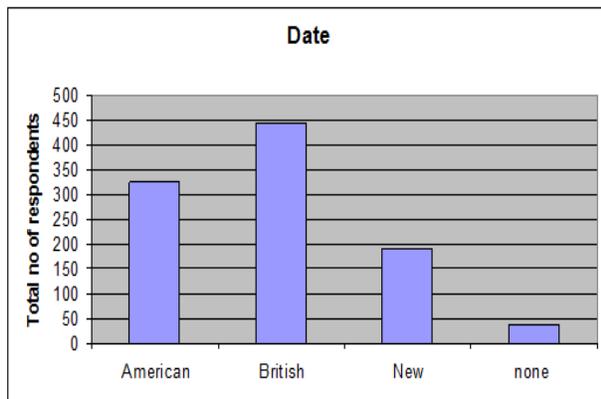
**6.1.2.1 Letter head**



Letterhead is used to give the recipient of the letter pertinent reference data and a better idea of what the company does. As Bovee and Thill (1995) defined “Letterhead (the usual heading) shows the organization’s name, full address, and (almost always) telephone number. Executive letterhead also bears the name of an individual within the organization”. (p. 620) In Pakistani business letters the organization’s name, address, telephone number; fax number, internet Address, and nature of business are placed in the letter head. Moreover, some optional details, names of officers and directors, trade mark and slogan are also parts of the letter head. There are also found few instances of cable address and firm starting date, but both these parts are not widely used. In most of these letters full address is not given in the letterhead. Sometimes, letterhead information is also provided by the writer in the footer. On the other hand information regarding zip code and extended zip code is not given in these letters.

### 6.1.2.2 Date

**Table 5.2**



Date	Frequency	Percent
American	325	3.9
British	445	32.5
New	191	44.5
Not present	39	19.1
Total	1000	100

Pakistan business letters are not following conventional date form. As it is described in the course books, e.g. “The standard method of writing the date in the United States uses the full name of the month (no abbreviations), followed by the day (in numerals, without *st*, *rd*, or *th*), a comma, and then the year: July 14, 1995(7/14/95)” (Bovee, 1995, p. 620). Another convention described in the same book is as under “The U.S. government and some U.S. industries place the day (in numerals) first, followed by the month (unabbreviated), followed by the year----with no comma: 14 july1995 (14/7/95). This convention is similar to the one used in Europe, except that European convention replaces the U.S. solidus with periods when the date appears all in numerals: 14 July 1995 (14.7.1995)” (p.620). But a close observation of these letters shows number of variation. Pakistani business letters have some similar date format. Here are different format selected from some of these letters to illustrate the point:

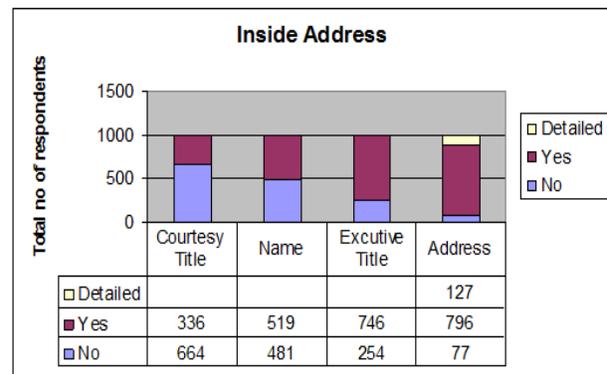
- June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2009.
- February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2010.
- November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009
- 3 oct, 2008
- 15-10-2010
- 13 Dec 2008

- 30<sup>th</sup> june 2008 or 24<sup>th</sup> September, 2010 (with comma)
- Sep 01, 2010
- Aug.12, 2010
- 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 2010
- 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2008
- 21<sup>st</sup> February, 2009

These direct examples illustrate some of the date formats used by business letter writers and point to the fact that the writers are not following completely the standard method of writing the date, in Pakistan and abbreviated date forms are also used which is simply informal. No doubt the date sequence is either British or American but the style of writing is different. As it is described here by Lesikar and Flatley (2005) in these words “Abbreviated date forms such as 09-17-03 or sept. 17, ‘03 are informal and leave unfavourable impression on some people” (p. 566). Moreover, the writers are not following the international standard too. “The international standard places the year first, followed by the month and the day, using commas in the all numerals form: 1995 July 14 (1995, 7, 14)”, state Bovee and Thill (1995, p. 620).

### 6.1.2.3 Inside address

**Table 5.3**



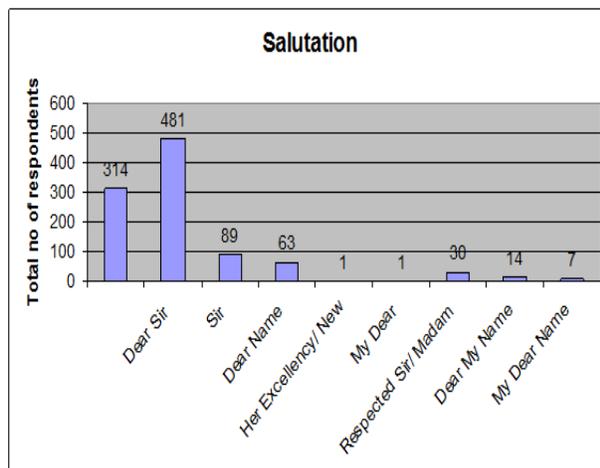
The inside address identifies the recipient of the letter. It is always blocked at the left hand margin. Directly underneath the date sender’s address is given. Lesikar and Flatley (2005) defined the inside address as “The mailing address, complete with the title of the person being addressed, makes up the inside address” (p. 566) But when we talk about inside address used in our Pakistani business letters just few instances are there, where ‘mailing address’ is written by the writers. Moreover, ‘professional title’ is given more importance as compared to ‘courtesy title’. In spite of the emphasis given on it for example, “Always be sure to include a courtesy title such as *Mr.*, *Ms.*, *Mrs.*, *Dr.*, or *Professor* before a person’s name in the inside address”.(Guffey, 2010, p. a-5). But the writers do not precede the

addressee's name with a courtesy title all the time. This is clearly seen in the nature of inside address found in our corpus. Out of 1000 letters analysed, 360 have courtesy title, while 746 letters have professional title as shown in the figure. It may be attributed to the writer's ignorance of the appropriate usage of language. Many such usages may be dubbed as deviant by native speakers of English. Perhaps "variant" would be a more appropriate label to describe them.

Moreover, instead of detail address the name of the organization, department name and city or town name is provided in the 'addresses'. So in Pakistani Business letters organizational title, name and organization's name are included. There are also some features like e-mail messages for example 'To line'. It includes the receiver's address after 'To'. Similarly in some letters 'from line' is given which includes the sender's address after 'from'.

#### 6.1.2.4 Salutation

Table 5.4



Salutation	Frequency	Percent
Not Present	314	31.4
Dear Sir	481	48.1
Sir	89	8.9
Dear Name	63	6.3
Her Excellency/ New	1	.1
My Dear	1	.1
Respected Sir/ Madam	30	3.0
Dear My Name	14	1.4
My Dear Name	7	.7
Total	1000	100

Table 5.4 presents different types of salutations and complimentary closes found in the data. In Pakistan,

formal business letters written in English open and end in an unconventional way. As the rule is prescribed in business writing textbooks:

"Salutations are placed on the left margin. As a general rule when the writer knows the addressee well and is on a "first name" basis, the writer begins an informal social letter with "Dear" followed by the addressee's first name (Dear John, Dear Mary, etc.). For formal social and business letter the salutation "Dear" is followed by the title and family name or by Mr / Mrs + family name. (Dear Mr. Simpson, Dear Dr. Jones, etc.). Other acceptable forms of business letters salutations: Dear Publisher, Dear Editor, Dear parents, Dear colleagues, etc.—this avoids the use of "Dear sir" and "Gentlemen" which is now outdated" (Pilucka, pg. 88)

Moreover in another book the same rule is described: "As a general rule, remember that if the writer and the reader know each other well, the salutation may be first name (*Dear Joan*). A salutation by last name (*Dear Mr. Baskin*) is appropriate in most cases". (Lesikar & Flatley, 2005, p. 566).

In another way the same idea is described: "Letters to people you don't know well enough to address personally include in courtesy title and last name, followed by a colon" (Bovee & Thill, 1995, p. 622). But in these letters neither the writers are using first name nor are they using the last name alone. On the other hand, if the name of the person, to whom, the letter is written, is given that is the full name of that person i.e. first and last name both. In 63 letters the name has been given in the salutation, while in seven letters 'My dear (name)' has been given. Bovee & Thill (1995) suggest, "For the salutation, use Dear (*Title/Last name*). Close the letter with '*Sincerely*' or '*Cordially*', and sign it personally" (p. 626). Similarly, "Damerst (1966) and Shurter (1971) suggest that the complimentary close should be in keeping with the salutation. Choices here are also limited in range, involving the use of *Dear Sir*: or *Dear Madam*: or *Dear Mr.*\_\_\_\_\_ : when the name is known". Moreover, they also present a small number of choices, ranging from very formal (Respectfully yours,) to informal (Cordially,).

But instead of name what we find in most of letters 'Dear sir' is used. These letters open with "Dear sir" and closes with 'yours sincerely', 'sincerely' or 'yours truly', which is irregular and unconventional. Conventional way of opening and ending the letter is that it should be opened with 'Dear sir' and closed with 'yours faithfully' or opened with 'Dear (name)' and closed with 'yours sincerely'.

As the rule is described here "*Yours faithfully*" is most commonly used in business; it should always be used when the greeting uses Sir or Madam and not the name of the addressee. When it is permissible to use the addressee's personal name in the greeting, it is often permissible to use the more intimate close "*Yours*

*sincerely*". In a training guide of Cambridge international college this suggestion is given

□ "Dear Sir" or "Dear Madam" should always be followed by "Yours faithfully,"

□ but "Dear Mr. (Mrs. or Miss) Brown" may be followed by "Yours sincerely," (Pg. 14 module 1)

But these letters open with 'Dear (name)' and closes with 'yours faithfully' which is also unconventional. It may be attributed to the writer's ignorance of the appropriate variety of language use. But as a matter of fact, it demonstrates some of the distinguishing features of Pakistani English. Another important thing to be noticed here is that many letters do not have salutations and complimentary closes. There are also some letters where the Salutation 'Dear Mr. (Name)' has been used.

We have not only a simple straightforward mode of address, but also the formal and stiff. These are the various address forms found in our corpus:

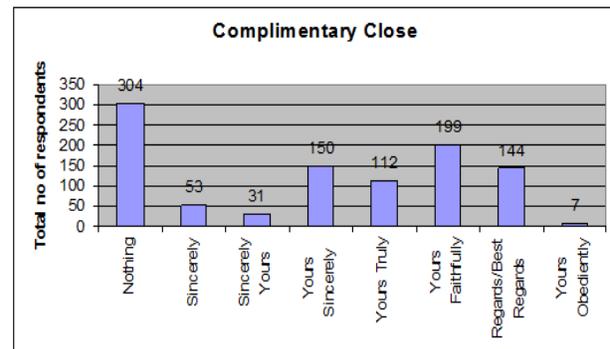
- Dear Sir/Madam
- Sir
- My Dear
- Dear (name)
- Her Excellency
- Respected Sir/Madam
- Dear Mr (name)
- My dear (name)

Moreover, there are also few examples of opening the letter with 'assalamualikum'. The greeting 'assalamualikum', normally used in face-to-face interaction, is sometimes given as the opening sentence of a letter. The practice of starting a letter with salutations of this sort is non-existent in the native varieties of English.

It is elementary courtesy to acknowledge a letter with thanks. The complimentary close describes the relationship between you and the person you are writing to. As Bovee & Thill (1995) said: "A number of alternatives for wording are available, but currently the trend seems to be toward using one-word closes, such as 'Sincerely' and 'Cordially'" (p. 623).

### 6.1.2.5 Complimentary Close

Table 5.5



Complimentary Close	Frequency	Percent
Not present	304	30.4
Sincerely	53	5.3
Sincerely Yours	31	3.1
Yours Sincerely	150	15.0
Yours Truly	112	11.2
Yours Faithfully	199	19.9
Regards/Best Regards	144	14.4
Yours Obediently	7	.7
Total	1000	100

In keeping with the Pakistani context, the following salutations have been noted in this corpus:

- Sincerely
- Yours sincerely
- Sincerely your
- Yours truly
- Yours faithfully
- Regard/Best regards
- Yours obediently

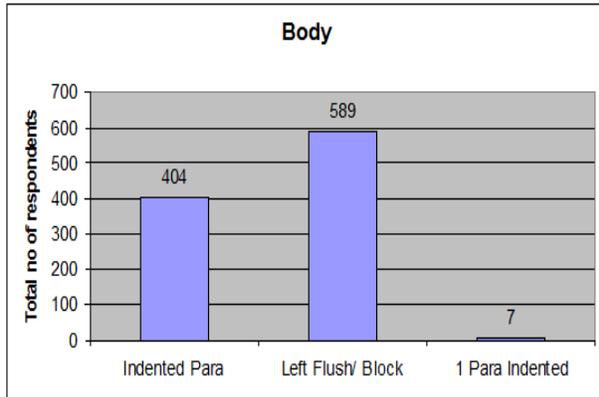
But there is a general uncertainty on how to end letters beginning with 'Dear sir' and 'Dear (name)', which can be attributed to unique style of Pakistani business letter writers.

The use of 'yours obediently' is considered out-dated and old fashioned in contemporary British English. Although such a manner of thanks-giving is less common among native speakers of English, it is by no means unknown. In these letters the writers seem ignorant of the rule in the choice of complimentary closes. Out of 1000 Pakistani business letters analysed, 497 letters have irregular complimentary closes only 199 can be called conventional. It is interesting to note that towards the end of a letter the writer does not always introduce himself with the usual phrase *Yours sincerely*

or *Yours truly*. Sometimes, he takes liberty and does not follow the conventional usage. It may be noted that many letters don't have salutation and complimentary closes at all.

**6.1.2.6 Body**

**Table 5.6**

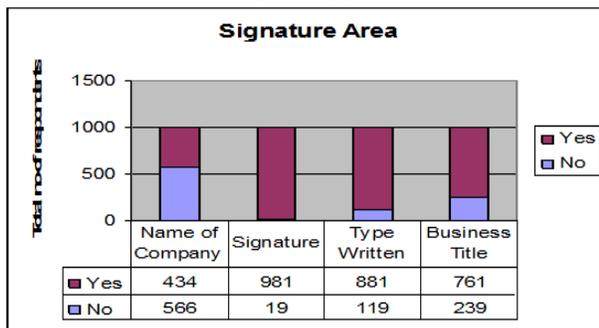


Body	Frequency	Percent
Indented Para	404	40.4
Left Flush/Block	589	58.9
1 Para Indented	7	.7
Total	1000	100

Body of these letters are at left flush and paragraphs are also indented in many letters. Some letters are with 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph indented. These formats differ in the way paragraphs are indented. Books on business letter writing give most of their attention to the body of the letter. The contents of a business letter represent a wide spectrum of topics relating to the writer and the addressee and ranging from very private to very general matters.

**6.1.2.7 Signature area**

**Table 5.7**



After leaving three blank lines for a written signature below the complimentary close, the sender's name and organizational title is typed. Signature area in a business letter in Pakistan, like other parts of the letter, has a design of its own which does not necessarily follow the pattern of a letter written by native speaker of English. Most of the letters contain 'Signature', 'type written name', and 'Business title' in the signature area. While in 434 Letters Company name is also given as it is illustrated in figure----. 'Signature' appears below the complimentary close. Then the sender's name is typed after that person's title appears on the following line in these business letters. In many letters the sender's name is placed in parenthesis. Unlike the conventions in the Pakistani business letters, the name of the company is placed after the business title. The conventional form for this arrangement is described by Lesikar and Flatley (2005):

"The conventional form for this arrangement places the firm name in solid capitals and blocked on the second line below the closing phrase. The typed name of the person signing the letter is on the fourth line below the firm name" (p. 567). Similarly, in another book the same placement is emphasized: "The accepted way of doing that is to type the company's name in capital letters a double space below the complimentary close and then type the sender's name and title four lines below that." (Bovee & Thill, 1995, p. 623).

Guffey (2010) is of the view: "Some organizations include their names in the signature block. In such cases the organization name appears in all caps one blank line below the complimentary close." (p. A-6).

**6.1.2.8 Optional/Additional parts of the business Letters in Pakistan**

**Table 5.8**

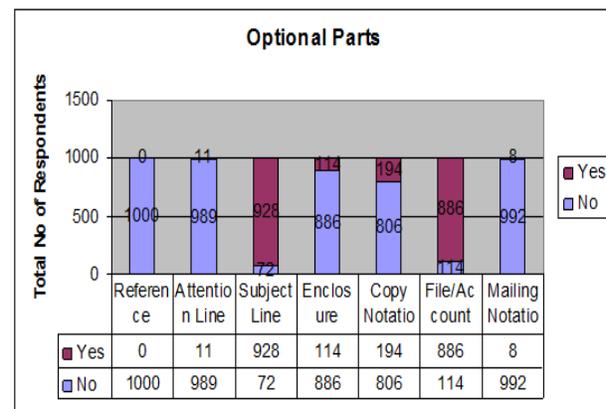


Table 5.8 presents different types of optional parts used by the Pakistani writers. Several of these optional letter parts appear in every letter; others appear only when

desirable or appropriate. The usage of these parts of the letters demonstrates some of the distinguishing features of Pakistani English. Generally, these parts are widely used by the Pakistani business letter writers:

- file/account number
- subject line
- copy notation
- enclose notation

#### 6.1.2.9 File / account number/reference line

Just like 'Date' the way of arranging the file number in Pakistani business letter is different from British or American English letters. As the placement of file number described by Guffey (2010) is:

"Reference lines often show policy or file numbers; they generally appear one blank line above the salutation" (P. A-5). But in Pakistan business letters most of the file numbers appear above the date line at the left margin of the page or above the inside address. In some letters it is placed below the body. These references lines contain the information regarding the 'name of organization', 'name of branch' and 'year'. Sometimes capital or some times small words are used for main words in reference line. Unlike the pattern prescribed in textbooks: "Use initial capital letters for the main words or all capital letters" (p. A-5).

#### 6.1.2.10 Subject Line

"The subject line lets the recipient know at a glance what the letter is about; it also indicates where to file the letter for future reference" (Bovee & Thill, 1995, p. 623). Most of the writers use the subject line in their letters so that both the sender and the receiver may quickly identify the subject of the correspondence, because it tells what the letter is about. Although experts suggest placing the subject line one blank line below the salutation, but in our content writers place it above the salutation mostly. The block is headed in a number of ways, of which the following are representative:

- Subject: National ICT scholarship program 2009
- Re: Complaint no.H/1035/09
- Subject: Deduction-G.p./Ben Fund and group insurance
- Sub: proposal No.509325) OWN LIFE
- Subj:- issuance of the credit card

Sometimes subject line is underlined and sometimes not. The writers use the word 'Subject' and then put a colon after it. In some letters a colon with hyphen is used after the word 'subject'.

#### 6.1.2.11 Copy notation

"When you want persons other than the addressee to receive a copy of your letter, the names of these persons should be typed just below the reference initials or the enclosure notation, whichever is last". (Murphy, Hildebrandt & Thomas 1997, p. 167)

In Pakistani business letters these forms are used:

- Cc to:
- Cc:
- CC:
- C.C.to:-
- Copy to
- Copy to,
- Copy to:

It appears at the bottom of a letter, below the enclosure notation, or below the body.

#### 6.1.2.12 Enclosure notation

"When an enclosure or attachment accompanies a document, a notation to that effect appears one blank line below the reference initials. This notation reminds recipient to look for the enclosure or attachment" (Guffey, 2010, P. A-6)

As in our corpus the reference initial does not exist it appears in the lower –left corner of the letters. We have both abbreviated and spelled out notation for enclosures. The following examples may be noted:

- Encl: As Above
- Encl: a.a.
- Enclosure (4)
- Enc. Annexure A

Either they indicate number of enclosure or a specific enclosure. The reference section, which includes information about the message composer and typist, is not the part of these letters. There are also a few usages of 'mailing notation' and 'attention line'.

#### 6.1.3 Punctuation style

Letters may also be classified according to the style of punctuation they use. Two types of punctuation styles are very common.

"*Standard*, or *mixed*, *punctuation* uses a colon after the salutation (a comma if the letter is social or personal) and a comma after the complimentary close. *Open punctuation* uses no colon or comma after the salutation or the complimentary close". (Bovee & Thill, 1995, p. 627). There is no hard and fast rule followed by the Pakistani business letter writers. Mostly a comma is used after salutation and complimentary close.

## 7. Discussion on Results and Findings

The results of the data show a difference in theory and practice of the format and language of business letters. The format and the language of letters taught by textbooks reflect a pattern that is ought to be used by the students of business in their real life business dealings. However it has been observed that there is a gap between the format and language taught by the books and 'real' language and structure use in business letters. This difference is due to many reasons. One of the main reasons is that books generally suppose an ideal situation where the sender and the receiver both are either native English speakers or educated people who have developed competence of English as a second language. While the issue with us is that Pakistan is not English speaking country. As discussed earlier that its vast exposure and widely use in offices gave it a status of a co-official language in Pakistan. Gradually it has evolved as a distinct variety of 'World Englishes' having particular patterns and distinctions. Another reason of the difference found in the language and structure of Pakistani business letters is due to the teaching materials used in our academic institutions i.e. text books, notes and other helping materials (internet), presents an oversimplified and unreal picture of business world. The language and structure of letters found in books differ from the actual business communication. The real use of language in business letter is entirely based on intuition, perception and experience of the author. There is a huge impact of Pakistani native cultural and ethnic values on our business as well as business English. As the data was collected from different institutions of Pakistan, therefore it has not only the impact of 'Pakistaniness' on language rather every institution also has its own particular letter style.

Through the study of the frequencies of letter style of 1000 letters in PBE, it has been observed that 485 letters out of 1000 Pakistani business letters showed the new style.

In the study of letter parts, it has been seen that date sequence has shown similarity with the BrE and AmE letters but date style (with abbreviation, and in numerals with st, rd, th) was quite different from BrE and AmE letters. The study of use of inside address has also revealed the different use in comparison with the BrE AmE letters. In the study of salutation and complimentary close, it has been found that Pakistani Business English letters open and close in an unconventional way as compared to BrE AmE letters. Similarly, letterhead and Signature block have shown different pattern in contrast with BrE AmE letters. The difference has also been observed when different optional parts have been studied in PBE letters. Surprisingly, it has been noted that letter parts have shown the similarity with BrE and AmE letters but the

style bears the difference. After the analyses and comparison of different conventions it can be safely said that the differences occur in writing styles of Pakistani business letters. The formats of Pakistani letters differ in the way paragraphs are indented, in the way letters parts are placed and in punctuation style. In all types of business letters, it seems that the average writer does not have complete mastery over the basic rules involved in the choice and placement of letter parts and it is not easy to reach on a specific letter pattern and letter style. Out of 1000 letters analysed, most of the business letters have irregular letter style and only few can be called conventional.

So, it also needs to be pointed out that, the business letters under scrutiny here demonstrate a variety of features that consist of innovations which may strike an indigenous speaker of English as deviant. However, these may be explained in terms of nativization of English and indigenous socio-cultural factors. In addition, they also serve to reveal the difference of the self in the East from that in the West. Brown (1996) correctly observes, "The self in the East is said to be relational, interpersonal or collective whereas the self in the West is individualistic and autonomous" (p. 39).

In nut shell, it can be said that a particular language community shares a particular set of writing conventions which differs it from other language communities. Despite a general uncertainty on how to use different parts of the letters and letter style, which may be viewed as the writer's ignorance of proper knowledge of the rules, business letter-writing as a genre is developing its own distinctive patterns of appearance and structural sequencing in Pakistan. On the other hand, there is a need to observe this genre for a long duration to draw definite conclusions on any observed deviant features of Pakistani English.

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