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## WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN POST-COLONIAL FICTION: A CORPUS-ASSISTED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE SELECTED WORD 'BIBI'

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### ABSTRACT

Pakistani English fiction provides a window to the social representation of women. Exploring narratives with corpus-assisted discourse analysis has changed the landscape of linguistic analysis and it provides sufficient evidence in the form of fiction corpus. The aim of this study is to explore gender stereotype construction in post-colonial fiction. It applied a corpus-assisted approach to the selected corpus (PakLocCorpus). This article explored the multifaceted and pluralistic representation of the Pakistani woman, ranging from different accounts of native female sensuality and discussion of social reform issues to admiring inscriptions of wifely devotion or the lady from the household, 'Bibi'. A corpus of Pakistani English Fiction, that is part of an extended project, PakLocCorpus, is exploited for the current analysis. Corpus Assisted Discourse analysis of themes has been carried out to identify gender stereotypes through colloquial patterns of the selected word 'Bibi' in Pakistani society. All collocates of selected words are analyzed for the discourse analysis of themes. The results revealed that the local narrative representation of women denotes a respectful figure and this social illustration is different than the one presented in Western media. On the contrary, modern writers raise their voices to highlight the construction of gender stereotypes in society. The study is a significant contribution to the existing literature.

**Keywords:** representation, corpus-assisted analysis, social illustration, women, fiction

### INTRODUCTION

Fiction discourse is a rich source of social representation and reflects language usage in a social construct. The representation of gender finds its place not only in classic literature but also in modern, contemporary, or post-colonial fiction discourse. Language is the tool that gives different voices to these portrayals through the use of imagery, discourse, and style. Discourse analysis has become one of the trendiest linguistic disciplines throughout the world. The situation is partly a reaction to the complete dominance of formalistic linguistic approaches during the five recent decades. Though social constructions are analyzed from different theoretical perspectives, women's representation is often related to socio-cultural or religious patterns. Though women's representation or the concept of women empowerment or Western feminist movements is entirely different than the women in the East, it is often misinterpreted. Ahmed (2009) observed that constructions of gender roles and their development reflect the society that dominated the media throughout the post-colonial period and preface the models of

masculinity that dominated the earlier. Sen (2001) observed that all colonial cultures, women are perceived as the gendered, 'others'. It argued that the social contexts, colonial victimization of native women and their limited role further stress the fiction writers to describe local women and their pride in the households. Post-colonial literature exploited Urdu loan words, such as Ayah, Bibi, Zenana, etc to defend the eastern perspective of women empowerment. Dhal (2018) focuses on the character of the Ayah in the fiction discourse, who, as a victim of oppression, symbolizes the fate of the subaltern. It described the empathy of women characters after political upheavals during the partition of India and Pakistan. Characters have been described as shaped by prejudice born of religious inequality, social change and cultural suppression. Sidhwa, who wants a world free of patriarchy and hierarchy, obliges her audience to meet her feminine characters in various social representations and; 'ayah' is a significant character in almost all of her narratives. The cultural difference in Ayah's social circle was, for the most part, respected and accepted, and this often reflected in social circles. Asif et al. (2021) and Fischer-Starcke (2010) revealed gender stigmatization and identity in fiction. It discussed how several novelists from Pakistan (including Tariq Mehmood, Nazneen Sadiq, Adam Zameenzad, Nadeem Aslam, Muneeza Naqvi, Kamila Shamsie, Muhammad Hanif, Mohsin Hamid, and Uzma Aslam Khan) articulate the voices of the common people and articulate gender stereo types and characterization. Mahlberg and McIntyre (2011) studied corpus stylistics whereas Sen (2001) investigated women characterization and gendered colonized construction of 'native' women. It explores the multifaceted and pluralistic representation of the Indian woman, ranging from prurient accounts of native female sensuality and discussion of social reform issues to laudatory inscriptions of wifely devotion and the sati. In other words, the image of the Indian woman was constantly being reconstructed and proscriptions of her sensuousness were interwoven with prescriptions of passive feminine behavior.

Gender representation is considered as a basic theme in fiction discourse .Though previous investigations have focused their attention towards post-colonial representation of women in fiction, native perspective is not yet explored. Constructions of gender roles and their development reflects the society and when it comes to women representation, western feminist empowerment is also compared. Though western feminist perspective is more concerned with liberalism and freedom, the post-colonial construction of women in household, or 'Bibi' is entirely different. Previous investigations focused on the western perspective of women's victimization and marginalization and ignored the primacy of joint family systems and women empowerment in households. Current investigation analyzed characterization of women through selected word, 'Bibi' in the fiction corpus. Selected word is significant as it is extensively used in post-colonial fiction and represent women in households. This research focused on exploring and understanding allocation of feminine gender roles in fiction discourse and how these gender roles are merged in the 'social language' of borrowed words. Urdu borrowed words are deliberately used in fiction and corpus based evidence shows the deliberate meaning making process of these Urduized words.

Current study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do fiction writers use 'Bibi' to describe female character in Post-colonial fiction discourse?

2. What 'colloquial patterns' are used to describe Urduized word, 'Bibi' in selected fiction corpus?
3. How does 'social language' reinforce gender stereotypes?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Discourses represent particular realities, as forms of semantic contractions, peculiar for some concern in a particular historical and social context. Social practices involved in these constructions not only evaluate, justify or transform the discourse but also legitimize the constructions involved in it. Relationship between social world and language-in-use is not straightforward and multiple heterogeneous, largely qualitative, approaches of discourse analysis can observe language as a form of social practice influencing social world. Many contemporary variations of discourse analysis have, explicitly or implicitly, been influenced by traditional philosophical style of French school of Foucault (1977) and Derrida (1970) related to power, knowledge, and discourse. In part, Foucault's work has helped stimulate greater interest in researching the role language plays in the production and maintenance of specific knowledges, and inequitable power relations. There are many different approaches to discourse, none of them, can be considered uniquely "right." Different approaches often fit different issues and questions, better or worse than others (Gee, 2014). Language interpretations, with any method of discourse analysis is likely to exploit theories about what language and interpretation are, or what the important questions to pursue in regard to them are, 'adopting or adapting' specific tools of inquiry and strategies for implementing them in a certain 'practicing community'. In theories of discourse analysis, language use is often studied in association with thinking, valuing, acting, and interacting, in the "right" places and at the "right" times with the "right" objects, for members of a socially meaningful group or 'social network', in contemporary sense of group membership (Gee 2014; see also Bourdieu 1991; Foucault 1977). Mackie (2012) investigated media representation of Afghan girls.

The corpus studies are democratic in approach as they provide equal opportunities of studies to non-native speakers as to native speakers. Corpus linguistics facilitates compilation and analysis of large data sets of written and spoken language whether produced in a professional, academic or social contexts or developed for specific purposes. Collection of samples of different registers and styles of language is possible which are necessary to show the 'wide repertoire of language' (Mehboob, 2009). Corpus provides an opportunity to several researchers from different locations to work on the same corpus whether text or speech, from different perspectives. Corpus methods and tools are mostly frequency based, e.g. wordlists, concordance keywords, tag frequency, collocation, lexical bundles and multiword units. Corpora can be made more informative by adding linguistic information to the text and it is termed as annotation. Corpus linguistics encompasses a sound system of tagging and annotation that explains the origin, biography and other relevant information of the text development.

Corpus of Pakistani English have been compiled, studied and described by Mehmood (2009), Mehboob (2009), Amir and Mehmood (2018), Abbas et al. (2022) provide description of unique features of Pakistani English represented in different sociocultural or political contexts of the country. Discussion of previous investigations seem to highlight what kind of linguistic expressions, devices, collocation patterns are possible in indigenous vocabulary and concordance lines represent these patterns in text frame and how these patterns are similar or different with

other varieties or registers, etc. Corpora of Pakistani English carry rich cultural load of indigenous vocabulary and grammatical constructs within itself. Language in CDA is a type of social practice where researchers try to uncover the embedded meaning, power relations, and false ideologies in any discourse (Khan, 2020). Significantly, CDA and CL are merged effectively to analyze a text where certain words and phrases, collocations, and syntactic patterns of text are analyzed with the help of corpus tools, including the use of pronouns for a particular gender in language, transitivity, and agency.

After Kachru's (1983) groundbreaking work on South Asian Englishes (SAE), Baumgardner, Kennedy, and Shamim (1993) have considered the borrowed items from South Asian languages with a particular focus on Urdu and analyzed their semantic and grammatical aspects. Sheeraz (2014) identified sixteen unique features of Pakistani English employed in the fiction discourse. This acknowledgment reinforces the findings of some of the previous studies in the area such as Mahboob (2009), Ahmed (2009), Khan (2020), etc. From hybrid formations of Kachru (1983) till single item transfer from Urdu to English (Baumgardner, 1993), Unique features of Urduized vocabulary are described with reference to their contextual areas. Pakistani fiction writers like Talat Abbasi, Qaisra Shahraz, Mohsin Hamid, Bapsi Sidhwa, and Zulifkar Ghose have made concerted efforts to bring to light the status of Pakistani woman. Ahmed (2009) observed that their female portrayals are reflective of the behavioral changes women undergo to achieve the status of emancipation and empowerment. Pakistani Anglophone literature also represents environmental crisis whether it is the course of nature or the result of poor strategic planning and policies and Uzma Aslam Khan has structured the post/neocolonial status of the characters with their relationship in natural environment. Sen (2001) observed that women were strategically linked to the agenda of empire. It focused upon Bibi, and ayah (child's maid) who in any case was the Indian female with whom the average white man or woman now came closest in contact. Though, post-colonial fiction changed the colonial portrayal of ayah and Bibi, western representation is still the same, as observed in Sen (2001).

Current investigation analyzed post-colonial fiction through corpus-assisted discourse analysis, and it used colloquial patterns of the Urduized word, Bibi, to identify related themes of women representation and how Gee's (2011) tool of 'social language' reinforces gender stereotypes in selected data sets of PakLocCorpus.

## METHODOLOGY

Research Methodology a mixed method approach has been used to vitalize the process of data collection and analysis. Although fiction corpus was selected randomly, it was ensured that these data sets were taken from Pakistani English narratives, only. Secondly, it was considered that the selected data discuss all types of themes beyond considering gendered phenomena so that no biased information may be given and results may not be equivocal. The selected data was cleaned with the help of software (text fixer) and saved as text files for further processing. Antconc 3.5.9 corpus analysis software was used to analyze the targeted corpus. This software offered different corpus tools such as n-grams, word lists, concordance lines, collocate, and keywords in context. To analyze the data for this research in the first place we developed a list of words and later collocates of, 'Bibi' have been analyzed with the help of Antconc. The word was selected because it significantly represent women in the Pakistani fiction. Also, it is in line with research questions where gender stereotype and social language needed to be analyzed. Later,

thematic analysis was carried out to divide the data into different themes. Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data. It is usually applied to a set of texts, such as an interview or transcripts. The researcher closely examined the data to identify common themes, topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly (Ailwood, 2008). Corpus linguistics (CL) has been used to study critical discourse analysis (CDA) by Baker et al. (2008) initially, these approaches were combined to study the Pakistani English newspapers. As CL is primarily used for the quantification of data, it is majorly used in the context of a particular situation (Sinclair, 1991). Key word analysis has been extensively used for the study of literary texts (for example, Walker 2010). Hence, these methods are applied to analyze discourses and its features such as language features, recognition of a specific function, symbolizing a variety of languages, and plotting the occurrences of a feature by examining the whole text (Conrad, 2002). A sample of 38 files or novels has been selected from the category of Pakistani English Fiction. This gives the most relevant information and saves time. The corpus comprises 2532644 words. The themes are general in their nature so that no subjectivity could affect the results. Post-positivism has been used as a guiding map. This Meta theoretical critique approach has been employed to investigate the selected editorials. Post-positivists believed that all cause and effect are probability and there is no strict cause-effect. Their primary focus was to support quantitative analysis in order to justify the results with the help of scientific research methods. Baker's (2018) approach has been employed as a theoretical framework to conduct a thematic analysis in the current research. Gee's 2011 framework social language tool provided theoretical grounding for the current investigation. It focuses on answering the questions while considering all the meaningful linguistic choices, and the writer's mental filters to get to the way they have contributed to building the world, and this is what discourse analysis or interpretation means.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

After the compilation of the corpus, AntConc version 3.5.9 (Anthony, 2020) and (Anthony, 2012) was used to identify colloquial patterns and concordance lines of the selected word. It allows for flexibility and evidential data, which enables the researcher to explore complex social representations and issues related to the context of a certain community. Appendix (A) shows total 24 hits of the selected word, 'Bibi in fiction category of PakLocCorpus. Thematic analysis allowed interpretations from the concordance lines of selected word' Bibi'. Data was further analyzed qualitatively, using objective, interpretative paradigm. Transcripts were analyzed, codes were generated (e.g. attitudes), finding, reviewing and defining themes (e.g. Bibi's association) which resulted in providing answers to the research question and producing additional literature regarding body Pakistani women representation. Furthermore, the interpretivist approach to thematic discourse analysis was selected to realize emerging themes of the text, in reference to the 'social language' tool of Gee (2011). Social language is characterized with lexical and grammatical expressions and how identity or gender stereotype is socially constructed through selected, well- chosen words. Different registers of a variety for doing different things in that variety, and these registers are developed by socio-historical practices; a person have many registers in his or her mind, and he or she can mix or switch between them in actual use. Gee's framework assert how something becomes important or unimportant, significant or insignificant through language use. Selected word, 'Bibi' is extensively used to describe female characters in the socio-cultural landscape of post-colonial fiction. AntConc

version 3.5.9 (Anthony, 2020) was used to analyze word frequency, and concordance lines were derived with left and right colloquial patterns.

Table 1: Right collocates of the selected word ‘Bibi’.

| Target word | Sr no | Collocates                         | Themes                                  |
|-------------|-------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|
| Bibi (ji)   | 1     | Has been<br>Has even<br>has        | Bibi’s association in household matters |
|             | 2     | Bibi’s daughter<br>Bibi’s troubles | Bibi as the center of attraction        |
|             | 3     | If .....                           | Bibi as a matter of discussion          |
|             | 4     | Reciting                           | Bibi as a religious person              |
|             | 5     | You are .....                      | Labeling bibi as Punjabi                |
|             | 6     | Said<br>say<br>says                | Bibi as an address of respect           |

Above table shows right collocates of the selected word and six major descriptive themes are observable in this pattern. First theme shows ‘Bibi’s strong association with household matters. Her involvement and influence cannot be challenged and her voice cannot be denied in this matter. The second theme is concerned with the importance she receives whether she belongs to the family, or not. Third theme shows how the matters related to the Bibi are of major concern. Fourth theme shows Bibi’s incline towards religion and it is another sign of a socially respectable person. Fifth theme of ‘Bibi’ is her description as a ‘Punjabi’. Finally, in the sixth theme, ‘Bibi’ is being addressed again with respect and it shows her social value in the household. The suffix -ji is also another indication of honor that shows how much respect a certain character is receiving. Gee’s (2011) concept of social language let the analysts observe the social value of lexical expressions and here it is identified that all colloquial patterns direct attention towards a humble, respectable female character of the household who is not only influential but also exert a strong voice in decision making matter

Table 2: Left collocates of selected word ‘Bibi’

| Sr no | Collocates                                                | Target word | Themes                            |
|-------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1     | Safia(2)<br>Husna<br>Alice<br>Raheen<br>Nasreen<br>Shanta | Bibi        | Respecting women in<br>addressing |
| 2     | (I care) About<br>Poor                                    | Bibi        | Bibi as a center of discussion    |
| 3     | So....,<br>No                                             | Bibi        | Bibi as a third person            |

Table 2 shows left collocates of selected word, 'Bibi'. Three major themes are observable here. The first theme shows how the selected word 'Bibi' is used as a detached suffix with other Proper nouns of female characters. Second theme shows how other characters discuss 'Bibi' sympathetically and these words direct attention towards this socially influential description of the selected word. Finally third and last theme describe 'Bibi' as a third person and there is no negative connotation or expression that shows victimization of female or any oppression. Like Begum, 'bibi' is used as a surname by many women in the region. In Anglo-Indian, the term Bibi came to be seen as a synonym for mistress.

This section includes what the current research has found from the data to conduct a quantitative analysis of data, the researcher incorporated data in the form of screenshots from the software, which provided a detailed discussion of qualitative findings made by the researchers. Here, a detailed analysis of women highlights the gendered vocabulary used in selected newspaper editorials. It is hypothesized that women/woman carries negative connotations in both Pakistani culture and newspapers. Moreover, they are underrepresented or misrepresented by news media. These gender-specific words help researchers to find the very set patriarchal social system and the mindset that declares women as an inferior gender. Collocates are calculated to analyze the syntactic structure of words neighboring the target words. The following examples from the data showed the possible collocates of target words and helped the researcher understand the writers' intentions and intended meaning. The first objective of this study is to explore the most frequently occurring collocates of women, women, men, and men in Pakistani English newspapers.

Table 3: Frequency of selected word, 'Bibi' in the fiction corpus

| Sr no | File code    | author             | Theme     | No of instances |
|-------|--------------|--------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| 1     | TRSPSS.txt   | Uzma Aslam Khan    | Romance   | 11              |
| 2     | SRBRD.txt    | Nadeem Aslam       | Mystery   | 5               |
| 3     | BRKVRS.txt   | Kamila Shamsie     | Religion  | 2               |
| 4     | KARTGRPH.txt | Kamila Shamsie     | Politics  | 1               |
| 5     | INOTHER.txt  | Daniyal Mohiyuddin | Feudalism | 4               |
| 6     | ICBPS.txt    | Bapsi sidhwa       | Partition | 1               |

Table 3 shows the dispersion of the selected word in different novels, written by different authors at different time periods. It is evident that authors are both male and female, and themes are also different but the word is used in the same manner in almost all instances. This similarity confirms its interpretation and portrayal of, 'Bibi' as a respectful household character. Westernized ideologies of women in Islam, as represented in specific media, represent only a fraction of the Western population. Times Magazine is very popular in the Western population, and it is available in almost all waiting areas, hotel lounges, and community centers. It has published this perspective of Afghan women as a cover story as 'A view to a kill, as observed in Mackie (2012). Gee (2011) concept of social language exert that different registers of a variety for doing different things in that variety, and these registers are developed by socio-historical practices; a person has many registers in his or her mind, and he or she can mix or switch between them in actual use. Social representation not only change attitudes towards a certain population but also responsible for policy formation. Zadoon (2015) explored the construction

of women veil through their characters, and the ambiguity it generates. The veil carries immense empowering potentials for women within Islamic framework and becomes oppressive through media representation and patriarchal, feudal forces in a certain locations. As Zadoon (2015), claims, it exposes multifaceted sets, the innumerable denotations that are connected with the veil in perspective to modernity, patriarchal power, tradition and rural principles which imitate the ideology and gender stereotype construction. Here, the selected word, 'Bibi', and all the colloquial patterns not only draw scholarly attention towards a more realistic perspective but also, a 'social language' construction that is deviant from Western representation of, 'Pakistani Muslim Women'.

## **CONCLUSION**

Western representation of women in Pakistan is confronted in this investigation with the reference to the selected word 'Bibi'. This representation and its victimization from Western discourse needed to be revisited from a fresh perspective. In the reflection of investigation, current research finds that works through the representation has constructed Pakistani women stereotypes which makes them as a victim and need freedom. Gee (2011) observed that representation assigns significance to a certain human or non-human element. Language use can change views, attitudes towards individuals and even lead to policy formation. Extensive victimization of Afghan women in publications after 9/11 is an example of this manipulation. Tuhiwai (2013) argued that non-Western feminism, tradition, and legacy cannot be silenced at the cost of promoting Western feminism. It uncovered the distinct tone of the Muslim lifestyle and revealed their stance on women's empowerment in the articulations of gendered and faith identification. Though it has distanced itself from Western liberal societies, it has its value, support, and significance. Current investigation explored description of the female character 'Bibi' through the application of Gee's tool of inquiry, 'social language'. Colloquial patterns that describe the selected word are not only interpreted but also analyzed through the comparison of representation in previous investigations. Study found that Western representation is not aligned with the fiction representation of women and this corpus based investigation can open doors to another perspective of women, which is not only evidence based but also local to the context. Construction of gender stereotypes and reality descriptions can be challenging in a social or religious context. However, corpus-based evidence and discourse representation of the narratives have allowed researchers to observe the hidden representativeness of gender stereotypes. Abbasi et al. (2023) argued that gender portrayal have firm theoretical grounding and each perspective, when reflected through fiction discourse confirm the relocation of gender in a certain context.



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