

# Patterns of Verb Complementation in Pakistani English

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the verb complementation patterns, and their frequencies and distributions, in Pakistani English. The data has been taken from The Pakistani Written English (PWE), comprising a sample of 1,867 sentences taken randomly but proportionately from different sentence categories formed on the basis of number of words. The PWE is a corpus of written Pakistani English having 29 different written text categories, 1,477 files, and 2,119,626 words. Keeping in mind the different verb complementation patterns mentioned by Greenbaum and Quirk (1990), Quirk et al. (1972 and 1985) and Greenbaum (1995), the researcher has manually analyzed the complementation patterns of all the verbs in the data and then calculated each pattern's frequency and distribution. The findings reveal that Pakistani English uses various verb complementation patterns and that certain patterns are used much more frequently than the others. It was concluded that, as is the nature of language, Pakistani English has internal variations according to the local cultural values, and has also external variations if the findings are compared with the same as explored by Altenberg (1993) in the British English.

**Keywords:** corpus, verb complementation

## 1. Introduction

Over the past few years, many researchers in the field have tended to study linguistic variation on almost all linguistic levels. English, being the *lingua franca*, has many different varieties, each having its own distinct patterns as a reflection of the local languages and the social and cultural values.

Various studies show that languages or varieties of a language show internal as well as external variations on almost all linguistic levels (Poole, 1999). As language is reflection of culture, so these variations are caused by the influence of the indigenous languages and the social and cultural values. These studies establish that any deviations from the so-called Standard English, which are regular and systematic, are not to be considered as errors but as the regular norms of that specific variety.

It will establish that the English used by the Pakistanis forms a non-native variety of English with its own peculiar regular and systematic features, influenced by the indigenous languages and culture, on almost all the linguistic levels, and thus will make the users of the variety realize that any deviations, which are regular and systematic, from British or American or any other English are not incorrect forms of the language but they are distinct and regular features of the variety. It will spare the teachers and the learners the problem of memorizing the native speakers' cultural values wrapped in linguistic structures and so will surely encourage them to develop their own individual structures based on their indigenous languages and cultural values.

The purpose of this study was to investigate all the different patterns of verb complementation, and each pattern's frequency and distribution, in Pakistani English. Verb is "a word class displaying such contrasts as tense, aspect, voice and mood, and typically used to express an action, event, or state..." (Crystal, 1997, p. 470). Complementation is "the addition of a complement to a linguistic unit such as a verb, adjective, or noun....A complement is a phrase or clause whose form is determined by the word it complements." (Greenbaum, 1995, p. 371). So, verb complementation is the addition of a complement to a verb.

## 2. Verb

### 2.1 Types of Verb

There are two types of verbs: 1) auxiliary or helping verb, and 2) main or lexical verb:

#### 2.1.1 Auxiliary or Helping Verb

Auxiliary or helping verbs are those which syntactically accompany other verbs called main or lexical verbs, and they typically mark modality, tense, or aspect.

#### 2.1.2 Main or Lexical Verb

Main or lexical verb is a syntactic element which, singly or in combination with other verbs (verb phrase), is used as the minimal predicate of a sentence or clause, co-occurring with a subject.

For convenience in the classification of verb complementation patterns, lexical verbs are classified into the following five categories:

##### 2.1.2.1 Copular Verb

A verb that is complemented by a subject complement in sentence or clause structure is called copular verb or linking verb. It makes a link or marks the relationship between one element (subject) and another (complement); or, in other words, it serves only to express identity or class membership of subject:

*She is honest.*

*My friend became a doctor.*

*The chairs are in the room.*

*The conference is next year.*

#### 2.1.2.2 Intransitive Verb

A verb that does not take a complement, it is singly related to the subject:

*I daily run (intransitive verb).*

*Children go (intransitive verb) to school.*

#### 2.1.2.3 Monotransitive Verb

A verb that takes direct object:

*My brother is taking (monotransitive verb) tea (direct object).*

#### 2.1.2.4 Ditransitive Verb

A verb that takes direct object and indirect object:

*He gave (ditransitive verb) me (indirect object) a camera (direct object).*

#### 2.1.2.5 Complex-transitive Verb

A verb that takes direct object and some complement other than an object:

*The teacher put (complex-transitive verb) the book (direct object) on the table (adverbial).*

### 2. 2 Complementation and its Elements

Complementation is the addition of a complement to a linguistic unit such as verb, adjective, or noun. A complement is a phrase or clause whose form is determined by the word it complements.

The following are among the elements of verb complementation:

(i) subject (ii) verb (iii) direct object (iv) indirect object (v) complement (vi) adverbial

#### 2.2.1 Subject

A syntactic element which represents someone or something of which something is said or predicated. For convenience in grammatical description, subject can be classified into two categories: (i) grammatical subject, and (ii) logical subject. The grammatical subject typically precedes the verb in declarative sentences. The logical subject is traditionally associated with the 'doer' of the action, regardless of its position in the sentence:

In the sentence "*The thief was caught by the police.*" *The thief* is the grammatical and *the police* the logical subject.

#### 2.2.2 Verb

A syntactic element which, singly or in combination with other verbs (verb phrase), is used as the minimal predicate of a sentence or clause, co-occurring with a sentence.

*Children go (verb).*

*The police caught (verb) the thief.*

#### 2.2.3 Direct Object

A direct object is a complement of a transitive verb and is typically the entity affected by the action denoted by verb. It can be made the grammatical subject of a corresponding passive sentence or clause:

*The player hit the ball (direct object).*

#### 2.2.4 Indirect Object

An indirect object is a complement of a transitive verb and typically has the role of recipient or beneficiary of the action denoted by verb. Like direct object, it can be made the grammatical subject of a corresponding passive sentence or clause:

*My friend bought me (indirect object) a laptop.*

*I gave my friend (indirect object) a cheque.*

#### 2.2.5 Complement

A noun phrase or adjective phrase that comes after a copular or linking verb is called complement. Complement has two types: (i) subject complement (ii) object complement

##### 2.2.5.1 Subject Complement

The complement which identifies or characterizes the subject is called subject complement. It is realized by an adjective phrase or a noun phrase:

*Some of the students are intelligent (subject complement realized by an adjective phrase).*

*My neighbor is a clever man (subject complement realized by a noun phrase).*

##### 2.2.5.2 Object Complement

The complement which identifies or characterizes the object is called object complement. It is realized by an adjective phrase or a noun phrase:

*People consider her clever (object complement realized by an adjective phrase).*

*The players selected him captain (object complement realized by a noun phrase).*

#### 2.2.6 Obligatory Adverbial

An obligatory adverbial typically refers to space or time. It is used in the SVA pattern, in which a location or

time is attributed to the referent of the subject, and in the SVOA pattern, in which a location or time is attributed to the referent of the direct object. The form of an adverbial is realized by an adverb phrase, a noun phrase, or a prepositional phrase:

*All the students are here* (adverb phrase).

*The meeting is next year* (noun phrase).

*The baby is in the cradle* (prepositional phrase).

Biber et al. (1999), Eastwood (1994 and 2005) and Quirk et al. (1985) have mentioned the following patterns of verb complementation in English:

### 2.3 Patterns of Verb Complementation

#### Copular Verb

SVC (adj.)

*He (S) is (V) clever (adj. C).*

SVC (nom.)

*Imran (S) is (V) an intelligent student (nom. C).*

SVA

*The meeting (S) is (V) over (A).*

*All the students (S) were (V) in the room (A).*

*The conference (S) is (V) every year (A).*

#### Intransitive Verb

SV

*Children (S) run (V).*

#### Monotransitive Verb

SVO

*Someone (S) broke (V) the glass (V).*

#### Ditransitive Verb

SVOO

*My friend (S) gave (V) my uncle (O) a beautiful watch (O).*

*My supervisor (S) bought (V) me (O) a grammar book (O).*

SVO + prep. + O

*My friend (S) gave (V) a beautiful watch (O) to (prep.) my uncle (O).*

*My supervisor (S) bought (V) a grammar book (O) for (prep.) me (O).*

#### Complex-transitive Verb

SVOC (adj.)

*All the students of my class (S) consider (V) me (O) lucky (adj. C).*

SVOC (nom.)

*The people of Pakistan (S) elected (V) Nawaz Sharif (O) prime minister (adj. C)*

SVOA

*I (S) sent (V) her (O) home (A).*

*She (S) turned (V) the TV (O) off (A).*

*The teacher (S) put (V) the book (O) on the table (A).*

SVO + to infinitive

*My supervisor (S) enabled (O) me (O) to complete the thesis (to clause).*

SVO + bare infinitive

*I (S) saw (V) him (O) cross the road (bare infinitive).*

SVO + -ing clause

*My father (S) saw (V) me (O) playing cricket (-ing clause).*

SVO + -ed clause

*I (S) got (V) all the documents (O) photocopied (-ed clause).*

### 3. Study Plan

#### 3.1 Methodology

On the Microsoft Office Excel 2007, a sample of 1,867 sentences was taken systematically from the corpus the PWE. The corpus comprises 29 different written text categories, 1,477 files, and 2,119,626 words. It consists of bodies of texts taken from the genres and the registers which have relatively large readership and easy availability. Length of every sentence in the sample ranges from 1 to 83 words. The researcher has manually analyzed the complementation patterns of all the verbs found within all the sentences and then calculated the frequencies of all the patterns. As the data was analyzed manually, the form and semantic and syntactic features of the elements of verb complementation as mentioned by Downing and Locke (2006), Greenbaum (1995), and Greenbaum and Quirk (1990) were used to point out the syntactic elements of verb complementation. Verb

complementation patterns of all the instances in the data were manually analyzed and then each pattern's frequency and distribution was calculated. By comparing these findings with the same as explored by Altenberg (1993) in the British English, the reasons for the intra and inter discrepancies were found in the two different social and cultural values.

### 3.2 Results

The researcher has explored all the different patterns of verb complementation in Pakistani English and then calculated each pattern's frequency and distribution. Of the patterns which are used in the British or other varieties of English, two are not attested in Pakistani English, and that some patterns are used much more frequently than the others. The following table gives all the possible patterns of verb complementation in English along with their frequencies and distributions in Pakistani English:

**Table 1 Verb complementation in PWE**

Complementation pattern	No. of tokens	Distribution
<b>Copular</b>		
SVC (adj.)	205	0.051
SVC (nom.)	367	0.0914
SVA	157	0.0391
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>729</b>	<b>0.1815</b>
<b>Intransitive</b>		
SV	217	0.054
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>217</b>	<b>0.054</b>
<b>Monotransitive</b>		
SVO	2,691	0.67
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>2,691</b>	<b>0.67</b>
<b>Complex transitive</b>		
SVOC (adj.)	19	0.0047
SVOC (nom.)	33	0.0082
SVOA	169	0.0421
SVO + <i>to</i> infinitive	61	0.0152
SVO + bare infinitive	2	0.0005
SVO + <i>-ing</i> clause	0	0
SVO + <i>-ed</i> clause	0	0
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>284</b>	<b>0.0707</b>
<b>Ditransitive</b>		
SVOO	35	0.0087
SVO + prep. + O	61	0.0152
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>0.0239</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,017</b>	<b>1</b>

Table 1 shows that, except two patterns, Pakistani English uses all the patterns of verb complementation which are used in any varieties of the language, though with much differences in frequencies and distributions among them. Out of 4,017 instances of the use of verbs, 2,691 (67%) are of the SVO pattern, only 2 (0.05%) instances occur of the pattern SVO + bare clause, and no instance is found of the patterns SVO + *-ing* clause and SVO + *-ed* clause. The frequencies and distributions of the other patterns are also significantly different from one

another; for instance, the SVC (adj. + nom.) has 572 (14%) instances whereas SVOC (adj. + nom.) has only 52 (1%) instances.

**Table 2 Most frequent verbs and their frequencies and distributions in PWE**

<b>Verb</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Distribution</b>
Achieve	18	0.0045
Base	22	0.0055
Be	644	0.1606
Carry out	14	0.0035
Cause	11	0.0027
Comprise	14	0.0035
Conduct	23	0.0057
Consist	17	0.0042
Continue	13	0.0032
Develop	37	0.0092
Do	16	0.004
Enable	14	0.0035
Establish	43	0.0117
Find	17	0.0042
Follow	16	0.004
Form	21	0.0052
Give	25	0.0062
Have	108	0.0269
Head	12	0.003
Help	21	0.0052
Hold	23	0.0057
Improve	16	0.004
Include	62	0.0157
Launch	15	0.0037
Locate	13	0.0032
Make	68	0.017
Need	15	0.0037
Offer	24	0.006
Organize	37	0.0092
Produce	23	0.0057
Promote	22	0.0055
Provide	121	0.0302
Realize	15	0.0037
Relate	18	0.0045
Select	13	0.0032
Use	30	0.0075
Work	21	0.0052
Others	2,399	0.5972
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,017</b>	<b>1</b>

Table 2 above and 3 below show that 37 verbs cover the 40% of the total number of all verbs used in the variety. Of this 40%, 16% is taken up by *be*, 3% each by *have* and *provide*. The other frequent verbs, being mostly monotransitive, represent the use of the SVO pattern.

**Table 04. Frequencies and distributions of the most frequent and the other verbs**

	Frequencies	Distribution
<b>37 most frequent verbs</b>	1,618	0.4028
<b>Other verbs</b>	2,399	0.5972
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,017</b>	<b>1</b>

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

Results of the study support the original hypotheses: 1) Pakistani English uses different verb complementation patterns, and 2) certain patterns of verb complementation are used more frequently than the others. Out of 4,017 instances of the uses of verbs, 2,691 (67%) are of the SVO pattern, whereas no instance is attested of the patterns SVO + *-ing* clause and SVO + *-ed* clause, and only 2 (0.05%) instances occur of the pattern SVO + bare infinitive. The frequencies and distributions of the other attested patterns are also significantly different from one another; for instance, the pattern SVC (adj. + nom.) has 572 (14%) instances whereas the pattern SVOC (adj. + nom.) has only 52 (1%) instances. The grammatical structure SVO involves two entities, realized by the subject and the object, and the relationship between them, realized by the verb. The structures SVO + *-ing* clause and SVO + bare infinitive clause mostly occur when the subject anyhow takes interest in or observes the action being performed by the object. This shows that Pakistani people usually do not have concern with the actions being performed by others or they do not feel the need to communicate such actions to others. This pattern usually occurs with verbs like *help, see, watch, smell, listen to, feel, notice, observe, and hear*, for example “*I saw a man cross the road*”. Also, according to the findings, 37 verbs cover the 40% of the total number of all verbs used in the variety: of this 40%, 16% is taken up by *be*, 3% each by *have* and *provide*, thus 22% of the total number of the use of verbs is covered by these three verbs. Also, it was informally observed that: 1) the Pakistanis think in terms of two entities and the relationships between them and are not interested in observing others performing actions and relating these actions to others, which are respectively realized in the language by the patterns SVO and SVO + *-ing* clause and SVO + bare infinitive, and 2) they use some verbs more frequently than others because these verbs mostly represent the needs of the users of the variety and the indigenous social and cultural values. Consider these three interesting steps: 1) a first entity *provides* a second entity to a third entity, 2) now the third entity *has* the second entity, and 3) now the second entity *is* with the third entity. These three verbs (*provide, have, and be*) complete a sequence from the origin, possession, and ultimately to the placement or existence of entities. Again, these three steps embody our social and cultural values wherein lie the concepts or concerns of mutual cooperation, possession or ownership, and the availability of things. Similarly, the frequent use of some other verbs (*cause, enable, give, head, help, and offer*) also represents our social and cultural values like cooperation, expectations from others, dependence on others. The study makes it known that a learner of the variety must basically learn these 37 verbs and their complementation patterns. Again, the study proves, in general, the established fact that language is a reflection of social and cultural values and, in particular, proves the belief that Pakistani English is an independent variety with its own distinct but systematic and regular features which largely correspond to the indigenous social and cultural values and, to some extent, to the indigenous languages.

Results cannot be generalized to all Pakistani English because the data represented only the written aspect of the Pakistani English, not spoken, which is primary of the two. Even, the population from which the sample had been taken represented the English as used by the highly educated class of Pakistan which is relatively very small. However, the results were in consistency with the previous findings which exhibit languages or varieties of a language as having deviant but regular and systematic norms based on the indigenous languages and the local cultural values.

Comparison of these findings with those explored by Altenberg (1993) in the British English establishes that both the varieties have distinct but regular and systematic features which reflect their respective cultural values. While further research is needed in this and other linguistic areas in both aspects of the variety—spoken and written—, especially using software, the study establishes that Pakistani English is an independent variety having its own distinct regular and systematic features which conform to the local cultural values and are influenced by the local languages. The study warrants that a language or a variety of a language has both internal variations and, when the findings are compared with the same as explored by Altenberg (1993) in the British English, has also external variations, so that any deviations from the Standard English, which are systematic and regular, should not be considered as errors but distinct features of that variety. The idea that every variety of a language can develop its own linguistic structures encourages the teachers and the learners of a foreign language.

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