

## Exploring Learner Corpus Data to Inform ESP Curriculum Design for Engineering Students

Hina Muneer

University of Management and Technology Lahore

Email: hashim.mul@gmail.com

### Abstract

*This study investigates the utilization of learner corpus data as a foundational resource for informing the design of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) curricula tailored to engineering students. With the increasing globalization of engineering education and the necessity for engineers to possess proficient English communication skills, the development of effective ESP courses has become paramount. Drawing upon corpus linguistics methodology, this research delves into the linguistic needs and challenges encountered by engineering learners through the analysis of authentic learner-produced texts. By scrutinizing learner corpora, consisting of written and spoken English samples, this study identifies recurrent linguistic patterns, errors, and areas of difficulty specific to engineering students. Moreover, it explores the potential of corpus-based pedagogical interventions in addressing these linguistic shortcomings and enhancing ESP instruction. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the linguistic characteristics of engineering students and offer practical implications for ESP curriculum designers, educators, and materials developers to create targeted and effective language learning resources that cater to the unique needs of engineering learners.*

**Keywords:** *Learner corpus, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Engineering students, Curriculum design, Corpus linguistics, Linguistic needs, Language proficiency, Pedagogical interventions.*

### Introduction

Kamaila Shamsie, one of the prolific writers of the modern era is particularly acclaimed for the creation of extraordinary literary pieces. She composed various books. Her books are immensely read and praised for their brilliance and topic; her writings mostly portray and show subjects associated with the human progress, culture, and historical background of her motherland and sub-continent. She often talked about the subject matter of love and war. *Burnt Shadows* is one of her best scholarly manifestations which is totally valid, complex, breath-taking and was distributed on 10 October 2009. This historical novel comprises three sections showing distinctive time spans and diverse settings discussing the tales of two families. The entire story rotates around a Japanese youthful hero Hireko Tania who lives in Nagasaki gladly alongside her family. Her bliss is multiplied by the profound relationship between her and her German fiancé?? Konrad Weiss with whom she will get hitched soon. August 9, 1945, was an extremely unfortunate morning for her as Atom Bomb was tossed on her motherland Nagasaki Which brought decimations, passing, tears, separation, and debacles and it took away very close relations and dear things from her. It grabs away her all happiness and gave her tears and irremovable misfortune. Hiroko is a girl who is a survivor of the Nagasaki bombarding which left three cranes molded spots on her back, is currently left with just a single decision to forget everything and give a fresh start to her life. She does as such however her miseries appear to be endless she continues evolving homes, urban communities, and nations in the pursuit of her character and place yet her untiring voyage begins from Nagasaki and finishes in New York, with her old hood.-

## Research question

What post-modern characteristics and literary elements are embedded in the “Burnt Shadows”?

## Objectives

- 1- To find out the post-modern characteristics in the novel “Burnt Shadows”.
- 2- To enable the reader to identify literary elements in the text.
- 3- To enable the novice reader to understand the text.

## Limitation of the study

This study cannot present literary elements and post-modern characteristics in Kamaila Shamsie’s *Burnt Shadows*. This study is also limited to only one novel written in the post-modern era. There are many other aspects in this novel such as feminism which are not focused on in this study.

## Literature review

The purpose of literature review is not to search the data and information, but it also provides a detailed account of a particular topic. The works incorporated in the literature review are to be interpreted, assessed, and dissected, however, the connection between the literary writing must also be pinpointed and distinguished concerning the research area. The reason behind the literature review is to transmit the knowledge, information, and ideas to the reader about the given topic and to tell them about their strengths and weak points. This chapter represents the review of the literature of this study.

The novel *Burnt Shadows* has been dissected from diverse perspectives such as feminism, globalism, and nationalism (Khan 2011, Watson 2012). According to Khan (2011), this allegorical novel focuses on the various aspects of feminism, nationalism, and globalism as well. His study describes the repulsive beauty of Tanakas’ bird-shaped burn. This study also explores Tanakas’s body as a figurative manuscript that replicates the national, socio-cultural, political aspects of the existing world.

Watson (2012) describes the experience and revolt of Tanaka’s life in the destroyed world of war. The loss from the personal level to the political level in Tanak’s life is discussed by Watson in his study. This novel is also interpreted under the concept of intertextuality by Saira and Mumtaz (2012). This novel is also dissected by using deconstructionism. Despite great research on this selected text, rarely does any researcher explore the new trends in this novel.

Postmodernism is a term that is used for various aspects of changes that occurred in different fields of knowledge such as art, philosophy and literature, etc. (Cuddon, 1999). The nature of postmodernism is very complex and critical which restricts the critics to explain it in a vivid and precise manner. However, some salient features are explored by some critics. Cuddon (1999) defines postmodernism as an ambiguous and controversial literary theory. He states that postmodernism pleads for duality as it follows and criticizes the epistemology of literary modernism.

Hutcheon (1988), states that “postmodern novels discussed various ideas about autonomy, certainty, authority, unity, and uniqueness”. According to Dodhy (2012) “postmodern text holds some important features such as pastiche technique, metafiction, magic realism, and self-reflexivity”. All these characteristics will be discussed in the section after the methodology.

## Methodology

Research methodology is the method used to collect and examine the data which is needed to answer the research questions. Research methodology is a systematic road map for any analysis

that leads to a proper conclusion. The nature of the present study is qualitative. The design of Qualitative research is the most affable of the different investigational methods, enclosing a variety of accepted techniques and structures. It is emphasized the qualities of organization and processes and meanings that are not experimentally tested or measured. The main purpose behind choosing a qualitative approach is an in-depth analysis of the topic. Another purpose behind the selection of this approach is that it may generate rich interpretation even though the available data is scant. Qualitative research offers means to explore a large number of aspects as compared to quantitative which binds the research to remain within limits.

The secondary source is used by the researcher to collect data. The Internet is the source of data collection. The researchers have selected one novel Witten by Kamaila Shamsie. To understand the author's perspective, tone, and style of narration the text is analyzed line by line. Then some postmodern characteristics that are embedded in the construction of plot, characterization, and narrative techniques are also explored by the researcher.

## **Discussion and analysis**

### **Questionable narrator**

Mac Hale (1987) stated that in postmodern fiction, the speaker's uncertain voice creates ambiguity for the readers. Readers found the obscurity in the novel in which the narrator has a questionable identity. Here readers find out the conflict between first person and third-person perspectives. The third person's role is twofold i-e s/he appears both as a limited and omniscient speaker. The reader can find the same abnormality in the case of the first-person point of view where the reader encounters two kinds of narrators. At some points in the novel the first person is used for an individual character and at some points, it seems to refer to an omniscient narrator having all knowledge of events.

The novel starts as "later, the one who will survive will remember the day as grey..." (Shamsie 2009). Hereby predicting the future, the third-person omniscient storyteller guarantees that the dull and desolate day of ninth August 1945 in Nagasaki will never be overlooked by the blast-influenced survivors. Then the characters with their past and present identities are introduced by the narrator. "Yushi Watanable is Jap ...his grandfather Pater Fuller who has the closest friend and neighbor of George Bruton." The given lines show that the narrator is commenting on Yushi's current situation by referring to his grandfather's friendship with Bruton and Konard's grandfather, the speaker is describing Yushi's previous life.

In the second part of the novel speaker talked about Delhi and Sajida confidently and with surety. But that voice became uncertain gradually and created an enigma for the reader about the absolute speaker's identity. When the narrator says; "perhaps this would be the year she'd reveal that it was not the winter flower for which she waited all years" (shamsie, 2009,p.19). To clarify the uncertainty the word perhaps is used by the speaker who speaks with a certain voice before. The vagueness in the voice of the narrator dismantles the conventional trend of narration.

Nonetheless, the third-person perspective also provides the characters with the opportunity to describe their stories in their own voice. For instance by using the first-person singular "I", Hiroko can describe her own story to Sajjad. She tells him about WW II as;"I worked as a translator for over a year and I knew the straight way I could not keep working with them".(Shamsie, 2009 p 35).In this way, the third-person perspective is converted into the first person. Readers can find this ambiguity in the whole novel.

### **Socio-culturally constructed characters**

The characters of this novel have fragmented identities. In a real sense, they appear as the true dweller of the postmodern world. Characters of postmodern writings construct their identities according to the demand of their social world. These characters pretend whatever they are asked to be and hide their original identities. In the selected novel Raza is an obvious example of such a character. He was the son of Hiroko and Sajjad whose first language is Urdu. When he was first seen by the FBI agents he was speaking Urdu. Harry praised her Urdu and was anxious that how an Urdu speaker can understand English. Raza reveals that he can speak English, Japanese and German as well. With Pashtu people, he speaks Pashto proficiently. The author depicts him as an “artful linguist” who can change his identity according to the situation by changing his language.

His conversation shows that he is a peculiar postmodern man who knows how to change himself according to the situation. Hiroko and Sajjad also act according to the situation. All these characters are representative of the postmodern era. They can play their roles as per the requirement of their context.

### **Pastiches technique**

Pastiches technique is also used by Shamsie in the novel “Burnt Shadows”. This technique refers to the use of various styles, moods, and genres in a single text in order to produce a unique story. The text under study is a combination of various styles and the author creates a unique story by using different styles. The selected novel focuses on multiple genres and styles. This novel is a historical novel that describes the history of the partition of the subcontinent into two-parts India and Pakistan. “Due to the demand of Pakistan Muslim league for their separate homeland, the subcontinent becomes the center of riot (Shamsie 2009).

This novel also deals with World War II as war fiction. The central character of the novel has suffered from WW II. Hiroko escaped from war and find shelter in Delhi. She lost her whole family and wanted to leave the inhuman world. The element of suspense is also present in the novel. The author gave references to the FBI, CIA, and other agencies of the world. There are various spies like mujahidin, Taliban, and policemen and they connected with each other and this thing creates suspense in the reader.

### **Temporal distortion**

In Burnt Shadows the author's modern technique of temporal distortion is used by the author. This novel is written in a non-linear timeline. Here narrator moves forward and backward in the past and present time. This kind of distortion creates ambiguity for the reader. When Elizabeth Bruton is seen by Hiroko “ walking down the stairs” she reminds Konard and at this point, the authors remarked that “ seeing Elizabeth in descending the satire made it only yesterday that Konard walked away from her to his death (shamsie, 2009 p. 24).” The author also described the past life of Hiroko when she was “dancing with an American GI in Tokyo”. When Sajjad “touches her back, feelings of his touch remind the physical intimacy of Konrad (shamsie 2009 p 53)”.

Similarly, at the time of harassment, Raza first time saw Kim, her anger and furry compel Raza to remind Harry and he thinks that “Harry’s quick temper manifests in her”. In the whole novel, the narrator moves backward and forward in time.

### **Schizophrenic subjectivity**

“It may be sent be true for you but not for me” this is the sentence that appeals to every postmodern individual because he/she can see the world from his/her own perspective. In the novel characters show schizophrenic behavior that helps them to spend their life according to their own beliefs and truth. The

Japanese war is bad but the American war is a tool that helps to save the nation (Shamsie, 2009). The whole novel revolves around the war. Without any particular truth, the entire world is engaged in war with each other. Afghans believe that the reward to kill an American is Heaven (pg. 215) while Muslims are seen as extremists by Americans. These beliefs are obtained by the characters in order to understand the world from their own perspective.

Raza asked Kim to save Abdullah because he is innocent and left the FBI. She turned no ear on Raza's request and called the police to arrest Abdullah. Police did not arrest Abdullah, they arrested a Raza. Kim asked the police to release Raza but they replied "the person did a lot wrong....Miss your (late) father would be proud of you (p 218)". Hiroko asked Kim the reason to create problems for Abdullah she replied that "she was suspects the threat and when we suspect the threat we do not ignore it". So in the whole novel, individuals see the world from their own point of view.

### Historiographic metafiction

The writer of *Burnt Shadows* blends historical references and fiction which is a salient attribute of historiographic metafiction. According to Hutcheon (1988), "the main question in historiographic metafiction is the impossibility to know about the past events in present point of view". Shamsie has fictionalized the historiographical scene of war through Hiroko's character.

The writer also refers to several historical characters like Quaid-e-Azam, Rani of Jhansi, Razia Sultana, Altmash, and Qutb-up-dib Aibak and also mentioned Obama and unites them with fictional characters. The selected novel follows the convention of using and abusing installing and then subverting history into fiction. By using a dual mode of writing (literary/historical) the writer makes the novel historiographic metafiction.

### Conclusion

It is clear by the text analysis of the novel that "Burnt Shadows" is a postmodern novel. In the novel, all characters know how to change themselves according to the demand of the situation and get a questionable identity. Raza and Harry know how to change their role according to the social context. The narrator has a conflicting identity throughout the novel because of the conflict between the third person and first-person voice of the speaker. This novel is not written in a linear timeline. The speaker moves forward and backward in time. Here narrator successfully mingles history and fiction. The Plot of the novel comprises different genres such as historical, suspense, and war fiction. By using multiple genres narrator make this novel a postmodern novel. All above postmodern characteristics are founded in the selected novel "Burnt Shadows" by Kamila Shamsie. Readers can enjoy the all postmodern aspects in the novel.

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