

# A Multidimensional Study of Language Variation in Pre-Partition Legal Texts of Sindh in English

Muhammad Waleed Butt\* Dr. Rooh Ul Amin\*\*, Dr. Ghulam Ali\*\*\*

\* PhD Scholar, Department of English, Foundation University School of Science and Technology, Pakistan

\*\* Professor, Department of English, Foundation University School of Science and Technology, Pakistan

\*\*\* Associate Professor, Centre for Languages and Translation Studies, Allama Iqbal Open University, Islamabad, Pakistan

---

## KEYWORDS

Multidimensional  
Analysis  
Legal English  
Pre-Partition  
Sindh

## ABSTRACT

This research endeavors to illuminate the linguistic intricacies within the realm of pre-partition (prior to 1947) Sindh legal English by employing Biber's multidimensional analysis model 1988. The corpus under investigation comprises legal English texts from the pre-partition era in Sindh. The primary objective is to scrutinize this corpus through the lens of Biber's five dimensions and gain insight into its inherent characteristics, aided by the application of a Multidimensional Analysis Tool modeled after Biber's 1988 framework. This study adopts a mixed-method approach, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The findings of this research unveil several noteworthy observations. The pre-partition Sindh legal corpus is characterized by language use that is informative, non-narrative, context-independent, less overtly expressive, and notably abstract and technical in nature. This not only provides a valuable insight into the historical evolution of legal language but also underscore the significance of linguistic heritage in the legal discourse of the Sindh region. Furthermore, this study contributes to the broader understanding of legal English in a historical context and highlights the enduring influence of linguistic factors on legal communication.

---

## 1. Introduction

Legal discourse is critical in moulding societies, influencing legal practises, and ensuring justice within a specific legal system. Legal discourse research is critical because it gives insights into the language used in legal contexts, the power dynamics inherent in legal communication, and the cultural and social influences that shape legal systems.

Variation in legal language is caused not only by the mode of language use (speech or writing), the situation in which language is produced, the participants, the relationship between the participants, and the purpose of communication, but also by language patterns that can be understood by comparing different genre categories with reference to language

characteristics. Though legal discourse is a broad term that encompasses a wide range of legal discourses in both written and oral form, resulting in various text types (genre) (Maley, 1994; Trosborg, 1995; and Mattila, 2006), previous research on legal English in Pakistan has treated it as a homogeneous phenomenon (Khan & Khan, 2015; Ahmad, 2005). Textual categories have been analyzed to comprehend the linguistic aspects of various genres in Pakistani legal context to a point.

Asgar (2017) examined variations across different registers in Pakistan, including the comparison of the Pakistani legal register with its American counterpart. There are several studies that have been conducted in Pakistani legal environment, but not in regards to partition

era wise like pre or post-partition, and that of a specific region. The purpose of this study is to conduct a multidimensional analysis of language variance across dimensions in pre-partition time legal English of Sindh region just to see the features it carries and the nature the legal language of that era has.

## 2. Research Question

How does Sindh Legal Discourse of pre-partition era in English differ from the textual features of General English?

- To what extent is Sindh Legal Discourse informational?
- To what extent does Sindh Legal Discourse exhibit narrative dynamism?
- To what extent is Sindh Legal Discourse context dependent?
- To what extent Sindh Legal Discourse is persuasive?
- To what extent Sindh Legal Discourse is technical?

## 3. Significance

This study is significant in the field of language studies, particularly in the context of pre-partition Sindh's legal discourse. Using Douglas Biber's multidimensional analysis technique, this study reveals significant language patterns present in legal texts from the time period. The findings suggest a language that is informational, non-narrative, context-independent, expressively constrained, and has a strong preference for abstraction and technicalities. These specific linguistic elements not only improve our understanding of ancient legal discourse, but also provide a window into Sindh's cultural and linguistic heritage. This study not only contributes to the larger subject of legal linguistics, but it also demonstrates the continuing influence of linguistic elements on legal communication across time.

## 4. Literature Review

Legal language refers to the specific form of language employed within a legal context. According to Tiersma (1999), legal language can be defined as the specific mode of communication, both oral and written, that has been cultivated by various legal systems across the globe. According to Danet (1985), language holds a key role in all aspects of human affairs, with particular significance in the field of law. Physicians engage in the manipulation and examination of tangible items and beings, whereas attorneys and judges primarily deal with the realm of symbolism and abstraction. It can be argued that the existence of law is fundamentally dependent on the presence of language (p. 273). Legal English encompasses a wide range of oral and written genres that are determined by their specific communicative purposes, the particular situations in which they are employed, the people involved, their interpersonal relationships, and the background knowledge of those who are engaged in the language use activity (Bhatia, 1987).

Legal discourse employs a specialized vocabulary that serves specific legal purposes. The use of legal terminology, with its precise definitions and technical meanings, aims to ensure clarity and accuracy in legal communication (Hoekstra, 2011; Mellinkoff, 1963). Scholars have explored the role of legal terminology in maintaining consistency, avoiding ambiguity, and promoting legal certainty (Solan & Tiersma, 2005; Vallentyne, 1997).

In Pakistan, register studies other than the legal register in English were carried out utilising Multidimensional analysis; for example, a researcher (Shakir, 2013) detected linguistic variance among print advertising in Pakistani media. Language variations in press reportage in Pakistani print media were explored in a study (Ahmad, 2015). Linguistic patterns in Pakistani English fiction were examined in another study (Ali, 2016). Alvi (2016) investigated linguistic variances in editorials in Pakistani newspapers.

On the basis of a multidimensional approach, Abdulaziz (2017) conducted comparative analyses of Pakistani learner writing

against other varieties of World English. In terms of learner writing, the study examined differences between Pakistani English and the three major varieties of World English: ENL, ESL, and EFL. Five dimensions of 88 multidimensional analysis and three new dimensions of variability specific to learner argumentative writing were compared. The statistical evidence suggested that the four population categories varied significantly.

In a study conducted by Asghar (2017), an investigation was carried out to analyse the variations observed in different registers inside Pakistan. This analysis specifically focused on comparing the Pakistani legal register with its American equivalent. The study employed two iterations of Biber's Multi-Dimensional Analysis framework to examine eight distinct legal categories in Pakistan across nine dimensions.

## **5. Research Methodology**

The This section outlines the methodology employed in the execution of this study. The components encompassed within this framework consist of the nature of the study, the design of the corpus, and the process employed for data analysis. This research incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. This study offers a complete linguistic analysis of pre-partition legal writings from the region of Sindh. It employs a methodology that involves calculating linguistic dimensions based on the co-occurrence of various language traits.

### **5.1. Corpus**

The selected corpus for this study is the Corpus of Legal English of Sindh. This study encompasses the pre-partition era. The analysis was conducted using complete pre-partition data. The Pre-Partition Law Corpus of Sindh was obtained from the law section of the official website of the Government of Pakistan. There has been a significant

emphasis on the legal genres associated with written activities.

The number of texts for inclusion and the length of those texts were the first factors taken into account when compiling the corpus. The selection of text files was based on the study's objectives, which aimed to identify co-occurrence patterns of variation, examine textual variance, and explore the dimensions of the data.

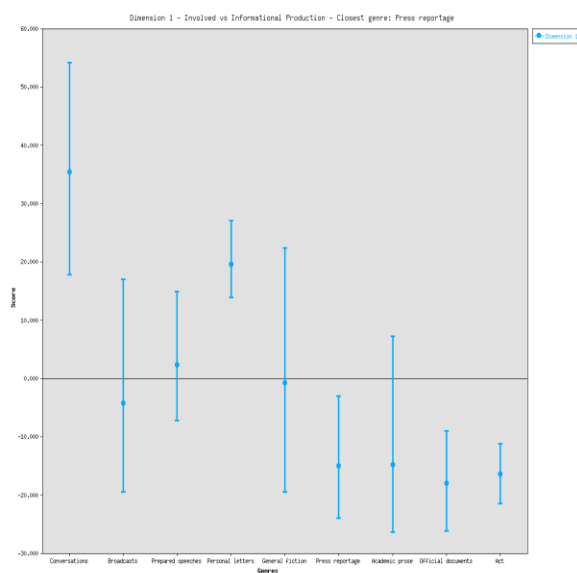
### **5.2. Data Analysis**

This study investigates the linguistic characteristics of Legal English during the Pre-Partition era of Sindh. It employs the MD analysis approach proposed by Biber (1988) in his publication "Variation across Speech and Writing". The 1988 MD model is a framework that examines newly identified discourse categories in relation to pre-established dimensions, as proposed by Biber (1988). The framework encompasses five dimensions, namely "Involved vs. Informational Production," "Narrative vs. Non-narrative Concerns," "Explicit vs. Situation Dependent Reference," "Overt Expression of Persuasion," and "Abstract vs. Non-Abstract Information." The variation model utilised in this study is founded upon a set of 67 linguistic variables, which have been categorised into 16 primary groups based on their grammatical and functional characteristics. For a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic aspects that underlie these categories, please refer to Biber's work (1988, pp. 223-245). For the application of that, Multidimensional Analysis Tool (MAT) by Andrea Nini, which is proven replicate of Biber's MD model has been applied on the corpus.

## **6. Results and Discussion**

This section centers the results and discuss findings taken from analysis. The analysis is done with the help of Multidimensional Analysis Tool (MAT), which is, as mentioned earlier, is a replicate of Biber's model. The graphs shown in this section are plotted by the tool on the basis of corpus it has been provided to analyse. It has genres this corpus is compared with on the horizontal or x-axis. Vertical side or y-axis of the graph plotted shows the range of scores for the dimensions, as suggested by Biber.

### Dimension 1

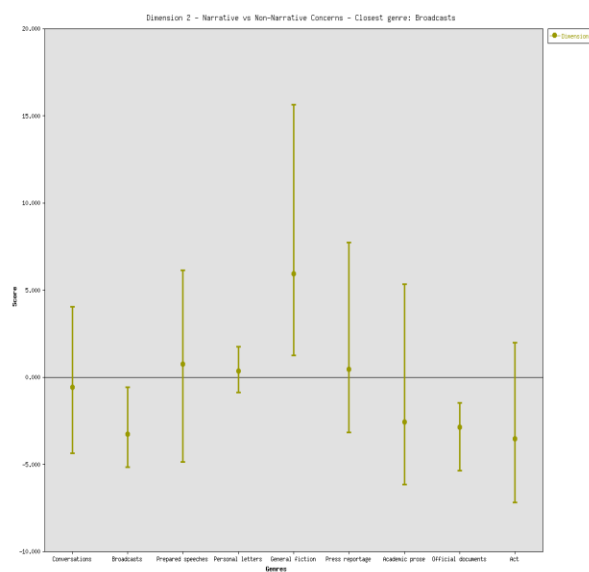


**Figure 1**

Dimension 1 results for the Sindh pre-partition legal discourse highlights that text it contains is highly informational and not involved. It scored -16.45 on this dimension. The extent to which it has scored negative talks about the information density. Like certain features which highlight the involved nature of texts, there are also features which show the nature of text being informational as well. Being informationally dense means that text contains features like nouns, prepositions, attributive adjective as well as

average words length and type token ratio. Here, in this dimension, as shown in the graph plotted by MAT, the closest genre in terms of results is Press Reportage. Official Documents on this dimension are showing highly negative result, which says that it possesses informational features even more than the Sindh pre-partition law. The focus on providing information is consistent with the frequent utilisation of legal and technical jargon within the dataset. Novice researchers or persons lacking familiarity with legal language may encounter difficulties in comprehending the corpus due to the presence of legal and technical terms.

### Dimension 2

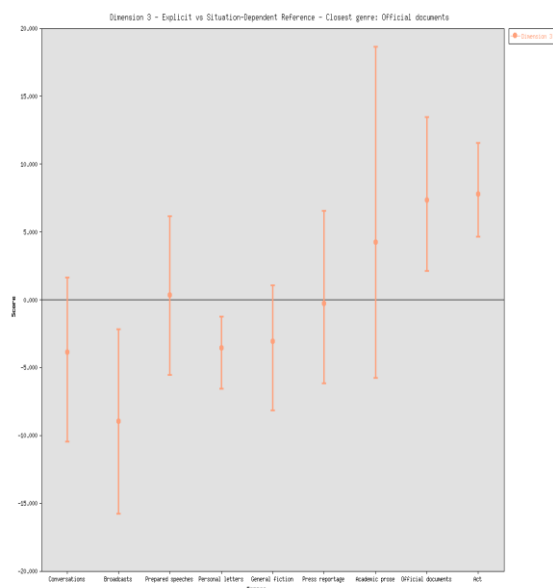


**Figure 2**

Sindh pre-partition legal corpus, on text Dimension 2, which highlights narrative or non-narrative nature of the text, scored a low -3.58. The score tells clearly that Sindh pre-partition legal text are non-narrative in nature. Unlike dimension 1, this dimension only comprises of positive features which are associated with the narrative style of the text. These positive features include past tenses,

perfect aspects, present participle clause, synthetic negations, third person pronouns and public verbs. The graph plotted on this dimension show Broadcasts to be the closest genre to legal text. Official Documents and Academic Prose are also close in terms of score but they are slightly less non-narrative. This is pretty much like the quality of legal documents to be precise, direct, and not be on a story-telling mode. It demonstrates that pre-partition legal texts in the Sindh region tend to prioritize the delivery of straightforward information over narrative elements.

### Dimension 3

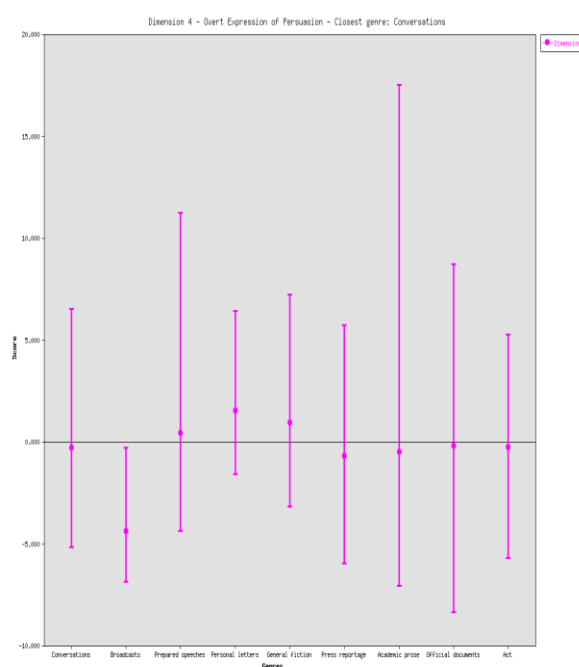


**Figure 3**

Dimension 3 looks into context dependency or independence of the text. According to the corpus test, the Sindh pre-partition text corpus scored 7.74, which is a high positive score. The high positive score highlights that the tested corpus is highly independent of the context. There is positive as well as negative features mentioned for this dimension, very much like dimension 1, which means like certain positive features

which highlight context dependence on high score, there are also some for-text independence on the negative scores as well. The tested corpus has scored a high positive on this dimension, which means it highly possesses features like nominalization, wh-relative clauses on subject as well as objective position, phrasal co-ordinations and pied piping relatives and less in extent features, like time, place or general adverbials. The closest to the tested corpus in terms of score is Official Documents, which is slightly below the corpus. Next in line on context independence is Academic Prose.

### Dimension 4



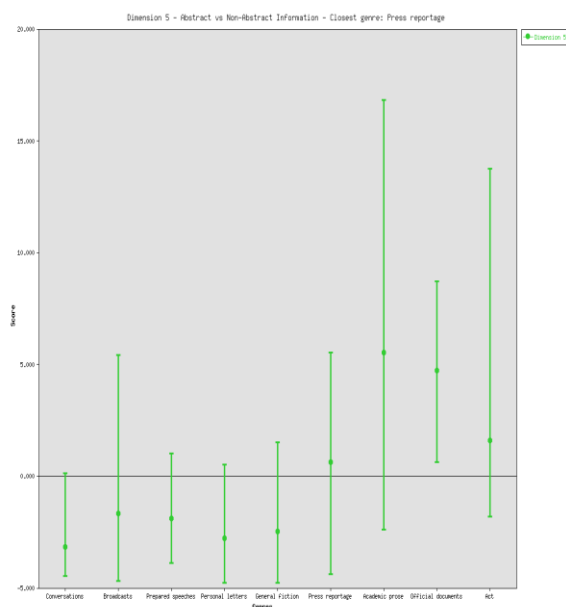
**Figure 4**

Sindh pre-partition legal corpus scored -0.28 on dimension 4, which highlights overt expression of persuasion in the text. Like dimension 2, this dimension also highlights features of only one side, and it is when the score is positive. The features that are present in such case are modal verbs, infinitives,

persuasive verbs, necessity modals, conditional subordinations and split auxiliaries.

The positive score means that there is high explicitness in persuasion or opinion of author in the text under test. According to Biber (1988), these features are related with a persuasive style, "This dimension marks the degree to which persuasion is marked overtly, whether overt marking of the speaker's own point of view, or an assessment of the advisability or likelihood of an event presented to persuade the addressee" (p. 111). It is worth noting that it is possible that not all of the features might be present simultaneously in every text or not to the same extent. The negative score on this dimension tells us that the tested corpus contains very low level of persuasive expressions in the text, which means the text is rather informative and not evaluative. The genre closest to this corpus in terms of score on this dimension is Conversations, which is also on a lower score side.

### Dimension 5



**Figure 5**

The categorical difference between technical and non-technical discourse, or abstract and non-abstract information, the label originally given to this level by Biber (1988, p. 152), is discussed in level 5. This dimension is very important. Later, this name was replaced and it was labelled as impersonal vs non-impersonal style. Texts that are positive on this dimension tend to be objective and impersonal in tone.

Adverbial conjunctions, by passive, agentless passive verbs, subordinating conjunctions and passive post nominal modifiers are features on the positive line of dimension five. These forms are often used in technical and abstract discourse that has a high level of formality. In this dimension, there isn't anything negative.

Dimension 5 score for the tested legal corpus is 1.58. The score on this very dimension tells us that text is abstract and technical in nature. Legal documents of the pre-partition era of Sindh frequently address legal principles, theories, and intricate concepts that possess an inherent abstract nature. The utilisation of precise and technical terminology is frequently employed to effectively communicate distinct legal concepts. The closest genre on this dimension in terms of score is Press Reportage and next in line are Official Documents and Academic Prose which are on the higher side than Sindh corpus.

## 7. Conclusion

This study provides a thorough investigation of the linguistic traits inherent in pre-partition (pre-1947) Sindh legal English. The analysis indicated that the language demonstrates legal discourse characteristics such as informativeness, non-narrativity, and context

**Title:** *A Multidimensional Study of Language Variation in Pre-Partition Legal Texts....*

**Author:** Muhammad Waleed Butt, Dr. Rooh Ul Amin, Dr. Ghulam Ali

independence. Furthermore, the use of legal language in this corpus stands out for its restrained expressiveness, evoking an intentional precision fitted to the demands of legal documentation. The language is notable for being exceedingly abstract and technical, reflecting the specialized character of legal discourse.

These findings provide an important contribution to the study of legal linguistics by putting light on the persistent patterns of

legal language in Sindh's historical setting. This study adds to our understanding of the language legacy that underpins Sindh's legal tradition by identifying these tendencies. Furthermore, it emphasises the long-term impact of linguistic elements on legal communication, emphasizing the role of language in developing legal discourse across time and space.

## References

- Abdulaziz, M. (2017). *A Multi-Dimensional Analysis of Pakistani Learner Writing* (thesis).
- Ahmad, S. (2015). *Linguistic Variation Across Press Reportage in Pakistani Print media: A Multidimensional Analysis*.
- Ali, S. A. (2016). *Multidimensional Analysis of Pakistani English Fiction*. Ph.D. dissertation, Govt. College University Faisalabad.
- Alvi, U. F., & Mahmood, M. A. (2016). *A Multidimensional Analysis of Pakistani Press Editorials*. *The Dialogue*, 11(284), 3270-284.
- Asghar, S. A., Mahmood, M. A., & Asghar, Z. M. (2018). *A Multidimensional Analysis of Pakistani Legal English* (thesis).
- Bhatia, V. K. (1987). *Textual-Mapping in British Legislative Writing*. *World Englishes*, 6, 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-971X.1987.tb00172.x>
- Bhatia, V. K. (1993). *Analysing Genre: Language Use in Professional Settings* (p. 5). London: Longman.
- Biber, D. (1988). *Variation Across Speech and Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Danet, B. (1983). *Studies in legal discourse* (pp. 440-500). Special Edition of Text 4.
- Danet, B. (1985). *Legal Discourse*. In T. A. Van Dijk (Ed.), *Handbook of Discourse Analysis 1*. London: Academic Press.
- Gotti, M. (2008). *Investigating specialized discourse*. Peter Lang.

**Title:** *A Multidimensional Study of Language Variation in Pre-Partition Legal Texts....*

**Author:** Muhammad Waleed Butt, Dr. Rooh Ul Amin, Dr. Ghulam Ali

- Jackson, B. S. (1995). *Making Sense in Law*. Deborah Charles Publications, Liverpool.
- Khan, R. B., & Khan, S. Q. (2015). Stylistic study of legal language. *International Journal of Engineering Research and General Science*, 3(1).
- Maley, Y. (1994). The language of the law. In J. Gibbons (Ed.), *Language and the Law* (pp. 11-50). New York: Longman.
- Mattila, H. E. S. (2006). *Comparative legal linguistics*. Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing.
- Mellinkoff, D. (2004). *The language of the law*. Wipf and Stock Publishers.
- Nini, A. 2015. *Multidimensional Analysis Tagger* (Version 1.3.3). Available at: <http://sites.google.com/site/multidimensionaltagger>
- Shakir, A. (2013). Linguistic variation across print advertisements in Pakistani media: A multidimensional analysis.
- Tiersma, P. (1999). *Legal Language*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Trosborg, A. (1995). *Interlanguage pragmatics: Requests, complaints, and apologies* (Vol. 7). Walter de Gruyter.
- Trosborg, A. (1997). *Text typology and translation* (Vol. 26). John Benjamins Publishing.



**Title:** *A Multidimensional Study of Language Variation in Pre-Partition Legal Texts....*  
**Author:** Muhammad Waleed Butt, Dr. Rooh Ul Amin, Dr. Ghulam Ali