

# The Syntactic Variations in Verb Phrase – Double Modals in Pakistani English (PakE) and Malaysian English (MyE): A Comparative and Corpus-Based Study

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Received: February 23, 2023

Accepted: March 24, 2023

Online Published: March 30, 2023

doi:10.5430/wjel.v13n5p241

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v13n5p241>

## Abstract

This study aims to detect the variations and compare the use of Verb Phrase – Double Modals in PakE and MyE. For this study, two recently released corpora – GlowbE-PK and GlowbE-MY were utilized. Twenty Verb phrases with double Modals in PakE and MyE were selected from thousands of concordance lines and a large amount of text. This study utilized mixed method research and also kept in view the Sociolinguistic Variation and World Englishes conventions of research by utilizing corpora.

The Frequency of each token (phrase), and then the accumulative and average frequencies of both Englishes were given separately. A comparative analysis of both varieties of English was done. It was an interesting fact to know that MyE displays comparatively more use of VP-Double Modals than PakE. The frequency of VP - Double Modals in MyE is 1.88, which is 0.41 more than the frequency of VP – Double Modals in PakE.

The results and discussion indicated a noticeable variation in the use of VP with Double Modals of PakE and MyE from Standard British English (BrE). This research also indicates a linguistic pattern in the different dialects of English. The PakE and MyE have different phases of development, and contact languages with English in both varieties are also different. However, they both display the use of Double Modals.

**Keywords:** verb phrase, double modals, dialect, variety, Standard English, Pakistani English, Malaysian English, dialect syntax, corpus, concordance

## 1. Introduction

English underwent the phases of Old English and Middle English before taking on the shape of Modern English. With England's colonial control over the subcontinent, this language spread to the regions that are now part of Pakistan. Like some other African and Asian nations, English was introduced to Pakistan during colonial control. Although the ruling elite in Pakistan had a strong preference for English from the beginning, the majority of people in Pakistan did not welcome it because it was the language of foreign rulers.

Second, unlike Baluchistan, a sizable portion of Khyber Pakhtoonkha province, and other regions that are now a part of Pakistan; the majority of these regions, as well as the interior sections of Sindh, were not directly affected by the British. The English remained isolated from the common culture of these areas as a result. Primarily, due to this reason, the Pakistani dialect or variety of English is considered as unique from other dialects or varieties of English throughout the globe.

The history of Malaysian begins in the 18th century with the arrival of the British in the Straits Settlements of Penang, Singapore, and Melaka (Pillai, 2022). The legal system, business, and public administration all used English. During the British colonial period, more and more English-medium schools were built. These schools tended to be Christian missions.

Malaysia (formerly Malaya) got its independence from the British rule in 1957. Soon after independence, the Malay language was declared the national and official language of Malaysia. English started to be replaced by Malay in government offices, and courts, and as the primary language of instruction in public universities and national schools. English was still declared a mandatory subject until secondary schools.

Additionally, it is still frequently used in the media, industry, private higher education, and the private sector. English is becoming the primary language of instruction at an increasing number of government and private colleges, universities, and foreign schools. Malaysian print publications including *The Star* and *The Malay Mail* are also frequently found.

Most Malaysians are able to speak English because it is taught in schools, albeit some are more proficient than others. “A small minority of Malaysians of various ethnicities consider English to be their first language because they grew up speaking English at home” (Pillai, 2022).

This article is an investigation into the use of verb phrases: Double Modals in Pakistani English and Malaysian English, with reference to Standard BrE.

## 2. Research Questions

This article contains three research questions.

Does Pakistani English differ from the Standard English in the Verb phrases with double Modals?

Does Malaysian English differ from the Standard English of Verb phrases with double Modals?

Does the variation in PakE and MyE replicate a pattern in the various varieties of the English?

## 3. Syntax of Pakistani English

Syntactically, PakE varies from Standard BrE.

According to Baumgardner (1990) provides some instances of phrasal compounds that could replace postponed attributive relative clauses:

Detrimental to health medicines “medicines which are detrimental to the health”.

Public dealing office “an office which deals with the public”.

Regarding complementation, Baumgardner (1993) shows the BrE and PakE variants. For example, the *adjectives* in PakE are frequently followed by a to-infinitive instead of a preposition and participle clause as in BrE. As with adjective complementation, PakE differs from BrE in *noun* complementation. Thus, a preposition plus -ing participle in BrE may become to-infinitive in PakE. PakE speakers may substitute the BrE main verb plus to-infinitive with a main verb plus that-clause. Like,

He is interested in learning Urdu. (BrE)

They were not at all interested in democracy—and were only interested to grab power at any cost. (PakE)

Pakistan has no influence in controlling----- (BrE)

Pakistan has no influence to control affairs inside Afghanistan. (PakE)

He wants to go. (BrE)

I want that I should get leave. (PakE)

Rahman (1990) also shows variations in the syntax of PakE. In PakE a *to-infinitive* is substituted for the preposition plus gerund in some idioms. Like,

The Prime Minister of Sri Lanka has shown keen interest *to send* his agricultural scientists to interact with Pakistani scientists. (PakE)

The Government was attaching importance *to removing* the procedural difficulties. (PakE)

In Standard British English, the infinitive of purpose is similar to a *to-infinitive* complement and has ‘in order to’ or simply ‘to’ to answer the question ‘for what purpose?’ or simply ‘why?’ Like,

He went to China *to learn* Chinese. (BrE)

However, in PakE the *for + gerund* replaces the infinitive of purpose. Like,

He went to China *for learning* Chinese. (PakE)

While awaiting response to their ransom, the bandits *went out for committing* their crime in a nearby village. (PakE)

Also, in PakE the *auxiliary* is frequently omitted in *Wh-questions*. Like,

“*Which girl you met at work?*” (PakE)

Which girl did you meet at work? (BrE)

## 4. Syntax of Malaysian English

According to McArthur (1998), syntactic characteristics of Malaysian English include:

The countable use of some usually uncountable nouns: *Pick up your chalks*.

Innovations in phrasal verbs, such as *cope up with* rather than *cope with*

The use of reflexive pronouns to form emphatic pronouns, such as *Myself sick*.

Pillai (2022) also mentions a few syntactic features of Malaysian English:

*Wh* questions

In colloquial Malaysian English, questions beginning *who, what, when, where, why, or how* generally do not use verbs like *is, are, was, were, do, did, have, and had*:

*When you going home?* (When are you going home?)

*What* movie you watched? (What movie did you watch?)

*How* long you lived here? (How long have you lived here?)

*Where* you work now? (Where do you work now?)

*Why* you so angry? (Why are you so angry?)

#### *Dropping of pronouns*

There is a tendency in colloquial Malaysian English to drop pronouns:

Can go now lah. (I can go now.)

Need to eat rice every day one. (They need to eat rice every day.)

### **5. The Use of Corpus**

The idea of using text collections to learn languages is not new (nowadays it is called corpus or corpora). Making lists of all the words in specific writings, along with their contexts, was first attempted in the Middle Ages and is now known as "concordancing." Other academics tallied word frequencies from individual texts or books or from collections of texts and created lists of the most common terms in them.

Language learning, syntax, semantics, sociolinguistics, global Englishes, and comparative linguistics are a few fields where corpora have been used. With one major exception—back then, computers had not yet been created or were not widely used—a lot of the work was similar to the corpus-based research we conduct today, even though the term corpus linguistics had not yet been coined.

The strategy to linguistic research known as corpus linguistics has gained widespread acceptance as a significant and practical method of linguistic study over the past twenty or so years (Baker, 2010). The study of language as it appears in "corpora" (body) of "real world" writing is known as corpus linguistics. The study of linguistic events using sizable corpora—collections of machine-readable texts—is now known as corpus linguistics. These are utilized in a variety of study fields, including language learning, prosody, and descriptive studies of language syntax, to name a few.

"Corpus linguistics is a research approach that has developed over the past few decades to support empirical investigations of language variation and use, resulting in research findings with much greater generalizability and validity than would otherwise be feasible," according to Biber (2009, in Heine and Narrog 2009). Concordance is a crucial instrument for understanding and applying corpus techniques.

A "concordance" is a table that lists every instance of a linguistic token found in a corpus along with its associated linguistic context (usually a few words to a few lines on either side of the linguistic item). Concordances are a crucial component of corpus linguistics because they enable qualitative analyses of corpus data, allowing the researcher to thoroughly examine specific instances.

Before we can infer or even conclude linguistic variation or change based on frequency, concordance analyses are typically required. Concordances enable researchers to identify linguistic patterns, which can be based on grammar, meaning, pragmatics, and discourse, as well as to verify that words have the meanings or use that we say they do.

### **6. Theoretical Framework**

This paper utilizes corpora for its research and belongs to the field of linguistics known as the study of Language Variation and Change (Sociolinguistics) and World Englishes. There are specific standards for the variation analysis of the various linguistic varieties in sociolinguistics and world Englishes. It collects samples from the linguistic records of the community.

### **7. Methodology**

This investigation uses a variety of research methods. It makes it obvious that AntConc was the tool used in the study. The corpora of global Web-based English are where the text examples for PakE and MyE analysis were chosen from (GloWbE). The 1.9 billion words in the GloWbE corpus come from 20 various nations, including Pakistan and Malaysia. Released in May 2018, GLoWbE was created specifically for analyzing linguistic variation.

In Labov's terms, a linguistic variable (2008) There are two different ways to express the same word, and it all starts with the simple act of noticing the variation. Two or more ways of saying the same idea is a linguistic variable, according to Labov (1972c) and Sankoff (1980). Verb Phrase - Double Modals is the language variable used in this study.

On the basis of observation, the linguistic variable verb phrases – double modals are determined in this research. The study of linguistic variation relies heavily on observation. According to Tagliamonte (2012), variation in language is most readily observed in the vernacular of everyday life.

Adger & Trousdale (2007) rightly credit Labov (1969, 1972) for using observational techniques in his writing. Moreover, Tagliamonte further emphasizes that language variation study starts with the realization that language is inherently variable.

The topic statement clearly states that this research is comparative and corpus-based. Pakistan and Malaysia are two GloWbE sections that are examined and contrasted. On the premise of observation, some data regarding the linguistic variable existed, and it was examined using the GloWbE corpus. The researcher's observations of PakE and MyE are the main foundation for this existing data, which was

compared with GloWbE. Having studied and taught English for many years, the researcher has excellent exposure to PakE and MyE. In addition, the analysis of the linguistic characteristics of both varieties has taken into account the literature and study on PakE and MyE conducted by other researchers.

In the words of Baker (2010), “corpora are normally used in conjunction with analysis software”. Word Smith Tools, created by Mike Scott, and AntConc, developed by Lawrence Anthony are the most well-liked and widely used softwares. AntConc is used in this study. It is used to derive specific data of various tokens, such as the concordance of the tokens *may* and *can* in PakE and MyE.

An in-depth analysis is done of the Verb Phrase with Double Modals in Malaysian and Pakistani English. The corpora of Malaysian and Pakistani English contain the intended 20 Verb phrases. From each English dialect, 10 instances of double-modals verb phrases were chosen. The precise sentences from the corpora for the 20 verb phrase tokens of PakE and MyE are written. The instances used in this research are mentioned by a unique code: corpus name/hit number/file number.

The research's samples are taken from Glowbe-PK (for Pakistan) and Glowbe-MY (Malaysia). Glowbe-PK and Glowbe-MY each have 14 folders and roughly 51 million and 42 million words, respectively. In order to equalize the number of words for search in both corpora—roughly equivalent to 42 million words in each corpus—all the files were searched for 10 tokens in Glowbe-MY, but only 12 out of 14 files were searched in Glowbe-PK.

The double-modal verb phrases are italicized. We can access that concordance line in the corpora by typing the italicized sentence. In both corpora, there are frequently multiple hits for a single token; in such cases, the hit number that was chosen for the article is made obvious in the code immediately below the sentence.

For all the tokens in both varieties, the frequency and quantity of occurrences are listed. Additionally, the maximum and lowest frequency and the number of token occurrences in both the PakE and MyE dialects have been given.

To obtain the frequency of the tokens, a Corpus Linguistics formula is used. Baker (2010) has given the formula to determine the frequency per million words:

Total number of occurrences of lexical item  $\times 1,000,000$

Total words in a corpus

In this study, the frequency of each token as well as the total and average frequency of all 20 Verb phrases in both dialects of English are calculated using this formula.

### 8. Verb Phrase – Double Modals in Standard English

Double modals – the use of two modals together is not a feature of Standard British English (BrE). Most of the standard books on grammar, even do not mention this mistake at all, as this is an accepted fact in Standard BrE. However, PakE and MyE, and many other dialects (Kortmann, 2010) show the use of double modals. Like,

PakE: “Whilst plastic-type loses typically possibly be because lower care storage devices products, you can get instances that you can should instigate unique repairs and maintenance to Read more.”

Glowbe-PK/04/g09.txt

MyE: “The FL lenses, for instance, may be used for stopped down metering or stopped-down automation on Canon cameras which provide that mode have an “A-M” ring which *may can* be used in place of the stopped-down lever.”

Glowbe-MY/07/g06.txt

Swan and Walter (2011) write about Modals, “Modal verbs are a group of auxiliaries: can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must and ought. They are used before other verbs, and in tags and short answers.

‘You can swim, can't you?’ ‘Yes, I can.’

‘She shouldn't be late, should she?’ ‘No, she shouldn't.’

*Oxford English Grammar Course (Advanced). Oxford: Oxford.*

Swan and Walter (2011) continue providing different examples of Modals along with their usage on twenty pages, however, they do not mention this feature as a possible feature in Standard British English. In fact, this is a non-standard dialectal feature, and it is not used in Standard BrE.

iMore (2016) summarizes her research on the use of Double Modals in these words, “The main findings suggest that double modal combinations are only found in Scotland and the North of England and that the most common double modal combination is *might could*. Nevertheless, double modals are a non-standard feature that might end up disappearing because they are poorly used.”

*Double Modals in the British Isles: Scotland and Northern England. Retrieved from: https://ddd.uab.cat/pub/tfg/2016/167242/TFG\_annanovich.pdf*

### 9. Verb Phrase – Double Modals in PakE

“Only quiet, well-coordinated and sincere multi-lateral crackdown *may can* provide us all the much-needed relief.”

Glowbe-PK/01/b03.txt

“You *may ought to* seem diligently to make sure of they can be actual, however, if you realize your own features to check away regarding, it is possible to when they are not customize the list of high quality boots and shoes that has a small portion with the value.

Glowbe-PK/01/b05.txt

“When this occurs, you *may will* notice a substantial inflow connected with vistors on your weblog.”

Glowbe-PK/04/b05.txt

“That *may may* not generate any sense.”

Glowbe-PK/01/b02.txt

“BTW would Riba be an issue if 100% reserves become norm – the supply/demand differential should not be huge as consumer credit *may would* also be restricted along with inflationary economic growth!”

Glowbe-PK/04/g06.txt

“Kafka I did not see LWT but on Meray Mutabiq couple of days ago it was Mushahid who said that ‘ager 9 March ko ek chodhry na ker skta he tu ab dosra chodhary kiyon nahee aur kr di he’ and as we heard Mushe’s doors have been closed to Mushahid quite some time ago and same is true for Chodharies the only thing chodharies need to do is to come on publically and rip Musharraf on media become ‘useable’ (not useful) for PML-N and later they *can can* be gotten rid off.”

Glowbe-PK/18/g10.txt

“Even though alcohol *can may* feel you sleepy at first, it may cause you to awaken later in the night and disrupt your sleep.”

Glowbe-PK/03/b03.txt

“I *can will* need to wait back when concerning added time.”

Glowbe-PK/11/g04.txt

“Myself *can must* become bankrupt his wager.”

Glowbe-PK/01/g01.txt

“Whilst plastic-type loses typically possibly be because lower care storage devices products, you can get instances that you *can should* instigate unique repairs and maintenance to Read more.”

Glowbe-PK/04/g09.txt

**Frequency**

**Double Modals**

Token	Number of the occurrences	Frequency (per million words)
May can	11	0.26
May ought to	1	0.02
May will	6	0.14
May may	6	0.14
May would	3	0.07
Can can	10	0.23
Can may	7	0.16
Can will	12	0.28
Can must	2	0.04
Can should	4	0.09
Total tokens	62	
Average frequency(per million words)		1.47

**10. Verb Phrase – Double Modals in MyE**

1. “The FL lenses, for instance *may be* used for stopped down metering or stopped-down automation on Canon cameras which provide that mode have an “A-M” ring which *may can* be used in place of the stopped-down lever.”

Glowbe-MY/07/g06.txt

2. “Once you show up at the Des Moines International Airport, you *may ought to* present the appropriate varieties of identification at the very first check-in stage.”

Glowbe-MY/01/b01.txt

3. “Should you set up the actual all of them instantly using WordPress then you definitely *may will* have to run into the actual style and acquire this for your difficult generate.”

Glowbe-MY/01/b01.txt

4. “All these makes it such a serious consideration for those *may may* need such a lens type to compliment a wideangle or widengle zoom for travelling companion or for normal family/PR photography usage.”

Glowbe-MY/16/g06.txt

5. “You *may would* like every edge you’ll be able to gain.”

Glowbe-MY/01/b04.txt

6. “It should not go so far as to shut it down as in a democracy even idiots *can can* their say.”

Glowbe-MY/34/g09.txt

7. “To me, it seems like a turbine could be fashioned out of an aluminum soda can; on the other hand, a smaller individual serving type of juice *can may* be a better size even if it would be harder to cut fins into the sides with a tin snip type of tool.”

Glowbe-MY/01/g08.txt

8. “If you are prone to recurring lower back pain, seeing a massage therapist as often as you *can will* help to facilitate circulation, release tension, and help your muscles to remained relaxed and flexible.”

Glowbe-MY/12/g10.txt

9. “Customers *can must* walk-in to redeem their freebies Brother Customer Service Centre.”

Glowbe-MY/02/g04.txt

10. “In sales might however be increased compared with repeated during the paste owed towards intention that in a matter of regarding back then of your energy of their time of then they also *can should* unquestionably decrease below brand-new UGG expenses during the walk owed toward intention they may have.”

Glowbe-MY/04/b03.txt

**Frequency**

**Double Modals**

Token	Number of the occurrences	Frequency (per million words)
May can	2	0.04
May ought to	1	0.02
May will	13	0.30
May may	3	0.07
May would	1	0.02
Can can	34	0.80
Can may	1	0.02
Can will	12	0.28
Can must	2	0.04
Can should	10	0.23
Total tokens	79	
Average frequency (Per million words)		1.88

**11. Results and Discussion**

Accumulative Frequency

Total number of 10 tokens in the Glowbe-PK	62
Total number of 10 tokens in the Glowbe-MY	79
Accumulative Frequency of words per million words in both corpora	3.35

Frequency in PakeE

Token	Occurrences	Frequency
Token 8: Can will	12	0.28 (Maximum)
Token 2: May ought to	1	0.02 (Minimum)

Frequency in MyE

Token	Occurrences	Frequency
Token 8: Can will	34	0.80 (Maximum)
Token 2: May ought to Token 7: Can may	1	0.02 (Minimum)

The results show 62 occurrences of 10 tokens of VP - Double Modals in the corpus of PakeE; however, 79 occurrences of 10 tokens of VP

– Double Modals in MyE. The results also reveal the maximum number of occurrences of one token in PakE corpus is 12 and the token is VP – *can will*; however, the maximum number of occurrences of one token in MyE corpus is 34 and the token is VP – *can can*. Moreover, the results indicate the minimum number of the occurrence of one token in PakE corpus is 1 and the token is VP – *may ought to*; however, the minimum number of the occurrence of two tokens in MyE corpus is 1 (each) and the tokens are VP – *may ought to & can may*.

The results are very interesting. MyE shows more use of VP - Double Modals than PakE, based on the study of 10 tokens in the corpus. The frequency of use of Double Modals in MyE is 1.88 per million words; on the other hand, PakE shows a frequency of 1.47 per million words. Interestingly, the maximum use of one token is also in MyE and that is *can can* with 0.80 frequency; while, in PakE, the maximum use of one token is *can will* with 0.28 frequency. However, for the minimum frequency of tokens in both dialects – PakE and MyE have an equal figure and that is 0.02. Although, PakE has only one token with a frequency 0.02, and MyE has two tokens with the same frequency.

This research also indicates the use of Verb Phrase – Double Modals in many varieties of the English Language. Kortmann (2010) has also described the use of Double Modals in the Feature Catalogue of WAMVE (World Atlas of Morphosyntactic Varieties of English). Although, this is not a standard English feature, however, it is used in many varieties of English.

The focus of this research is on the variations in the linguistics variable: Verb phrase – Double Modals in Pakistani English and Malaysian English. It has used corpora – *GlowbE-PK* and *GlowbE-MY*.

This research has explored the use of 10 double Modals in 20 different Verb phrases: 10 phrases from PakE, and 10 phrases from MyE. This research has clearly shown the use of double Modals in PakE and MyE, while this is not a Standard English feature.

Moreover, this research has compared the use of the same 10 types of VP – Double Modal tokens in both dialects of English. Interestingly, MyE displays more use of double Modals than PakE. The difference is clear with an average frequency of 1.88 in MyE and 1.47 in PakE.

This research also endorses a pattern in the non-standard varieties of the language. Use of Verb Phrase – Double Modals in two major varieties of English with considerably different backgrounds and development patterns indicate a significant pattern in the different dialects of English. Kortmann (2010) has also quoted the use of VP – Double Modals in the different native and non-native varieties and regions with different substrate languages and the history of the English language in them. This research affirms a pattern in the different dialects of the language – English.

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