



Diachronic Variation in Pakistani English Sports News: A Multi-Dimensional Analysis

Research Article

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Abstract

This study investigates linguistic variation in Sports News (SN) across three decades (1995–2004, 2005–2014, and 2015–2021) in Pakistani English newspapers. Employing a corpus-based approach and Biber's (1988, 2004) Multidimensional Analysis (MDA) framework, the research examines co-occurring linguistic features to identify stylistic dimensions and diachronic shifts within the SN sub-register. A corpus of 1,693 Sports News articles, totaling approximately 1.9 million words and spanning three decades (1995–2021), was compiled from major Pakistani English newspapers to examine diachronic linguistic variation. The findings indicate that earlier SN texts exhibit more involved, elaborated, and affective linguistic tendencies, characterized by subordination, longer lexical items, and markers of personal stance, aligning them with narrative storytelling. Over time, SN transitions toward a more informational and compressed style, featuring higher lexical density, increased nominalisation, and expanded noun phrase usage, reflecting a professionalised, report-oriented approach. Despite this shift, explicit referencing, evaluative phrasing, and interpretive elements persist, ensuring analytical depth and narrative framing. This study demonstrates that the linguistic evolution of Pakistani English Sports News is systematic, multidimensional, and



responsive to changing journalistic conventions and audience expectations, balancing concise fact reporting with evaluative and interpretive commentary.

Keywords: sport news, Pakistani English newspapers, Biber's (1988) model, dimensions, multidimensional analysis tagger

1. Introduction

The emergence of distinct varieties of English across postcolonial contexts has been widely documented in World Englishes research (Pride, 1982; Platt, Weber & Ho, 1984). These new Englishes evolve through continuous linguistic change at micro and macro levels, shaped by historical, social, and regional forces, and examined through both synchronic (Biber, 1985, 1986, 1988; Mitkov & Stajner, 2011) and diachronic perspectives (Biber & Finegan, 1989; Leech & Smith, 2005). Within this tradition, Pakistani English (PE) has emerged as a recognized variety influenced by colonial history and sustained interaction with local languages such as Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto, and Sindhi. Research by Rahman (2002, 2004) and Baumgardner (1990s) highlights features such as retroflex phonology, locally embedded vocabulary, and widespread code-mixing, illustrating how PE reflects Pakistan's multilingual sociolinguistic environment.

Internationally, diachronic corpus studies have facilitated the investigation of long-term linguistic shifts across languages such as Spanish, Portuguese, and English (Bybee, 2001; Croft, 2000; Biber et al., 2006). Within English, newspapers have been a productive site for studying diachronic change because of their evolving communicative functions, stylistic shifts, and responsiveness to sociocultural transformation. Research on British and American newspapers—such as Burt and Bauer (1996), Westin (2001), and Westin and Geisler (2002)—demonstrates gradual movement toward more informal, lexically specific, and structurally integrated styles over the twentieth century. Similar scholarship explores diachronic shifts in engagement features (Hyland & Jiang, 2016), linguistic sexism (Laine & Watson, 2014), and broader sociolinguistic change (Saily, 2014), showing how news discourse responds to ideological and cultural currents.

In Pakistan, although considerable work has been conducted on PE across phonology, syntax, lexis, discourse, and register variation (Mahboob & Ahmad, 2004; Khan, 2012; Latif & Chaudhary, 2016; Ali & Sheeraz, 2018; Ali et al., 2021; Rasool et al., 2021), diachronic research remains limited. A small number of studies have examined changes in specific written registers such as newspaper editorials (Ali, 2018; Ali & Sheeraz, 2018) or the sports category of press reportage (Latif & Chaudhary, 2016). However, most studies remain synchronic, and very few apply a systematic multi-dimensional approach (MDA) to track long-term register variation in any sub-register of Pakistani English newspapers.

The Multi-Dimensional Analysis (MDA) framework (Biber, 1988; Biber, 2004) provides a powerful methodological basis for investigating how linguistic features co-occur and interact across large corpora. Rather than focusing on isolated structures, MDA identifies underlying textual dimensions that highlight the communicative functions shaping register variation. This makes it particularly suitable for diachronic investigations, where subtle shifts in the distribution of linguistic features accumulate over time and reflect changing patterns of news discourse.

Sports journalism offers a compelling site for such analysis. In Pakistan, sports news has expanded significantly due to increased media coverage of cricket, the rise of digital news platforms, shifting audience expectations, and the growing cultural and political significance of sports. These developments make sports reporting a dynamic register where changing styles, narrative techniques, and journalistic norms can signal deeper linguistic evolution within Pakistani English. Yet, despite its cultural visibility, the linguistic study of Pakistani English sports news—especially from a diachronic perspective—remains underexplored.

Addressing this gap, the present article investigates diachronic linguistic variation in Pakistani English sports news using Biber's (1988) MD framework and the expanded 2004 semantic-grammatical MDA model. By examining changes across multiple decades, this study aims to uncover how sports news has shifted functionally and stylistically over time, what kinds of textual dimensions have emerged or diminished, and how these changes contribute to the broader evolution of Pakistani English as a distinct variety. The findings offer insights into newsroom practices, changing audience orientations, and the evolving nature of PE registers within the context of digital and print media development in Pakistan.

2. Literature Review

The evolution of Pakistani English has long been studied within the wider paradigm of World Englishes, which acknowledges that postcolonial varieties develop unique linguistic identities shaped by local sociocultural conditions (Baumgardner, 1990; Rahman, 2002; Schneider, 2007). Within this framework, newspapers have been recognized as dynamic linguistic sites where register-specific conventions reveal how English changes across time (Biber, 1988; Westin, 2001). However, despite the growth of corpus-based work on Pakistani English, its diachronic development, particularly across specialized registers such as sports news, remains insufficiently explored.

Recent corpus-based studies have begun tracing long-term variation in Pakistani English newspapers. Siddique, Mahmood, and Ahmad (2022) conducted a diachronic multidimensional analysis of Pakistani newspapers and found significant shifts across key functional dimensions over several decades. Their findings show that Pakistani English newspaper discourse has become progressively more informational and less narrative, reflecting the professionalization and globalization of journalistic norms. Similarly, in a follow-up study, Siddique, Mahmood, and Ahmad (2023) examined editorial discourse from 1995 to 2021 using Biber's MDA and observed a gradual intensification of argumentative and persuasive linguistic features. These studies collectively demonstrate that Pakistani English is not static, but evolves in measurable functional ways as media practices change.

While these studies offer valuable insights, they share several limitations directly relevant to the present research question. First, none of them focuses on sports news, despite its distinctive communicative structure, reliance on narrative dramatization, evaluative framing, and culturally charged representation of national sports events—especially cricket. Second, with the exception of Siddique et al. (2022; 2023), these studies do not employ Multidimensional Analysis, leaving a gap in how co-occurring linguistic features in Pakistani English evolve across time within specific registers. Third, even the existing MDA studies examine general news or editorials, not genre-

specific subregisters such as sports reporting, which may follow unique developmental trajectories influenced by globalization, commercialization of sports media, and digital reporting styles.

Given these gaps, the present study seeks to undertake the first systematic, diachronic, multidimensional analysis of Pakistani English sports news. Sports journalism represents a hybrid genre, encompassing narrative recounting, rapid information dissemination, evaluative commentary, stance-taking, and the construction of national identity. Consequently, it offers a rich site for investigating long-term linguistic change. By applying Biber's (1988, 2004) Multi-Dimensional Analysis to sports news spanning multiple decades, this research examines how functional dimensions—such as involved versus informational production, narrative versus non-narrative styles, and evaluative stance—have evolved within this register. This approach facilitates a nuanced, functional interpretation of co-occurring linguistic patterns in a genre of considerable sociocultural significance in Pakistan.

Through this diachronic corpus-based investigation, the study extends existing scholarship in four key ways:

1. It moves beyond general newspaper discourse to analyze a specialized and understudied register, sports news.
2. It applies MDA across decades, adding a functional dimension to prior grammatical or lexical studies.
3. It situates sports journalism within the broader developmental trajectory of Pakistani English, revealing how sociocultural and media transformations reshape linguistic practice.
4. It contributes to comparative register studies within World Englishes by showing how Pakistani English adapts over time within a culturally significant media domain.

In doing so, the research addresses a clear empirical and conceptual gap and advances our understanding of diachronic register variation in Pakistani English.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Overview of the Chapter

This chapter presents the methodology adopted for developing a corpus-based study of Sports News (SN) in Pakistani English (PE). The first section outlines the selection and development of a representative corpus, including the processes for data collection, cleaning, and preparation. The second section describes the data analysis procedures using Biber's (1988) MDA framework. A diachronic perspective is adopted to examine linguistic variation across three decades (1995–2021), reflecting both synchronic and temporal trends in PE sports reporting.

3.2 Corpus Development and Data Collection

3.2.1 Selection of Written Sub-Register

For this study, the SN sub-register of newspapers was selected due to its unique stylistic and linguistic characteristics. Newspapers represent a formal written register that reflects cultural, social, and journalistic norms in Pakistan. The newspapers included in the corpus are:

- Dawn News
- The News
- The Frontier Post
- The Express Tribune

Only texts with a minimum of 100 words were considered to ensure adequate linguistic content for meaningful analysis. The corpus covers national and international sports reports, commentaries, and feature articles published between 1995 and 2021.

3.2.2 Nature of Data

The corpus comprises Pakistani English Sports News (SN), including national and international reports, commentaries, and feature articles published between 1995 and 2021. It consists of 1,693 files totaling approximately 1.9 million words.

3.2.3 Corpus Distribution Across Decades

Table 1 presents the distribution of the sports news corpus across three decades, showing the number of files, total word counts, and their respective percentages, with the largest portion of texts (53.6%) from 1995–2004 and the smallest (17.7%) from 2005–2014.

Table 1: Size and Distribution of Corpus of Pakistani English Sports News

Decade	No. of Files	No. of Words	Percentage (%)
1995–2004	500	1,017,755	53.6
2005–2014	499	336,548	17.7
2015–2021	694	545,421	28.7
Total	1,693	1,899,724	100

3.2.4 Tools and Procedures for Corpus Development

Step 1: Data Collection

First, articles for the study were retrieved from online archives from the selected newspapers. It should be noted that only sources providing authentic and representative coverage of Sports News were considered, so that the dataset accurately reflects journalistic practices.

Step 2: Data Cleaning

Subsequently, non-linguistic content, including headers, footers, advertisements, tables, figures, and other extraneous material, was removed. In this way, only relevant textual data remained for analysis, thereby enhancing the reliability of the corpus.

Step 3: Metadata Recording

After cleaning, each text was assigned a unique code and accompanied by metadata, which included the newspaper name, year of publication, file number, and total word count. This procedure allowed for systematic organization and traceability of the corpus, which is crucial for reproducibility and accurate referencing.

Step 4: Tagging

Following metadata recording, the cleaned corpus was processed using a MAT tagger. It should be highlighted that over 67 linguistic features were extracted for MDA, covering aspects such as verb types, noun phrases, adverbs, pronouns, and hedges. Consequently, the data were ready for quantitative and qualitative examination.

Step 5: Normalization

Thereafter, word counts and frequency data were normalized to account for differences in text length. In this manner, frequency comparisons across texts were accurate and not biased by variations in text size, which is essential for valid statistical interpretation.

Step 6: Data Analysis for MDA

Finally, normalized frequencies of the tagged linguistic features were subjected to statistical analysis, including factor analysis, using SPSS. As a result, dimension scores were calculated to identify co-occurring linguistic patterns. These findings then allowed us to examine stylistic characteristics, evaluative tone, and diachronic changes in Sports News writing, thus providing comprehensive insights into journalistic language use.

3.2.5 Procedure of Data Collection

The following sequential steps were employed for data preparation: The process of data preparation for this study began with the retrieval of Sports News (SN) articles from selected online sources. It should be noted that these sources were chosen to ensure authenticity and comprehensive coverage. Subsequently, non-linguistic content such as headers, footers, tables, figures, and page numbers was removed, in order to retain only the relevant textual material. Thereafter, each file was assigned a unique code and renamed according to newspaper, sub-register, and decade using batch renaming software, which allowed for systematic organization and traceability. In addition, the files were classified into folders based on decade and newspaper, thus facilitating efficient navigation and management of the corpus. Finally, metadata was created for each text, documenting the file title, publication date, word count, sub-register, and source, which ensured that the dataset was well-organized and ready for rigorous analysis.

3.3 Data Analysis

3.3.1 Research Model Employed

Biber's (1988) MDA framework was employed to examine co-occurring linguistic features in SN. MDA allows identification of stylistic dimensions such as narrative style, informational density, involvement, and evaluative language, characteristic of journalistic writing.

3.3.2 Tools for Data Analysis

The present study employed AntConc to conduct concordance, frequency, and collocation analyses, SPSS for factor analysis and dimensional scoring, and Microsoft Excel to perform data normalization, descriptive statistical analysis, and graphical visualization.

3.3.3 Analysis Procedure

Following corpus preparation, the tagged files were processed to extract key linguistic features, including verbs, nouns, adverbs, pronouns, and hedges, so that the data could be systematically analyzed. Subsequently, these co-occurring features were subjected to factor analysis, which allowed the identification of stylistic dimensions within the Sports News sub-register. In addition, dimension scores were compared across decades (1995–2004, 2005–2014, 2015–2021), in order to observe diachronic changes in language use over time. Thereafter, the results were interpreted to examine patterns of stylistic variation, linguistic complexity, and evaluative tone, thus providing insights into the evolving nature of Sports News writing in Pakistani English newspapers. Finally, the findings were cross-validated against prior studies on Pakistani newspaper sub-registers, which ensured the reliability and contextual relevance of the analysis.

3.3.4 Normalization and Statistical Procedures

The data analysis procedure began with normalization, whereby raw feature frequencies were adjusted to a standard text length of 1,000 words to ensure comparability. Following this, the normalized frequencies were standardized by converting them into z-scores, allowing for consistent comparison across datasets. Factor analysis was then conducted to identify clusters of co-occurring linguistic features, which were subsequently categorized according to their functional dimensions. To quantify these dimensions, dimension scores were calculated by summing the standardized scores of positive and negative features. Finally, ANOVA was employed to assess the statistical significance of diachronic variations across different decades, providing insights into temporal patterns in the data.

3.3.5 Tagging Process

The corpus was tagged using software developed by Dr. Shakir and Dr. Elen Le Foll based on Biber's (1988) framework. Over 150 linguistic features were tagged, with 143 features selected for MDA after removing overlaps. These features were analyzed to identify co-occurrence patterns and factor loadings according to the 1988 MDA framework.

To summarize, the methodology outlined ensures a robust, representative, and diachronic corpus of SN in PE. By combining quantitative MDA procedures with careful corpus development and cleaning, this study investigates stylistic variation in Sports News both synchronically and diachronically across 27 years.

4. Results

The present section the results of the 1988 MDA of sports news (SN) in the diachronic Pakistani English corpus. Table 2 summarizes factor loadings across five dimensions, showing key positive and negative linguistic features. Factor analysis indicated a four-factor solution as optimal. Descriptive statistics reveal that D1, D2, and D5 remained relatively stable across 1995–2021, while D3 and D4 showed diachronic variation. ANOVA results highlight statistically significant differences for certain dimensions across decades (Table 4.16, Figure 4.8). Comparative analysis situates SN within Biber’s (1988) framework, showing the decades as informational (D1), narrative (D2), explicit (D3), not overtly argumentative (D4), and abstract (D5), closely aligning with academic prose, press reviews, and press reportage.

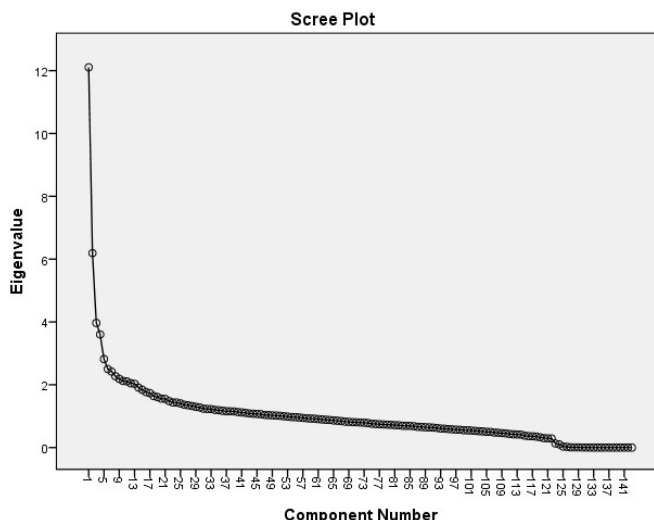
Table 2: Factor Loadings Based on the 1988 MDA across SN

Dimension 1: Involved vs. Informational Production		Dimension 3: Explicit vs. Situation Dependent Reference	
Positive Features	Scores	Positive Features	Scores
Split infinitives	5.00	Phrasal coordination	1.62
Total other nouns	5.49	That relative clauses on subject position	0.51
Sentence relatives	1.28	Negative Features	
Average word length	0.78	Place adverbials	-0.39
Negative Features		Pied-piping relative clauses	-0.45
Direct WH-questions	-0.33	Predicative adjectives	-0.49
WH-clauses	-0.4	Nominalizations	-0.51
Causative adverbial subordinators	-0.4	Time adverbials	-0.55
Hedges	-0.43	WH relative clauses on object position	-0.69
Total prepositional phrases	-0.44	Total adverbs	-2.7
Discourse particles	-0.48	WH relative clauses on subject position	(-0.09)
Downtoners	-0.48	Concessive adverbial subordinators	(-0.22)
Stranded preposition	-0.53	Dimension 4: Overt Expression of Argumentation	
Independent clause coordination	-0.55	Positive Features	Scores
Indefinite pronouns	-0.6	Predictive modals	(0.30)
Amplifiers	-0.67	Negative Features	
Second person pronouns	-0.68	Necessity modals	-0.68

Contractions	-0.68	Conditional adverbial subordinators	-0.8
Pro-verb do	-0.71	Split auxiliaries	-1.11
Demonstrative pronouns	-0.73	Suasive verbs	(-0.22)
First person pronouns	-0.79	Infinitives	(-0.23)
Analytic negation	-0.79	Dimension 5:	
Pronoun it	-0.8	Abstract vs. Non-Abstract Style	
<i>Existential</i> there	-0.82	Positive Features	Scores
Emphatics	-0.82	Past participial clauses	2.13
Possibility modals	-0.98	Other adverbial subordinators	1.07
Private verbs	-1.07	By-passives	0.59
Present tense	-1.4	Negative Features	
Type-token ratio	-1.41	Past participial WHIZ deletion relatives	-0.46
Be as main verb	-1.82	Conjuncts	(-0.12)
Subordinator that deletion	(-0.26)	Agentless passives	(-0.23)
Attributive adjectives	(-0.26)		
Dimension 2:			
Narrative vs. Non-narrative Concerns			
Positive Features	Scores		
Public verbs	0.65		
Present participial clauses	0.54		
Past tense	0.39		
Negative Features			
Perfect aspect	-0.32		
Third person pronoun	-0.52		
Synthetic negation	-0.58		

The results indicate that Dimensions D1, D2, and D5 exhibit relatively stable mean values across the three time periods, reflecting consistency over time. In contrast, Dimensions D3 and D4 display notable variations in their mean values, suggesting temporal changes in these linguistic patterns across the examined decades.

Figure 1: Scree Plot for Factor Analysis Showing Eigen Values across SN



In this study, the analysis was limited to four factors occurring prior to the breakpoint (i.e. Eigen value 1). Factors with less than one significant Eigen value were excluded from the analysis, based on the scree plot. The plot shows that after the first four factors, there is a merging of factors around an Eigen value of 2. Notably, Factor 1 explains the largest proportion of variance, with an Eigen value close to 12. Thus, a four-factor solution was considered optimal for the study.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of the 1988 MDA of SN across Decades

Register	Sub-Register	Year	Dimensions	Mean	Min	Max	SD
Written	SN	1995-2004	D 1	-17.47	-20.17	-14.41	1.78
			D 2	1.18	-0.60	2.49	0.93
			D 3	4.24	2.66	5.35	0.79
			D 4	-1.38	-2.21	0.49	0.87
			D 5	0.70	-0.34	1.72	0.64
			Mean	Min	Max	SD	
Written	SN	2005-2014	D 1	-20.57	-23.19	-18.46	1.51
			D 2	-0.94	-2.40	0.93	0.97
			D 3	3.81	2.76	4.67	0.58
			D 4	-3.44	-4.57	-2.02	0.89
			D 5	0.16	-0.48	1.01	0.47
			Mean	Min	Max	SD	
Written	SN	2015-2021	D 1	-19.09	-20.15	-17.82	0.83
			D 2	-0.69	-1.22	-0.04	0.37
			D 3	3.26	2.46	4.48	0.61
			D 4	-3.31	-3.96	-2.75	0.41
			D 5	0.31	-0.31	1.76	0.69

The results show that dimensions D1, D2, and D5 have relatively stable mean values across the three time periods, indicating consistency over time. However, dimensions D3 and D4 have shown changes in their mean values over time, indicating variation across the three time periods.

4.1 Analysis of Variance of SN across Decades

The table 4 comprising ANOVA results compares language of Pakistan across the decades of SN on five factors studied through the 1988 MDA.

Table 4: Diachronic Variations across SN of the 1988 MDA

Sub-Category	Comparison/Dimensions	Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	p-value	F crit
SN	1995-04 vs. 2005-14	Between Groups	4.60	1.00	4.60	0.06	0.81	5.32
	1995-04 vs. 2015-21	Between Groups	2.92	1.00	2.92	0.04	0.84	5.32
	2005-14 vs. 2015-21	Between Groups	0.19	1.00	0.19	0.00	0.96	5.32

The table above demonstrates that no statistically significant differences exist among the decade pairs of Sports News (SN)—1995–2004 vs. 2005–2014, 1995–2004 vs. 2015–2021, and 2005–2014 vs. 2015–2021—as all significance values exceed 0.05.

Table 5: Variation across the Decades of SN of the 1988 MDA

Dimensions	Values of Sig. (p-value)		
	1995-04 vs. 2005-14	1995-04 vs. 2015-21	2005-14 vs. 2015-21
Dimension 1	0.04	0.67	0.01
Dimension 2	0.00	0.01	0.01
Dimension 3	0.25	0.01	0.24
Dimension 4	0.01	0.00	0.28
Dimension 5	0.00	0.00	0.39

The table indicates that for Dimension 1 (D1), statistically significant differences are observed between the decades 1995–2004 vs. 2005–2014 and 2005–2014 vs. 2015–2021 ($p < 0.05$), whereas the comparison between 1995–2004 vs. 2015–2021 shows no significant difference ($p > 0.05$). For Dimension 2 (D2), all pairwise comparisons across the three decades demonstrate statistically significant differences ($p < 0.05$). In Dimension 3 (D3), a significant difference is found only between 1995–2004 and 2015–2021, while the other decade comparisons are not significant ($p > 0.05$). Dimension 4 (D4) shows significant differences for 1995–2004 vs. 2005–2014 and 1995–2004 vs. 2015–2021, with no significant change between 2005–2014 and 2015–2021. Similarly, for Dimension 5 (D5), significant differences occur between 1995–2004 vs. 2005–2014 and 1995–2004 vs. 2015–2021, whereas 2005–2014 vs. 2015–2021 does not show a significant difference.

5.5.5 Comparison of Decades of SN across Five Dimensions

To compare the linguistic differences in SN across decades, Figure 2 provides a visual representation of how SN as sub-register of written category across decades vary on five textual

dimensions. It offers a comparative analysis of the variations across decades: 1995-2004, 2005-2014, and 2015-2021 on the five textual dimensions.

Table 6: Decade-wise Dimensions Scores of Written Registers across the 1988 Model

Decades	Text Type	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5
1995-2004		-17.27	1.53	4.10	-1.26	0.71
2005-2014	SN	-18.60	-0.77	3.58	-3.16	-0.02
2015-2021		-17.37	-0.39	2.92	-2.84	0.09

Graph 1: Comparison of Five Dimensions Scores of SN across Decades

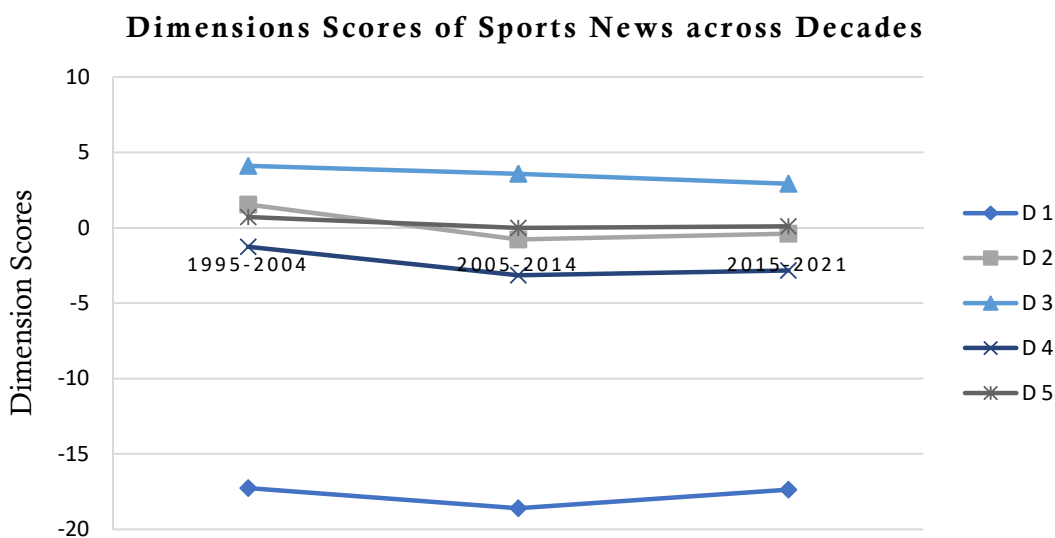
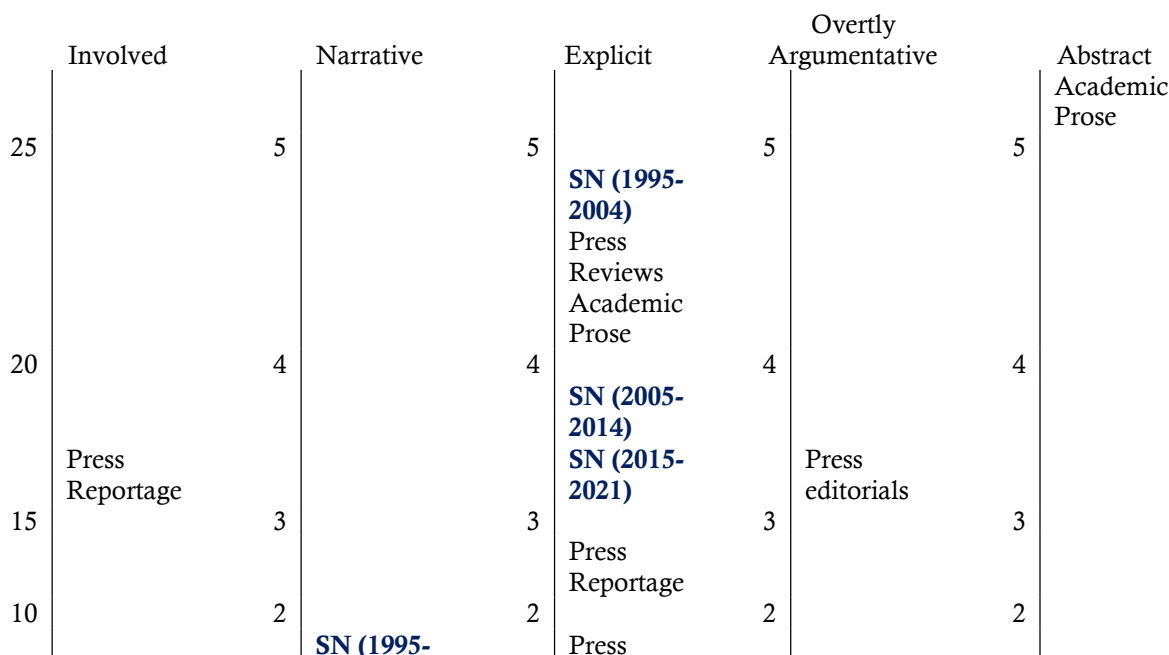
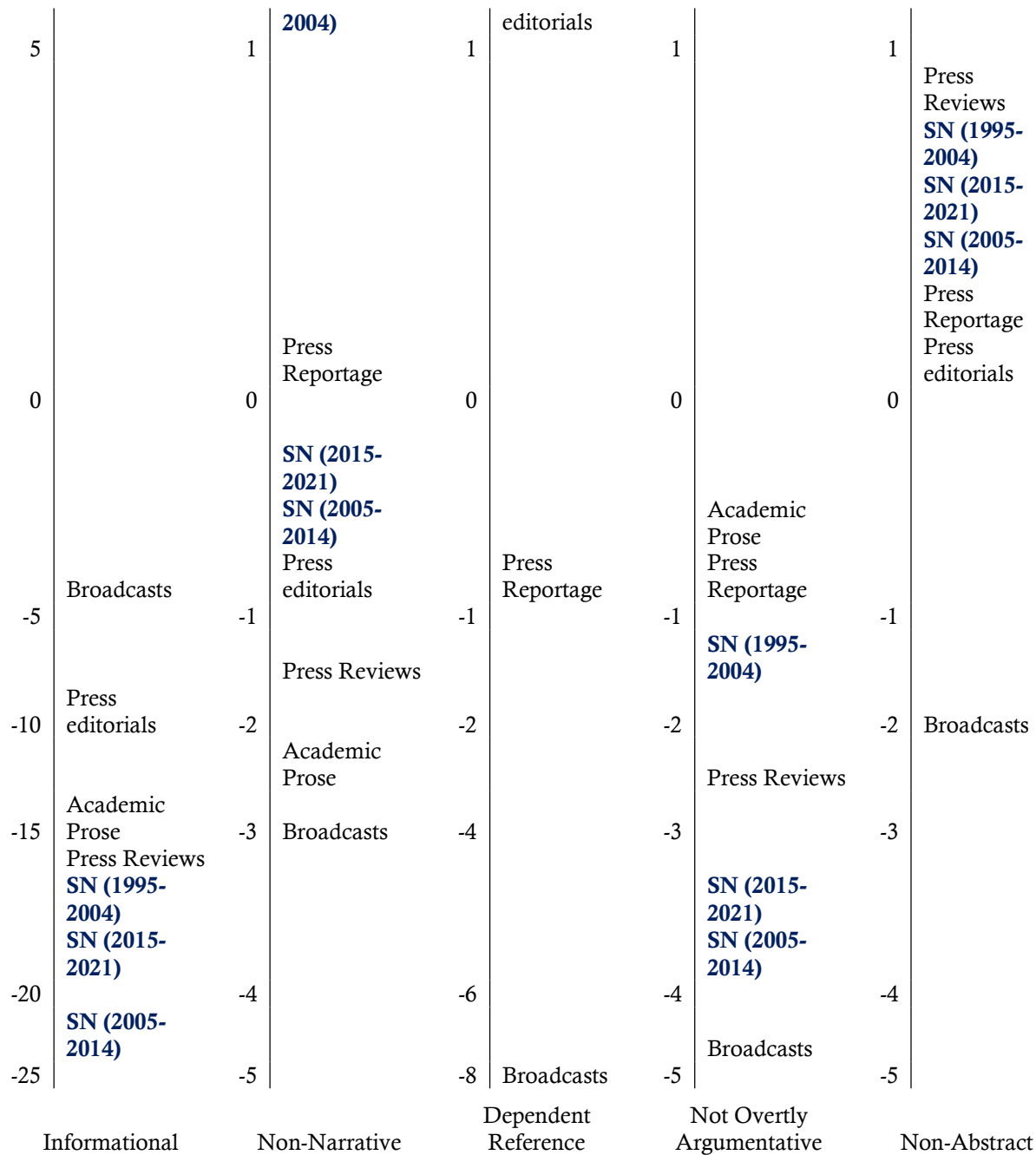


Figure 2: Mean Scores of Dimensions for SN and Six Genres by Biber (1988)





To situate Sports News (SN) within a broader register comparison, the decades 1995–2004, 2005–2014, and 2015–2021 were classified as informational on Dimension 1 (D1), reflecting higher scores of negatively loaded co-occurring linguistic features. This aligns SN with registers identified by Biber (1988), including academic prose and press reviews. Across Dimension 2 (D2), all three decades exhibit narrative characteristics, indicated by positive co-occurring features, positioning SN closer to Biber’s (1988) press reportage genre. On Dimension 3 (D3), each decade demonstrates explicit reference patterns, comparable to the genres of press reviews and academic prose, as evidenced by high positive feature scores. For Dimension 4 (D4), none of the decades display covertly argumentative traits; however, 1995–2004 aligns with academic prose and press reportage,

whereas 2005–2014 and 2015–2021 resemble press reviews and press reportage. Finally, on Dimension 5 (D5), all decades are abstract in nature due to positive co-occurring features, comparable to Biber’s (1988) press reviews, press reportage, and press editorials.

5. Discussion

5.1 Interpretation of D1: Informational vs. Involved Production

The first step in interpreting Dimension 1 is to describe the communicative functions shared by the co-occurring linguistic variables across the decades. In Biber’s (1988) model, D1 differentiates between involved and informational production, with negative weights indicating informational density. In the case of Pakistani English Sports News (PESN), the dimension scores across all three decades (1995–2004 = -17.27 ; 2005–2014 = -18.60 ; 2015–2021 = -17.37) follow a linear pattern, reflecting an overwhelming dominance of linguistic features with large negative loadings. These features form the hallmark of compressed expository writing rather than interactive spoken discourse.

Due to the strong presence of negative-weighted features—such as dense nominal structures, high lexical variety, extensive attributive modification, heavy use of prepositional phrases, and phrasal coordination—D1 reflects an informational rather than involved style (see Figure ____). Similar to Biber’s findings for press reportage, the overuse of these co-occurring linguistic variables results in informationally dense texts characterized by compact presentation of facts and minimal speaker involvement.

Across the decades, PESN maintains this informational profile. The decade 2005–2014 is the most informationally dense due to the sharply negative score (-18.60), indicating intensified reliance on compact nominal expressions, participial clauses, and syntactic compression. The first (1995–2004) and third (2015–2021) decades show slightly higher scores, suggesting partial reintroduction of interpretive language and evaluative framing, yet without altering the general informational nature of the register.

Therefore, on D1, the language of PESN consistently reflects a formal and informational mode of exposition across 1995–2004, 2005–2014, and 2015–2021. The register remains rooted in fact-focused reporting rather than interactional engagement.

Excerpt 1:

The *committee* analysis *report on player performance* was finalized yesterday, and the *findings* highlight that the revised training *model* is implemented across all *units*. The *dataset* comprises 12 *variables*, with each *metric* for *match efficiency* calculated using standardized *benchmarks*. Additionally, the *review* was conducted under strict *criteria*, ensuring that each *parameter* in the *evaluation framework* remains consistent across *tournaments*. (File: NSU.11605.1995)

The italicized bold words represent the nouns identified in Excerpt 1; the underlined segment marks the sentence-relative clause; and the double-underlined phrases indicate the prepositional phrases that contribute to informational density.

5.2 Interpretation of D2: Narrative vs. Non-Narrative Concerns

D2 captures the contrast between narrative and non-narrative discourse. When plotted across the three decades (1995–2004 = 1.53; 2005–2014 = –0.77; 2015–2021 = –0.39), the language of PESN demonstrates a clear diachronic movement. The first decade reflects narrative concerns, while the remaining two decades predominantly reflect non-narrative concerns.

The decade 1995–2004 is situated on the positive side of D2, indicating a narrative orientation. This pattern is shaped by the presence of past-tense markers, public verbs, and event sequencing typical of traditional sports narration, where match progressions, player actions, and chronological details are foregrounded. These features align with Biber’s narrative cluster, positioning early PESN closer to event recounts.

In contrast, the decades 2005–2014 and 2015–2021 shift toward the negative side of D2, showing non-narrative concerns. This shift suggests a transformation toward analytical reporting, increased focus on real-time commentary, and reliance on descriptive and interpretive summaries rather than chronological storytelling. The reduction of narrative features such as synthetic negation, present participial clauses, and past-tense public verbs contributes to this transition.

Negative-weighted features, such as third-person pronouns and indicators of implicit stance, remain dominant across 2005–2014 and 2015–2021, which keeps these decades on the non-narrative side of D2. Although 2015–2021 exhibits a slight rise compared to 2005–2014, the register remains fundamentally non-narrative.

Thus, PESN displays a diachronic movement from narrative reporting (1995–2004) to non-narrative, analytical reporting (2005–2021). This transformation mirrors global shifts in sports journalism, where statistical summaries, expert commentary, and interpretive framing have replaced chronological recounting.

Excerpt 2:

Manager Yawar Saeed *was relieved* of his duties because of his “professional commitments” as the Pakistan Cricket Board *continued* to play Nasir *was asked* to take the hot seat he first *occupied* in 1999 he *was shown* the door. (File: NSU.11230.2011)

The excerpt 2 leans strongly toward narrative discourse because it recounts a sequence of events through frequent past-tense verbs such as *was relieved*, *continued*, *was asked*, *occupied*, and *was shown*. These verbs construct a clear storyline of managerial changes within the cricket board. Although the paragraph lacks present participial clauses and public verbs, the dominant use of past-tense forms outweighs these absences. The presence of third-person pronouns slightly reduces narrativity, but not enough to shift the paragraph into a non-narrative mode. Overall, the paragraph reflects narrative concerns by presenting events as part of a progressing timeline.

5.3 Interpretation of D3: Explicit vs. Dependent Reference

D3 identifies the degree to which texts rely on explicit reference rather than context-dependent cues. PESN scores consistently fall on the positive side of this dimension (1995–2004 = 4.10; 2005–2014 = 3.58; 2015–2021 = 2.92), forming a nearly linear pattern but with a gradual decrease across decades.

Positive loadings dominate, such as nominalizations, phrasal coordination, and that-relative clauses, which create high referential clarity and reduce reliance on contextual explanation. These features ensure that sports news remains accessible even to readers without background knowledge of the event. Across the three decades, the co-occurring linguistic variables point to a strong commitment to explicitness.

In the earliest decade (1995–2004), the highest positive score reflects extensive use of elaborated noun phrases and referential markers. Negative features—such as total adverbs and WH-relatives in object position—are less prominent, keeping the text explicitly anchored.

During 2005–2014 and 2015–2021, explicit referential features remain dominant, but the slight decline in scores suggests a shift toward more compressed structures and reduced reliance on elaborated noun phrases. The language becomes increasingly succinct, though still explicit.

Overall, PESN exhibits explicit, context-independent discourse across all decades, similar to official documents, academic prose, and press reviews. Sports reporting maintains clarity through explicit reference, ensuring communicative transparency in presenting matches, statistics, and evaluations.

Excerpt 3:

Farhan, *nephew of former great Qamar Zaman*, who shocked fourth seed Aurangzaib Mahmood the other day, kept his cool *and* was in no mood to surrender. A member of the victorious Pakistan team *that* won the World Junior Squash Team Championship at Switzerland, Farhan surged 2–1 up, and some unforced errors cost him the fourth set closely. However, he bounced back to win the fifth and decisive set. (File: NSU.12340.2009)

The highlighted features—phrasal coordination (“kept his cool and was in no mood to surrender”) and that-relative clause in subject position (“the Pakistan team that won the World Junior Squash Team Championship...”) make the text explicit by clearly linking actions and precisely identifying referents. Together, they increase informational clarity, reduce contextual dependence, and position the excerpt toward the explicit end of Dimension 3.

5.4 Interpretation of D4: Overt Expression of Persuasion

D4 measures the overt expression of persuasion. Across decades, PESN demonstrates predominantly non-persuasive language patterns, reflected in negative scores (1995–2004 = –1.26; 2005–2014 = –3.16; 2015–2021 = –2.84). The decade 1995–2004 is the least negative, indicating the

highest degree of argumentative or evaluative expression, while 2005–2014 shows the strongest suppression of persuasion.

In the first decade, positive features such as predictive modals, necessity modals, and suasive verbs surface occasionally, giving space for evaluative commentary and future predictions about team performance. However, negative features—such as conditional subordination and split auxiliaries—limit the extent of overt persuasion.

The decade 2005–2014 is characterized by overwhelmingly negative feature loadings, reflecting a shift toward neutral, objective reporting. The reduced presence of modals and persuasive markers keeps the texts factual and non-interactive.

The decade 2015–2021 shows a slight rise compared to 2005–2014, suggesting a mild return of interpretive stance, likely influenced by the growth of expert analysis and commentary integrated into sports reporting. Yet, the text remains non-persuasive overall.

Therefore, PESN across all decades prioritizes factuality over argumentation, with persuasion only marginally present in the earliest decade and substantially reduced in subsequent decades.

Excerpt 4:

Juventus open up who *can* reduce the gap when they host Bologna later. "The team is doing very well, we *have to* keep working to *ensure* we keep this form in the second half of the season," and we *should* welcome anything that makes his job easier." (File: NSU.12915.2018)

The excerpt shows covert argumentation: predictive modals (*can*, *should*) suggest possibilities or advice, split auxiliaries (*have to*) imply obligation subtly, and infinitives (*ensure*) indicate intended actions. Arguments are implied rather than explicitly stated.

5.5 Interpretation of D5: Abstract vs. Non-Abstract Information

D5 distinguishes between abstract and non-abstract information styles. PESN exhibits low-positive to near-zero scores (1995–2004 = 0.71; 2005–2014 = -0.02; 2015–2021 = 0.09), indicating generally limited abstraction with fluctuations across decades.

In the decade 1995–2004, the presence of positive co-occurring features, such as conjuncts, passive constructions, and participial clauses, positions PESN closer to text types characterized by moderate abstraction. These features allow reporters to generalize information, summarize match strategies, or highlight broader trends.

The decade 2005–2014 shows almost neutral scoring, indicating highly concrete reporting. The reduced presence of abstracting features reflects a focus on immediate events, scores, and factual summaries rather than broader generalizations.

The decade 2015–2021 reintroduces selected abstracting features, consistent with changes in sports journalism where analytic insights, performance trends, and strategic interpretations become more common.

Across all decades, however, PESN remains fundamentally non-abstract due to its dependence on event-based descriptions, statistical reporting, and concrete match details. Even when abstract features appear, they function within an expository rather than theoretical framework.

Thus, PESN demonstrates a stable but low degree of abstraction, aligning with press reportage and informative summaries rather than scientific or technical expositions.

Excerpt 5:

Former Pakistan captain Ramiz Raja has *criticised* England for not taking precautions *after* a major Covid-19 outbreak *forced* them to name a new squad ahead of the ODI series against Pakistan. Three players and four support staff *tested* positive on Tuesday. England players have *tested* positive, which is not a good thing, Raja said in a video on his YouTube channel. They felt like they were in jail and were not ready to follow protocols *like* wearing masks and social distancing, and this desperation has *resulted* in their team grabbing negative headlines, he said. Pakistan team has *gotten* advantage and they should benefit from the negativity in England's dressing room, he said. (File: NSU.13268.2021)

The excerpt exhibits features characteristic of abstract academic prose. Past participial clauses such as *forced*, *tested*, and *resulted* condense actions and their consequences, allowing information to be presented efficiently. Other adverbial subordinators like *after* and *like* establish logical connections between events, signaling causality or comparison. By-passives such as *have tested* and *has resulted* foreground the actions or outcomes rather than the actors, promoting an impersonal and objective tone. Collectively, these features produce a formal, generalized, and information-dense style typical of abstract academic writing.

6. Conclusion

This diachronic analysis of SN in Pakistani English, interpreted through the 1988 Multidimensional Analysis framework, demonstrates that the linguistic character of sports reporting has shifted notably across the decades. The findings reveal that these changes emerge not from isolated grammatical choices but from sets of co-occurring linguistic patterns that reflect evolving communicative purposes and stylistic expectations within sports journalism.

Across the three decades examined, SN shows a clear movement along the multidimensional continua of the 1988 framework. Earlier SN texts are characterised by more involved, elaborated, and affective linguistic tendencies—evident in their heavier reliance on subordination, longer lexical items, and stylistic markers of personal stance. Functionally, these features position early sports reporting closer to narrative storytelling, foregrounding human involvement, emotional tone, and descriptive richness, which correspond to the involved end of Dimension 1 (Involved vs. Informational Production).

As the decades progress, the language of SN transitions toward a more informational and compressed style. Later texts exhibit higher lexical density, increased nominalisation, heavier use of noun phrases, and greater reliance on prepositional elaboration. Functionally, these patterns place SN increasingly at the informational end of Dimension 1, where precision, referential clarity, and rapid transmission of facts become central. This shift suggests that sports journalism gradually adopts a more professionalised and report-oriented style—one driven by the demand for efficiency, accuracy, and immediacy in media communication.

Alongside this trend, SN continues to integrate features associated with Dimension 3 (Explicit vs. Situation-Dependent Reference), using elaborated references, stance markers, and context-setting expressions. Functionally, these features allow reporters to interpret events, highlight performances, and guide readers toward particular meanings. This ensures that despite becoming more informational, SN still maintains interpretive depth and analytical framing.

Similarly, traces of Dimension 4 (Overt Expression of Persuasion) appear through the use of public verbs, communication verbs, and evaluative phrasing. Functionally, these structures help sports writers subtly shape narratives, construct hero–villain dynamics, and emphasise achievement or failure while retaining the credibility expected in news discourse.

Taken together, the functional interpretations of these dimensions show that the linguistic evolution of SN produces a distinct shift in communicative style and purpose. Over time, the move toward higher lexical density and nominalisation enhances factual precision, enabling reports to present information with greater clarity and specificity. At the same time, compressed structures and reduced subordination make information delivery more efficient, allowing sports events to be narrated quickly and succinctly in line with faster news cycles. Despite this increasing informational load, reader engagement is sustained through selective use of evaluative and interpretive elements, which help frame performances, build narrative interest, and guide audience perception. Ultimately, these developments contribute to a more analytically framed reporting style—one that balances concise factual reporting with interpretive commentary, reflecting contemporary expectations of sports journalism as both objective and insightful.

Overall, the 1988 MDA framework highlights that SN in Pakistani English has undergone systematic and purposeful linguistic change, moving from expressive and involvement-oriented reporting toward a more informationally dense, interpretive, and strategically framed register. These findings deepen our understanding of how sports discourse evolves in response to shifting journalistic norms and audience demands, and they illuminate the multidimensional nature of linguistic variation across time.

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