

# Post-colonial Literature- Valorization of Local Identities through Code Switching

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study analyzes postcolonial literature, with a focus on the strategy of code-switching. During the colonial era, Southeast Asian and South Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, faced the hegemonic structures and values imposed by European countries. This resulted in the degradation of local identities, languages, norms, and values. Consequently, in the post-colonial era after independence, many postcolonial writers started questioning the colonial legacy in their literary works. Critics and theorists, such as Homi K. Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak influenced the post-colonial thought that sought to valorize local identities. This study seeks to investigate this process of valorization. Our discussion is focused on selected examples taken from a contemporary writer, Wajahat Ali's play, *The Domestic Crusaders* (2011) . Valorization is identified as a process of giving value or merit to a person, thing, or idea. Our primary focus in this paper is on how the writer gives value and merit to local identities through the use of code mixing/codeswitching. Furthermore, we argue that this valorization challenges colonial structures and norms. To conduct a thematic analysis, a purposive sampling technique was adopted to collect data from this fictional text.*

**Keywords:** Code-switching, Englishes, localized, post-colonial, values, valorization.

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## **Introduction**

Postcolonial theorists, such as Homi Bhabha (1994) have argued that literature can play an important role in the question of identity, while Edward Said (1994) explains that human beings create their own cultural and ethnic identities. Despite the global dominance of the English language, many postcolonial writers incorporate their own cultures and languages into literary works written in English. More importantly, postcolonial writers use the language of their colonizer (such as English) for the purposes of reinforcing their cultures and identities. For instance, a Malaysian writer may compose a novel in English, while using many lexical strategies adopted from many other languages spoken in the country. This may include Malay, Chinese, and Tamil. This commonly includes local expressions such as, exclamation markers like “Aiyah” instead of “Oh dear!”. It is still English, but it is a different kind of English. This demonstrates how local writers have appropriated the language of former colonizers. The quest for their own voice has resulted in distinctiveness in the Englishes used, as evidenced by the incorporation of indigenous words, expressions, and narratives. This reflects the identity as non-white writers of the English language.

When multilingual speakers try to hold a conversation, they usually incorporate words and sentences from different languages and mix them in a single discourse (Jabeen, 2018). This process has been described as code-switching or code-mixing. In other words, code-switching is a practice of speakers changing languages in the middle of their conversation (Zainab et al., 2024). Conversational code-switching was explained by Gumperz as “the juxtaposition of speech belonging to two different grammatical systems or subsystems within the same speech exchange or passages.” (1982: p. 59). This general definition of the term includes all varieties of speech samples within a language system (Zainab et al., 2024).

Previous studies (Alhourani, 2018) did not show how code-mixing could become a process of valorization. However, this study seeks to fill the research gap by exploring code-mixing as a postcolonial process of valorization. A qualitative study conducted by David (2003) demonstrated how code-switching is a common practice in a postcolonial country (Malaysian courtrooms) where lawyers switch between Malay and English.

The bilingual speakers of a community can use discourse structures containing the characteristics of code-mixing and code-switching. According to Tay (p. 408), code-mixing involves mixing linguistic parts/units, such as morphemes, words, phrases, and clauses from two or more languages within the same utterance or sentence. Simply defined, code-mixing means shifting between two or more languages within a single utterance (Yao, 2011). In contrast, code-switching involves switching between syntactic units of two or more languages during a conversation.

Studies on code-mixing (Azuma, 1997) have explored the characteristics and restrictions of language functions and how such functions affect individual esteem, communicative planning, language attitudes, and the roles of interlocutors in different socio-cultural contexts (Alhourani, 2018; Rasul, 2006). In sociolinguistics, code-mixing and code-switching are seen as an outgrowth of bilingualism (Ramzan et al., 2021).

Before delving deeper into this discussion, it is important to review some novels written in English that reflect the sociocultural norms of Pakistan and India. It is significant to provide some prior observations based on the works of well-acknowledged writers, such as, Salman Rushdie and Arundhati Roy. On this subject, Rushdie himself states that “one of the major roots of *Midnight’s Children* lies in the oral narrative” (Rushdie quoted in Cane 1992, 170). It has been said that Rushdie’s (1995) novel has an eclectic mix of prose styles that echo the rhythm and slang of English as it is colloquially spoken in India. Familiar English words are combined in new and unusual ways, and long, unbroken sentences run on freely, sometimes spanning a page or more. The inspiration Rushdie draws from both ancient and contemporary Indian culture is notable in his fiction. Elements taken from traditional Indian mythology and religion thread themselves through the novel.

Similarly, Arundhati Roy in *The God of Small Things* (1997) uses the technique of joining words together without punctuation, as seen in the description of the ‘Orange drink Lemon drink man’. She subverts the syntactical and grammatical rules to express her resistance towards English language and counter its colonial influence.

In the above context, Pakistani-American writer is an interesting example of code-mixing strategy. This example allows us to address the following key questions: How does the author use the technique of valorization?

How does the author use code mixing/switching? To address this inquiry, we used the following methodology.

### **Methodology**

This study applies qualitative methods of data collection and analysis. We use the technique of purposive sampling to identify diverse patterns of valorization. This includes localized speech acts, code mixing/switching, counter narratives. We chose this technique to ensure that the sample could offer valuable insights into the research topic. To identify trends and techniques of valorization, we examined works written by postcolonial writers. In particular, we chose Wajahat Ali's *The Domestic Crusaders* as the primary text, which highlights examples of code mixing/switching.

We collected data through purposive sampling techniques in the form of excerpts, which were further processed through the coding technique. We used bottom-up coding in this study to enable emergent themes and patterns to arise from the data, providing an exploratory and nuanced approach to analysis. This method was selected to ensure that the coding process was grounded in the data itself, allowing for a deeper understanding of the patterns of valorization in this text. Identifying these broader trends and patterns, the general themes are qualitatively analyzed to report our findings.

### **Code Mixing**

Code mixing involves the use of lexical items from more several languages in a single utterance. Rushdie (1996) resists the supermacy of English through the use of local expressions like goondas (86), beta (18), shaitan (19), "tamasha" (p. 19), "arre baba" (p. 19), "every body is doing chamchagiri to the bosses" (p. 135), "dramabazi" (p. 166), "pallu" (p. 168), "lena dena" (p. 186). "Old clothes for the raddiwalla to cart away" (p. 211), "bai" (p. 226), "kaajal and sindoor" in the parting of my hair (p. 238), Pucca Bombay product" (p. 244).

The preceding sections of this paper analyze the author's localized speech acts of code mixing through selected textual examples from Pakistani diaspora writer, Wajahat Ali's two-act English play, *The Domestic Crusaders*.

### Code Mixing Strategies in Wajahat Ali's *The Domestic Crusaders*

Wajahat Ali is regarded as a “canonized author” by Ishmael Reed (i). In this paper, we argue that *The Domestic Crusaders* (2011) resists the socio-political pressures and stigmatization of Muslims represented through a Pakistani family in this two-act play. The family depicted in Ali's play constitutes the following members: a middle-aged couple: Khulshoom (mother) and her husband Salman (father), Fatima (their hijabi/veiled daughter and a socialist-feminist activist), Salauddin or Sal (the elder son), Ghafur (the youngest son) and Hakim (the grandfather). The context of this play is the aftermath of the events of 9/11. The text depicts a day in the life of a Muslim-Pakistani family settled in New York. During the process of preparing for the celebration of their father's birthday, they discuss their cultural, political, and social views. The exchange of dialogue among an intimate circle of first and second-generation Pakistani immigrants in America is an important discourse in this play. Their focus is on their Muslim-Asian identities and how 9/11 has affected their lives as immigrants.

The author uses code-mixing strategies that make the play an interesting read. We review his efforts as a “writing back” (Ashcroft 2002) strategy by using Urdu as a weapon. Ali uses diverse local words and provides their literal translations as footnotes for clarity. He also uses symbols from Pakistani culture and Urdu (and occasionally Hindi) to resist the colonial hegemony of English. This play has been reviewed from the perspective of voicing the dilemmas of American Muslims (Cury 2021) and as an intergenerational conflict (Islam et al. 2022). Rarely has it been studied from the perspective of valorizing local identities. Our discussion suggests that Wajahat Ali uses the symbols of Pakistani culture and Urdu (and occasionally Hindi) to resist the colonial hegemony of English.

Khan et al. (2022) offer a textual analysis of the play discussing Ali's strategy of using English and Urdu codes at lexical, phrasal, and sentential levels. They regard code-mixing strategy as a means of creating Pakistani English that undergoes a “course of localization” (503). The study analyzed Urdu words used for food, religion, relations, and other topics in day-to-day conversations. Khan et al conclude that “The intensity of the Urdu words used as substitutes for equivalent English words illustrates the cultural as well as linguistic influence on Pakistani fictional works” (511). This study identifies the ideological gaps symbolized through different languages while debating that the author deliberately

uses these words without reference to the post-9/11 political context in this play.

On the contrary, our argument indicates that the author's careful word choices are used to reveal the intricate political context of the play. A few examples include the choice of South Asian, and Muslim names adopted from Urdu/Persian. We argue that this is Ali's deliberate choice to highlight Muslim culture. More importantly, we discuss how Ali also uses language as a symbol of valorization. A frequent shift to Urdu expressions adds spice to the family dialogues in this play. The extensive use of code-mixing strategies for casual expressions such as "Hato! "Stop!" (57);... to food as a cultural symbol, to depict their personal relationships, for highlighting the political context of the play. He has also switched to Urdu to refer to blessings, slang, abusive words, religious Arabic references, and Hindi expressions. These strategies make the language playful while also subtly commenting on the supremacy of the US and the marginality of the Muslim community as discussed below.

### **Food as a Cultural Symbol**

Ali uses "gastronomic images" (Huggan, 2001: 82) to indicate that "food has become a tired means of depicting South Asian diasporic life" (Maxey163). Therefore, "homemade biryani" is a significant symbol of celebrating and family bonding in the play (Scene I: p. 18). Khulshoom (the mother) is preparing a lamb biryani to celebrate her beloved showhar, "husband" (p. 73) (Salman's) surprise birthday treat. Her conversations with her daughter are aimed at transferring the recipe and skills to the second generation: "Grab the tamatar, hari mirch, and pyaaz from the fridge. You'll make the raita for Ghafur's "biryani" (Scene I , p. 4). Maxey has observed the connection between "food, mothers, daughters, and domesticity" as a "life-affirming" strategy (p. 66). Sal suggests, "And no one cooks biryani and tandoori chicken like my ami jaan. Plus, American girls can't get along with the mother-in-law" (Scene III, p. 26). While Khulsoom seems to be mainly discussing her cooking skills with her daughter, occasionally she also slips into the conventional South Asian mother concerned about her matrimony and finding suitable rishtas or "suitors" (p. 78) for her.

Despite her "pride" (Maxey, p. 177) in sharing her 'culinary methods' (Maxey, p. 184), Khulsoom 's discussion with her daughter can be recontextualized through "gender roles, family, and especially matrilineal connections", "cooking as labour" (Maxey, p. 164). This is reflected in

her frustration over household tasks and the hope that her youngest son Ghafur will become a famous surgeon. He may “hire a maasi maid to cook biryani for me for a change” (Scene I: p. 18). The “politics of food preparation” (Maxey, p. 165) that limits her life is highlighted as a social and cultural problem by Ali previously discussed by several British Asian writers (Amulya Malladi, *The Mango Season*; Sudha Bhuchar’s *The Trouble with Asian Men*; Vicky Bhogal, *Cooking like Mummyji: Real British Asian Cooking*; Meera Syal, *Anita and Me*). Additionally, certain Urdu words are deliberately used as a reference to authentic Eastern cuisines, such as the mention of “dhood with shahed” (milk with honey) and “khajjoors” (dates) (Scene II: p. 20) as symbols of the Prophet’s Islamic tradition. Later, the Urdu references to “lychee” or “falooda” or a discussion about flavours: “Voh, kya, mango nahee thha?” - “Was there any mango flavor?” accentuate the authentic local food (like language) that is hard to replace (Maxey, p. 176). Such representations challenge Maxey’s stance and debates that South Asian diasporic youth prioritize Western food, irresistible for the second-generation youth (p. 183). In short, the use of code-mixing to emphasize gastronomy-related connotations and “culinary heritage” (Maxey, p. 198) in this play is aimed at exploring the “questions of identity in national and cultural terms” (Maxey, p. 197).

### **Relationships**

Several Urdu words are deliberately used by Ali to refer to close blood relations of his characters, such as “umi” (mother), “khalaas” (maternal aunts) “beti” (daughter). These Urdu words are used to highlight the bonds that cannot be expressed in any other language and may even lose their significance if the author tries to do so. In contrast, the English words are distorted to reflect the Urdu accent and mock the Western girls as “bee-lond” (blond) (Scene III: p. 26) by Khulsoom. She ironically regards them as “The White Hourain” (p. 28) with whom Eastern women fail to compete due to their whiteness/blondness; yet in her view, they remain ‘boring and common, like daily naan’ with ‘nothing mysterious about’ them (Scene III: p. 28).

### **Political Responses**

Most significantly, code-mixing plays a key role in reflecting the author’s frustration over the ill-treatment of Muslim and Pakistani immigrants by “Ferengi” “foreign” (p. 47) as a derogatory term used against the U.S. authorities. Sal occasionally uses abusive words in Urdu: “So, Iran is

making weapons now? Why don't you tell us who sold it to them in the first place!? Jhootay! Haramzaday!" Who's that? Right—another Amreekan general telling me why the Muslim world hates us" (Scene III: p. 23). Kumbakhts "bastards!" (p. 47). "soowar ki awlad!" or "progeny of pigs" (p. 48), "pagals "crazies" (Scene IV: p. 43).

The Urdu version of America as "Amreeka" itself becomes an ironic expression. In 9/11, the term "jihad" is crucially mentioned to mock the U.S. stereotyping of the Muslim identity, as indicated by Ghafoor: "Which brings me back to myself, standing in line, wearing sandals, with a grizzly beard, with my prayer cap on, a Sports Illustrated in my back pocket, and a new paperback of Jihad and Terrorism (shows the audience the book) under my left arm". (Scene IV: p. 40). The characters discuss the way Muslims are searched, referring to it as a "Muslim-mammal zoo exhibit" (Scene IV: p. 40) and mock their attire such as "topi" (Ali's translation: "skullcap") (Scene IV: p. 41). The author regards the mistreatment in the U.S. as reflecting the "badkhismatee" (bad destiny) (p. 74) of these characters who seem to be trapped in a Ghulami? (slavery) (p. 74) of the U.S. system and always being tagged as "Junglee" (Uncouth) (p. 75) as elaborated in the example below:

Salman: Hanh, ghulami? Servitude? You don't even know the meaning of the word. To you, doing some simple house chores, and performing some requests for your husband, has become slavery. Why don't you go write a book now? I'm sure it'll be a bestseller. Put it in Barnes and Noble or on Amazon. com—  
Ghulami: The Suffering of the Muslim Wife. Or maybe this one—My Husband, the Pakistani Slave Driver. (p. 74)

This mistreatment adds to their "nazla and zookam" (literally meaning, cold and flu) but connotating grief and complaints (p. 74) of the Asian Muslim community represented through these characters.

Ironically, Khulsoom's "halal" lamb biryani serves as a reminder of Samuel Huntington's theory of "Clash of Civilizations" (1996). Pakistani scholar, Pervez Amirali Hoodhboy has critiqued Huntington's theory because: "he resolutely avoids how the United States and its allies aided the rise of retrogressive forces in Muslim society. The fact is that militant Islamic fundamentalism did not exist as a political force until the 1960s" (Hoodhyboy quoted in Langah 2019, p. xv). Huntington's theory, which labels Muslims as fundamentalists, is relevant to the disturbed state of mind of the Pakistani youth, as well as for the older generation of



characters in the play. For example, the grandfather in the play is shocked to be bluntly regarded as a terrorist by the Americans, as he narrates one such incident:

Hakim: Yesterday at the flea market, I was picking my fruits—as usual. One white man was next to me. He was with his son—just a boy, probably eight or so. The boy looked up at me and asked, ‘Are you related to Osama bin Laden?’ (p. 16)

As indicated above, the repeated references to whiteness versus brownness are exemplified through examples of “greasy ghoes” (white women) (p. 9-10) who expect Pakistani/Muslim men to use a “breath mint” before initiating a conversation with them. Khulsoon even fears her children getting married to “white women or black men” which would result in the parents ending up in a “senior center home” (p. 81). This racial division is reiterated through recurring references to the “whiteness” and the color white in the play. For example, Fatima’s white hijab (vi), Salman’s and “white salwar” worn over an American t-shirt (p. 88) or a white business shirt over black professional trousers; dhadha’s (grandfather) white shalwar kameez (vii).

### **Blessings, Registers, Expressions, Slang, Abusive Words, and Code Mixing.**

References to the tradition of conveying blessings are only introduced in Urdu and Arabic as a symbol of cultural values. For example, the grandfather blesses Sal by uttering, “Jeetay raho, jeetay raho” or ‘keep living, keep living’ (Scene III: p. 24). As a sign of anger, the grandfather (Hakim) calls his grandson (Sal) “oye bandar” and “badtameez” or “monkey” (p. 19). The Pakistani characters “teri beevi eh Punjabi” or “your wife is a Punjabi” (Scene III: p. 30).

At another occasion, Kulsoom (the mother) welcomes her husband home as “—some tired boodha” (boodha refers to an old man) (Scene III: p. 25) in need of rest after work. His frankness is reflected in his response “Choro. khana nikaalo” (leave it. Serve food) (Scene III: p. 35) can be observed as a symbol of intimacy or love. Appreciation of food or drinks, such as, Chai ahee hai - “The chai is good” (p. 93) is an important part of the discussions among characters. Expressions such as, “Dunya” (world) (p. 76); “Samjhay?” (understand?) (p. 78); “chai bane hai kya?” (Have you made any chai?) (p. 88); “Abey, meh khalee” (I was only just—) (p. 88); “Yeh ahee baath hay?” (This is peculiar/interesting);

“doosree baath thee” (that was something else) (p. 90); “— esai bol raha tha” (I didn’t mean it). (p. 91); “Nahee, aap khayeh” (p.91); “Idhar ow” (Come here). “Abey, behra” (Deaf boy) (p. 91); “Nikaalo” (Take it out) (p. 92); “Ub, buss” - (Now, stop) (p. 99); “buss! Chup ho jow! Thum ko kya maloom?” (Enough! Be quiet! What do you know?) (p. 103); “Sathya naas (“Ruined.”) (p. 73); “Abey, pagli” (Crazy lady!) (p. 73).

Urdu registers such as “Hmn”, “hanh”, “Abey”. “Kya”, “Ahhhh haaa aaahh ahhh...”, “Dekhe, Abu” (See, Father?) “Phir se” (Again) (p. 50), “Nahee, nahee” (No, no) (p. 51) and “oye” are repeated, reflecting both, a level of frankness and conversational styles of these characters. Some examples are: “Chi”(A common expression showing disgust or disapproval (p. 86).

In addition to the political anger reflected in the play, the aggressive mood of characters also relies on the use of abusive words. For instance: “kameenay” (terrible people) (p. 78); “Kumbakht!” (Idiot!) (p. 80); “Haramzada! Jhoota!” Pagal ho gay ho! (Have you gone mad?) (p. 83); “Gundays” (hoodlums) (p. 83); “Beymaan” (dishonorable) (p. 97).

### **Religious Arabic References and Code Mixing**

Furthermore, some references are given in Arabic, for instance, (MashAllah) or “La Hawla wa la Qhuwata!” (There is no power or strength except with Allah). These religious expressions are uttered if someone faces a calamity. In the context of this play, they also reinforce the family’s association with the Muslim culture and values. Further references include: “Ya Allah, teri madad!” (Oh God, help us!) (p. 55), “Ya Allah, ya Rahman, hamaree madad kar. Koy tho sunay?” (O, Allah. O, Merciful, help us. Won’t anyone listen?) (p. 57), “Allah is my Gavah” (witness) (p. 76). Khulsoom, a strong believer in the Muslim faith, does her “thoba” (forgiveness) as a ritual and ensures that her Westernized children understand the meaning of it: “Do thoba now!” (She starts reciting an Arabic prayer, bites her tongue, and lightly taps her cheeks) (Scene III: p. 28).

### **Hindi Expressions**

Annoyed with her son Sal, on one occasion, Khulsoom used the Hindi word bhashan! (Lecture) as follows: “How would you know—you’re not even here for half a day in a month! Coming here and giving me and your father a bhashan!” (p. 95).

## **Discussion**

This discussion explores how a non-native English writer has used valorization as a strategy. The discussion also focuses on the relationship between valorization and code mixing. One of the most prominent features of valorization is the use of code mixing, that is writing in English along with a local language while retaining the influence of local culture. As shown in this study, code mixing has resulted in the localization of English in developing/underdeveloped countries. The usage of code mixing in English works of post-colonial writers in the global south shows how they valorize their identity, norms, and values and challenge the hegemony of colonial discourse. Unlike Ali and David (2021) who studied counter-narratives to colonial discourse in Pakistan's Sindh province, this study focuses on the trends and patterns of valorization in selected post-colonial works.

Code mixing (sometimes referred to as code-switching) can be defined as a common factor of valorization. In contrast to Khan et al.'s study discusses code-mixing/switching in Wajahat Ali's *The Domestic Crusaders*, as a textual pattern. The study discusses code-mixing/switching as a post-colonial technique of valorization that seeks to challenge the colonial hegemony of English. Code mixing involves inserting words taken from local languages and inserting them in text written in dominant English. This is a strategy used in the works of many post-colonial writers who do this to portray different facets of their cultural identity. Words used in code-mixing have been categorized based on broader themes, including culture, relationships, political responses, food, and blessings.

## **Conclusion**

This paper provides examples of literary fiction in which colonial discourse is expressed through the use of localized speech acts, code-mixing in various local languages and the choice of specific topics/themes. In short, through the diverse varieties of English used and other literary devices, a voice is claimed by the once-colonized writers. In this way, they claimed their identity and have created a variety of the English language, and contested the writings of colonial writers. The paper presents examples of valorization by a writer from a previously colonized country. The writer uses different strategies and contests for the reclamation of his identity by the use of code- -mixes, which include the use of words in many languages like Urdu, Hindi, Arabic, etc., with

specific objectives, such as indicating localized terms of address, endearment, and even abusive and slang words. This valorization has resulted in various English language varieties.

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