



DESCRIPTION OF AN URDU GRAMMATICAL WORD: AN ENGLISH-URDU BILINGUAL LEXICOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT:

Describing a grammatical word from lexicographic perspective has been an interest of the grammarians since many decades. Lakoff (1987) is one of the significant names in this regard who highlights the importance of these grammatical items in a lexicon and asserted that there is virtually a common workmanship behind most of the grammatical constructions. The need for describing these grammatical words in contrast with the content words is the high frequency that these grammatical words carry with them. No language learning scheme can be considered comprehensive without giving serious implications to these grammatical items. As lexicon is considered a great influential language tool, the impact of these grammatical items becomes more crucial. The undertaken research is an attempt in this regard to systematically describe Urdu grammatical items to be presented in English-Urdu bilingual lexicon and highlight the prospect of producing more comparable lexicography in two different languages.

Keywords: Word, Grammar, Description, Language Learning, Lexicography

Introduction:

Traditionally, lexicographers have been swallowing grammar in bilingual dictionaries and more or less have been focusing on the content words. They have been making serious efforts to shape bilingual dictionaries to become compendium of content words of the target language. Rather, describing language culturally and compiling dictionaries commercially has been the beacon house of lexicographers across the ages. According to Hall (2005) "Though, realistically speaking, inclusion of all the grammatical dimensions of the language does not primarily change the basic theory and practice of bilingual lexicography". However, it creates space to determine this linguistic division in a more theoretically motivated style that will be consistently useful in the practice of bilingual lexicography across the full range of language diversity.

According to Hartmann (2001), a reasonable approach to bilingual lexicography will no doubt distinguish between a lexicon and fully schematic expressions such as the transitive constructions. On the other hand, phraseological expressions as collocations and phrasal idioms will likely to be included in a bilingual dictionary. But, the bigger these expressions grow, the harder it becomes to include in them in dictionary. Ljung (2003) observes that it is difficult to arrive on a unanimous conclusion as to what length the grammatical constructions should be included in a dictionary. As grammatical words are part and parcel of the phraseological constructions, it becomes all the more difficult to determine a limit to these multiword grammatical combinations.

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Similarly, many grammatical words such as prepositions, articles, auxiliaries, etc. combine to make larger independent constructions, demand to be considered for lexicographic entries.

But Bloomfield's definition, though covers a good number of the forms of grammatical words in different languages, yet does not cover all the phenomena of grammatical words. As Bloomfield himself pointed out, the definition will not capture certain forms that have traditionally been considered as independent words: *the* or *a* in English and postpositions in Urdu, for example *پر* *per* (on) and *کو* *ko* (of) etc. Such forms are not likely to occur as whole utterance in any normal situation of language use. Rather, he introduces a supplementary criterion of "parallelism" with forms which are classified as words by the first criterion of freedom of occurrence. But even, his concepts of parallelism, potential pauses or grammatical internal cohesion do not describe all the complexities of the phenomenon of word.

Analysis of the Grammatical Urdu Word

There have been many approaches to define the word grammatically. Different techniques of analysis are used each time. Nevertheless, we may confine ourselves to the discussion of two most important grammatical criteria often applied in word definitions. These are (a) isolation, and (2) internal cohesion.

(a). The most famous universal definition of the word in general linguistics is based on the criterion of isolation: "the word is a minimum free form". This definition appears also to be the most popular among linguists. As Lyons (1968) points out, Bloomfield's definition is founded on the prior distinction between free and bound forms. Strictly speaking, Bloomfield's definition can account for the majority of units that are regarded as words in most languages. But Bloomfield himself was aware of the fact that there exist some forms which are not used alone as sentences (i.e. are not free forms) in normal communicational situations, yet they are regarded as words by the native speakers of the language e.g. Urdu *کا* *ka* (of), *ہے* *hay* (is), *ہوں* *hon* (am)... etc. It is not difficult to imagine situations in which such forms may function as full utterances: e.g.

A. کیا آپ نے کہا یا کی؟ *Did you say 'ka' (of-masculine) or 'ki' (of-feminine) ?*

B. *کا* (of) *ka*

Moreover, an impatient listener may occasionally use forms such as *کہاں* where, *اگر* if, *کو* who... etc. as independent meaningful utterances.

It is obvious, however, that in the first instance the free forms *کہاں* where, *اگر* if, *کو* who are used in abnormal situations in a metalinguistic discussions. In the second instance, the occurrences of the free forms are unusual to the extent that we cannot recognize them as free forms in the same way as we recognize say: *ہاں* *haan* (yes), *اسد* *Asad* (name) ... etc.

The criterion of isolation may also fail to account for the forms that apparently contain more than one free form, but on orthographic and semantic grounds are regarded as consisting of single words. These are usually known as compound words, e.g. *نیلا آسمان* (*نیلا* + *آسمان*) *neela asman* (blue sky), *آسمان بوس* (*آسمان* + *بوس*) *asman bouce* (high)... etc. Further difficulties may be caused by the phenomena of idioms (section 5.1.1), phrasal verbs, collocations found in Urdu and in some languages of the world. More significant, probably, is the fact that semantically they function as single units.

Apart from these problematic and some border-line cases manifested by Urdu, the criteria of isolation or word independence, seems to work fairly well. Therefore, any universal definition of the word has to take it into consideration as complementary to other criteria applied.

Internal Cohesion:

As defined by Kramsky (1969), internal cohesion means "... a connection of the elements of the word which is such that it makes it impossible for any other element to enter between them, this is the highest degree of cohesion". Since internal cohesion is determined, to a very high extent, by the morphological structure of language, then the degree and the nature of cohesion are likely to be different from one language to another.

Lyons (1968) discusses internal cohesion in terms of positional mobility and the potential not to be interrupted. Positional mobility may be illustrated by the following Urdu sentence:

میں نے خوبصورت کتابوں کو دیکھا۔
Mein ne khoobsoorat kitaboon ko dekha
 (I saw beautiful books)

میں نے خوب + صورت کتاب + وں کو دیکھا +

9+8	7	6+5	4+3	2	1
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This sentence consists of nine morphemes arranged in a particular order. However, other combinations without any change in the meaning of the sentence are possible.

میں نے دیکھا خوبصورت کتابوں کو۔
 beautiful books I saw

9	8+7	6+5	4+3	2	1
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This latter example shows that one of the characteristics of Urdu word is that it is mobile within the sentence, but its own elements (morphemes) have a fixed order of occurrence that does not allow for their mobility. Obviously, the criterion of positional mobility will fail to identify forms such as *yeh* (this) وہ *woh* (that) ...etc. as words because these are not mobile without the nouns they modify.

Related to positional mobility is "uninterruptability" i.e. the impossibility of interrupting or, as Lyons (1968) puts it "the impossibility of inserting within".

Languages exhibit great differences as regards the extent to which they allow for using other items within a certain sequence, e.g. in the Urdu sequence, ایک کتاب *aik kitaab* (one book) it is possible to insert other items between ایک and کتاب.

Thus: ایک خوبصورت کتاب *aik khoobsoorat kitaab*. This is not possible in languages in which the definite article forms an inseparable part of the noun e.g. in the Arabic utterance /alkita:bu/ (the book) we cannot use any other elements between /al/ (the) and /kita:bu/ (book).

The utility of positional mobility and uninterruptability as universal defining features seems questionable. While the former, as has been seen earlier, fails to identify forms that have come traditionally to be regarded as words, the latter seems to be different from one language to another. Furthermore, they both appear to offer enormous methodological problems.

As Lyons (1968) says further that different problem related to the grammatical status of word is manifested by the fact that the word, grammatically, takes different forms according to its syntactic function, the word may take the different forms (see the next table).

According to most linguists, word should be a simultaneously a semantic, a phonological and a grammatical unit. This criterion comes up to definition of word with reference to the most of the languages of the world but they are certainly not the only standards to define word in a few languages of the world. For example the Urdu possessive pronoun " اپنا " *apna* (my, our, your, her, his, their, etc. has one phonological, semantic and orthographical form but has different grammatical meanings.

Urdu	Grammatical meanings	Transliteration	Translation
میں اپنا سبق یاد کرتا ہوں	1 st person possessive singular	<i>Mein apna sabaq yaad karta hon</i>	I learn <u>my</u> lesson.
ہم اپنا سبق یاد کرتے ہیں	1 st person possessive plural	<i>hum apna sabaq yaad kartay hain</i>	We learn <u>our</u> lesson.
تم اپنا سبق یاد کرتے ہو	2 nd person possessive masculine singular	<i>tum apna sabaq yaad kartay ho</i>	You learn <u>your</u> lesson.
تم اپنا سبق یاد کرتے ہو	2 nd person possessive masculine plural	<i>tum apna sabaq yaad kartay ho</i>	You learn <u>your</u> lesson.
تم اپنا سبق یاد کرتی ہو	2 nd person possessive feminine singular	<i>tum apna sabaq yaad karti ho</i>	You learn <u>your</u> lesson.
تم اپنا سبق یاد کرتی ہو	2 nd person possessive feminine plural	<i>tum apna sabaq yaad karti ho</i>	You learn <u>your</u> lesson.
وہ اپنا سبق یاد کرتے ہیں	3 rd person possessive masculine plural	<i>wo apna sabaq yaad kartay hain</i>	They learn <u>their</u> lesson.
وہ اپنا سبق یاد کرتا ہے	3 rd person possessive singular	<i>wo apna sabaq yaad karta hey</i>	He learns <u>his</u> lesson.
وہ اپنا سبق یاد کرتی ہے	3 rd person possessive feminine singular	<i>wo apna sabaq yaad karti hey</i>	She learns <u>her</u> lesson.
وہ اپنا سبق یاد کرتی ہیں	3 rd person possessive feminine plural	<i>wo apna sabaq yaad karti hain</i>	They learn <u>their</u> lesson.
ہم اپنا سبق یاد کرتے ہیں	1 st person possessive plural	<i>hum apna sabaq yaad kartay hain</i>	We learn <u>our</u> lesson.
اسد اپنا سبق یاد کرتا ہے	3 rd person masculine singular proper noun	<i>Asad apna sabaq yaad karta hey</i>	Asad learns <u>his</u> lesson.
انعم اپنا سبق یاد کرتی ہے	3 rd person feminine singular proper noun	<i>Anam apna sabaq yaad karti hey</i>	Anam learns <u>her</u> lesson.

Table 1: different grammatical meanings Urdu possessive pronoun " اپنا " *apna*

The example in the above table sets the idea clear that how can a grammatical word be confusing in some languages. This confusing situation creates serious pressure for a bilingual lexicographer as how to handle this multi dimensionality of a grammatical word in a bilingual dictionary. No two languages are semantically parallel nor can the grammatical words be compared in two languages because of their different cultural background.

Jackson (1985) asserts that in grammatical constructions, from word formation perspective, roots plus grammatical prefixes and suffixes are added. In many languages like Arabic and Urdu, all the grammatical equivalents are not available. For Example, Arabic has more or less sixteen forms of verb while English has nearly five. As the development of Urdu, by large, is on Arabic and Persian, there are many grammatical variants of a grammatical words, making the job of a bilingual lexicographer comparatively difficult. Hence, the undertaken issue grows more confusing that an Urdu lexicographic entry with different prefixes and suffixes should have separate entries in bilingual dictionaries.

It can be assumed that lexicographic handling of such confusing Urdu words in English should ideally present complete information. But the fact is that that most of the available English Urdu dictionaries do not provide the delicacy of these meanings. Katamba (1997) asserts that a bilingual lexicographer is expected to provide the sort of explanation that these grammatical constructions develop that normally should be found in reference material such as dictionaries or grammar books or at least some general user friendly information that is up to level of a comprehensive bilingual dictionary.

Concluding Remarks:

Bilingual lexicography is a very challenging task. As, every language carries a culture, it becomes very difficult for the bilingual lexicographer to transport cultural background of grammatical meanings from one language to the other. The other issue may be of organizing entries by grammatical prefixes and suffixes or by the roots and content words. Inflectional morphology has always been demanding for Urdu bilingual lexicographers though some parameters have been devised to sort this issue but it does not suit most of the oriental languages like Urdu and Arabic that have a lot of prefixes and suffixes, given the convention of an alphabetical organization. Moreover, Urdu is one of those languages that have strong cultural and religious roots. As a result, the task of English Urdu bilingual lexicographer becomes more sensitive and demanding. In the undertaken research, a serious effort has been made to describe the possible dimensions of Urdu grammatical words from bilingual lexicographical perspective. In the end, all the possible dimensions of Urdu grammatical words may not have been explored. But the undertaken study may be taken as a point of departure. The lexicologists may be encouraged to investigate further dimensions of Urdu grammatical words for various linguistic purposes.

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