

ANALYSIS OF VARIOUS FACTORS: BLOCKING URDU WORD FORMATION RULES

1. Dr. Abrar Hussain Qureshi
2. Mehmood Ul Hassan
3. Shamim Akhter

ABSTRACT:

After the world has been shaped into a global village, the need for the linguistic interactions has also increased. Generally, languages allow free production of words but some languages do not allow productivity freely. The reason of this blocking is sometimes due to the natural complexities of these languages as they developed from various regional languages. Sometimes, this blocking is due to the inherent morphological rules. Urdu is one of those languages that have natural complexity in word formation rules that hampers productivity (Hussain, 2004). The undertaken research investigates the factors that result in blocking in the Urdu language and discusses some other options to describe Urdu morphological rules. The study has special significance for Urdu grammarians, lexicologists and Urdu bilingual lexicographers.

Key Words: Language, Urdu, factors, rules, word formation

Introduction

Katamba & Stonham (2006) present four dimensions of language investigation, namely, morphology, phonology, semantics and syntax. They assert that the each word of language firstly emerges in sounds, and then its structure is formed. Afterwards, words combine to make sentences and finally, meaning is determined with the help of context. According to Ooi (1998) linguistically, word formation is considered a synchronic study. It means that word structures are studied at a particular time of their existence. Word formation also studies the cognitive aspects in the morphology of language. In the words of Aronoff and Fudeman (2005), morphology studies the internal structure of words of a language.

Bauer (2004) regards words as the basic unit of syntax. It is an established fact that words have grammatical relations with other words of the language. For example, any native speaker of the Urdu language can find the grammatical relationship among the words دوڑتا (run) , دوڑتا (run) , دوڑتے (run) . Urdu speakers can also find that there are certain rules behind these relationships as لڑکا (boy) is to لڑکوں (boys) or as خاتون (lady) to خواتین (ladies). If the above examples are closely analyzed, in one sense, they are the same words as both are nouns and they refer to the same idea though different in number. But in another sense, they are different words as they cannot be used in the same sentence until there are some necessary modifications according to the semantic requirement. For example, the verb ہے (is) and ہیں (are) in

خاتون خوش ہے (the lady is happy)
خواتین خوش ہیں (the ladies are happy).

*University of Sargodha

**Khawaja Fareed UEIT, Rahim yar Khan

***Institute of Southern Punjab

The difference between the two senses of the word is absolutely very important in morphology. When the same sense is taken from both the words, then they will be called “lexeme”. While, if they are taken in different sense then they will be called “word forms”. Morphology essentially analyses such rules within languages. Mathews (1991) asserts that some word formation rules describe the various forms of the same lexeme while some morphological rules relate two different lexemes.

The main reason of ambiguity in Urdu word formation is that this one-to-one relation between form and meaning hardly ever holds. For example, pairs as (singular ,mare) گھوڑیاں / گھوڑی (mares, plural),(army, singular) افواج / فوج (armies, plural), have different rules between singular and plural and sometimes, even this type of difference is not signaled at all in Urdu as well as in English. There are some obstructions in the productivity of Urdu morphology though languages allow free number of words. The term ‘blocking’ is used for such type of obstructions (Sinclair, 1991). In the subsequent discussion, the various factors resulting in these obstructions on productivity will be discussed.

Phonological factors:

Phonology can be one of the reasons of morphological blocking, such as number of syllables or type of segment or sequence of segments that end a base (Lewis, 1993). The Urdu suffix چہ *chah* is applied to the following nouns

باغ → باغیچہ *baagichah* (small garden)
دیگ → دیگچہ *degchah* (a kettle)

to show the smallness of things but it cannot be applied to all the Urdu nouns as they do not meet the phonological pattern of Urdu. For example, it cannot be applied to Urdu noun کتاب (book) to create the meaning of a small book.

Morphological Factors:

The morphological rules of a word can block productivity in Urdu word formation rules. One example of this factor is that indigenous base free morphemes behave different from loan affixes as in English (the suffix –ant, as in defant, is added to the roots of French language (Moon, 1998). Another aspect of this factor is that morphemes belonging to different paradigms take different affixes. Example from Urdu is the suffix (آل) *aal*

سسر آل (house of in-laws)
ندھیال (house of grand-mother)
ددھیال (house of grand-father)

The above prefix cannot be applied to the foreign morphemes; it can only be applied to the native morphemes.

Semantic factors:

Semantic considerations can also prevent the application of affixes to a base. One example, given by Katamba and Stonham (2006, p. 80) is the use of –un, which is supposed to be used with “positive” adjectives, like “happy” or “clean” and not with “negative” adjectives, like “sad” or “dirty”. Urdu example of this phenomenon is that the prefix (نا) *na* is used with the following positive adjectives

لائق (intelligent) → نالائق (unintelligent) ,
مناسب (proper) → نامناسب (improper)

but this prefix cannot be used with the negative adjectives for example اداں (sad) ، گندا (dirty).

Aesthetic factors:

Sometimes, complex aesthetic factors cause blocking in the productivity of Urdu morphological rules. Katamba and Stonham (2006) comment that some words are well-formed, but their adoption has nevertheless suffered resistance. They produce example of the word “stagflation” in the 70s. They argue that the coinage of the word to highlight two ideas, namely, high level of inflammation and economic stagnation. This word is not used anymore because speakers of this word consider it indecent and heavy. In other words, due to aesthetic factors, this word could not meet the expectations of its speakers of the English language. Similarly, in the Urdu of 18th century India, the prefix (بارا) *hara* → لکڑہارا *lakkerhara* (wood cutter) was frequently used but it is not used anymore in current Urdu due to absence of this profession, replacement of new word and even on aesthetic ground.

In Urdu, پتنگ (kite) is a single lexeme while the word پتنگ is its realization in graph. There are some words in Urdu that has two lexemes each as the nouns گدھا (donkey) and چاند (moon).

گدھا is a sign of stupidity as well as an animal. While, چاند (moon) means a heavenly object and a beautiful person. These are two lexical items each and should be listed in dictionaries separately. But, چاندنی (moonlight) is the derivation and is a separate lexeme according to the morphological rules. A “Lexeme” in the Urdu language may be a single word, parts of a word, group of words, compound, an idiom, or a shortened form. A lexical item in the Urdu language may be more complex as compared with the other eastern languages of the region as there are many realization of a single lexical item. For example:

رونا (weep) that is used for both genders and an infinitive form,

رو that is used for both genders and an imperative form,

رویا that is used for male singular in past indefinite,

روئی that is used for singular feminine in past indefinite,

روئے that is used for plural masculine in past indefinite,

روئیں that is used for plural feminine in past indefinite etc.

The above Urdu examples are the best examples of word-formation rules with various realizations. A common observation may be that they are the realization of a single word but every lexical item has its own syntactic flow with changed context. Such modifications are executed by affixation or irregular verbs with the process of suppletion.

Often, suppletion can make this semantic relation very obscure (Read, 2000). For example, it is not simple to determine a semantic relationship between جانا (go) and گیا (went). This is suppletion that motivates the need for the concept of lexical item. Clearly, گیا (went) is not an independent word in the same way as جانا is. The concept of lexical item is very subtle and different from lemma that is a lexicographic word. However traditionally, the word will be گیا جانا indexed as the past indefinite of (to go). The concept of lexical item meets most of the standards to arrive on a description of any morphological rules in the Urdu language. So, it goes without saying that the lexical item جانا (to go) is the core form while جا، جانا، گئی، گئے، گئی، گئی، etc. are the various realizations.

Concluding Remarks:

The concept of lexis is very core in Linguistics. Paradoxically, this has also questioned the very basis of lexicology. The ever increasing focus to mental lexicon has highlighted the debate about the real nature of this semantic unit (Nation, 2001). The linguists have been challenging the prevalent theories and practices in terms of words. This complexity increases many times, if language under investigation is inherently opaque as Urdu like many other Eastern languages (Malik, 2006). An effort has been made to describe Urdu morphological rules to arrive on a single and authentic paradigm. May factors have been discussed that block Urdu word formation rules and obstructs its productivity. Finally, the concept of lexical item has been suggested like English to resolve the issue of different factors that block Urdu morphological rules. The research is far from being thorough. There are spaces that can be investigated further about Urdu morphological rules. The research motivates the Urdu lexicologist and morphologists to take this research as a point of departure and investigate further dimensions of Urdu morphological rules.

References:

- Aronoff, M. and Fudeman, K. (2005). What is Morphology, Blackwell Publishing Australia.
- Bauer, L. (2004). A Glossary of Morphology. Washington, D.C. Georgetown University Press.
- Hussain, S. (2004). Urdu Localization Project. COLING: Geneva. pp. 80-81
- Katamba, F. & Stonham, J. (2006). Modern Linguistics Morphology (2nd ed.). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lewis, M. (1993). The Lexical Approach. Hove: LTP
- Malik, A. (2006). Hindi Urdu Machine Transliteration System, Master Thesis, University of Paris 7, France.
- Matthews, P. (1991). Morphology (2nd ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moon, R. (1998) Fixed Expressions and Idioms in English, Oxford: Clarendon
- Nation, I.R.P. (2001). Learning Vocabulary in Another Language Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Ooi, V. B. I. (1998). Computer Corpus lexicography. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press
- Read, J. (2000). Assessing Vocabulary Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Sinclair, J. (1991). Corpus, Concordance, Collocation. Oxford: OUP