A CORPUS-BASED DESCRIPTION OF URDU CONVERSION FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS: A MORPHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Generally, strategy of conversion in morphology is considered as the change in the part of speech without any addition of affixes in the base. Conversion is a significant morphological process across the languages and relatively simple to determine. Urdu also claims to have the strategy of conversion in a multi-dimensional manner. However, a close analysis at the process of Urdu conversion highlights the element of complexity as compared with the other oriental languages of the region. A difference has been tried to establish between partial an total conversion in the Urdu language and there has been a deliberate attempt to arrive on a general criteria to describe process of Urdu conversion. The undertaken taken research is significant with reference to Urdu morphologist, lexicologists, lexicographers, and grammarian and especially for the learners who intend to learn Urdu as a foreign language.

Key Words:Urdu, morphology, conversion, description, corpus

Introduction:

Bauer (1998) considers conversion as the change in the grammatical form of the word without any affixation. For example the English loan word 'family" is used in two meanings in Urdu without making any structural change in the base. The first meaning is used in the sense of "خاندان"while the second sense is used in terms of "بیوی" and "بچوں". Other definitions of conversion by linguists do present approximately the same concept as the one presented by Bauer (1998). While the virtual concept, however, does not harmonize with the actual process of conversion that is "zero derivation" resulting in change in functional position. Thus, the term "functional shift" is more in use as the process reflects the adoption of new grammatical structures after the phenomenon of conversion. A different perspective of conversion is the morphological view that prefers the "zero derivation" as there is no word formation strategy occurs.The latter concept , somehow, has a significant position in the organized structure of morphological process. Unlike derivation, grammatical shift occurs without any word formation change in the root except with some change in the stress patterns or sometimes a little change in the orthography of the lexical unit. According to Bauer (1998) these changes in stress patterns do not involve any derivational replacements. However, there is a subclass of conversion in the words of Tournier ( ) namely "quasi-conversion" in which a sort of inflectional process is excuted with the root that is not native to original word-class but in harmony with the newly acquired grammatical functions of the root language. Anyhow, change in morphological form is not considered an obstruction in the acknowledgment of a conversion.

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Rather, on the contrary, there may be another dimension of conversion and that is partial or total conversion though it is very confusing for example, "defeat" or لکهنا in Urdu. The later example may be used as a gerund or as an infinitive. Theoretically speaking when there is only a grammatical shift without any morphological change, it may be called as "partial conversion" as in the above Urdu example لکهنا. Here, the conversion is partial as there is no morphological change in the root while the grammatical shift is there. As discussed earlier, the expansion of grammatical meanings in a certain lexical item is the potential requirement of conversion. But, it is quite difficult to arrive on a criterion that how much the grammatical expansion will involve in changing the word class of the root. Altering the wordclass is a common phenomemnon and is considered as a hallmark in Urdu conversion. One important aspect of conversion in the Urdu language that it should be analysed on the basis of correlation, namely, between the grammatical function and the word classes. It still needs to be determined that which is the most precise of the two criteria of conversion in the Urdu language.

Full conversion in Urdu:

To determine a distinction between partial and close conversion is not as simple as it is supposed, especially analyzing a pidgin language like Urdu. It appears considerably difficult to apply all the rules of English conversion on a systematic and sound basis. Full conversion is assumed to occur when the converted vocabulary item takes notonly some features of inflectional morphology but also the grammatical functions of a word class since adopting the grammatical features of a word class along with the morphological marks is a sign of further stage in the acquisition of characteristic of a different word-class by comparison with the mere adapting of grammatical features of partial conversion. Theoretically speaking, if there is a morphological change along with the grammatical shift, it may be called total conversion, although it overlaps the boundaries of inflection in the Urdu language as in the Urdu example**,** کهیلتا(plays-and (Mesculine، کهیلتی (plays-femnine).

Sometimes, the distinction between partial and full conversion in the Urdu language grow slightly ambiguous for a few reasons. Firstly, the distinction exceedingly relies on word formation rules, meaning to say, the adopting of the rules of inflections. And secondly, because the criterion of meaning variation has often been given least importance to make a distinction between full and partiallconvertion, thus focusing only morphology and the syntax of words and ignoring the semantic aspect of the converted word. A description of Urdu may successfully be done relating to word class of verb and noun and adjective because of their inflectional features but it is comparatively difficult with Urdu adverbs, conjunctions and post positions that don't take inflection. And secondly, because semantic variation has often been neglected as evidence for the distinction of full vs. partial conversion, thus focusing basically on two aspects of words, their morphology and their syntax, while somewhat ignoring semantic considerations which may be of, at least, the same importance. A description of Urdu along the traditional ones above may thus successfully deal with cases of full conversion involving the word-classes noun and verb, as these still retain some significant inflections, but will invariably and itself at a loss when studying conversion between word-classes which, like adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions and prepositions may or will never take any inflection:

Partial Conversion inUrdu:

In partial conversion, vocabulary items do not adopt new inflection while going through new grammatical functions. These partially converted lexical items do not undergo any inflection that normally determines the new grammatical function and a strong impact prevails that they belong to more than one word class simultaneously ( ). It is due to this reason that shaped Adams ( ) views to assert that partial conversion is a sort of certain grammatical behavior that overlaps various word classes. Phenomenon of partial conversion in the Urdu language refers to the partial adaptation of the morphological process, involved in conversion. Generally, in partial conversion of the Urdu language, that is basically of grammatical dimension, the root takes some of the properties of a different word-class and partially absorbs some of its characteristics. In simple words, partial conversion does not cause any new morphological inflections but grants it some grammatical functions. But, there is a strong effect that the base belongs to various word-classes simultaneously. Adams ( ) also asserts that partial conversion involves to some extent the the grammatical behavior of the lexical unit. Moreover, this type of partial conversion is very limited in languages especially in the Urdu language. It occurs only when an adjective function as the head of a Urdu noun phrase.

1) -- سفیدپوش کی زندگی مشکلات کا شکار ہے

2) -- ذخیرباندوزوں کے خلاف قانون کو حرکت میں لایا جائے

Unlike Bauer's unclear position, Katamba (1993) does not hesitate to consider conversion as a potential morphological technique that is very productive in languages. Conversion is commonly considered to producing new words without making any structural change in the root. The base might be in a noun or verb form (Katamba, 1993:54).Conversion is a word-formation technique, analogous to class-changing derivation, whereby the output item is formally identical with the input item. In this interpretation, conversion is viewed as zero-derivation/affixation by means of adding a zero affix to the base word (Marchand 1969; Kastovsky, 2005). Alternatively, zero-derivation is also understood as the lack of overt affixation (Katamba 1993; Adams 2001; Balteiro 2007). In the analysis of the phenomenon of conversion, the term "zero derivation" is used. It reflects two different approaches in morphology. One approach is the use of the zero morpheme to base, meaning the application of phonologically null suffix. For example the Urdu word "چاند" is the best example of zero phonological suffixes. It is used in two contexts. The first meaning is the physical moon in the sky for the second meaning is used to refer to one's beloved person. The phenomenon is reflected by another technical term in morphology that is called covert affixation. While the second approach does not regard the first technique as zero affixation rather it describes this as a lack of affixation in the base. . In spite of the fact that the first approach has several disadvantages, among morphologists it is still one of the most influential views of conversion. Considering conversion as zero-derivation apparently has several advantages. One is the simplicity of explanation, since if conversion is treated as a type of derivation, namely covert suffixation, there is no need to postulate a separate word-formation process. Another advantage is that this interpretation seems to be a significant step towards solving the notorious problem of directionality of conversion processes, suggesting that that word is derived which takes the zero suffix. A further advantage related to the previous one is the fact that, with the exception of lexicalized cases, the meaning of a converted item can be safely predicted, since its semantic description includes explicit reference to the converting word.

Bauer (1983: 33) finds zero-affixes "theoretically dubious", therefore, he prefers the term 'conversion' to 'zero-derivation' since the former, owing to the theoretical position associated with it, allows for a dynamic interpretation. Katamba (1993: 55) argues that the existence of zero-morphemes, for example, in N>V conversion would result in the controversial assumption that a zero suffix on the noun contrasts with a zero suffix on the derived verb. He concludes that it is more prudent to consider conversion as a distinct word-forming mechanism and notes, in agreement with Pennanen (1982: 248) that zero-morphemes must be relegated to inflectional morphology where they can be justified syntactically.

Conversion is a characteristic feature of the Urdu word-building system. Following are some examples of conversion in Urdu.

Noun → **Verb**

1. گاناگاﺅ　　　　　　　　میں <u>گانا</u> جانتا ہوں

I know <u>how to sing</u>.　　　　　　　Sing a <u>song</u>

2.میں <u>سونا</u> چاہتا ہوں　　　　　<u>سونا</u> منع ہے

I want <u>to sleep</u>　　　　　　　　<u>Sleeping</u> is prohibited

3. میں <u>تیرنا</u> جانتا ہوں　　　　<u>تیرنا</u> منع ہے

I know how <u>to swim</u>.　　　　　　<u>Swimming</u> is prohibited

Some more examples given as under:

Noun (gerund)→	Verbs (infinitive)
<u>کھیلنا</u> (playing)	<u>کھیلنا</u> (to play)
<u>لکھنا</u> (writing)	<u>لکھنا</u> (to write)
<u>بھاگنا</u> (running)	<u>بھاگنا</u> (to run)
<u>چلانا</u> (crying)	<u>چلانا</u> (to cry)
<u>رونا</u> (weeping)	<u>رونا</u> (to weep)
<u>ہنسنا</u> (laughing)	<u>ہنسنا</u> (to laugh)
<u>بیٹھنا</u> (sitting)	<u>بیٹھنا</u> (to sit)

Examples of Conversion

As a simple Urdu word as 'gadha' (donkey) may become abusive in a certain context. Lexicology explores all such aspects. Similarly, the researcher has tried to analyse this social change in the Urdu language with the help of corpus though the data could not be studied in detail due to the smallness of the available corpus.

Concluding Remarks

It is easy to recognize the phenomenon of conversion in Urdu though sometimes difficult to identify the exact procedure. This complexity of procedure leads towards the stance that there is no need to maintain a distinction between partial and full conversion as the process of partial conversion, at certain stage of analysis, becomes the same as inflection. Considering Nation's views (2005) on the pedagogy of the vocabulary of a language, the present research may help the teachers of Urdu in the teaching of the Urdu language with certain modifications according to the level and the proficiency of the learners. It is regretted that due to the non-availability of a big corpus of Urdu, it was comparatively not an easy task to analyze entire data with the help of corpus though otherwise, it would have got great empirical significance. Moreover, lexical studies, based on corpus are new phenomena in Pakistan and in third world countries. There is a considerable dearth of technical support and orientation of corpus linguistics. Moreover, the present research about Urdu lexicology is very general. It could have been more comprehensive and useful if apart from description of Urdu Lexis, some space would have been given to the pedagogical and lexicographical aspects of lexis. Though, some issues of lexicography and pedagogy have been discussed, yet they are far from being enough. Therefore, there is great space of further research in the lexicographical and the pedagogical aspects of the Urdu lexicology. Many institutions are working in Pakistan on corpus-based Urdu lexicology, for example; National Language Authority, Urdu Science Board, Urdu Lughat Board, West Pakistan Urdu Academy, etc. The present research will strengthen those research activities that are being carried in this field. The findings of the present research may be used in teaching of Urdu as the second language (TUSL). The role of vocabulary cannot be over-emphasized. It constitutes the bones of language because without reasonable control on vocabulary, the learners of the Urdu as foreign language , cannot achieve overall comprehension of the language. The present study has great relevance for the new generation of Pakistani emigrants. As a matter of fact, they use and learn English in countries like the USA, UK, Australia and the USA. As a result their link with Urdu weakens. They need much more instruction on Urdu. Though the Orientalists rendered great services in the Urdu lexicology, pedagogy and lexicography yet the present research will provide considerable guidance in this regard.

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