

The Study of English Loan Word Phonology in Urdu

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Abstract:

This paper elucidates the exploration of loan word phonology in Urdu language. It is an attempt to examine loan words in Urdu language specifically that have been taken from English language. The paper attempts to trace the innateness of loan words in Urdu and its gradually becoming “native” through the phonological phenomena of variation in vowels, insertion, borrowing, deletion of vowels and conversion in morphosyntactic features of the loan word phonology. The words studied; are the most frequently used in Urdu language by native speakers so that these loan words have become an integral part of daily conversation these words are spoken under the umbrella of Urdu words’ pronunciation influence. The paper culminations with an analysis and discussion of the factors behind naturalization of loan words in a specific language.

Key Words: loan words, morphological, phonological, Urdu language

I. Introduction:

Language is taken as a sensitive and complex phenomenon because it triggers different responses of population in the different areas especially in a country like Pakistan because almost 70 numerous languages are spoken and implicit including English and Urdu. Urdu is the initial language of Pakistan and provincial languages have different versions of Punjabi and Urdu languages respectively. English has robust impact on Urdu language speakers and broadly People speak amalgamate their phonetic features with new version of additional phoneme.

Urdu language has evolved through an amalgamation of loan/borrowed phonological and morphological features of a number of other languages which have influenced, developed and reshaped Urdu to its present form. Urdu proudly carries a bulk of loan words from Arabic, Turkish, Persian and Portuguese languages (Saleem, et al., 2002).

The most common source of formation of new words in a language is the process of borrowing from another language (McGregor , 2009). Loan words are normally adopted and adjusted according to the phonological and phonetic patterns of the recipient language. Certain variations are applied to the loan word including the change in

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the stress pattern of the syllables. McGregor (2009) illustrates this fact with the example of the word “kangaroo”. The origin of the word is the GuuguYimithiir language that is spoken in Australia. The word is /ganguru/ with stress falling on the first syllable. Although by borrowing the word into English language, its phonemic pattern has been regularized according to the phonemic patterns of recipient language. The velar nasal at the second syllable has been replaced by the nasal stop cluster /ng/ whereas the /r/ the tap or trill of the original word has been replaced by the English rhotic /r/. The stress has been shifted to the third syllable. In addition, the vowel of the second syllable has been changed from /u:/ to schwa /.

Another characteristic of loan words is that it is not necessary for loan words to retain their original meanings once they are borrowed. The morphosyntactic features might show variation where a loan word is free to behave either as a noun or verb, masculine or feminine or with native singular or plural characteristics.

Loan words sometimes behave as loan blends. The main lexical morpheme is usually borrowed and is characterized as the stem. By adding native suffixes, the loan stem corresponds to it and behaves as a loan blend (McGregor , 2009). In Urdu language, this is usually done by adding the native plural markers to the loan words. This adaptation occurs as Urdu does not usually favor consonant clusters. So a vowel addition along with the native plural suffix goes naturally with the Urdu native speakers.

For Example:

| | | | |
|----|--------|----------|----------------------|
| a) | Bus | /b s s/ | /b s :n/ or /b sein/ |
| b) | List | /lists/ | /listein/ |
| c) | Lights | /lights/ | /lightein/ |

The morph syntactic variation allows for the nasalization of the plurality marker and the change in the syllabification of the word.

II. Literature Review:

2.1) Borrowing/Loan word phonology:

Linguistic is an ever-changing phenomenon. A language is considered to be dynamic with intra linguistic changes as well as inter linguistic changes. Languages not only show variation in accents but also show evidence of variation in the loan words. Different aspects of all languages are flexible enough and can be easily borrowed and adjusted into another language (Bynon, 1977). Although language is a medium pregnant with identity, religion, effects of cross cultural societies and existing system within one culture, not all these mentioned aspects influence language, internally and externally, when words are borrowed. Mostly, change occurs in grammatical features including phonology and morphology of a specific language (Baumgardner, 1993). Baumgartner (1993) pointed out the modification in English language done by non- native speaker formulates a phonological phase in the process of adaption. The non-native speakers of English in the sub-continent illustrate a complex form of linguistic diversity. Linguistic borrowing is based on language liaison. It depends on the mutual sharing of morph phonological features

of native language and loan words of the donor language. The adoption of loan words converges and leads towards a combined effect of both the benefactor language and the receiver language. With the passage of time, this combined effect ultimately forms a mutual influence leading towards a “variegated language”.

English is accepted as the lingua franca in the whole world. Urdu has also characteristically borrowed words from English language. Urdu has shown extreme flexibility in borrowing words, incorporating them and introducing variety in these borrowed words. Urdu has borrowed vocabulary and its writing system mainly from Arabic and Persian (Hardie, 2003).

2.2) Adaption:

As today’s world is globalized, so language is much influenced by its nativist countries and this strong connection leads to borrow or to loan words. As much the countries interact with each other, borrowing would occur in that language because the recipient language is adapted underlying subsystems of the donor language and the sounds of that language may be modified according to the availability of phonetic system. Loanwords adaptation is vital because no one country can stay alone without interaction with each other. For adaption in loan words, if a sound of a phone is absent in a recipient language then it adapts the closest one or in most cases the donor phone (Mahmood, 2011).

2.3) Code switching/ mixing:

Another aspect related to the use of loan words is in the distinct feature of code switching or mixing. Code switching and code mixing also takes up the phenomena of adaption according to the phonemic patterns of a language. This mainly points to the sociolinguistic factors acting behind this phenomena; indispensability of code mixing/ switching and adaption (Talaat, Mubina, & Anwar, 2010). Talaat et al. (2010) orate that mostly English lingua franca speakers change Urdu language by using loan words for general and specific purposes. It denotes a weak and divergent form of adaption of words in the structure of Urdu. Use of English words for code mixing and code switching does not provide a stable system of loaning. Moreover, loanwords are limited for bilingual speakers because monolingual speakers do not recruit borrowing.

2.4) Morphosyntactic Features:

A Morphosyntactic feature is the class of phonetic acemes that manage the syntactic conduct of morphosyntactic units. It shows that two morphosyntactic units can concur as per shared morphosyntactic highlights. Morphosyntactic highlights are additionally called linguistic classifications. This class is planned to speak to just the proper parts of morph syntax; that is, there is no notional segment. In a linguistic framework, such features happen as opposed to each other, and are commonly communicated in a similar manner (Kroch, 1994). The flexibility of Loan words allows them to behave idiosyncratically according to morphosyntactic features. With the passage of time and usage, such words gain a proper trend and position in the recipient language.

2.5) Syllables:

Syllable is considered to be a significant unit in the production of speech. Ladefoged & Johnson (2001) claim that it is not possible to describe English or any other language without taking into account syllables as significant units of a particular language. Syllables are included in phonological descriptions of a speech (Ladefoged & Johnson, 2001). Syllable is defined as a unit in the organization and planning of the sounds of an utterance. Syllable is the minimum possible component of speech. Every uttered word must have one syllable. For descriptive purpose, a syllable can be divided into its onset and rhyme. The rhyme of the syllable is further divided into a nucleus and a coda. The nucleus refers to the vocalic part and coda refers to any consonant at the final position. There are words with only rhyme that may also be called its nucleus. On the other hand, there are certain words which hold consonant clusters not only at onset position but at coda position too. For example, “owe” has only one syllable whereas the word “splint” is a single syllabic word with consonant clusters at the onset and coda positions. Urdu is considered to be syllable-timed language. Mostly it allows vowel sounds to break words into syllables. Because of being syllable-timed, loan words in Urdu language undergo a change in terms of addition or substitution of vowel sounds in phonemic patterns so that there is a regular time interval between each syllable (Khan, 2011).

III. Research Objectives:

As this study is particularly related to the loan word phonology, the main objectives of the study are related to the exploration and analysis of the loan words of English in Urdu language. Moreover, it would study the behavior of loan words in terms of different phonemic patterns that play an effective role in the naturalization of loan words. The study will also focus on the ways borrowed English words are syllabified and re-syllabified in Urdu.

IV. Source of borrowed words:

Some common borrowed English words are collected from the website <http://wals.info/refdb/record/Bender-1967>. The website is a gigantic source of languages spoken around the world. Urdu structures and patterns were searched from this source which was a basic guide for the selection of words not only native but also up-to-date borrowed words, naturalized and a significant part of the Urdu language.

V. Description of the underlying structures:

In this section, the features of different loanwords of English that have been borrowed by the Urdu speakers will be explored. These words are spoken according to their native language influence. This section deals with the syllabification patterns of coda and onset clusters. The selected vocabulary will be discussed with certain forms of changes and re-syllabification of borrowed words; deletion, variation and substitution (particularly in vowels).

When words are borrowed from English, the naturalization tends to insert a vowel to transform the word as syllable timed. These words become a part of daily use and are transcribed as such (Hussain, Mahmood, & Mahmood, 2012). The omission of a phoneme from the onset position is a type of adaptation that is frequent in English loanwords that are borrowed directly into Urdu. The word-initial vowel is deleted to shorten the pronunciation of a word. The following examples show both phenomena:

5.1) Insertion:

| | English | → | Urdu | |
|----|------------|---|------------|-------------|
| a) | /əkædmi/ | | /əkædəmi/ | ‘Academy’ |
| b) | /ɒpəreɪʃn/ | | /ɒpre:ʃɒn/ | ‘Operation’ |
| c) | /əla:m/ | | /əla:rəm/ | ‘Alarm’ |
| d) | /ɪlæstɪk/ | | /la:stək/ | ‘Elastic’ |

5.2) Variation:

| | English | → | Urdu | |
|-----------|------------|---|-----------|-------------------------|
| Ambulance | 'æmbjələns | | 'æmbələns | /jə/ is replaced by /b/ |
| Column | 'kɒləm | | 'kɒləm | /ə/ is replaced by /ʌ/ |
| Art | ɑ:t | | ɑ:rt | r is pronounced |
| Cafe | 'kæfeɪ | | 'kæfeɪ | k is unaspirated |

Bringing variation into the vowel as well as consonant sounds is another way through which Urdu speakers adapt the borrowed words according to the native language. Hussain, Mahmood, & Mahmood (2012) illustrate through examples that mostly in Urdu, aspirated sounds tend to become unaspirated, /r/ is mostly pronounced and diphthongs are replaced by monophthongs as in the case of the word [Ambulance].

5.3) Vowel substitution:

Substitution of vowels (monophthongs, triphthongs and diphthongs) usually occurs for syllabification and re-syllabification of a variety of words.

5.4) Substitution of monophthongs:

5.4a) Substitution of the back vowel /ɒ/ in Urdu

| | English | Urdu | |
|----|---------|---------|---------|
| a) | /ʃɒt/ | /ʃɑ:t/ | ‘Shot’ |
| b) | /lɒri/ | /la:ri/ | ‘Lorry’ |

5.4b) Substitution of /ɜ:/ in Urdu:

| | English | Urdu | |
|----|----------|----------|----------|
| a) | /ɜ:bən/ | /ərbən/ | ‘Urban’ |
| b) | /tʃɜ:tʃ/ | /tʃərtʃ/ | ‘Church’ |

The above examples show that /ɜ:/ is adapted as /ə/ in Urdu.

5.5) Substitution of triphthongs:

English triphthongs is a difficult phenomenon to be tackled by Urdu language speakers. English triphthongs undergo certain adjustments. The following examples show the substitution of /aɪə/ in Urdu.

| | English | Urdu | |
|----|-----------|-----------|------------|
| a) | /faɪə(r)/ | /faer/ | ‘Fire’ |
| b) | waɪələs/ | /vaerles/ | ‘Wireless’ |

5.6) Substitution of diphthongs:

English diphthongs are substituted either by a single phoneme or lose its second element and the first element is lengthened. Substitution of diphthong /eɪ/ in monosyllable words is evident from the following examples:

| | English | Urdu | |
|----|---------|---------|---------|
| a) | /deɪt/ | /de:t/ | ‘Date’ |
| b) | /weɪst/ | /ve:st/ | ‘Waist’ |
| c) | /tʃeɪn/ | /tʃē:n/ | ‘Chain’ |

When English monophthongs are being tackled in Urdu then different adaptation strategies can occur. For Example, When /ɒ/ (vowel) is substituted in Urdu:

| | English | Urdu | |
|----|---------|--------|--------|
| a) | /bɔ:l/ | /ba:l/ | “ball” |
| b) | /ʃɒt/ | /ʃa:t/ | “shot” |
| c) | /fɔ:l/ | /fa:l/ | “fall” |

To adapt the /a:/ or /ɔ:/ vowel English is not restricted like the Urdu language. On the other hand, Urdu has consonantal restrictions. When there are /b/ or /p/ bilabial then /ɔ:/ is followed as /o:/ and on the other hand when there are /l/, /k/, /ʃ/, /v/, /r/, or /f/ sounds followed by /ɔ:/ then /a:/ vowel is used rather than /ɔ:/ because it has always been considered an appropriate and suitable vowel as shown in the above examples (a and c). Like the same way, the example (b: shot) shows that /a:/ vowel has been used in Urdu which is actually /ɒ/ phoneme in English. The above example shows the identified phonological changes.

5.7) Changing of the diphthong /eɪ/ into monosyllabic word:

| English | Urdu |
|-----------|---------------|
| a) /weɪt/ | /ve:t/ “wait” |

The given example is indicated that /eɪ/ diphthong of English is always changed into /e:/ in Urdu, where second element (ɪ) is being deleted while the first element is being lengthened (e into e:). The other examples are [make], [gait], [shake], [wake] (Hussain, Q 2011). It is clear that vowel substitution is more regular and an acceptable change from English loan words into Urdu. Pakistan is such a nation in which different languages are spoken at the same time and people use different sounds according to their different accents. Variation in vowels is mostly does not happen alone. It is sometimes accompanied with a variation in consonant sounds also.

5.8) Diphthong substituted by two or more vowels:

Another word [town] /təʊn/ demonstrates another rule applicable to borrowed words in Urdu. It becomes /ta:.o:n/ in Urdu. When diphthongs (aʊ, aɪ, ɪə, ʊə, ɔɪ ,ju) appear in Urdu related to an English borrowed word they are considered as more than one vowel and so the number of syllables increase in the word.

Examples are mentioned below:

| English → Urdu | | |
|----------------|-------|------------------------|
| a) | Type | /taɪp/ → / ta:ɪp/ |
| b) | Boy | / bɔɪ / → /bɔ:.ɑ:.e/ |
| c) | Cute | / kju:t / → / kɪ.jʊ:t/ |
| d) | Time | / tam/ → / ta:.ɪm/ |
| e) | Night | / naɪt / → / na:.ɪt/ |

In the above examples we can see that in word “type” there was one syllable but in Urdu it has got two syllables. The word “boy” had diphthong ɔɪ so in Urdu it has got three syllables. In the words “time “ and “night” single diphthongs are considered as two separate vowels while speaking in Urdu.

5.9) Two Consonant clusters in word's initial position

| | |
|----|---|
| a) | Graph /græf/ a borrowed word in urdu becomes /gə.rɑ:f/. |
|----|---|

Naturalization of borrowed words in Urdu tends to insert a vowel between two consonants in the onset position or in the start of the syllable of the word in initial position in order to break the consonant clusters because Urdu syllable template does not permit two consonants in the onset position of a syllable in the word's initial position.

In any special case if two consonants are allowed in onset position, then the starting consonant would be /s/ but Urdu structure does not allow /s/ to stand alone at initial consonant position so /I/ would be added before /s/.

Examples are mentioned below:

English → Urdu

- a) Skirt /skɜ:t/ → /ɪs.kɪrt/
- b) School /sku:l/ → /ɪs.ku:l/
- c) Student /stʊ.dənt/ → /ɪs.tʊ.dənt/
- d) Stadium /steɪ.diəm/ → /ɪs.te.dɪ.jəm/
- e) Scale /skel/ → /ɪs.kel/
- f) Stunt /stunt/ → /ɪs.tənt/

5.10) Two Consonant clusters at word's medial position

Urdu does not allow two consonants at the onset position of the syllable at word's medial position. If two consonants occur at this position they are divided by a vowel in making two syllables while the word is spoken in Urdu.

For example

English → Urdu

- a) Pamphlet /pæm.flɪt/ → /pəm.fə.læt/

An exception in this case is that if /s/ comes as the starting consonant in a case when there are two consonant in the onset of syllable in word medial position then Urdu will attach /s/ to the coda of the previous syllable.

Examples are as follows:

English → Urdu

- a) Expose /ɪk.spəʊz/ → /æks.poz/
- b) Express /ɪk.spres / → /æks.pres/

VI. Discussion:

This study mainly aimed at exploring the underlying patterns in re-syllabification of borrowed English words when spoken in Urdu. Each language has its own phonology of syllabifying the words. The phonological rules of the Urdu language tend to modify the words borrowed from English. Urdu inserts a vowel between two consonants and it is always a short vowel. A long vowel is never inserted in Urdu between two consonants. Some diphthongs are considered as more than one vowel in Urdu so this way the number of the vowels increase. Urdu syllable structure is very much different from English. English words are processed before they are indigenized in Urdu. English can have maximum three consonant in onset position and four consonants in coda position. Urdu does not follow the same condition as it allows 0 or 1 consonant at onset position however it can allow maximum two consonant in coda position in some specific cases.

VII. Limitations:

It is a theoretical study to explore the syllabic patterns underlying the borrowed English words in Urdu. Some specific words were collected from the website and the patterns underlying those words were studied only. To study all possible structural variations in these words, i.e. consonants in coda position and state of nucleus in Urdu would require time and a larger collection of words.

VIII. Conclusion:

English has a very flexible syllabic structure in comparison to Urdu. When English words are borrowed in Urdu, they are re-syllabified through certain techniques. Insertion, deletion or substitution are some aspects which play a significant role in modifying loan words to make them native. These indigenized changes are based on certain explicit rules which are briefly explored in this study. Urdu is a flexible language indigenizing a large number of words from other languages and it has the ability to expand further.

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