

## AN EXPLORATION OF EXOCENTRIC COMPOUNDS IN URDU: A STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

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### ABSTRACT

Urdu is the 10<sup>th</sup> most widely spoken language in the world, with total 230 million users and it's the national language of Pakistan. Most of its words come from Persian, Arabic and Sanskrit. Sadly, not a lot of research has been done on exocentric compounds in Urdu. The study is meant to analyze the exocentric compounds in Urdu and explore the structural constituents of compounds. The study is likely to reveal the rules, structure and the metaphoric meaning of exocentric compounds that add to the existing literature and is meant to support the production of language processing tools.

### INTRODUCTION

Language is a collection of words and morphemes which serves as the principal source of information and communication. Words are a vital part of the language and the mental lexicon of human beings. Words are the showcase of the linguistic and the cultural background of the language. Morphology is the study of the words, word formation rules and the internal structures of the words while compounding is a morphological phenomenon which deals with word formation in languages.

#### Compounding:

Compound words are an important part of the lexicon of any language. They are formed through the word formation process by joining two free or bound morphemes to create a new word. According to Hatch and Brown, compounds deserve to be written as one word rather than one entry in dictionaries. Sometimes, they are written as two or more orthographic words (Schmitt, 1997).

The formation of compounds includes various combinations such as Adjective + Noun, Noun + Adjective, Noun + Noun, Adjective + Verb, and Noun + Verb, resulting in compounds that are mostly adjectives, nouns, and verbs.

Compounding is a very useful technique for coining new words and native speakers of that language can do it frequently. Compounds not only

produce new words, but they also help in expressing novel ideas. Most importantly compounds are very useful because they are short and contain more semantic attributes rather than idiomatic phrases.

Syntactic structures of the compounds are fixed, and they are easy to use by native speakers. These structures are based on the intuitive knowledge of the language and the cultural context decides the meaning of the constituent. In compound words, the head of the constituent decides the meaning of the compound and to decide the head of the constituent is a labor of love.

Three different writing systems are used for compounds. They are written as one word in the first place, such as "hotpot teaspoon," and as separate words in the second place, such as "ice cream," "swimming pool," and so on. Thirdly, they are written with a hyphen, as in mother-in-law and coworker.

#### Compounding in Urdu:

Urdu is a very diverse language because it's an amalgamation of different languages just as Arabic, Persian, and Sanskrit. Due to its diversity and the ability to coin many compounds it provides an intriguing space for exploring the compound words. Urdu has no compound words with hyphens, unlike English. They are employed to

combine words to form a single idea or to change a noun. Different rules or methods are applied to know the head of the compound words like stress or the right-hand head rule (RHHR). In English (RHHR) is used to identify the head of the constituent.

#### **Types of Compounds:**

According to semantic criteria, compounds can be subdivided into four groups, exocentric, endocentric, appositional and dvandva or copulative compound (Bauer1998).

#### **Endocentric Compounds:**

Endocentric compounds are those whose meaning can be predicted from the constituents of the compound. For instance, "Dudhpatti" (a type of tea) is an endocentric compound because the meaning exists in the constituents.

#### **Appositional Compounds:**

A compound that is the hyponym of both of its elements is an appositional compound Fauji general (General in Armed Forces).

#### **Copulative Compounds:**

Copulative compounds, sometimes called dvandva compounds, are a particular kind of compound word made up of two or more independent words. Every component in a copulative compound adds to the overall meaning of the constituent. Miyan Biwi, (husband and wife) is a perfect example since both terms equally contribute to understanding the sentence's meaning.

#### **Exocentric compounds:**

These compounds are made by combining two words and the overall meaning of a compound isn't directly related to the meanings of its parts. The main characteristic is that these compounds are formed by combining two free lexicons. Exocentric Compounds depend on the metaphorical connection outside the constituents to express overall meaning instead of having a headword to show the overall function. According to Valerie Adams "The term Exocentric describes expressions in which no part seems to be the whole or central to it". Exocentric compounds don't have a clear syntactic head to expression to express a clear purpose because the overall meaning extends beyond the literal meanings of constituents.

Another definition of exocentric compounds "Compounds which consist of two or more parts, whereby the one or the other of the parts cannot be viewed as providing the bulk. These compounds also called 'headless compounds'". ('Ali, M. (2017, October 31, Semantic heads.)

For instance, Terhii khiir (hard pill to swallow) is an exocentric compound word and its meaning can't be predicted through the constituents of the compound.

Exocentric compounds are adaptable in their nature, and they can be used in all formal, informal and literary settings.

#### **Punjabi exocentric compound:**

The process of compound formation in Punjabi is quite complex. In

Punjabi, the exocentric compounds are very productive as compared to Indo-Germanic languages. Some copulative compounds also carry the metaphorical meaning, for e.g. Siah-o-Safeed (black and white). If the compound is taken as colors, then it is copulative, but in the metaphorical sense it may be used as 'owner of everything'. These types of compounds are not very productive. Regretfully, the researchers were unable to focus on the Indo-Aryan languages.

The sole published work in Punjabi is by Akhtar (1992). He is renowned for his creative efforts and dedication to Punjabi compounds in general. He classified compounds in more than 25 structural patterns.

The work includes all kinds of compounds, including copulative, reduplicative, endocentric, and exocentric ones.

#### **English Exocentric Compound:**

Bauer (1983) in his earlier work noted that in English, the exocentric compounds are found in a very small number. Here are few examples of exocentric compounds in English.

**Skinflint:** This combination, which combines the words "skin" and "flint," describes a person who is excessively frugal or extremely unwilling to spend money.

**Turncoat:** This compound, which combines the words "turn" and "coat," describes someone who changes allegiance or loyalties, frequently for their own benefit or advantage.

Stating at the end of the debate that no research has yet been done on this area of Urdu. While several scholars have examined other features of the Urdu, none have ventured to investigate exocentric compounds within the Urdu language. Since there isn't a literature study accessible for this subject, I briefly touched on the vocabulary of Punjabi and English to get a deeper understanding of the compounds' structure.

**Research Question:**

1. What are the structural patterns found in the exocentric compounds in Urdu?
2. How are the meaning of exocentric compounds derived and identified in Urdu?

**Data analysis:**

In Urdu exocentric words are formed by joining two free lexemes without any infixes in it but sometime the shortened form of the words is used to form or create a new compound. For instance, **“Nakcharha” (Irritating and temperamental person)** is an exocentric compound in which **“Nak”** the short form of **“Naak”** is used.

S#	Constituent 1	Constituent 2	Compound word	Metaphoric Meaning
1	Naak	Charha	Nakcharha	Temperamental
	Noun	Verb	Adjectival	

Some Exocentric compounds in Urdu are sometime written with a space between the constituent. For instance, **“Nangi talwar” (Naked sword)** is an exocentric compound and the metaphorical meaning of which is **(Fearless man)** does not exist in the constituent of the compound. The structure of the compound is following.

S#	Constituent 1	Constituent 2	Compound word	Metaphoric Meaning
2	Nangi	Talwar	Nangi Talwar	Fearless Person
	Adjective	Noun	Nominal	

The compounds that convey idiomatic meaning come under the category of exocentric compounds. This compound word **(Sufaid Khoon)** has two elements, one of which is a modifier, and the other is the head. **Sufaid** is the modifier and **Khoon** is the head. Its English meaning is **“White blood”**, but the metaphoric meaning doesn't exist in the compound which means a person who is **“Unkind or Callous”**. The structure of the compound is following.

S#	Constituent 1	Constituent 2	Compound word	Metaphoric Meaning
3	Sufaid	Khoon	Sufaid khoon	Unkind or Callous
	Adjective	Noun	Adjectival	

Another exocentric compound example is **“Khota Sikka”** and the literal meaning of it in English is **“Bad Coin”**, but the Metaphoric meaning of the constituent is totally different **(worthless or Useless person)**. The structure of the compound is following.

S#	Constituent 1	Constituent 2	Compound word	Metaphoric Meaning
4	Khota	Sikka	Khota Sikka	Worthless or useless person
	Adjective	Noun	Adjectival	

In exocentric compounds the meaning is derived through some cultural association of objects with some specific beliefs or context associated with the constituent. **“Kali Zuban” (Black Tongue)** is another exocentric

**Research Objective:**

1. To identify the structural patterns found in the exocentric compounds in Urdu.
2. To analyze the derivation and identification of meaning in exocentric compounds in Urdu.

**Research Methodology:**

**Research Design:**

Qualitative research approach has been used to analyze exocentric compounds.

**Data Collection:**

Data was collected based on the intuitive knowledge being the native and near native speaker of the language.

compound, and its metaphoric meaning doesn't exist in the constituent. It means a person who's saying is considered (*Ominous*). The structure of the compound is following.

S#	Constituent 1	Constituent 2	Compound word	Metaphoric Meaning
5	Kali	Zuban	Kali zuban	Ominous
	Adjective	Noun	Adjectival	

A small number of Urdu terms are so peculiar that they become meaningless when translated into other languages. For example, the exocentric compound (*Tehrii Khiir*) is incomprehensible in English (*spoiled rice pudding*). The metaphorical meaning of this phrase is incomprehensible to language learners (*a hard nut to crack / a hard pill to swallow*). The following is the compound's structure.

S#	Constituent 1	Constituent 2	Compound word	Metaphoric Meaning
6	Tehrii	Khiir	Tehrii Khiir	Hard pill to swallow
	Adjective	Noun	Nominal	

In Urdu, words from several semantic domains, including clothes, food, animals, and body parts, can be combined to form exocentric compounds. Exocentric compound "*Laal Pila*" (*Red Yellow*) is an adjectival having a totally different meaning (*In a rage*) could dazzle the language learners. The structure of the compound is as follows.

S#	Constituent 1	Constituent 2	Compound word	Metaphoric Meaning
7	Laal	Peela	Laal Pila	In a rage
	Adjective	Adjective	Adjectival	

Another example of exocentric compound is "*Sufaid Jhoot*" (*White Lie*) which means (*Explicit Lie*) The structure of the compound is as follows.

S#	Constituent 1	Constituent 2	Compound word	Metaphoric Meaning
8	Safaid	Jhoot	Safaid Joot	Explicit lie
	Adjective	Noun	Nominal	

Exocentric compound taken from the semantic domain of animals is "*Sher Dil*" (*Lion Heart*) and the metaphoric meaning of this constituent is (*Brave*) The structure of the compound is as follows.

S#	Constituent 1	Constituent 2	Compound word	Metaphoric Meaning
9	Sher	Dil	Sher dil	Brave
	Noun	Noun	Nominal	

Another example of exocentric compound taken from the animals is "*Bher Chal*" (*Sheep Walk*). The metaphoric meaning of this constituent doesn't exist in the constituent (*Mob Mentality*). The structure of the compound is as follows.

S#	Constituent 1	Constituent 2	Compound word	Metaphoric Meaning
10	Bher	Chal	Bher chal	Mob Mentality
	Adjective	Noun		

"*Sang Dil*" (*Stone heart*) is another example of exocentric compound because the meaning doesn't lie in the constituents of the compounds. The heart isn't made of stone, but this is used metaphorically for the person who is cruel and unkind.

S#	Constituent 1	Constituent 2	Compound word	Metaphoric Meaning
11	Sang	dil	Sang dil	Heart stone / cruel and Unkind
	Adjective	Noun		

“**Namak Haram**” is an exocentric compound which is usually used for a person who is disloyal or disobedient and the constituents of the compound don’t convey this meaning.

S#	Constituent 1	Constituent 2	Compound word	Metaphoric Meaning
12	Namak	Haram	Namak Haram	Disloyal
	Adjective	Noun		

“**Namak Halal**” is an exocentric compound which is usually used for a person who is loyal and obedient, and the constituents of the compound don’t convey this meaning.

S#	Constituent 1	Constituent 2	Compound word	Metaphoric Meaning
13	Namak	Halal	Nama halal	Loyal
	Adjective	Noun		

“**Paon Bhari**” (**Heavy foot**) is another example of exocentric compound because the constituents don’t refer to a heavy foot while its referring to a pregnant woman.

S#	Constituent 1	Constituent 2	Compound word	Metaphoric Meaning
14	Paon	Bhari	Paon Bhari	Pregnant woman
	Noun	Adjective		

**Conclusion:**

The exploration of exocentric compounds helps to understand the intricate tapestry of Urdu lexicon. The structural patterns helped to observe the formation of exocentric compounds and it offered a glimpse into the diversity and the flexibility of the language. It is observed that the implications of compound words often mirror the setting in which they are utilized.

In conclusion, the structural analysis of exocentric compounds in Urdu serves as a steppingstone towards a more profound comprehension of this language's linguistic essence. As we unveil the layers of structure, meaning, and cultural resonance within these compounds, we open doors for future linguistic inquiries.

The above study shows that all the metaphorical meanings associated with these compounds are based on the cultural aspect of the language. Being a native speaker of the language, all analysis has been based on the mental lexicon of the language. In the end, all the exocentric compounds may not have been discovered because the native speakers could generate new compounds adding to the richness and complexity of the Urdu Lexicon.

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