



RESEARCH PAPER

Comparative Study of Noun Inflections and Their Functions in English and Astori Dialect of Shina Language: A Morphological Analysis

¹Altaf Hussain*, ²Ghulam Abbas and ³Muhammad Bashir

1. Lecturer, Department of Languages and Cultural Studies, University of Baltistan, Skardu, Pakistan
2. Lecturer, Department of Languages and Cultural Studies, University of Baltistan, Skardu, Pakistan
3. Lecturer, Department of Languages and Cultural Studies, University of Baltistan, Skardu, Pakistan

*Corresponding Author altaf.uobs@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study aims to highlight and explore the similarities and differences of the noun inflections and their functions in English language and in Astori dialect of Shina language. This research contributes significantly to readers' understanding of the morphology of Shina, and it is of interest to linguists, language educators, and policymakers working on the promotion and preservation of endangered languages in Pakistan. The study has carried out a morphological analysis so as to explore the similarities and differences of noun inflections and their functions in both the languages. For the said analysis, inflections of nouns have been taken into considerations as the stand point of the research work. Findings of the study revealed that Shina nouns are highly inflected as compared to English nouns. The noun inflections are not easy to handle in Shina because noun inflections in Shina (Astori dialect) have more than one function in a single context, but on the other hand, English nouns are easy to handle as they are not that much inflected, and nouns are inflected, in English, hardly to show possessive case in a context. Furthermore, the study found that proper nouns in English are inflected neither in subject position nor do they in object position, however, proper nouns are also inflected in Shina whether they are in subjective case or in objective case. This study targeted only the noun inflections and their functions, further research may be conducted on other aspects of Shina language like; inflections of verb, pronoun adjective, syntactic structures, tense and aspect etc in Shina language.

KEYWORDS Derivations, Inflections, Nouns, Prefix, Shina/Astori, Suffix

Introduction

This study basically compares noun inflections and their functions in Astori dialect of Shina language and English. 'Inflection' is an important aspect of a language which means variation in the form of a word with the help of an affix that is used to indicate a grammatical function, sometimes inflection is very necessary for a stem word to function differently. Inflection is the name for the addition of letter/letters to nouns, verbs and adjectives in their different grammatical forms. Old English was considered to be much more inflected language than the English being used today. Language experts tend to use the term inflection to indicate the endings which have been added to words to express grammatical function and relationship in different contexts like; in phrases or sentences. Present day English has only a countable number of grammatical inflections. Yule, (2006) is of the view that there are only eight inflections in present day English. Nouns that are capable of taking the inflectional possessive {-s} typically relate to Individuals, Moments,

Creatures, and Groups nouns. Inanimate nouns are those that, in general, do not take the inflectional possessive {-s}; nonetheless, some inanimate nouns do take the inflectional possessive {-s}. These are typically collective words, like "company," "team," "committee," or "government," that describe a collection/group of individuals. The majority of inanimate nouns use the "of phrase" to indicate possession, as in the desk's back rather than "its back" (Abbasi, 2019).

Shina Astori Dialect

Rumana Nazir et al. (2018) even though Shina is spoken by most people in Gilgit-Baltistan, it is still regarded as a minority language. The reason is that, unlike Sindhi in Sindh, it has never been granted the status of a provincial language. Unlike the languages of Punjabi and Pashto in their respective provinces, it is not widely spoken. It has no written literature, in contrast to Balochi or any other important language. Furthermore, the indigenous people are ignorant of their language rights. Since they set themselves apart from Punjabis based only on language, even the speakers of the Saraiki language in Western Punjab are aware of this.

Astori dialect is one of the main dialects of Shina language, and it has around more than seventy thousand speakers. Astorians (in this study people of Astore) are considered to be Dardo Tibetans. They have migrated from Chilas to Astore because there was a war between two groups. It was an internal war between Bote and Matshuke which are said to be two Chilasi groups (Dardistan, 1986:61). Influence of Chilasi dialect can be perceived in Astori dialect, however, this dialect has not only been influenced by the standard dialect but also by Urdu, national language, and English as well. In Astore, code switching and code mixing is a very common phenomenon that's why Astorians possess a tremendous amount of adoptive capability to speak and understand the other dialect of the same language or other languages like Urdu, Balti and English etc. nonetheless it is noteworthy that if the code mixing and code switching phenomenon is not interrupted, Astori dialect can very soon be among the list of distinct dialects.

Many inflections can be found in Shina language as "Mrs. Zaffar Waqar Taj in her thesis, (2007) claims that more inflections and derivations may be found in Shina language..." even though Astori is more inflected dialect than the other dialects of Shina, but it is one of the dialects that can be easily understood by the speakers of standard dialect and the speakers of dialects.

Inflections are not equally prominent in all the languages of the world. Languages of the world are quite different from each other in the amount of inflections in their words which show different grammatical functions (Haspelmath & Sims, 2010). What one language expresses with the help of inflection may be expressed by a separate word in another language. For example, English expresses the plural of noun by means of inflections (i.e. boy, boys, cat, cats and so on), but Shina sometimes uses separate word to show plural of some nouns (i.e. "manoozo" man, "jak" men). It does not happen with all the languages, but it happens with only the languages that are **isolating** (the language that has almost no morphology are called isolating e.g. Yoruba and Vietnamese), English is not included in isolating languages, it is considered **analytic language** (languages in which morphology plays a relatively modest role, are called analytic). Shina Astori dialect has a large amount of morphology, so it can be considered as **Polysynthetic** (a language that has an extraordinary amount of morphology is called polysynthetic).

A number of Shina words have inflections. According to structure, some similarities with English can be found in Shina language as some of Shina (Astori dialect)

verbs are inflected in the same way as the English to show the person and tense. Consider the following examples:

Shina (Astori)	English
• Likhyono	• to write
• Likhay (...ay)	• write (imperative) for singular 3 rd person
• Likhya (...ya)	• write (imperative) for plural 3 rd person
• Likhhas (...as)	• I have written (1 st person singular Present Perfect)
• Likhem (...em)	• I will write (1 st person singular Future)
• Likhao (...ao)	• he wrote
• Likhieen (...ieen)	• She wrote

A Breif Introduction of Shina Language

Shina (Tshina also) is considered to be Dardic language and it is being used by a large number of people in Gilgit Baltistan (formerly known as Northern Areas of Pakistan). The valleys, where different Shina dialects are spoken are: Astore, Chilas, Dareil, Tangeer, Gilgit, Ghizer and a few parts of Baltistan and Kohistan. It is also spoken in Gurez Drass (Kargil) and Laddakh valleys of Jammu and Kashmir. Main dialects of Shina language are:

The Origin of Shina Language

As Shina has no properly written system and it does not have recognized alphabets in published form, it is very difficult to find the mystery that from where Shina language has been originated in its correct historical aspects. Researchers have been doing their best to find out the origin of Shina language historically but their efforts proved to be a tentative exercise because of having different views. Some of the researchers are of a view that Shina language is an Indo - Aryan language of the Dardic group which is spoken in several dialect groups in Gilgit Baltistan. The variety spoken in the main valley "Gilgit" is known as Gilgiti Shina. Gilgiti Shina is considered as the standard dialect of Shina because of the greatest number of speakers live in and around Gilgit town besides being socio economic hub of the region.

Literature Review

The aim of this research work to compare inflections pronouns and their grammatical functions in English and Astori dialect of Shina language. Inflections are studied in morphology (Morphology is the study of the internal structure of words). Morphology and syntax are closely related because the words are usually inflected according to the syntactic structure of the sentence. Morphology can be considered as a sub discipline of grammar as inflections are the major concern of morphology and they (inflections) show grammatical functions by means of affixes (Haspelmath & Sims, 2010).

Morphology studies the combination of morphemes (a minimal unit of speech which has a meaning or grammatical function that cannot be divided into further such units) to construct words and inflections are morphemes which show the different grammatical functions. Nouns are inflected to express number (singular, plural i.e. bat bats) and noun case (i.e. Boy, boy's, boys') verbs are inflected to show the tense (i.e. write, wrote), number of the subject in a sentence (I, we, they, you go; he/she goes) and verbs are inflected to show aspect "perfective and imperfective" (i.e. I am writing. I have written.) and adjectives are inflected to indicate the degree i.e. comparative or superlative (tall, taller, tallest) in English (Oxford Univ. Press, 199)."

As it has been mentioned in introduction that we add extra letter (letters), known as affixes, to show grammatical function in a sentence, so to understand the inflections clearly, derivations should also be discussed briefly because they function differently in a sentence from the inflections therefore, experts use different terms about inflection and derivation.

Inflections in Astori Dialect of Shina Language

Shina (Astori dialect) has many inflections that show different functions. For example; nouns take inflections whether they are used as subject or object e.g. In "Aslamo gosh aelay hoon" the inflection "-mo" shows the possession and it is used as a subject in this sentence it also tells us that the entity being discussed, is masculine. In contrast, modern English does not have as much inflections as Shina (Astori dialect) has. In English, nouns can be inflected to show only plural or possession e.g. "Boysg are playing cricket" the inflection "-s" shows only plural but when the noun is used as object it does not take inflection as; "Seema likes Ahmed". In Shina (Astori) nouns are inflected either they are used as subject or they are used as object of the sentence as; "Seemasey Ahmedadey khosh thein". Here Ahmed is used as object of the sentence and it has been inflected as; "-adey".

Derivational and Inflectional morphemes of Shina (ASTORI) and Other Languages

As it has been discussed in introduction that inflections are the additional letter(s) in a base lexeme to show the different grammatical functions via suffixes or prefixes, it is valuable to discuss inflectional and derivational in a particular and systematic way to make the discussion more vivid (Haspelmath & Sims, 2010). The suffixes or prefixes, added to a base lexeme, can be either inflectional or derivational. These inflectional and derivational suffixes and prefixes are termed as derivational meaning and inflectional values by the Morphologists. Abbasi (2019) states that one of the main divisions in morpheme is bound and free. One term for a free morpheme is an independent word. There are two varieties of bound morphemes: Linguists define an inflectional morpheme as just a grammatical marker or indication. Inflectional morphemes are a subset of bound morphemes. A word's grammatical class cannot be changed or new words created via an inflectional morpheme. According to Yule, inflectional morphemes are a set of bound morphemes that express certain facets of a word's grammatical function rather than being utilized to create new words in the language. To indicate if a word is plural or single, whether it is in the past tense or not, and whether it is a possessive or comparative form. George Yule (2006) Inflectional morphemes are a compact, closed set of eight grammatical morphemes. These eight mark a grammatical function, such as plural or tense, but provide little to no substance. Words can have their forms altered by inflectional morphemes, but their meanings remain the same.

Derivational Suffixes or Prefixes

Derivational suffixes or prefixes are the additional letters which cause to convert the class of the word like they sometimes change verb into noun and they are usually placed close to the base e.g. "read, reader". Here the suffix -er changed the class of the verb "read" into a noun "reader".

Noun Inflections and Their Functions

In English, nouns are inflected to show case and number, that is, if a noun is inflected with "-s", it shows the possessive case of a noun and inflection "-s" the plural number but proper nouns in English, are not inflected when they are used as subjective or

objective case. In contrast nouns in Shina, are inflected to show case and number either it is in subjective case or it is in objective case, which means a single inflection of a noun expresses dual function. For example; in “Aslam gosh”, the inflection “-o” shows the possessive case and the singular number as well. The following analysis in table no. 1 may help to understand this clearly.

Table 1
Comparison between Noun Inflections of Shina and English

English Sentences	inflections	functions	Shina Sentences	inflections	Functions
Aslam's house is near.	-'s	possession	Aslam ^o gosh aelay hoon.	-o	Possession (singular)
Boys are playing cricket.	-s	plural	Balisey cricket khel theon haan.	-isey	Plural
A girl is going.	-----	singular	Mulaiek bojoon hein.	-ek	Singular
Riaz loves Nadeem.	-----	-----	Riazse Nadeemeday khosh theon.	-eday	Objective case
Ahmed writes.	-----	-----	Ahmedsey likhyoon.	-sey	Subjective

Results and Discussion

Aslam's house is near. (English)

If the sentence 1 in the table no.1 is analyzed, it can be found that the English noun inflection “-'s” shows the possession of Aslam nothing else.

Aslam gosh aelay hoon. (Shina)

In Shina first sentence, the noun inflection “-o” not only shows the possession of the noun “Aslam” but it also shows that the noun “gosh”, which is being shown to be possessed by Aslam, is singular.

Boys are playing cricket. (English)

In sentence 2 of English, inflection “-s” with boys shows that the noun being inflected is plural and it takes a plural verb “are”.

Balisey cricket khel theon haan. (Shina)

In sentence 2 of Shina, inflection “-isey” shows that the noun being inflected is a plural noun and it also shows the genitive case.

A girl is going. (English)

In this English sentence, noun is not being inflected but to show that the noun is singular in number, a separate word “a” is used and because of being singular it takes a singular helping verb “is” as well.

Mulaiek bojoon hein. (Shina)

In this Shina sentence the noun “mulai” has been inflected with “-ek” to show the singular number of the noun and it takes a singular helping verb “hein” as well.

Riaz loves Nadeem. (English)

Sentence no. 4 shows that in English, proper nouns are not inflected when they are in object position, that is, they are not inflected in objective case.

Riazse Nadeemeday khosh theon. (Shina)

In Shina, proper nouns are inflected in subjective and objective case as well. As in the above sentence No.4 of Shina language, the noun "Nadeem" is in objective case. The noun "Nadeem" has inflected by adding "___eday" to show its objective case.

Ahmed writes. (English)

Sometimes, in English if the proper noun is in the position of subject, it is not inflected to express any particular grammatical function as in sentence no 5, the proper noun "Ahmed" has not been inflected because there is no need of any inflection in this case.

Ahmedse likhyoon. (Shina)

In Shina, proper nouns are inflected even if it is in the position of subject as in Shina sentence no 5, the proper noun "Ahmed" has been inflected by adding the inflection "-se" that shows Ahmed is the performer of the action.

Conclusion

In English, nouns are inflected to show case and number, that is, if a noun is inflected with apostrophe "_'s", it shows the possessive case of a noun and inflection "-s" the plural number but proper nouns in English, are not inflected when they are used in subjective or objective case in a construction. In contrast nouns, in Shina (Astori dialect), are inflected to show case and number either it is in subjective case or it is in objective case, which means a single inflection of a noun expresses dual function. Proper nouns in English are not usually inflected either in subject position or in object position. However, in Shina proper nouns are also inflected either in subject position or object position. So it can be concluded that nouns in Shina have more inflections than English nouns; and that a single inflection in Shina may show more than one function in a single constructions but English nouns mostly show only one function.

References

- Abbasi, M. A. A. I. (2019). Inflectional Morphemes. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Science, Engineering and Technology (ijsrset.com)*. IJSRSET
- Greenbaum, S., O. (1996). *The Oxford English Grammar*. Oxford Univ: Oxford Univ. Press.
- Haspelmath, M., & Sims, A. D. (2010). *Understanding Morphology. 2nd Edition*. UK: Hodder Education.
- Hussain. S., Y., (n.d.). Infusion of foreign words in standard dialect of Shina:p7,40,50.
- Koul, L. (1996). *Methodology of educational research*. 3rd Revised and Enlarged Edition. New Delhi:Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd.
- Nordquist Richard<http://od/words/a/wordroots.htm>. (n.d.). /grammar.about.com.
- Nazir, R., Din, S., & Nafees, M. A. (2018). Language Attitude of Adolescent Shina Speakers Towards Shina, Urdu and English in Schools of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. *Communication and Linguistics Studies*. Science Publishing Group.
- Sekaran, U. (1992). *Research methods for business*. Singapore: John Wiley and Sons.
- Shakil, A., S. (n.d.). *Work Book For Shina Writing*. Shina Language and Culture Promotion Society Gilgit.
- Shamsuddin, S. (2010).New research on origin of Shina language.
- Yule, G. (2006). *Study of language*. 3rd Edition. NY: Cambridge university press.