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Morphological Variations in Using Plural Morphemes in Urdu

Somana Fatima, Ph.D.

Abstract

According to Platts, there are more than 20 patterns of plural formation. In this research paper I will discuss some of its pattern of plural formation and this paper will discuss the morphological variations found in the field by Urdu Speakers. Urdu speakers are categorized further in social variable scale of sex and three age groups. Further presentation of data from the field is given in the form of tables and chart. The data is collected from the field work done in Lucknow, Delhi and Aligarh City by presenting the word list of 100 words. The researcher instructed the respondents for doing the plural formation of words given in word list.

Keywords: Plural formation, morpheme, morphological variation

Changes due to Plural Formations

In Urdu there are more than 20 patterns of plural formation which have been discussed specially by Platts (1967). These patterns are purely Perso-Arabic in nature and hence they have been termed as the plural patterns of Arabic Persian and Standard Urdu (APSU). However, we may have the plural patterns of Perso-Arabic words in Hindi manner also. These patterns of plural formation are as follows:

1. Plural formation by suffixes

The words in Urdu are made plural by using suffixes with the singular forms. There are seven such most frequent patterns of plural formation by suffixes as shown in the table.

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1. Patterns of Pluralisation with suffixes

Singular	Word	Plural	Word	Gloss
Saval	سوال	sAvalat	سوالات	'questions'
nazIr	ناظر	Nazrin	ناظرین	'spectators'
hAvala	حوالہ	hAvalajat	حوالہ جات	'references'
mAhman	مہمان	mAhmanan	مہمانان	'guests'
GAzAl	غزل	GAzAlIyat	غزلیات	'ghazals'
sAd	سد	sAdha	سدہا	'hundreds'

2. Plural formation by Prefixes and the Morpho-Phonemic change

There are many words in Urdu whose plurals are made with the help of prefixes. When prefixes are attached, the process results in some morpho-phonemic change in the forms only then the singular forms become plural. There are seven such patterns as shown in table.

2. Plural Formation with Prefixes and Morpho-phonemic change

Singular	Word	Plural	Word	Gloss
sAbAq	سبق	Asbaq	اسباق	'lessons'
jUz	جز	Ajza	اجزا	'portion/ elements'
nAbi	نبی	AmbIya	انبیا	'prophets'
hAbib	حبیب	AhIbba	احباب	'pl. of dear'
rUkh	رکن	Arakin	اراکین	'member'
yom	یوم	Ayyam	ایام	'days'
zUlm	ظلم	mAzalIm	مظالم	'cruelities'

3. Plural Formation with infixes and vowel harmony

Several words are made plural with the help of infixes in the singular forms. The difference between some singular and plural forms is very thin and hence it becomes difference. Some most frequent patterns may be seen below. There are some other words which when take infixes change in quite a different manner specially in the case when there results vowel harmony for example in /xAt/ 'letter' /xUtut/ 'letters'.

3. Plural formation with infixes and vowel harmony

Singular	Word	Plural	Word	Gloss
mani	معنی	mAani	معانی	'meanings'
am	عام	Avam	عوام	'public'

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fArz	فرض	fAraIz	فراءض	'duties'
xAt	خط	xUtut	خطوط	'letters'

4. Plural Formation with Morpho-phonemic Alternations

Many Urdu words are made plural with the help of morpho-phonemic alternations. These alternations are also of different types. The plural formation with such alternations may be seen in the following table.

4. Plural Formation with morpho-phonemic alternations in singular forms

Singular	Word	Plural	Word	Gloss
qanun	قانون	qAvanin	قوانین	'laws'
vAzir	وزیر	vUzra	وزراء	'ministers'
šaitan	شیطان	šAyatin	شیاطین	'devils'
qafIya	قافیہ	qAvafi	قوافی	'rhyming words'
haji	حاجی	hUjjaj	حجاج	'performers of Haj'

1. Some Rules: Use of one frequent pattern formation for several different patterns

The speakers are exposed maximum to the words which are made plural by adding suffix /-at-/ as in sAval 'question'— sAvalat 'questions'. Moreover this is the simplest pattern of plural formation in Urdu from among all the Perso-Arabic patterns of plural in Urdu. Speakers apply the patterns of overgeneralization on those words also which follow different patterns of plural formation.

Urdu-Sg	Urdu-Pl in use	Urdu-Pl	Gloss
tAsnif تصنیف	tAsnifat تصنیفات	tAsanif تصنیف	'creative writings'
vAzir وزیر	vAzirat وزیرات	vUzAra وزراء	'ministers'
qanun قانون	qanunat قانونات	qAvanin قوانین	'rules; laws'
sAbAq سبق	sAbqat سبقات	Asbaq اسباق	'lessons'
mahIrr ماہر	mahIrrat ماہرات	mahrin ماہرین	'experts'
šer شیر	šerat شعرات	Ašar اشعار	'verses'

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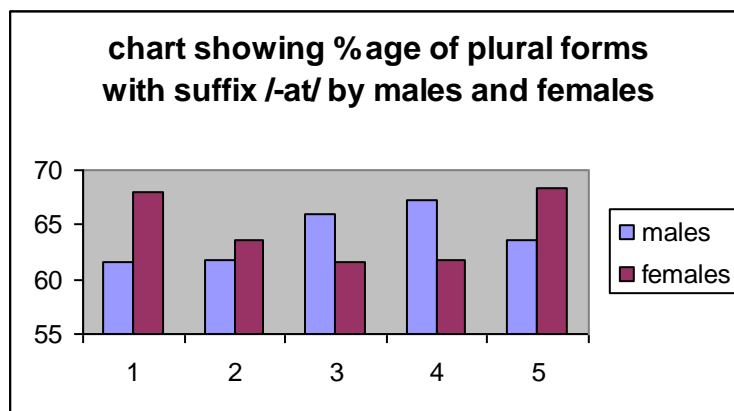
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fauj فوج	faujat فوجات	Afvaj افواج	'armies'
sInf صنف	sInfat صنفات	Asnaf اصناف	'genres'
zUlm ظلم	zUlmāt ظلمات	mAzalIm مظالم	'cruelities'
rAsm رسم	rAsmat رسومات	rUsum رسوم	'traditions'

In the field, the researcher finds that people are used to saying tAsnifat in place of tAsnif, vAzirat in place of vUzAra, qanunāt in place of qAvanin, sAbqat in place of Asbaq, mahIrat in place of mahrin and sherat in place of Ashar. They are least bothered about the correct pluralisation of Urdu words. They said that they used these plural forms only for the conversation and for the transformation of Ideas.

61.66 per cent of males use tAsnifat as the plural form of tAsnif, 61.70 per cent of males use vAzirat as the plural form of vAzir, 66 per cent of males use qanunāt as the plural form of qanun, 67.33 per cent of males use sAbqat as the plural form of sAbAq and 63.60 per cent of males use mahIrat as the plural form of mAhir on the other hand 68 per cent of females use tAsnifat as the plural form of tAsnif, 63.66 per cent of females use vAzirat as the plural form of vAzir, 61.60 per cent of females use qanunāt as the plural form of qanun, 61.75 per cent of females use sAbqat as the plural form of sAbAq and 68.30 per cent of females use mahIrat as the plural form of mAhir.



1. tAsnifat 2. vAzirat 3. qanunāt 4. sAbqat 5. mahIrat

80 per cent of males of Age group1 use tAsnifat as the plural form of tAsnif, 81 per cent of males use vAzirat as the plural form of vAzir, 83 per cent of males use

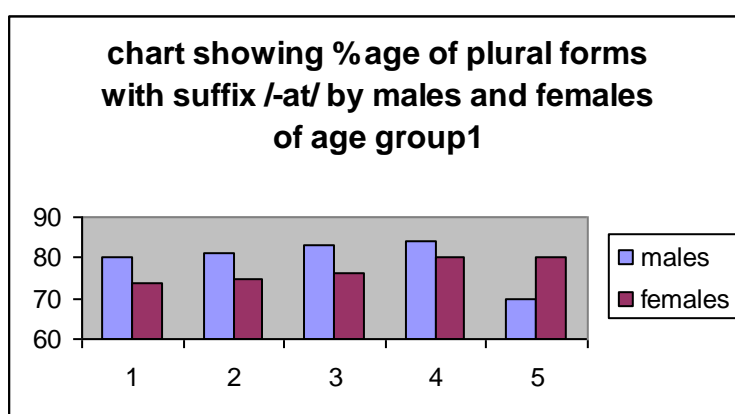
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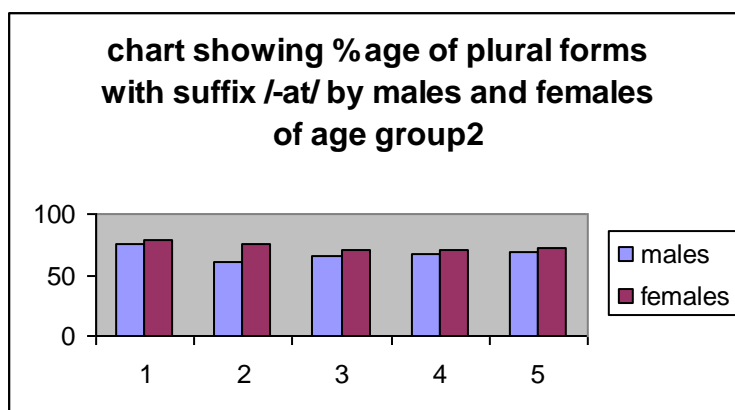
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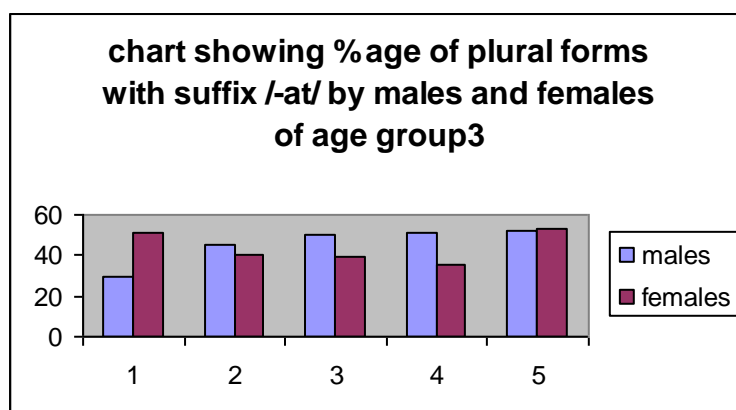
qanunat as the plural form of qanun, 84 per cent of males use sAbqat as the plural form of sAbAq and 70 per cent of males use mahIrat as the plural form of mAhir on the other hand 74 per cent of females of Age group1 use tAsnifat as the plural form of tAsnif, 75 percent of females use vAzirat as the plural form of vAzir, 76 per cent of females use qanunat as the plural form of qanun, 80 per cent of females use sAbqat as the plural form of sAbAq and 80 per cent of females use mahIrat as the plural form of mAhir.



75 per cent of males of Age group2 use tAsnifat as the plural form of tAsnif, 60 per cent of males use vAzirat as the plural form of vAzir, 65 per cent of males use qanunat as the plural form of qanun, 67 per cent of males use sAbqat as the plural form of sAbAq and 69 per cent of males use mahIrat as the plural form of mAhir on the other hand 79 per cent of females of Age group2 use tAsnifat as the plural form of tAsnif, 76 per cent of females use vAzirat as the plural form of vAzir, 70 per cent of females use qanunat as the plural form of qanun, 71 per cent of females use sAbqat as the plural form of sAbAq and 72 per cent of females use mahIrat as the plural form of mAhir.



30 per cent of males of Age group3 use tAsnifat as the plural form of tAsnif, 45 per cent of males use vAZirat as the plural form of vAZir, 50 per cent of males use qanunat as the plural form of qanun, 51 per cent of males use sAbqat as the plural form of sAbAq and 52 per cent of males use mahIrat as the plural form of mAHir on the other hand 51 per cent of females of Age group3 use tAsnifat as the plural form of tAsnif, 40 percent of females use vAZirat as the plural form of vAZir, 39 per cent of females use qanunat as the plural form of qanun, 35 per cent of females use sAbqat as the plural form of sAbAq and 53 per cent of females use mahIrat as the plural form of mAHir.



2. Addition of oblique plural marker /-ō/ with the plural forms which is not needed.

In Urdu, the singular form of words is used with the /-ō/ suffix in the oblique plural. It would have been alright if /-ō/ suffix is added to singular forms to singular forms to make them plural in Indic manner but in Perso-Arabic manner /-ō/ suffix is used in plural form. For example:

Urdu-Sg	Urdu-Pl in use	Urdu-Pl	Gloss
xAyal خیال	xAyalatō خیالاتوں	xAyalat خیالات	'thought'
sAbAb سبب	Asbabō اسبابوں	Asbab اسباب	'reasons'
hAq حق	hUquqō حقوقوں	hUquq حقوق	'rights'
jAzba جذبه	jAzbatō جذباتوں	jAzbat جذبات	'emotions'
hAq حق	hAqaIqō حقائقوں	hAqaIq حقائق	'truths'

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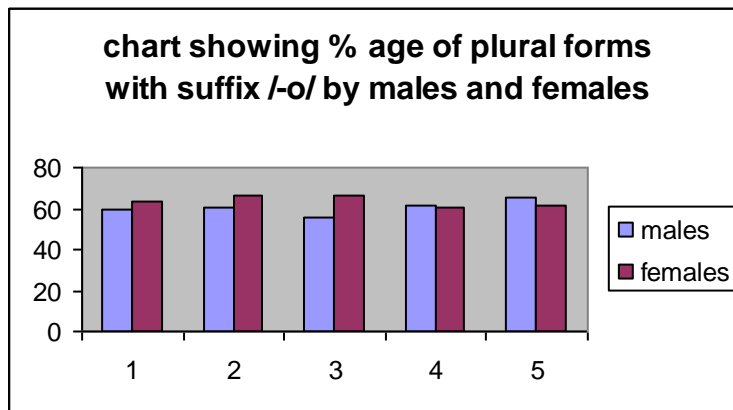
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sAval سوال	sAvalatō سوالاتون	savalat سوالات	‘question’
sInf صنف	Asnafō اصناف	Asnaf اصناف	‘genres’
IAfz لفظ	Alfazō الفاظون	Alfaz الفاظ	‘words’
vAje وجہ	vUjuhatō وجوہاتون	vUjihat وجوہات	‘reasons’
xUsusIyAt خصوصیات	xUsusIyatō خصوصیاتون	xUsusIyat خصوصیات	‘qualities’
šer شعر	Ašarō اشعارون	Ašar اشعار	‘verses’
mUškIl مشکل	mUškIlIlatō مشکلاتون	mUškIlIlat مشکلات	‘difficulties’

Researcher in the field finds that 60 per cent of males use xAyalatō as the plural form of xAyal, 60.33 per cent of males use Asbabō as the plural form of sAbAq, 55.30 per cent of males use hUquqō as the plural form of hAq, 61.30 per cent of males use jAzbatō as the plural form of jAzbat and 65 per cent of males use sAvalatō as the plural form of sAval on the other hand 63.30 per cent of females use xAyalatō as the plural form of xAyal, 66.66 per cent of females use Asbabō as the plural form of sAbAq, 66.60 per cent of females use hUquqō as the plural form of hAq, 60.30 per cent of females use jAzbatō as the plural form of jAzbat and 61.66 per cent of females use sAvalatō as the plural form of sAval.



1. xAyalatō 2. Asbabō 3. hUquqō 4. jAzbatō 5. sAvalatō

75 per cent of males of Age group1 use xAyalatō as the plural form of xAyal, 73 per cent of males use Asbabō as the plural form of sAbAq, 73 per cent of males use hUquqō as the plural form of hAq, 85 per cent of males use jAzbatō as the plural form

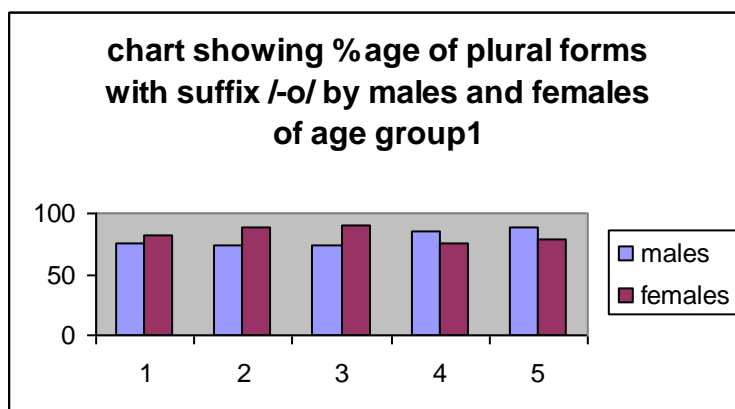
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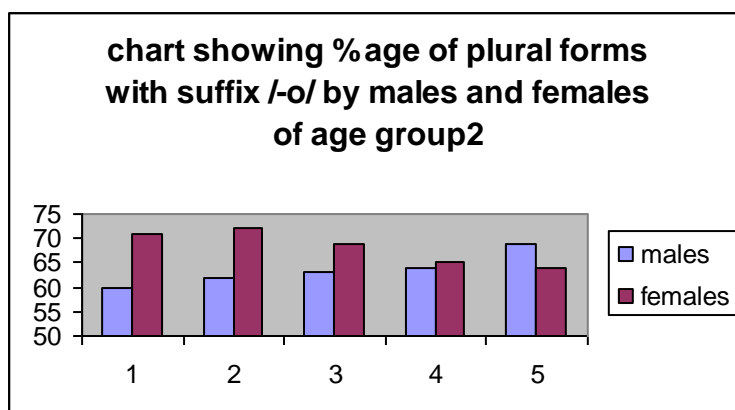
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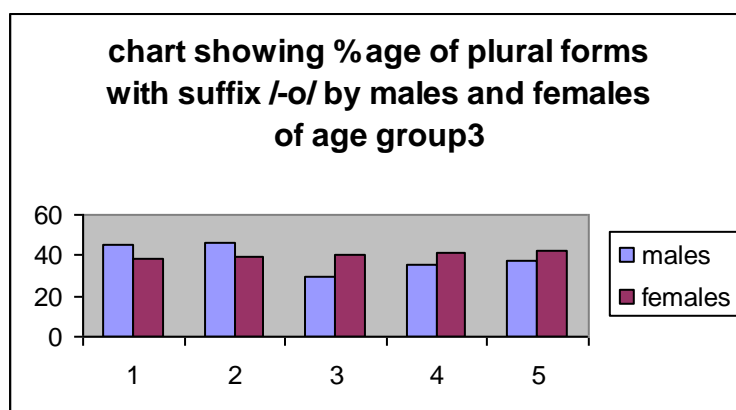
of jAzbat and 89 per cent of males use sAvalatō as the plural form of sAval on the other hand 82 per cent of females of Age group1 use xAyalatō as the plural form of xAyal, 89 per cent of females use Asbabō as the plural form of sAbAq, 90 per cent of females use hUquqō as the plural form of hAq, 75 per cent of females use jAzbatō as the plural form of jAzbat and 79 per cent of females use sAvalatō as the plural form of sAval.



60 per cent of males of Age group2 use xAyalatō as the plural form of xAyal, 62 per cent of males use Asbabō as the plural form of sAbAq, 63 per cent of males use hUquqō as the plural form of hAq, 64 per cent of males use jAzbatō as the plural form of jAzbat and 69 per cent of males use sAvalatō as the plural form of sAval on the other hand 71 per cent of females of Age group2 use xAyalatō as the plural form of xAyal, 72 per cent of females use Asbabō as the plural form of sAbAq, 69 per cent of females use hUquqō as the plural form of hAq, 65 per cent of females use jAzbatō as the plural form of jAzbat and 64 per cent of females use sAvalatō as the plural form of sAval.



45 per cent of males of Age group3 use xAyalatō as the plural form of xAyal, 46 per cent of males use Asbabō as the plural form of sAbAq, 30 per cent of males use hUquqō as the plural form of hAq, 35 per cent of males use jAzbatō as the plural form of jAzbat and 37 per cent of males use sAvalatō as the plural form of sAval on the other hand 38 per cent of females of Age group3 use xAyalatō as the plural form of xAyal, 39 per cent of females use Asbabō as the plural form of sAbAq, 40 per cent of females use hUquqō as the plural form of hAq, 41 per cent of females use jAzbatō as the plural form of jAzbat and 42 per cent of females use sAvalatō as the plural form of sAval.



3. Urdu speakers also do some other changes. For example:

1. Suffixing of /-in/ to the singular forms in place of morphophonemic alternations. For instance in the:

Urdu-Sg	Urdu-Pl in use	Urdu-Pl	Gloss
šalr شاعر	šayrin شاعرين	šUara شعراء	'poets'

On the basis of the pattern, the plural of nazIr is nazrin means 'spectators'.

2. Suffixing of /-in/ to the singular forms in place of the suffix /-an/. For example

Urdu-Sg	Urdu-Pl in use	Urdu-Pl	Gloss
bIradAr برادر	bIradArin برادران	bIradAran برادران	'brothers'

3. Suffixing of /-Iyat/ to the singular forms instead of morph-phonemic alternation as in the examples:

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Urdu-Sg	Urdu-Pl in use	Urdu-Pl	Gloss
fauj فوج	faujIyat فوجیات	Afvaj افواج	'armies'
mAnzAr منظر	mAnzArIyat منظریات	mAnazIr مناظر	'sceneries'

On the basis of the pattern, the plural of ghAzal is ghAzAlIyat means 'ghazals'.

4. Use of /aIr/ and /aIq/ in plural forms

Urdu-Sg	Urdu-Pl in use	Urdu-Pl	Gloss
vAzir وزیر	vAzaIr وزائر	vUzAra وزراء	'ministers'
sAbAq سبق	sAbaIq سبائِق	Asbaq اسباق	'lessons'

On the basis of pattern, the plural of zAmir is zAmaIr and the plural of fArz is fAraIz.

5. Use of nasalization in plural forms which is not required at all. For example in words:

Urdu-Sg	Urdu-Pl in use	Urdu-Pl	Gloss
nAGma نغمہ	nAGmë نغمے	nAGmat نغمات	'songs'

On the basis of pattern, the plural of ghAzal is ghAzlë and plural of nAzm is nAzëm.

Some examples of plural words are:

Urdu-Sg	Urdu-Pl in use	Urdu-Pl	Gloss
fArz فرض	fAraz فرائض	fAraIz فرائض	'duties'
fArz فرض	AfArzat افراضات	fAraIz فرائض	'duties'
qanun قانون	qAvanun قوانون	qAvanin قوانین	'laws'
vAzir وزیر	vAziran وزیران	vUzAra وزراء	'ministers'

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hAzar ہزار	hAzarhan ہزاراں	hAzarha ہزارہا	‘thousands’
šAİr شاعر	šavra شوراع	šUAra شعراء	‘poets’
šher شعر	šera شعرا	Ašar اشعار	‘verses’

Instead of these types of different pluralisations by the Urdu speakers in the field, researcher in the field finds that the respondents use fAraz and AfArzat in place of fAraİz as the plural of word fArz means ‘duties’, qAyanun in place of qAvanın as the plural of word qanun means ‘law’, vAziran in place of vUzAra as the plural of word vAzir means ‘minister’, hAzarhan in place of hAzarha as the plural of hAzar means ‘thousands’, šavra in place of šUAra as the plural of saİr means ‘poets’ and šera in place of Ašar as the plural of šer means ‘verses’. The statistical data of these types of pluralisation is not given in this work because very few people use these types of pluralisation in their day to day life.

NOTES

1. Age group 1 is from 15-25 years, Age group 2 is from 26-40 and Age group 3 is from 41-60 years
3. U stands for Urdu and FU stands for Field Urdu.

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