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## **Description of Urdu Noun Phrase Morphology**

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# DESCRIPTION OF URDU NOUN PHRASE MORPHOLOGY

Abrar Hussain Qureshi, Ph D Candidate

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## Abstract

*Learning a foreign language has become all the more important in the 21st century as the world has shaped into a global village. Lexical studies of different languages across the world has facilitated this inter communal interaction. This research paper contributes to the enormous efforts to learn Urdu as a foreign language. In this paper it has been attempted to present a comprehensive description of Urdu Noun phrase. It describes its key syntactic and morphological features. The structures and examples presented in this paper clearly demonstrate that Urdu and English noun phrase morphology is approximately the same with a few exceptions. As, no reliable studies of the range of these Urdu noun phrase structures are available, detailed studies of Urdu noun phrase are desperately needed and it is my hope that this paper will generate sufficient interest in Urdu noun phrase to encourage new studies of this kind.*

## Introduction

Traditionally a phrase is a group of related words that does not include a subject and verb (Mahajan, 1989). If the group of related words does contain a subject and verb, it is considered a clause. Formally a phrase is defined as a syntactic structure that has syntactic properties derived from its head (Mahajan, 2001). Basic Phrase structure is a universal feature of all human languages. The fundamental element of a phrase is HEAD that is often accompanied with a COMPLEMENT, often called a MODIFIER. The examples of heads are *badshah* (king), *bahader larkal* (brave boy), *lakri ka maiz* (table of wood), etc. Phrase forms the part of a clause e.g.

“*ager lamba larka taiz bhagta tu gaari paker laita*”  
(If the tall boy had run fast, he would have caught the train).

Phrases are often embedded one within the other that is another crucial feature of human language. A further distinction can be made among these embedded phrases that are the Main Phrase and the Subordinate Phrase. A

Main Phrase (MP) is one which is not a part of another phrase, but is a direct constituent of a clause; whereas a Subordinate Phrase (SP) is one which is a part of another phrase (Travis, 1994), e.g.

<u>Phechley saal</u>	<u>grammer per</u>	<u>os ki kitaab</u>
(last year	on grammar	his book)
SP	SP	MP

*Complex* which is phrase-level, is often confused with *compound*, which is word-level. However, there are certain phenomena that formally seem to be phrases but semantically are more like compounds (Saleemi, 1994) like "women's magazines", which has the form of a possessive noun phrase, but which refers (just like a compound) to one specific lexeme (i.e. a magazine for women and not some magazine owned by a woman). But it is comparatively difficult to determine whether a phrase is really a lexical unit or simply a phrase made up of separate words. The distinction between phrase, idiom and proverb is sometimes blurred in the Urdu language.

### Structure of an Urdu phrase

The Urdu language is not different from English as far as the structure of a phrase is concerned. Head (H) and Modifier (M) constitutes the basic structures of an Urdu phrase "(M) H (M)" (Butt, 1995). Head (H) is the word which can not be omitted from the phrase, whereas Modifier (M) is optional, and number of modifiers in a phrase may be more than one e.g. *intahae ajeeb jazba* (very strange feeling), etc.

### Structure of an Urdu Noun Phrase:

A noun phrase is a word or a group of words that does not have a subject and a predicate of its own, and does the work of a noun (Verma, 1974) e.g. *Sibgatullah* (name), *piara chehra* (lovely face). If a noun phrase is a group of words, it usually has a noun as its head along with some modifier e.g. *accha usaad* (good teacher), *poraani gari* (old car), etc. One thing that needs to be considered with noun phrases is the long complex noun phrase. These phrases are sometimes called "stacked noun phrases" (University Grammar of English) that are accompanied with more than one modifier.

The structures of Noun Phrases in the Urdu language are very diverse but the basic structure of a noun phrase is:

$${}^n (D) (M) H (M)$$

“D” stands for determiner, where “M” stands for modifier and H stands for head of a phrase. The superscript “n” means that there may be one or more than one modifiers. A noun phrase must have a head (H), but the modifiers are optional. These modifiers are of two kinds: Premodifiers and Postmodifiers. Premodifiers precede the head while postmodifiers follow the head, e.g. *Khusgawaar mausum mey* (in pleasant season), *khushgawaar* is a premodifier while in the phrase *zamana qadeem mey* (in ancient times), *qadeem* and *mey* are postmodifiers.

### The Head of a Urdu Noun Phrase:

The head of an Urdu noun phrase may be:

1. a noun:

Noun Phrase		
(M)	H	(M)
<i>zaheen</i> (intelligent)	<b><i>Baita</i></b> (son)	<i>Jo k ustaad hay</i> (who is a teacher)
<i>Piarri</i> (beloved)	<b><i>Anam</i></b> (name)	
<i>Achha</i> (good)	<b><i>Qalam</i></b> (pen)	

2. a pronoun: e.g. *yeh* (this), *wo* (he), *hum* (we), *her aik* (every one) etc.

Noun Phrase		
(M)	H	(M)
	<b><i>Wo</i></b> (they)	
	<b><i>Hum</i></b> (we)	<i>Sub</i> (all)
<i>Her</i> (every)	<b><i>Aik</i></b> (one)	

3. an adjective:

Noun Phrase		
Premodifier	H	Postmodifier
	<b><i>Ameer</i></b> (rich)	

<i>Os</i> (that)	<b>Zaheen</b> (intelligent)	
<i>Aik</i> (one)	<b>Buzdil</b> (coward)	

4. an enumerator:

Noun Phrase		
<i>Premodifier</i>	<b>H</b>	<i>Postmodifier</i>
	<b>Akhri</b> (the last)	
	<b>Phelay</b> (the first)	
	<b>Aik</b> (one)	

**Determiners:**

i. Predeterminers

Noun Phrase		
<i>Premodifier (PM)</i> <b>Predeterminers</b>		<i>Head (H)</i> <i>Noun</i>
Quatifier	<b>Tumaam</b> (all)	<i>Larkay</i> (boys)
Multipier	<b>Doogna</b> (double)	<i>Hissaw</i> (share)
Fraction	<b>Chothaee</b> (one forth)	<i>Zameen</i> (land)

ii. Central Determiners

Noun Phrase			
<i>Premodifier</i> <b>Central Determiners</b>			<i>Head</i> <i>Noun</i>
Pronouns	Personal	<b>Mera</b> (my)	<i>Qalam</i> (Pen)
	Indefinite	<b>Kuch</b> (some)	<i>Kamray</i> (rooms)
	Interrogative	<b>Koonsi</b> (which)	<i>Kitaab</i> (book)
	Demonstrative	<b>Yeh</b> (this)	<i>Kursi</i> (chair)

iii. Post determiners

Noun Phrase			
<i>Premodifier</i> <b>Postdeterminers</b>			<i>Head</i> <i>Noun</i>
Number	Ordinal	<b>Pheli</b> (first)	<i>Haalat</i> (condition)
	Cardinal	<b>Aik</b> (one)	<i>Ghari</i> (watch)

Quantifier	<b>Bahut</b> (several)	<b>Larkay</b> (boys)
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### The Premodifiers of a Noun Phrase:

Sometimes a single noun isn't specific enough for our purposes. Then we modify a noun to construct a more specific reference. The premodifiers (PM) of a noun phrase may be:

#### 1. Adjective:

Noun Phrase	
<i>Premodifier</i> <b>Adjective</b>	<i>Head</i> <b>Noun</b>
<b>Kalay</b> (black)	<b>Jotay</b> (shoes)
<b>Khubsoorat</b> (beautiful)	<b>Geet</b> (song)
<b>Haseen</b> (charming)	<b>Khatoon</b> (lady)
<b>Lamba</b> (long)	<b>Larka</b> (boy)

#### 2. Noun

Noun Phrase	
<i>Premodifier</i> <b>Noun</b>	<i>Head</i> <b>Noun</b>
<b>Ameere</b> (head)	<b>Kwait</b> (country name)
<b>Khaaleqe</b> (creator)	<b>Qaaenaat</b> (universe)

#### 3. Genitive Phrase:

According to Fatehpuri (1990) nouns may modified by the preceding possessive forms of nouns and pronouns. The Particles ka, ki, ke make the possessive forms of nouns and non-personal pronouns. These forms also show various relations other than possession between the modifier and the modified.

Noun Phrase	
<i>Premodifier</i> <b>Genitive Phrase</b>	<i>Head</i> <b>Noun</b>
<b>Shaam ka</b> ( of evening)	<b>Andhera</b> (darkness)
<b>Jawani ki</b> (of youth)	<b>Taaqat</b> (energy)

<b>Larkoon ki</b> (boy's)	<b>Chalaaki</b> (trick)
<b>Ali ki</b> (name'S)	<b>Kitaab</b> (book)
<b>Anam ka</b> (name'S)	<b>Bhai</b> (brother)

#### 4. Pronoun

a.

Noun Phrase		
Type of pronoun	Premodifier <b>Pronoun</b>	Head
Demonstrative	<b>Wo</b> (he)	<b>Larka</b> (boy)
Indefinite	<b>Kuch</b> (some)	<b>Kamray</b> (rooms)
Interrogative	<b>Kone Kone</b> (which)	<b>Ustaad</b> (teacher)

b.

Noun Phrase	
Premodifier	Head
<b>Pronoun+ka, ki, ke</b> <b>Personal possessive</b> like <u>mera, meri</u> <b>Reflexive possessives</b> like <u>apna, apni</u>	<b>Noun</b>
<b>Os ka</b> (his)	<b>Qalam</b> (pen)
<b>Yeh meri</b> (this my)	<b>Kitaab</b> (book)
<b>Wo apne</b> (his own)	<b>Makaan</b> (house)

#### 5. Infinitive + Ki, Ka, Ke

Noun phrase	
Premodifier	Head
<b>Infinitive +ki,ka,ke</b>	
<b>Khaney ki</b> ( of eating)	<b>Aadat</b> (habit)
<b>Aaney ka</b> ( of coming )	<b>Waqat</b> (time)

#### 6. Adverbs

a.

Noun Phrase	
Premodifier <b>adverb</b>	Head <b>Noun</b>
<b>Gustakhana</b> (blasphemous)	<b>Khaake</b> (sketches)

<i>walihaana</i> (extremely)	<i>piaar</i> (love)
<i>Gaddayanna</i> (beggar like)	<i>Lebaas</i> (clothes)

b.

Noun Phrase	
<i>Premodifier</i> <i>Adverbial+ka,ki</i>	<i>Head</i>
<i>Aj ki</i> (of today)	<i>Baat</i> (talk)
<i>Baher ka</i> (of out side)	<i>Aadmi</i> (man)

7. Adjective phrase

Noun phrase	
<i>Premodifier</i> <i>Adjective phrase</i>	<i>Head</i> <i>Noun</i>
<i>Buhat borra</i> (very bad)	<i>Moosam</i> (weather)
<i>Bahut aqlee</i> (very logical)	<i>Guftagoo</i> (conversation)
<i>Ghair Dil-chasp</i> (uninteresting)	<i>Kahaani</i> (story)
<i>Aik wafadaar</i> (a faithful)	<i>Doost</i> (friend)

8. Present participle

Noun phrase	
<i>Premodifier</i> <i>Present participle</i>	<i>Head</i> <i>Noun</i>
<i>Bhetaa huwa</i> (flowing)	<i>Paani</i> (water)
<i>Roota huwa</i> (weeping)	<i>Baccha</i> (child)
<i>Bhaagti huee</i> (running)	<i>Gaari</i> (car)
<i>Hanstaa huwa</i> (laughing)	<i>Ustaad</i> (teacher)

9. Past participle:

<i>Premodifier</i> <i>Past Participle</i>	<i>Head</i> <i>Noun</i>
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<b><i>Tha-ka huwa</i></b> (tired)	<i>Ghora</i> (horse)
<b><i>Ja-laa huwa</i></b> (burnt)	<i>Haath</i> (hand)
<b><i>Dooba huwa</i></b> (sunk)	<i>Ja-haaz</i> (ship)
<b><i>Maraa huwa</i></b> (dead)	<i>Sher</i> (lion)

10. Appositive Phrase:

Noun phrase	
<i>Premodifier</i> <i>Appositive phrase</i>	<i>Head</i> <i>Noun</i>
<b><i>Sadr-e-Pakistan</i></b> (president of pakistan),	<i>Zia-ul-Haq</i> (name)
<b><i>Shaer-e-Masraq</i></b> (poet of the East),	<i>Allama Iqbal</i> (name)
<b><i>Fakher-e-Pakistan</i></b> (pride of Pakistan)	<i>Qaid-e-Azam</i> (name)
<b><i>Shams-ul-ulama</i></b> (The sun of the learned),	<i>Meer Hasan</i> (name of Allama Iqbal,s teacher)

11. Numerals.

i. Numerals in simple form.

Noun Phrase	
<i>Premodifier</i> <i>Simple Numeral</i>	<i>Head</i> <i>Noun</i>
<b><i>Char</i></b> (four)	<i>Aadmi</i> (men)
<b><i>Teen char</i></b> (three or four)	<i>Din</i> (days)

ii. Numerals in iterated form: Numerals can come in iterated forms. Iteration gives a distributive sense.

Noun Phrase	
<i>Premodifier</i> <i>Iterated Numeral</i>	<i>Head</i> <i>Noun</i>

<b>Teen Teen</b> (three)	<b>Maiz</b> (tables)
<b>Dugna Dugna</b> (double)	<b>Maz-doori</b> (wages)

iii. Expansion of Numerals.

Numerals can be preceded by a limited group of modifiers showing exactude or approximation of numbers like:

Noun Phrase	
<i>Premodifiers</i>	<i>Head</i>
<b>Expansion of numerals</b>	<i>Noun</i>
<b>Thik teen</b> (exact three)	<b>Ghante</b> (hours)
<b>Taqreeban do</b> (approximately two)	<b>Din</b> (days)

### The post modifiers of a Urdu noun phrase

1. Adjective:

Noun Phrase	
<i>Head</i> <i>Noun</i>	<u><i>Postmodifier</i></u> <b>adjective</b>
<b>Tum</b> (you)	<b>Sub</b> (all)
<b>Court</b> (loan word)	<b>Martial</b> (military rule)
<b>Hum</b> (we)	<b>saa</b> (as)
<b>Wo</b> (they)	<b>Saaray</b> (all)
<b>Post master</b> (loan word)	<b>General</b> (designation)

2. Infinitive:

Noun Phrase	
<i>Head</i> <i>Noun</i>	<u><i>Post Modifier</i></u> <b>Infinitive</b>
<b>Naaraazgi</b> (displeasure)	<b>Khatam kerna</b> (to end)
<b>Ghoosa</b> (anger)	<b>Peena</b> (to control)
<b>Khoshi</b> (happiness)	<b>Haasal kerna</b> (to get)

3. Relative Clause:

Noun Phrase
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<i>Head Noun</i>	<i>Postmodifier Relative Clause</i>
Tumari <i>Koobi</i> (your quality),	<b><i>Jo mujhe pasand hey</i></b> (which I like)
Yeh <i>kitaab</i> (this book),	<b><i>Jo mey partha hoon</i></b> (which I read)
<i>Jhelum</i> (city),	<b><i>Jahan mey paida huwa</i></b> (where I was born)
Yeh <i>larka</i> (this boy),	<b><i>Jo k ustaad hey</i></b> (who is a teacher)

4. Noun / Pronoun + adverb (Jaesa, Sa)

Noun Phrase	
<i>Head Noun</i>	<i>Post Modifier Adverb Jaesa , Sa</i>
<i>Sher</i> (lion )	<b><i>Jaesa</i></b> (like)
<i>Phool</i> (flower)	<b><i>Sa</i></b> (like)
<i>Tum</i> (you)	<b><i>Jaesa</i></b> (like)

5.

i.Noun + title, honorific nouns

Noun Phrase	
<i>Head Noun</i>	<i>Post Modifier Title, honorific noun</i>
<i>Sardaar</i> (leader)	<b><i>Shahib</i></b> (honorific noun)
<i>Abo</i> (father)	<b><i>Ji</i></b> (honorific noun)

ii. Noun + Degree

Noun Phrase	
<i>Head Noun</i>	<i>Post Modifier Title, Educational Degree</i>
<i>Saeed</i> (name)	<b><i>B.A</i></b> (graduate)
<i>Akram</i> (name)	<b><i>M.A</i></b> (masters)

iii.Noun + Address

Noun Phrase	
<i>Head</i>	<i>Post Modifier</i>

<i>Noun</i>	<i>Address</i>
<i>Akbar (name)</i>	<i>Principal, Govt College Karachi</i>
<i>Shahid (name)</i>	<i>Inspector Police Islamabad</i>

### Function of a Urdu Noun Phrase

A noun phrase can have many functions in a sentence as discussed below:

1. As a Subject of a Verb: A noun phrase can function as the subject of a verb (Kachru, 1976).

1. *Meri maa phoolon se muhabat karti hey*  
(My mother loves flowers.)
2. *Ameeroon ko gareebon ki madad kerni chahiye.*  
(The rich should help the poor.)
3. *Yeh khoobsoorat baag meray mamoon ki malkiat hey.*  
(This beautiful garden belongs to my uncle.)

2. As direct Object of a verb:

1. *Wo apne baap se peaar karti hey.*  
(She loves her father.)
2. *Shekaari nay aik baray herun ko mara.*  
(The hunter shot a big deer.)
3. *May aap k intakhaab ki tareef karta hoon.*  
(I admire your choice.)

3. As Indirect Object Of A Verb:

1. *Os nay apne mangaeter ko phool bhijwae.*  
(He sent his fiance flowers.)
2. *May nay apne bhai ko cake dia.*  
(I gave my brother a cake.)
3. *Tum nay hamaray liae kitaab khareedi.*  
(You bought a book for us.)

4. As Object Of A Verbal:

Sometimes a noun phrase functions as the object of a verbal (Butt, 1993).

1. **Sarak** aboor karna aasaan nahe hay.  
(Crossing the road is not easy.)
2. **Dinner** kha kar wo so gia.  
(Having taken the dinner, he went to sleep.)
3. **Subah k waqat** chalna achhi aadat hay.  
(To walk in the morning is a good habit.)

5. As A Object Of a Preposition:

1. **Mey school ki taraf** bhaga.  
(I ran towards the school.)
2. **Bachhay sarak k wast** may chaltay hay.  
(children walk in the middle of the road.)

6. As subject Complement:

1. **Wo hamaray idaray ka chairman** hay.  
(He is the chairman of our institution.)
2. **Os ka uncle college ka principal** hay.  
(His uncle is the principle of college.)
3. **May is club ka sadar** hoon.  
(I am the president of this club.)

7. As Object Complement:

1. **May nay os ko apne dafter ka chaukidar** moqarrer kia.  
(I appointed him the guard of my office.)
2. **Hum nay os ko club ka sadar** muntakhib kia.  
(We elected him the president of the club.)
3. **Os k waldain nay os ka naam Sibgatullaha** rakha.  
(His parents named him Sibgatullaha.)

8. In Oppositon To Another Noun:

1. **Physics ki ustaad**, *Uzma Khanam*, *achha parhaati hay.*  
(Uzma Khanam, the Physics teacher, teaches well.)
2. **School ka principal**, *Usman Khan*, *aik achha insaan hay.*  
(Usman Khan, the principal of the school, is a good humanbeing.)
3. **Wapda ka director**, *Sajjad Hussain*, *maira bhai hay.*  
(Sajjad Hussain, director in WAPDA, is my brother.)

9. In Direct Address:

1. **Meiray Khuda**, *madad karna.*  
(My God, help me.)
2. **Piaare tulbaw**, *khamosh ho jaain*  
(Dear students, keep silent.)
3. **Uzma**, *eedhar aao.*  
(Uzma, come here.)

10. As A Modifier of Another Noun:

1. *May nay apne biwi ko soone ki anghooti di.*  
(I gave my wife a gold ring.)
2. *Hum nay kicthen may sheshay k darwaze lagaae hay.*  
(We have installed glass doors in kitchen.)
3. *Aman k muzakaraat nay lambi jang ko khatam kar dia.*  
(The peace talks ended the long war.)

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper I have attempted to provide a brief discussion of Urdu noun phrase morphology. This paper outlines some key structures in the formation of Urdu noun phrase. The description of the morphology of Urdu noun phrase is far from being through. This is partly because no reliable studies of Urdu noun phrase are currently available. In order to compensate this gap, this paper provides a morphological analysis based on language samples collected from newspapers, texts books and colloquial speech. In spite of the dearth of research work on Urdu noun phrase, it has been my focused attempt and intention to explore the various dimensions of Urdu noun

phrase. However, all these dimensions might not have been investigated in the end. I hope that this paper will motivate linguists to explore more dimensions of Urdu Noun Phrase in more detail.

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