

The Importance of Suprasegmental Features in the Structure and Meaning of Pashto Sentence

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ABSTRACT

Suprasegmental phonemes are the linguistic phenomenon which has phonemic value in a language. These features do not have a specific form as segments but have semantic relativity. As the numbers of suprasegmental features are not specified in Pashto Linguistics, but in most of the sources, stress, accent, intonation, syllable, pitch, and juncture are known as suprasegmental features. Rhythm is a type of intonation which has a specific value in the language. While changing intonation causes semantic changes. The accent is a phenomenon that takes place upon the segments, syllables and words and changes its meanings. In Pashto prose and verse, stress has its exact importance, which causes changes in the meaning of the sentence. Juncture is another suprasegmental phenomenon that causes changes in the context while reading it continuously or breaking it up into parts. The syllable is another suprasegmental feature which may be consisted of a single vowel or a vowel and consonant or consonants.

Keywords: Pashto Language, Sentence Structure, Meaning, Suprasegment

Introduction

In the structure of Pashto sentences, besides content and function words, suprasegmental features such as stress, accent, syllable, rhythm, pitch and juncture also play a key role. These features play a key role in structural and verbal sentences. In phonology, these features are known as suprasegmental; some of the grammarians also called it discontinuous segments (Sherzad, 2016).

As suprasegmental features have an important value in the structure of Pashto sentences. It plays a key role in the completion of sentence meaning. Therefore, based on the

importance, duties and completion of sentence meaning, this essay describes suprasegmental features. The author describes the paper on the basis of descriptive methodology while using valid sources in the explanation.

Suprasegmental Features

Suprasegmental features are also known as prosodic features, which are derived from English prosody, French prosodie, German prosodie and Spanish prosodie (Hellali, 1991). While suprasegmental features are related to phonology, but here we are using it in the syntactical area in order to produce and understand the exact meaning of a sentence. It is very clear that in most of the languages, syntactic investigations are not yet completed because till now, the researchers have analyzed the sentence on the basis of orthography, but in most of the languages, specifically Pashto, there are some elements that are realizable in the production of a sentence, but not in the orthography (Hellali, 1991).

In most of Pashto grammar books, suprasegmental features are known as phoneme and they have divided phoneme into two parts; first as a segment and the second one as suprasegments. The former ones are sounds that are continuously productive and written in a specific order and they are the basic elements of the language. The second ones are those sounds that do not have orthographic form but are recognizable from the production and pronunciation of the speaker. Suprasegmental features can never take place physically in a syntactic area, but segments can occur without the help of suprasegmental. It means that suprasegmental features can never occur without the presence of a word or sentence, but word and sentence, which are the group of segments, can take place without the existence of suprasegments (Lodin, 2016).

From the syntactic point of view, these segments have semantical and grammatical responsibility because these elements are changing the meaning of a sentence as well as its grammatical form and they also realize the unknown parts of the syntactic structure; therefore rhythm, stress, accent, pitch and juncture are known as the complement elements of the sentence (Zyar, 2001).

Suprasegmental segments are linguistic phenomenon which has phonemic value in the language; these elements do not have a specific form as segments but are related to the meaning in most of the eras. While the numbers of these suprasegments are not clear in Pashto, but in most of the sources; stress, accent, intonation, syllable, pitch and juncture are known as suprasegments, here we will describe these elements one by one.

Intonation

Intonation is a kind of rhythm in verbal language. As in other languages in Pashto, intonation has its specific importance because every language has an exact intonation pattern. While changing the pattern of intonation causes changing in the meaning of a sentence. Maybe the physical form and pattern of a sentence may not change, but the intonation differentiates a predicative sentence from other sentences. Intonation is the only mean of differentiating predicative, interrogative, exclamatory and interjectional sentences from each other.

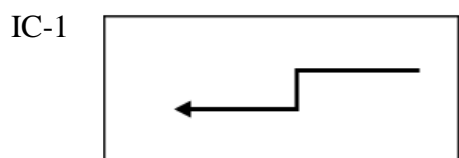
If sentences are separated from each other with the help of punctuation, it is not the proper and acceptable way of dealing with sentences. Sentences are categorized semantically on the basis of suprasegmental characteristics. Unfortunately, these elements were not described properly and practically in Pashto grammar; the research in this era was approximate,

but the investigation and examination will be reliable and acceptable if it is on the basis of a laboratory. If the Pashto sentence is structurally examined, many types of sentences will come into the picture. But here, we are going to separate predicative, interrogative, exclamatory and imperative sentences from each other on the basis of intonation (Reshteen, 2009).

1. **Intonation of predicative sentence:** It starts normally and ends down forwardly. It has soft intonation and produces with medial accent.

Note: for showing the difference between predicative and other sentences, we show predicative sentence with (I = intonation) or use IC=I form; it means I=intonation and C=Construction.

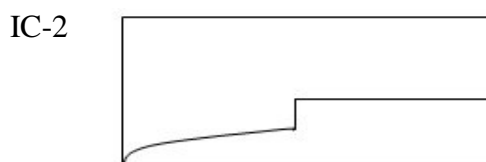
1- The intonation of predicative sentence is shown in the following picture.



1- [pəsarlay də xpəlo xwazə wazmo sra rawərasə] “the spring reached with its sweet fragrant”

2- [də gwəlano saruna wazmo wro wro aw pə xyal sara şorawəl] “tips of the flowers were slowly slowly fantasized by the fragrantce”

2- the intonation of the interrogative sentence; whenever there is a question mark in the sentence, it starts with low intonation and ends with high low intonation as shown in the following picture.



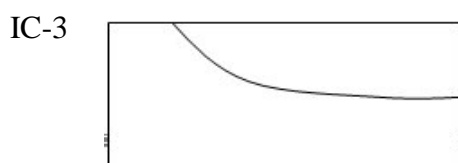
1- [taso fərtə rəwan yast?] “Where are you going?”

2- [tsok staase poštəne ta rayəlay wo?] “Who came to ask about you?”

those sentences that do not have question word, so these sentences start with low intonation and ends with high low intonation. As in the following example.

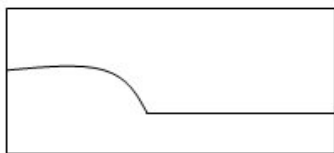
1- [tase hara wrəz dəltə radzəy?] “Are you coming here every day?”

2- [tase lə ma sara xabəre kawəy?] “Are you talking to me?”



In those sentences the structure of which is like question and answer, its intonation is also like IC-4 that became high at the end of a sentence.

IC-4

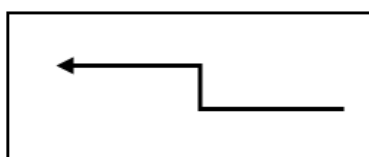


As in the following example.

[mela xlasa fwa monz koruno ta wlaqu ao taso?] “The party was finished; we went to our houses and you?”

Note: Those interrogative sentences, the answer of which is yes or no, it’s intonation is becoming high and the intonation of other sentences became high exactly at places which need to be answered (Reshteen, 2009).

IC-5



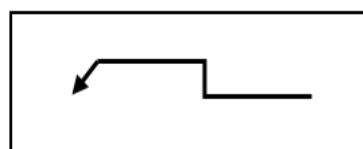
As in the following examples.

1- [Ahmad rayay?] “Did Ahmad come?”

2- [Ayesha laqa?] “Did Ayesha go?”

3- The intonation of exclamatory sentence; the exclamatory, vocative, probabilistic and other sentences start in low intonation and ends with up then low intonation, which is different on the basis of the purpose.

IC-6



1- [tə karuna ye wənə kɾəl!] “What did he not do”

2- [da ham xabəra fwa!] “Is it a matter”

3- [tə ham la dumra fwe!] “You have become like this too”

4- [de ta la gora!] “See at him/her”

5- [ay wruqu!] “o brothers”

6- [keday fi rayəlay wi!] “He maybe has come”

Intonation is the collection of those constituents that organize the speech and it’s the pattern specification of the speech. Without intonation speech is not possible. The constituents that organize the speech are as follow.

- 1- Melody: the highness or lowness of the sound.
- 2- Stop: breaking of a part of a sentence.
- 3- Stress: in the structure of a word or morpheme a vowel that is produced louder than other sounds.
- 4- Timber: reading of a sentence rhythmically.

Temp: reading a part of a sentence fast and quickly (Sherzad, 2016).

Stress:

Stress and accent are literally English words which are taken from Latin 'Eccentus' and in Arabic it's called 'Xaḍḡ' and in Persian, it is known as Feshar or Takia, the heavy and loud occurrence of a sound in a specific syllable is known as stress or accent. In other words, stress is a process in which an element of a word structure is produced with high air pressure. Stress does not act as a segment of word structure, but it takes place on a specific segment or syllable as a suprasegmental element in a word and causes changes in the meaning of that word (Zyar, 2011).

Whenever a word, phoneme or a syllable is produced with high air pressure, this type of sound production is known as stress or accent. In Pashto Prose and Verse structure, stress is an important element, its existence is more significant for word and sentence meaning, if it's not there in a word or sentence, the meaning may vary from the speaker and listener's point of view (Mahboob, 2017).

Among the suprasegmental features, stress is a significant element. Stress or accent is not a specific sound or segment that structurally changes, which causes semantic variations, but it needs a phoneme or syllable to cause and affect the meaning of words and sentences. As in the following example.

[ʃkóri] "seem"

[ʃkari] "hunter"

If we compare the above two words formally, both are the same, both words consist of two-syllable and five phonemes, but the only element that differentiates these words is stress. In the structure of the first word, stress takes place on the first syllable. Grammatically, it is a verb and it means 'seem or describe'. In the structure of the second word, the stress occurred on the second syllable. Grammatically, it is a noun and it means 'hunter or the person who shoots animals for his or their food'.

Stress causes changes in meaning in some words. There is no stress without a segment; it means stress or accent never takes place in a word or syllable structure without a segment, especially vowel sound. Stress has a close relationship with intonation and it is a process in which the production of a word, one syllable, is more strongly pronounced than other syllables of that word.

In the Pashto language, we have stress and unstressed allophone of a phoneme and we also have stress and unstressed syllable; the former one is heavier than the later one. For example, in the word [tsatskay] "drop" in the first syllable /a/ is stressed. Therefore, the

segment /t/ is also pronounced heavily and the second /t/ is also produced very quick and reckless. The same process takes place in the words [kor] “house” and [koruna] “houses” (Sherzad, 2018).

In Pashto, every morpheme and word has its own specific stress, but the occurrence and place of the stress are not particular. In some words, stress occurs on the first syllable, as in [bura] “sugar” and [nənatə] “entrance”. In some words, the medial syllable is stressed as in [lwaɽwaly] “highness” and [paɽtunwala] “Pashtunism,” and in some other words, the final syllable is stressed as in [dʒoɽa] “pair” and [nənatə] “entered”. There are other words in which stress does not vary, as in [xaɽgər] “mason”, [xaɽgəra] “female mason”, [pohantun] “university”, [tsawkəy] “chair”. It is to be remembered that stress and accent always take place on the vowel of the syllable but never occur on consonant or glide.

Environmental types of stress

On the basis of linguistic structure stress has four types which are as follow.

1- Syntactic stress

While producing and using a sentence has a specific purpose, there may be a particular word that explores our goal and stress also occur on a specific syllable of that word. In Pashto sentence, the stressed word is produced heavier and louder than other words of that sentence. Stress takes place on the word for which the whole sentence is produced. In short, we can say that in the internal structure of a sentence, any word which is stressed, this kind of stress is known as syntactic stress. As in the following example.

[zə kitabtun ta dʒəm] “I am going to the library”

In the above sentence, our purpose is going to the library; if we keep the complete sentence in mind, the stress occurs on the word [kitabtu] “library”.

2- Phrasal stress

In most of the Pashto grammars, stress is divided into three categories; syllabic, word and sentence stress, but Professor Mohammad Aqa Sherzad, in his book (Pashto Syntax) categorized stress into four types; syllabic, word, phrasal and sentence stress. In my opinion, the categorization of Professor Sherzad is correct and the right one.

Phrasal stress is a kind of stress where there is a stress occurred on a phrase or if a phrase is produced loudly, this kind of stress is known as phrasal stress. As in [spin kali] “white cloths,” the word *spin* is stressed or in the phrase [də nədʒono ʒowəndzay] “girl’s school” the word [nədʒono] “girls” is stressed, but if we look it from the word point of view the first syllable is stressed (Sherzad, 2016).

3- Word stress

In the previous part, we have mentioned that in a sentence where stress occurs on a basic word of a sentence and in the rest of the words, each syllable of a word also has its own stress. Now here we are going to discuss the word stress. Once again, if we look at the word [kitabtu] “library”, this word consists of three syllables and the third syllable is stressed; this kind of stress is known as word stress. In the introduction of stress, we have mentioned that in Pashto

we have many words in which changing of stress causes changing of meaning. It means that changing of stress always does not cause semantic changes, but there are words in which stress shifting causes variation in the meaning of a word, as in the following examples.

- 1- [kwóʈa] “storeroom, burden” the first syllable is stressed.
- 2- [koʈá] “room” the second syllable is stressed.
- 3- [yúʈa] “loop, node” the first syllable is stress.
- 4- [yʈa] “attack, plunge” the second syllable is stressed.
- 5- [búra] “a mother who lost her son” the first syllable is stressed.
- 6- [burá] “sugar” the second syllable is stressed.
- 7- [téra] “past, gone time” the first syllable is stressed.
- 8- [terá] “sharp, pointed” the second syllable is stressed.

While changing the place of stress causes varying in the meaning of a word. If we use the above words in sentences based on the context and sentence, we will get the differentiation in the meaning. In absolute verbs changing of stress the tense change into progressive tense or vice versa. (Reshteen Zewar, 2011).

As in the following example.

- 1- [zə tʌmlastəm] “I slept” the first syllable is stressed.
- 2- [zə tʌmlastəm] “I was sleeping” the second syllable is stressed.
- 3- [zə prɛwatəm] “I laid” the first syllable is stressed.
- 4- [zə prɛwatəm] “I was laid” the second syllable is stressed.
- 5- [zə kʂenastəm] “I sit” the first syllable is stressed.
- 6- [zə kʂenastəm] “I was sitting” the second syllable is stressed.

If we observe the above examples, if the stress is on the first syllable, it clarifies the absolute past tense, but whenever stress occurs on the last syllable of the verb, it specifies the past progressive tense.

4- Syllabic Stress

In the structure of syllables, stress always takes place in the nucleus. A word may consist of one or more syllables, but structurally stress occurs only on one syllable. For example, [roʃtun] “hospital” is a disyllabic word in which stress occurs on the second syllable, so this type of loudness or heaviness is known as stress or accent. Sherzad, in his (Pashto syntax) divided stress generally into two parts.

a- Constant Stress: It is a kind of stress in some languages that occurs at a specific syllable or place and does not change its tonality; in French, English and German languages, stress always occurs word initially, but in Polish languages, stress always occurs on the penultimate syllable in a word.

b- Variable Stress: It is a kind of stress which is free and can occur on any syllable of a word and does not have a specific place in the structure of words and it is free of exactness, as in Russian and Pashto languages, where stress can occur initially, medially and word finally and its occurrence change the meaning of that word (Sherzad, 2016).

Finally, we can say that in the Pashto language, stress has semantic and verse significance. Semantically, it means that changing the place of stress causes variation in the meaning and pronunciation of words. As in the word [yuʈa], if the stress occurs on the first syllable /yu/, it means “tie”, but if the stress takes place on the second syllable /ʈa/, then it means “plunge” in some verbs changing the place of stress change a verb from past progressive to simple past tense. As in the verb [kʂenəm] “I sat”, if the stress takes place on the first syllable, it gives the meaning of simple past tense, but if the stress occurs on the second syllable, then it represents the past progressive tense (Hamkar, 2013).

Juncture/Conjunction:

If two morphemes, phrases or sentences are pronounced connectedly and without any stop, this process and phenomenon are known as juncture or conjunction and vice versa; this process is known as disjunction. If a part of a passage or context which is not a portion of another passage or context, but while in the reading connectedly comes with the other context or read independently, this also causes changes in the meaning. Conjunction and disjunction are distinguished in reading continually or disconnectedly. As in the following examples;

[Maiwand gaʀanday ʂowəndzi ta dzi] “Maiwand garanday is going to scholl/ Maiwand is going to school quickly”

In the above example, if the word (Garanday) is connectedly come with the person’s name (Maiwand), it means it is the surname of Maiwand, but if it comes disconnectedly with Maiwand then it means “quickly” and there must stop before the word garanday and after Maiwand in order to get the exact meaning of the sentence. Let us look at the following sentences:

- 1- [baryalay Hairan, nast day.] “Baryalay Hairan, is sitting/ Baryalay is sitting surprised”
- 2- [noorgul zarawar warayay.] “Noorgul Zarawar, left/ Noorgul, left bravely”
- 3- [surgul Stoman rayay.] “Surgul Stoman came/ Surgul came tired”
- 4- [noor mohammad ghamjan wlaʀ] “Noor Mohammad Ghamjan, left/ Noor Mohammad left sad”

In the above sentences, if (Hairan, Zarawar, Stoman, Ghamjan) are the parts and constituents of the subject, then (nast di, waraghay, raghy, lar) are predicates of the same

sentences. In the first sentence, the word (Hairan) is connectedly said with the subject of the sentence; therefore, the sentence represents one kind of meaning. In the above sentences, if the words (Hairan, Zarawar, Stoman, Ghamjan) are said separately and not as a part of the subject and come as a part of the predicate, then they are not coming with the subject of the above sentences connectedly, because they are coming with the predicate of the sentences, which causes completely semantical changes of the meanings.

We can differentiate conjunct and disjoint whenever we know and understand the exact meaning of the context, but this is only possible for those readers and authors who bitterly understand the morphological, phrasal and syntactical structures and the correct usage of Pashto punctuation. Orthographically, there must be a space of only one phoneme between preposition, postposition, morphemes, phrases and sentences, and this space, up to some extent, brings the facility for the application of conjunct and disjunctions. So far, it's really important for the hand writers and computer composers to keep this principle in mind in order to write standard morphemes and sentences in a specific context.

Conjunct and disjunctive have two duties in Pashto context.

- 1- Grammatical; its grammatical duty is that in some places it acts as a noun while in other places as an adverb.
- 2- Lexical; its lexical purpose is that whenever it changes the meaning.

Syllable:

Literally, the word syllable is the synonymy of (tsapa/sapa) in Pashto and (heja) in Persian, Arabic and Urdu. A syllable is an important phenomenon in phonetics and phonology. Syllable and syllabification is an important element for segmental and lexical analysis. Vowel play a key role in the production of the syllable. As there is no word without a syllable, there may be no syllable without the existence of vowel. A syllable may be created of a vowel or a vowel with consonant or consonants and they come out with once opening of the mouth (Khweshky, 2016).

A syllable may consist of two or more sounds which one must be vowel that comes out together out of the mouth. A syllable is created of one or more vowels, glide and consonants, which are produced with only once opening of the mouth. A syllable is a simple or complex sound structure which is consisted of segments and suprasegmental features. In the linguistic structure, every syllable does not represent a specific meaning, and it means if we syllabify a multi-syllabic word into syllables independently, each of the syllables will not indicate a specific meaning. But if a word consists of various segments and only one syllable, it may signify a particular meaning as the word [kor] "house" which is consisted of three phonemes and only one syllable (Zyar, 2005).

In Pashto, a syllable is divided from different perspectives, but the most important one is on the basis of vowels. From this perspective, firstly, a syllable is divided into two types; an open syllable, which is ended with a vowel and a closed syllable, which is ended with consonant or consonants. In Pashto, an open syllable is categorized into the following types;

- 1- **Heavy or Strong syllable:** A syllable which is ended with /i, u, a/ vowels is known as strong syllable in Pashto language. This syllable is said with more air pressure than the

syllables around. As in [ana] “grandmother”, [salu] “tent”, [šaadi] “happiness”, [moʃi] “cobbler”.

- 2- **Weak or Light Syllable:** A syllable which is ended with /a, e, o, ə / vowels is known as weak syllable. This type of syllable does not need that much pressure, therefore it is also known as light syllable. As in [piʃo] “cat”, [zɾə] “heart”, [wɾə] “carry”, [xwre] “eat”.
- 3- **Onset less Syllable:** In Pashto, a syllable which is initially started with a vowel (a, ə, o, u, e, i) is known as onset less syllable. As in [elan] “announcement”, [aba] “grandfather”, [or] “fire”, [ar] “originally”.
- 4- **coda less Syllable:** A syllable which is ended with a vowel, but its onset may be consisted of one, two or three consonants, this may be a kind of open syllable. As in [xwlə] “mouth”, [zmɑ] “my/mine”, [tə] “you” (Solizay, 2020).

Conclusion

Segmental and suprasegmental features have an essential and Crucial role in the arrangement and meaning of speech. Suprasegmental features performance is significant in the structure and meaning of words, phrases and sentences. If these features were not there in the language, we would never be able to share our purposes and goals completely with the audience and readers. Suprasegmental features are (stress, accent, intonation, juncture, disjunctive...), and each of them plays an important role in context and speech. These features perform a substantial part in the structure and meaning of Pashto sentences. Without these prosodic features, the creation and meaning of grammatical elements, especially sentences, is impossible. Intonation also plays a significant role in changing the meaning of sentences. If a sentence is said with a disjunctive, it has one type of structure and represents one meaning, while whenever it's said with conjunctive, its meaning and grammatical structure are changed. On the basis of the above lines, we can say that suprasegmental features are crucial elements in the structure and meaning of syntactic structure.

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