



Morphological Linguamorphosis: The Impact of Language Contact on English Loanwords in Pashto

¹Saqlain Hassan -Email- saqlain.hassan@riphah.edu.pk

²Marwa Yousaf -Email- 58673@students.riphah.edu.pk

³Fatima Husna Ahmad -Email- 58638@students.riphah.edu.pk

⁴Alishba Khan -Email- 58333@students.riphah.edu.pk

⁵Sara Ali -Email- 58874@students.riphah.edu.pk

¹Assistant Professor, Department of English, Riphah International University, Pakistan. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8861-6800>

²BS (Hons) Scholar, Department of English Linguistics and Literature, Riphah International University, Malakand Campus.

³BS (Hons) Scholar, Department of English Linguistics and Literature, Riphah International University, Malakand Campus.

⁴BS (Hons) Scholar, Department of English Linguistics and Literature, Riphah International University, Malakand Campus.

⁵BS (Hons) Scholar, Department of English Linguistics and Literature, Riphah International University, Malakand Campus.

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Saqlain Hassan*:

Abstract

This study introduces the term “Linguamorphosis” to describe the process by which English loanwords are morphologically adapted in Pashto. This concept encapsulates the complex ways in which borrowed terms are transformed to fit Pashto's grammatical and phonetic frameworks, reflecting a subtle interaction between external linguistic influences and internal language structures. By employing a qualitative research methodology, the study analyzes how Linguamorphosis manifests in various aspects, such as the Pluralization of loanwords in Pashto by the addition of Pashto suffixes. Through the examination of everyday language, particularly in the contexts of technology and education, the research reveals distinct patterns in how Pashto speakers creatively incorporate foreign vocabulary while preserving the essence of their native language. The findings underscore that Linguamorphosis serves not only as a mechanism of borrowing but also as a means of cultural expression, reinforcing the speakers' identity. Recommendations for furthering this understanding include developing educational materials that integrate adapted loanwords to enhance learners' familiarity with them, establishing a comprehensive database of commonly used loanwords, and promoting awareness of the balance between linguistic assimilation and the preservation of Pashto. Ultimately, this study contributes to our understanding of language change and illustrates the dynamic interplay between languages as communities navigate their cultural identities and communication needs.

Keywords: Pashto Language, Morphological Inflections, Morphemes, Pluralization, Loanwords.



Introduction

This study introduces a novel term, "Linguamorphosis," which refers to the unique process of forming, shaping, or evolving language and its components. This concept highlights the dynamic nature of language development, illustrating how various linguistic elements transform and adapt over time, reflecting cultural shifts and cognitive advancements. Furthermore, Languages are dynamic entities that continuously evolve, often absorbing elements from foreign influences while maintaining their unique cultural identity. This is particularly evident in Pashto, where the language not only cherishes its historical roots but also seamlessly incorporates loanwords from English as a reflection of global interaction. This fascinating interplay can be encapsulated by the term "Linguamorphosis," which aptly describes the phenomenon of language development through borrowing and adaptation. Linguamorphosis highlights the ability of languages to transform and grow, blending the old with the new while still honoring their unique heritage.

As a matter of fact, language is one of the most adaptable parts of human life. It grows, shifts, and evolves with the people who use it. One of the most natural and widely observed aspects of this evolution is borrowing, when one language adopts words or expressions from another (Wardhaugh & Fuller, 2014). This borrowing becomes especially common when communities come into contact due to trade, education, globalization, technology, or cultural exchange. The Pashto language, spoken by millions in South Asia, especially in Pakistan and Afghanistan, has undergone significant transformation, particularly due to the influence of English (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2024; Herbert & Sloan, 2009). Borrowing happens for many reasons, and most of them are connected to real-life human needs (Labov, 2007). First, new inventions, tools, and ideas often appear in a dominant language (like English), so other languages borrow terms for things that did not previously exist in their culture. For example, words like computer, internet, laptop, and download came with technology and had no exact match in Pashto. Second, people often associate English with education, progress, jobs, and modern living, so using English words gives a sense of being connected to the wider world. Third, English is taught in schools and used in official settings, which increases its visibility and acceptance in daily Pashto speech. In linguistics, this process of borrowing is defined as the adoption of linguistic items from one language (the source language) into another (the recipient language) (Hockett, 1958). However, borrowed words are not just taken and used exactly as they are.

Instead, they are usually modified and reshaped to fit the sound system, grammar, and word-formation rules of the recipient language (Heinrich, 2021; Zaib et al., 2025). This reshaping process, especially at the level of word structure, is called morphological modification (Hamans, 2017). Morphology, the study of word formation and structure, plays a crucial role in understanding how borrowed words are adjusted in the recipient language. Pashto, like many languages, has its own rules. For how words are created, changed, and used in sentences. These include things like gender (masculine/feminine), number (singular/plural), tense, case, verb patterns, and the use of suffixes and prefixes (Fromkin, Rodman, & Hyams, 2011). When a word is borrowed from English into Pashto, it usually goes through one or more of these changes. For instance, the English noun *driver* becomes (*darewaran*) in plural, using the Pashto suffix (*an*). The verb phrase *send message* becomes *message waka*, following the Pashto verb structure. These changes are not accidental. They show how speakers actively adapt foreign words to feel natural and



functional in their own language. Instead of simply copying the word, Pashto speakers make it their own by shaping it to match their way of speaking. This shows both the flexibility of the language and the creativity of its users. It also helps the borrowed words to be better understood by people who may not be familiar with English (Clackson, 2007; Zaib 2022). In a similar vein, the current study examines the morphological modification of borrowed English words in Pashto, focusing on examples from everyday life, especially in the fields of technology, media, education, and communication, where borrowing is most visible (Trask, 1996). This research examines changes in nouns, verbs, adjectives, and compound words, illustrating how English roots are combined with Pashto grammatical markers, including plural endings, verb helpers, gender shifts, and affixes.

This current research is important not only for understanding language change but also for appreciating the way languages interact, influence, and enrich one another. It shows how Pashto continues to develop while maintaining its identity, adapting foreign elements without losing its own rules and beauty. It also helps us understand why borrowing happens: not just because of English's global power, but because of human needs to name, describe, and express the world around them in a way that makes sense (Fromkin et al., 2011).

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research method to analyze the morphological transformations that English words undergo when they are integrated into the Pashto language. By employing a qualitative approach, this study seeks to identify the structural changes in language. The primary focus of this research is to investigate how English loanwords are reshaped to align with Pashto grammar rules. This includes the addition of distinctive Pashto suffixes, modifications to gender classifications, and alterations that allow the words to function as either verbs or nouns within the Pashto linguistic framework.

Data Collection

To enhance the authenticity and relevance of the research, data have been gathered from naturally occurring Pashto discourse, including dynamic classroom discussions at the Department of English Linguistics and Literature at the Riphah International University, Malakand Campus, casual everyday conversations, and interactions on social media platforms such as student groups on WhatsApp. Through the examination of how these borrowed words are adapted, the research also demonstrates how Pashto preserves its grammatical integrity and cultural identity, even in the face of the incorporation of foreign vocabulary. On a broader scale, this study contributes to our understanding of Linguamorphosis, particularly in rich multilingual settings like our own in Pakistan.

Data Analysis

The collected linguistic data underwent a thorough examination to uncover how English words are morphologically adapted within the Pashto language, and for this purpose, the researchers took the help of Yule's (2010) and Wardak's (2024). The analysis revealed that English terms are not simply inserted into Pashto communication; rather, they are adjusted to align with native grammatical structures and usage patterns. This evolution illustrates a dynamic form of linguistic borrowing that retains both communicative clarity and cultural significance. A key finding was the recurrent integration of English nouns and adjectives into the structures of Pashto sentences. For example, in the phrase "Laptop band sho" (The laptop shuts down), the English noun "laptop" is effortlessly blended with the Pashto verb phrase "band sho," showcasing a seamless interaction between the two languages. This



pattern highlights a prevalent practice where English words serve as pivotal elements within sentences, while the accompanying verbs and modifiers remain firmly rooted in Pashto.

Moreover, expressions like "Missed Call" transform into "call miss sho". Here, the English word "missed" is adapted as a past verb "miss sho" in the Pashto sentence structure, illustrating a unique instance of semantic borrowing while preserving the local grammatical framework. Additionally, identity statements such as "Za online yam" (I am online) further demonstrate the functional integration of English vocabulary into everyday conversations, especially within digital or educational contexts. These patterns confirm that adopted words are utilized thoughtfully and strategically, tailored to reflect the sociolinguistic environments in which speakers actively engage, particularly in fields like education, technology, and communication. Thus, the analysis illustrates a hybrid linguistic practice that is not only efficient but also profoundly grounded in cultural identity, showcasing how speakers skillfully navigate between languages to express contemporary realities and experiences. However, in the context of the current study, the researchers' main focus was on seeing how the loanwords are treated in the Pashto Language in terms of pluralization, as elaborated in the section below.

Result And Discussion

Pashto Rules for Pluralizing Adopted English Words

Pashto rule for pluralization with the suffix "una":

Dr. Yakhya Wardak, a prominent Pashto linguist, made significant contributions to our understanding of how pluralization works in the Pashto language. He emphasized that this process utilizes regular morphological rules, showcasing the dynamic interplay between the two languages. For example, the English noun "book" transforms into "bokuna" in Pashto through the addition of the plural suffix "-una". This transformation illustrates the systematic nature of language adaptation, where English words are seamlessly woven into the fabric of Pashto grammar. Wardak's (2023) research reveals that these adaptations follow well-established linguistic patterns, reflecting a coherent system of morphological adjustment rather than erratic usage. His findings underscore how native Pashto speakers instinctively employ these rules in their daily conversations, highlighting the natural fluidity and resilience of language in response to cultural exchange.

Table 1: Example words of rule "una"

English Singular	English Plural	Pashto Singular	Pashto Plural
Book	Books	Book	Bokuna
Chair	Chairs	Chair	Chairuna
Bag	Bags	Bag	Baguna
Shirt	Shirts	Shirt	Shirtuna
Mobile	Mobiles	Mobile	Mobiluna
Class	Classes	Class	Classuna
File	Files	File	Filuna
Cup	Cups	Cup	Cupuna
Pen	Pens	Pen	Penuna
Glass	Glasses	Glass	Gilasuna
Ticket	Tickets	Ticket	Tickatuna
Ball	Balls	Ball	Baluna
Light	Lights	Light	Letuna



Mask	Masks	Mask	Maskuna
Clip	Clips	Clip	Clipuna
Card	Cards	Card	Carduna
Market	Markets	Market	Marketuna
Road	Roads	Road	Roaduna
Box	Boxes	Box	Boxuna
Brush	Brushes	Brush	Brashuna
Plate	Plates	Palet	Paletuna
Color	Colors	Color	Colaruna
Park	Parks	Park	Parkuna

Explanation

This rule illustrates the fascinating way in which Pashto speakers transform English singular nouns into their plural forms by incorporating the Pashto suffix “-una”. Rather than adhering to the conventional English pluralization methods, such as adding “-s” or “-es” to words like “book” or “pen,” they innovate by creating terms like “bokuna” for books and “penuna” for pens. This adaptation demonstrates that speakers of Pashto do not merely incorporate English words into their vocabulary; they skillfully reshape them to align seamlessly with the grammatical structure of their own language. This linguistic process offers a glimpse into the creativity and cultural richness of native speakers, who inherently grasp and employ this rule without the necessity of formal instruction. By doing so, they bridge two languages and create a more relatable and comfortable mode of expression that resonates in everyday conversations. Furthermore, this practice not only reinforces their linguistic identity but also enriches the tapestry of language use within their communities, making borrowed words feel both familiar and accessible.

Pashto Rule for Pluralization with the suffix “e”

In our previous discussions regarding the pluralization of borrowed English words in Pashto, we explored the use of the “una” suffix. Another prevalent method for forming plurals involves adding an “e” at the end of certain words. This practice is particularly common with terms that conclude in sounds like -er or -ar. By appending this soft “e” sound, the original borrowed word retains its core structure while simultaneously adapting to the phonetic preferences of Pashto speakers. This transformation not only enhances the word's familiarity within the context of spoken Pashto but also infuses it with a natural flow that resonates with casual conversation. It's important to note that this pluralization tendency is most frequently observed in informal or colloquial settings rather than in academic writing, where more traditional forms may be preferred.

Table 2: Example words of rule “e”

English Singular	English Plural	Pashto Singular	Pashto Plural
Computer	Computers	Computer	Computere
Stabilizer	Stabilizers	Stuplizer	Stuplizere
Generator	Generators	Gernitor	Gernitore
Projector	Projectors	Projector	Projectore
Charger	Chargers	Charger	Chargere
Speaker	Speakers	Speaker	Speakere
Button	Buttons	Button	Buttone
Sample	Samples	Sample	Sampale
Calendar	Calendars	Calendar	Calendare



Seminar	Seminars	Seminar	Seminare
Dollar	Dollars	Dollar	Dollare
Register	Registers	Register	Registere
Solar	Solares	Solar	Solare
Sticker	Stickers	Sticker	Stickere
Heater	Heaters	Heater	Heatere
Geyser	Geysers	Grezer	Grezere
Cooler	Coolers	Coller	Collere
Freezer	Freezers	Freezer	Freezare
Cable	Cables	Cable	Cablee

Explanation

This rule elucidates how certain English words, particularly those that conclude with sounds like -er, -or, and -ar, transform into their plural forms in Pashto. The process involves the addition of the suffix "e" at the end of these words. This slight modification does not alter the core of the word; rather, it facilitates a smoother integration into Pashto conversation, making it easier for native speakers to pronounce and comprehend.

This pluralization pattern is frequently encountered in casual dialogues, where you might hear phrases like "computere" or "chargere" instead of the conventional English plurals. While this method of pluralization may not appear in formal Pashto writing, it is a linguistic phenomenon that is widely recognized and embraced in everyday spoken language. This unique adaptation illustrates how Pashto speakers creatively assimilate English words, allowing them to sound more familiar and natural, all without straying far from their original form. Such linguistic adjustments highlight the dynamic nature of language and the blending of cultures in communication.

Pashto Rule for Pluralization with the Suffix "aan"

A common method of pluralizing borrowed English nouns in Pashto is by adding the suffix "aan". This particular pattern is notably prevalent when referring to individuals, especially in titles, roles, or professions. The addition of "-aan" not only transforms the noun into a plural form but also imparts a sense of formality or collectivity, making it well-suited for use in semi-formal contexts or literary Pashto, especially within urban dialects. In this process, the original English word is often adjusted phonetically to better align with the sounds and pronunciation of Pashto. Once this adaptation occurs, the suffix "aan" is appended, resulting in a plural form that resonates with speakers and reflects the integration of English vocabulary within the Pashto language. This fusion showcases the dynamic interplay between cultures and languages, highlighting how language evolves in diverse social settings.

Table 3: Example words for the rule "aan"

English Singular	English Plural	Pashto Singular	Pashto Plural
Doctor	Doctors	Doctor	Doctaraan
Teacher	Teachers	Teacher	Teacharaan
Driver	Drivers	Driver	Driveraaan
Officer	Officers	Officer	Officeraan
Engineer	Engineers	Engineer	Engineeraan
Cricketer	Cricketers	Cricketer	Cricketraan
Manager	Managers	Manager	Manageraaan
Principle	Principles	Principle	Principalaan



Member	Members	Member	Membaraan
Actor	Actors	Actor	Actoraan
Judge	Judges	Judge	Judgaan
Leader	Leaders	Leader	Leaderaan
Student	Students	Student	Studentaan
Reporter	Reporters	Reporter	Reportaraan
Singer	Singers	Singer	Singaraan
Scholar	Scholars	Scholar	Scholaraan
Minister	Ministers	Minister	Ministeraan

Explanation

A notable linguistic trend in Pashto is the adaptation of English words through the addition of the plural suffix “aan”, particularly when referring to professions or groups of people. This process exemplifies how Pashto incorporates influences from English while maintaining its unique grammatical structure. For instance, when English terms such as “doctor”, “teacher”, or “officer” are embraced by the Pashto language, they often experience subtle shifts in pronunciation, making them more phonetically compatible with Pashto. As a result, these English words morph into forms like “Doctaraan”, “Teacharaan”, or “Officeraan”. The suffix “aan” not only signals that the terms are plural, indicating multiple individuals, but it also conveys a sense of unity or collectiveness within the group being referenced. This linguistic adaptation tends to be prevalent in spoken or semi-formal contexts of Pashto, especially in urban settings, educational institutions, and various media platforms. However, it's noteworthy that these adaptations are less commonly encountered in formal academic writing, where traditional forms of the language prevail. This phenomenon illustrates the dynamic nature of language and how Pashto continues to evolve, melding English vocabulary with its own rules and modes of expression to reflect contemporary realities.

Conclusion

This study explores the fascinating process through which English words are borrowed into the Pashto language, revealing not just a simplistic incorporation but a profound reshaping that aligns these borrowed terms with the unique grammar of Pashto. This morphological modification serves as a testament to the remarkable flexibility of language and the ingenuity of its speakers, illustrating that borrowed words undergo significant adjustments to mesh seamlessly with existing Pashto linguistic structures. For instance, when English nouns are adopted into Pashto, many adopt the distinctive “una” ending in their plural forms. This change reflects the tendency of speakers to naturally integrate these borrowed nouns within familiar Pashto patterns, showcasing not only their adaptability but also the rich tapestry of everyday usage. In other cases, the addition of the “e” ending smooths phonetic transitions, making the words flow more gracefully in spoken Pashto, enhancing their pronounceability and comfort in conversation. Furthermore, the inclusion of “aan” demonstrates another layer of modification, as speakers align English terms with Pashto's rules regarding grammatical number and categorization.

These transformations are not arbitrary; they unfold in systematic patterns that highlight the dynamic interplay between languages. The findings of this research illuminate that language borrowing transcends mere acquisition of foreign vocabulary; it involves a thoughtful reconfiguration that reflects local identity, grammatical norms, and stylistic preferences. The examples featuring the suffixes “una”, “e”, and “aan” powerfully



illustrate the active restructuring of English vocabulary within Pashto, highlighting the interaction between two culturally rich languages. This phenomenon not only underscores the significant influence of English in the realm of global communication but also showcases the resilience of Pashto in preserving its linguistic integrity. Through these modifications, we gain valuable insights into the evolutionary nature of languages, the interconnectedness of cultures, and the profound enrichment of communication that arises when diverse linguistic traditions converge.

Contribution of the Study

This study has introduced a new concept called Linguamorphosis to the field of linguistics. The researchers' understanding of this term is discussed in detail, and the findings indicate that Linguamorphosis is best applied in situations (such as language contact) where languages evolve while still maintaining their cultural and grammatical integrity.

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