

# Ellipsisin Urdu Content Words

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**Abstract**- Presently, this work deals with thephonological rulesforunderstanding the role of ellipsis inresyllabification of Urdu content words, at larger scale, in speech of Pakistani Urdu speakers. The 10 hours audiocorpushas become the source of motivation for the current study due to itsmultiple pronunciations (Farooq & Mumtaz, 2016), (Farooq & Mahmood, 2020). The annotated speech data has multiple information i.e., same parts-of speech (POS), spellings and meaningsbut different pronunciations which ultimately becomes the cause of resyllabificationat different places and contexts. Therefore, that annotated speech corpus is used as baseline of this research (Mumtaz, et al., 2014), (Habib, Hijab, Hussain, & Adeeba, 2014) but the selected words' list includes only those words which have different pronunciations occurred due to phoneme ellipsis. Later this list has been shared and asked to record by 29 native Urdu speakers in Pakistan. Thus, data analysis has confirmed different reasons for causingellipsis in Urdu; (i) contextual variations, (ii)inter-speaker variations, (iii) stress variations, (iv) multilingual effect, etc. All these variations become the reasons for alternative pronunciations. It is also confirmed that alternative pronunciations are present in the speech data of all speakers but a speaker can use a single pronunciation at a time. Therefore, all different pronunciations have attained the status of alternative/multiple pronunciations (Farooq & Mumtaz, 2016) in Urdu in Pakistan.

#### Keywords: ellipsis, restructuring, re-syllabification, alternative pronunciations

# I. INTRODUCTION

The current work is based on a hypothesis that ellipsis directly influence re-syllabification by causing restructuring therefore known as major cause of multiple pronunciations in Urdu speech of Pakistani Urdu speakers. Linguistically, ellipsis refers a missing phonological form that construct the same meaning which it should has to denote. Therefore, the mismatches requires an associated gap between phonological form and its meaning. Thus, the sense of ellipsis differs from deletion, so, ellipsis requires the missing Phonetic Form (PF) to refer the information that is given in a linguistic context (Szczegielniak, 2018). Grammatically, ellipsis appears when a speaker left out an item which s/he would have to articulate normally but without effecting the meaning of the grammatical unit(Ellipsis).

Urdu language belongs tothe Indo-Aryan group of languages andhas multiple pronunciations and accents based on 100 million speakersaroundthe world. In Pakistan, Urdu is theNational and official language (Farooq, 2015) but most importantly a 'lingua franca' therefore is esteemed more than any other native language. Currently, the vowel ellipsis has been reported and analyzed in Urdu content words of Pakistani Urdu speakers' speech and becomes the important reason of restructuring andmultiple pronunciations. Data analysis has confirmed that these Urdu content wordshave same parts of speech, spellings and meanings but with different transcriptions. For example, a word أخرت (hereafter /a:xɪrət̪/)(Urdu Lughat: Tarixi Usuul Per, 2013)has another alternativepronunciation i.e., /a:x.rət̪/)but areinterestingly and equallycomprehensibleby all native Urdu speakers in Pakistan. Therefore, the motivation of the current study is the investigation phonological reasons behind ellipsis and restructuring in Urdu content words.

Phonological rules are the information of all possible phonemic combinations in a given language whichdeal with the alternative pronunciations of a word (Odden, 2005). So, phonological rules concern with the words' morphology and morpheme combinations to form meaningful words(Jehsen, 2004). Different researches have reported the inevitable occurrences of phonological variations in the speech of native speakers(John, NA) which ultimately become the reason of restructuring of vocabulary therefore may causeconfusionamong non-nativespeakers.Therefore,10 hours speech corpus of a female speaker has been used as a reference point for initiating this research. That speech has been comprised of unique tokens and duplicates; in the current research, only those duplicates have been used which appear due to ellipsis.

Afterwards, the wordlist is reused for recording and collecting speech data from 29 more native Urdu speakers. Consequently, this study is done to find outpossible reasonsfor ellipsis and restructuring inUrdu content words. Thus, ellipsis (Farooq & Mumtaz, 2016), (Hussain, 2005) has been used to explain this research with the help of phonological variations causing restructuring for the alternative pronunciation(s) of the surface forms of already existed phonetic-scripts of Urdu content words. Therefore, a backend strategy is investigated in order to resolve the issues of multiple pronunciationsfor non-native speakers. So, the context dependent variations have only catered in this research.

This paper has proposed Urdu phonological rules for ellipsis and restructuring of Urdu content wordsin connected speech. The remaining paper is arranged accordingly;(i) a report on the literature review of phonological rules forellipsis and restructuring are discussed in the second section, (ii) third sectionis about theexperimental methodology, (iii) fourth sectionis about data analysis and results, (iv) fifth section concludes the proposed phonological rules for ellipsis in Urdu content words,(v) future discussion is presented in section 6while (vi) section 7 acknowledges the contributions of research participants.

# II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This research deals with the phonological rules forellipsis which causes multiple pronunciations in Urdu content words. Number of researches have confirmed different phonological rules in various languages (Finch, 2000)e.g.,Hungarian,English, Japanese, Finish, Russian, Czech, Setswana, Dutch, and Shona (Panevov & Hana, 2010). According to American National Standards Institute (ANSI), the voice quality depends on the habitual variations of the vocal apparatus of a speaker which causes multiple pronunciations and accent variationsbased on momentary actions of speech segments (Kreiman, Jody; Sidtis, Diana Vanlancker; Gerratt, Bruce, 2014). Each language has different and unique phonemic inventory (Jehsen, 2004)but may lose theirphonemic features in connected speech (Roach, 2009)due to the complex phonological rules (Hall, 2005). Moreover, Vander has highlighted the importance of; (i) speakers' acoustic behavior and (ii) language change variations due to phonological rules (Hulst H. V., 1979). According to Sound Change Theory (SCT), multiple pronunciations and restructuring are inevitable speech features in connected speech (Ohala, 1980) due to inherent variations of "non-programmed features" to articulate an alternative pronunciation (John, NA), (Odden, 2005). But these phonemic features are not sufficient (Hall, 2005) because auditory transcription cannot duplicate human speech with traditional phonetic symbols foridentifying multiple pronunciations of a word. Therefore, themultiple pronunciations and restructuring have been catered in "phonetic grammar" of a language (Odden, 2005)after considering its phonological rules. Though, there are number of phonological rules which cause restructuring (Finch, 2000) but this research will only analyzeellipsis in Urdu content words.

#### 2.1 Multiple pronunciations and re-syllabification caused with ellipsis

The deletion of a speech segment or a phonemein a word is called ellipsis but such type of segment deletion does not cause meaning change of the lexical item. It is a common feature in connected speech articulation(Finch, 2000) which causes re-syllabification to produce the alternative pronunciation(s). Ellipsis may occur due to the unconscious and laziness of the native speakers (Wagar & Wagar, 2002). Basically, there are two different types of ellipsis i.e., (i) vocalic ellipsis, and (ii) consonantal ellipsis as have been observed in various languages. For example, Hindi language has reported both types i.e., a short vowel schwa is deleted if articulated before a long oral vowel [a:] and a nasal consonant may be deleted iffollowed by a nasal vowel(Trigo, NA).In English connected speech, the Relative Functional Load (RFL) Theory has reported, if asyllable final alveolar stop [i.e., t//d/, or n/]ispreceded by an unstressed n/ or /l/ consonant then the following consonants willbecome syllabicconsonant after deletingitspreceding short vowel schwa (Murcia, Brinton, & Janet, 2010). Moreover, a word final short vowel /ə/ will be deleted if followed by another stressed syllable. Consequently, the vowel deletion causes re-syllabification in Urdu (Nawaz, NA). Turkish language has reported the deletion of syllable-medial and syllable-final voiced velar plosive /q/ speech segment by conversion of ts preceding short vowel in a long vowel (Hulst & Weijer, NA). All these types of ellipsis ultimately cause the re-syllabification for producing alternative or multiple pronunciation(s) of a single word in a given language.

## 2.2 Urdu phonological rules for re-syllabification and multiple pronunciations

Number of researches has reported different phonological rules in Urdu connected speech but only at segmental levele.g,, deletion of (i) glottal fricative /h/ (Hussain, 2005), (ii) glottal stop /?/ (Nawaz, N.A.),(iii) short vowel / $\partial$ /(Akram, 2002), and (iv) deletion of short vowels i.e., [ $\partial$ /I], and (v) medial vowel [e] deletion at word medial position (Farooq & Mumtaz, 2016). Therefore, the phenomenon of re-syllabification has been investigated in Urdu speech of 29 more Urdu speakers in order to confirm ellipsisin Urdu content words. Methodology and data analysis have been discussed in the subsequent sections.

#### III. METHODOLOGY

Currently, Urdu phonological rules have been reported to cater ellipsis which causes re-syllabification and multiple pronunciations in the connected speech of 30 native Urdu speakers in Pakistan. The objective of this study is to identify phonological reasons for ellipsiswhich may cause multiple pronunciations. Therefore, 10 hours Urdu recordings of Urdu speech of one female speaker has been usedand this speech corpus is consisted of duplicates and unique words. But in the current research, only those duplicates have been used which appear due to ellipsis in Urdu content words. These content words have been shared with 29 more Urdu speakers for recordings. They have claimed Urdu as their first language. They have been selected conveniently from different public sector universities of Pakistan. Their age is between the range of 18-25 years and they have completed their undergraduate level of education. The speech data has been recorded at 8 KHz in an echoic chamber in PRAAT software. Speech Assessment Phonetic Alphabets (CISAMPA) in PRAAT (Mumtaz, et al., 2014). The results of data analysis are reported in section 4for removing confusions. The results confirm the reasons for the ellipsis and multiple pronunciations which are either based on speaker dependent variations orcontextual variations.

#### IV. RESULTS

Ellipsis is the main objective of this research as it is one important phenomenon which causes multiple pronunciations and re-syllabification of Urdu content words. 10 hours speech corpus (of 103902 wordlist) is used for initiating this research. It is consisted of a wordlist including; unique words, functional words, English loan words and duplicates. But currently after considering the scope of the research, only 9532 duplicates are used which occur due to ellipsis in Urdu content words. The speech datagives information about the multiple instances of Urdu content words with similar spellings. It also contains the information about; (i) transcriptions, (ii) POS tags, (iii) syllables' count, (iv) stress patterns and (v) file IDs. There are two main reasons for phoneme ellipsis; (i) stress variation, and (ii) multilingual effect. The standard transcriptionis consultedwith "Urdu Lughat: TarixiUsuul Per" (Urdu Lughat: Tarixi Usuul Per, 2013) and English meanings of duplicates are incorporated with the consultation of Oxford Urdu-English Dictionary (Parekh, 2013). The data analysis and results of duplicates arereported in the table 1;

Ellipsis in Urdu Content Words Ellipsis of Vowel						Ellipsisof Consonant		
Short	: Vowel Ellipsis in	Disyllabic Words	Short Vowel Ellipsis in Tri- syllabic Words		In Polysyllabic Words			
Short Vowel			Short Vowel	Medial Vowel				
	ә→ф	ι→φ	ə→φ	e→φ	/j/	/h/	/v/	
TW	157	45	79	77	440 3	4742	29	
ST	93	21	15	15	157 8	806	3	
AP	64	24	64	62	282 5	3936	26	

Table 1

Later, for the confirmation of phoneme ellipsis in Urdu content words, 29 male-female Urdu speakers are selected conveniently from public sector universities of Pakistan. They have at least completed their higher secondary school education. Results have confirmed the presence of alternative pronunciations in speech of 29 Urdu speakers. A list of 75 content words (i.e., 25 words of each category) has been shared with them and asked to record in Praat. This wordlist is recorded after embedding in different sentences for avoiding stress, boundary effect and confirming contextual effect. Subsequently, the results have also confirmed ellipsisin the given wordlist. The most important thing is; almost majority of speakers are more consistent in using alternative pronunciation than the standard form of the content word (details are in table 2).

This collected data also has same spellings and parts-of-speech but with different stress patterns and transcriptions due to ellipsis whichultimately become the reason of restructuring and multiple pronunciations. These multiple instances have been entered in an excel log-sheet for reconfirmation in order to avoid inconsistency and human errors in annotation. Log-sheet saves the time by making record of each alternative pronunciation with specific file ID. Then, ellipsis and multiple pronunciations have been confirmed only after consulting annotation errors. Alternative pronunciations may occur due to ellipsis by causing re-syllabifications of Urdu content words. These multiple pronunciations give broader perspective to reach a conclusive decision about re-syllabification of Urdu content words. This studywillultimately relax the concept of mispronunciations by accepting the alternative pronunciations as alternative variety.Results of data analysis are given in table 2 for making clarity about the context dependent or speaker dependent variations.

	Ellipsis in Urdu Content Words								
	Deletion of Vowels						of		
						Consonants			
		oic Word		Tri-syllabic Word		In Polysyllabic			
	Short Vowel		Short	Medial	Words				
			Vowel	Vowel					
	ә→φ	ι→φ	ә→ф	e→φ	/j/	/h/	/v/		
SP 1	14	24	14	12	15	16	17		
SP2	22	7	7	9	13	7	7		
SP3	22	17	17	15	19	17	17		
SP4	19	11	18	7	18	11	11		
SP5	12	23	23	17	7	23	23		
SP6	18	22	22	11	17	21	22		
SP7	17	12	12	23	11	24	24		
SP8	22	18	9	17	23	13	23		
SP9	24	12	15	19	22	18	23		
SP10	12	15	10	7	18	11	11		
SP11	14	14	10	17	7	23	23		
SP12	11	12	16	18	11	19	14		
SP13	13	11	17	10	12	15	10		
SP14	12	15	10	7	18	11	11		
SP15	14	14	11	16	7	23	23		
SP16	19	11	16	18	11	19	14		
SP17	12	23	17	10	12	15	10		
SP18	19	11	11	16	18	11	11		
SP19	12	23	16	18	7	23	23		
SP20	11	11	17	10	11	19	11		
SP21	14	14	10	11	21	12	23		
SP22	18	12	23	15	11	19	11		
SP23	22	10	22	11	16	21	12		
SP24	18	12	23	15	13	7	7		
SP25	10	15	13	11	19	14	14		
SP26	11	20	22	21	14	18	12		
SP27	23	23	23	13	17	22	10		

# Table 2

SP28	19	11	16	18	14	18	12
SP29	12	23	17	10	13	7	17
SP30	19	11	11	16	11	21	17

# V. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

There are some certain Urdu phonological rules for causing ellipsis in Urdu content wordwhich ultimately causes re-syllabification and multiple pronunciation. Ellipsis is one the mainreasons for alternative/multiple pronunciations of already existed phonetic scripts of different surface forms.

# 5.1 Re-syllabification and Ellipsis

Ellipsis is a process of phoneme deletion in connected speech and is also called elision. It is an important and common Urdu phonological rule and may appear due to coarticulation (Finch, 2000)which becomes the reason for restructuring and re-syllabification (Kahn, 1976) in Urdu content words.People may articulate lazily and consequently their pronunciationchanges(Waqar & Waqar, 2002)e.g.Urdu word uriculate lazily and consequently their pronunciationchanges(Waqar & Waqar, 2002)e.g.Urdu word pronounced as /a:x.rət/, نعماد /e:tema:d/) is alternatively pronounced as /e:t.ma:d/, اعتماد /e:tera:z/) is alternatively pronounced as /e:t.ra:z/, زامن /e:tera:z/) is alternatively pronounced as /e:t.ra:d/, اعتراض /dʒa.bəl/) is alternatively pronounced as /dʒəbl/, اعتراض /dʒa.bəl/) is alternatively pronounced as /e:t.ra:z/.Phoneme deletion causes reduction in number of syllablestherefore resyllabification occurs. Data analysis and results have reported five types of ellipsis occur due to the deletion of; short vowel,medial vowel(Parekh, 2013), /v/, /h/, and /j/ consonantal phonemes in disyllabic, tri-syllabic and polysyllabic content words. All these types of ellipsis are not appeared randomly rather follow some phonological conditions. Some of these are discussed here;

1. In monosyllabicUrdu content words, vowel ellipsis is not possible.

2. Ellipsis of a long vowel is not observed in whole speech corpus.

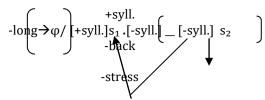
3. In Urdu content words, phonemicellipsis always appears at word medial and word final syllablesbut it is not observed at word initial position.But in data analysis, it has been observed that only the glottal stop /?/ can be omitted at all levels in a word i.e., word initial[على (proper noun /?əli:/) is articulated as /əli:/], word medial [علز] (miracle /e?dʒa:z/) is articulated as /e:dʒa:z/]and word final positions[اطلاح] (massage /ɪt̪ilə?/) alternatively articulated as /ɪt̪ila:/].

4. Urdu consonantal ellipsis converts its preceding short vowel in to a long vowel at word final position. i.e., deletion of glottal stop [?] and glottal fricative [h].

5. Short and medial vowel ellipsisisobserved only in disyllabic and polysyllabic words.

6. Stress variations playan important and primary role in segment elision e.g.,Unstressed speech articulation causes vowel reduction and re-syllabification in polysyllabic words.

a. Unstressed articulation of disyllabic Urdu words occurs in two steps; initially, a short vowel deletionarises in the last syllableby causing e-syllabication, which makes consonant clusters at coda position. For example, the word last (eternal /ə.mər/) converts into /əmr/ by following subsequent phonological rule;



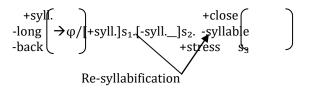
**Re-syllabification** 

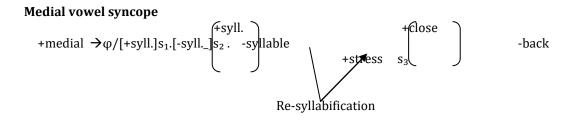
b. Vowel ellipsis occurs only at word final or medial position but not at word initial position. But in Urduized loan and borrowed words, ellipsis may occur at word initial position e.g., [Isku:l] as [sku:l].

c. Due to unstressed articulation, the vocalicellipsis occurs inpenultimate syllableoftri-syllabic wordswhich causes vowel deletion and re-syllabification. Therefore, it is called vowel syncope (Nierfeld & Theo, 1974) asvowel is considered a nucleus in the syllable therefore vocalic ellipsis demands re-syllabification (Roach, 2009). Ellipsis and re-syllabification is a complicated phenomenonbecause it dependson phonotactic rules (Kahn, 1976). For instance, Urdu phonotactic rules restrain consonant clusters (i.e., /xr/, /df/, /tb/, /tm/, etc.) at onset position. For example, a tri-syllabic word

اعتراض) (objection /e:t̪era:z/) may be converted into a disyllabic word with the vocalic ellipsis at word medial position /e:t̪ra:z/ but does not allow consonant cluster. The phonological rule for vowel ellipsis and re-syllabification can be explained by following the subsequent phonological representation;

# Short vowel syncope





d. Consonantal deletion /h/ occurs at word medial and final positions. Therefore, it follows some specific conditions in connected speech articulation i.e.,

a. a word is articulated in anunstressed or spontaneously.For example an Urdu word بادشاه/ba:dʃa:h/) is articulated as /ba:dʃa:/ simply by deleting word final /h/ consonant.

 $h \rightarrow \phi/[-stressed] #$ 

+pharynx/  
+fricative 
$$\Rightarrow \varphi$$
 -stress  
voice -svll. #

e. /j/ deletion always arisesbetween two vowels in two different ways; (i) making diphthongs and (ii) without making diphthongs. For example,

a. The phonemic deletion /j/ occurs at word medial positionby makinga diphthong as inUrdu word كير (why /kıjũ:/) as /kıũ:/ and كير (what /keja:/) as /kea:/(Bhatti, 2016).

b. Though, /j/ consonant is deleted even without producing diphthongse.g., in aword لي (for /lɪje:/) as /lɪ.e:/ and لي (status /hæ:sɪjət̪/) as /hæ:sɪ:ət̪/but in an unstressed articulation.

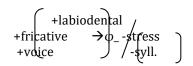
 $j \rightarrow \phi/[-stressed]$ 

+palatal -stress/  
+fricative 
$$\rightarrow \phi_{-}$$
 -syll./

f. The phonemic deletion /v/ occurs by substituting/v/ consonant with a vowel. The deletion of /v/ consonantalways appears inter-vocalically in two different ways; (i) making diphthongs and (ii) without making diphthongs. For example;

a. A disyllabic Urdu word)بوئى(was/hovi:/)transforms into a monosyllabic word /hu:i:/ by making a diphthong(Bhatti, 2016).

b. The unstressed articulation may cause the deletion of /v/ consonantbut without making a diphthong. For example, in the word  $\mu$  (Hindu hınduvõ:) /v/ deletion appears as /hındu:õ:/ by following subsequent rule;



Finally, we can say thatellipsis is a common but important feature connected speech, (Finch, 2000).Moreover, it is a complicated phenomenon because it causes re-syllabification of words(Kahn, 1976). People articulates minimum due to their laziness consciously or unconsciously and ultimately produce alternative pronunciation (Waqar & Waqar, 2002). Phonemic ellipsis may reduce number of syllables which directly become a cause of re-syllabification. For example, vowel elisiondirectly causes syllabic deletion while consonantal elision may or may not cause syllable reduction but causes restructuring and re-syllabification in Urdu content words.

#### VI. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DISCUSSION

Finally, the speech analysis of Urdu corpus has confirmed the multiple pronunciations occur due to the ellipsis inUrdu content words. The results have also confirmed Urdu phonological rules at larger scale. All the above mentionedrules have been confirmed after collecting the consent of native Urdu speakers in Pakistan. (i) Unstressed or spontaneous speechcausesellipsis and re-syllabification of Urdu content words. (ii) Phonemic elisionhas reported only inmultisyllabic words. Moreover, (iii) ellipsisoccursonly at word medial and final positions (iv) but in Urduized loan words, ellipsis may occur at word initial position. Presently, dictionaries only incorporate morphological information but phonological information is not the part of any dictionary which should be incorporated in new dictionaries in order to cater alternative pronunciations of Urdu vocabulary.

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