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A MORPHOSYNTACTIC STUDY OF VERB PHRASES IN SHAHPURI

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Abstract

The present study describes the morphosyntactic features of the Shahpuri verb phrase. Shahpuri is a dialect of Punjabi spoken mainly in Punjab, Pakistan. Data were collected from native speakers living in rural areas of the Sargodha Division (Sargodha, Khushab, Mianwali, and Bhakkar) through focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. 40 participants took part in interviews (10 from each district), and 32 took part in focus group discussions (8 from each district) (N = 72). A descriptive approach was used to analyze the data. The findings show that, while Shahpuri follows general verb phrase structures of Indo-Aryan language, it also exhibits distinct morphosyntactic features in its verb phrases that differ from those of other Punjabi dialects. Number, gender, case, tense, and aspect play key roles in shaping verb phrase structures. The study contributes to preserving the Shahpuri dialect and highlights the importance of documenting local languages of Pakistan.

Keywords: Morphosyntax, documentation, description, Shahpuri.

Introduction

Purpose of the Study

The present study aims to explore the structures of verb phrases in Shahpuri from a Morphosyntax perspective. It explores various kinds and patterns of verb phrases being used by the Shahpuri speakers in everyday speech. Shahpuri is spoken in the Sargodha division (districts of Sargodha, Mianwali, Khushab & Bhakkar). This study contributes to understanding the grammatical structure of Shahpuri, a dialect of the Punjabi language.

Background to Study

Punjabi is an Indo-Aryan language that was acknowledged as an autonomous language in the 11th century. Now, it has become the 12th language (with number of speakers) of the world



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(Matthews, 2003). Globally, 109 million speakers speak Punjabi in the world (76 million speakers live in Pakistan and 33 million live in India). It is the official language in Indian Punjabi (Ghai & Singh, 2013). This language has no electronic resources, so it is recognized as a Less Resource Language (LRL) (Lata, 2011). Due to the diversity of speakers, it has various dialects. Sir Richard C. Temple (1883) divides Punjabi into the dialects of Majhi, Multani, Potohari, and Pahari. In contrast, Shackle (1970) divides into four groups: Eastern dialects, Dogri, Majhi, and Western dialects. Campbell (1991) referred to the Western dialects collectively as Lahnda.

Shahpuri is a dialect of Lahnda. Grierson contends that Shahpuri is the standard dialect of Lahnda (as cited in Masica, 1991). Chohan (2022) reports that Shahpuri is a mixture of other dialects of Punjabi. He maintains that Shahpuri is the combination of Majhi, Thalochi, and Pothohari. This blend of dialectal influences shapes the grammatical behavior of Shahpuri. Grammar includes morphology and syntax. The morphology and syntax of Shahpuri are under description.

Morphosyntax

The interface between syntax and morphology is called Morphosyntax. Morphosyntax has been regarded as a branch of linguistics by various studies. These works include: Crystal (1980), Anderson (1986), Halle and Marantz (1993), Kibort (2007), etc. These studies hold that Morphosyntax is a part of morphology that explains the relationship between morphology and syntax. It also explains why a particular word falls in a particular grammatical category. Anderson (1986) notes areas of interface between morphology and syntax. These areas between morphology and syntax include agreement properties, inherent properties, configurational properties and phrasal properties. There are two types of morphology: Derivational morphology and inflectional morphology.

Inflectional morphology deals with the concepts how the words interact with other words. Harley and Noyer (2006) argue that inflectional categories such as tense, number, and case are closely linked with meaning. They do not exist separately but work together with word meanings and other elements in a sentence, including prepositions and postpositions. In a similar way, Marantz (1997) explains that a morphological rule is considered inflectional when it follows syntactic rules and functions within sentence structure.

In languages with inflection, words are organized into natural syntactic classes such as nouns and verbs. Each class is connected with certain grammatical features. For example, verbs typically carry tense, aspect, and mood, while nouns are associated with case and number. These features create systematic patterns known as paradigms for each word class.

Inflectional morphemes, such as suffixes, are both productive and regular. This means that when a new word enters a language, it follows the same grammatical pattern as other words in its class. For instance, if nouns in a language show number and case, then every noun must express these



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features. Because of this consistency, these grammatical categories become obligatory for all words in that class.

Harley and Noyer (1999) further explain that inflectional morphology shows a strong connection between word formation (morphology) and sentence structure (syntax). In line with this view, Halle and Marantz (1993) and Embick and Halle (2001) propose that word formation is closely integrated with syntax. They suggest that language is built from two main types of elements: lexical items (such as nouns and verbs) and functional items (such as grammatical markers).

Marantz (1992) argues that grammar does not directly handle meaning; instead, it focuses on structural relationships. Therefore, a word's grammatical category can only be explained at the morpho-syntactic level, where morphology and syntax interact. From this perspective, morpho-syntactic processes are sufficient to determine how words are categorized.

Finally, Hale and Keyser (1993) propose that syntactic structure itself determines word categories. According to this view, a word does not have a fixed category like noun or verb before entering a sentence. Its category is assigned through syntactic structure. However, they also acknowledge a level where argument structure—the relationships between words—is established before full sentence formation.

Objectives of the Study

The main objectives of the study are:

1. To examine the syntactic structures of verb phrases in Shahpuri
2. To explore the functions of grammatical categories such as number, gender, person, case, tense, and agreement in Shahpuri verb phrases

Research Question

The present study addresses the following research questions:

1. How are the morphosyntactic features of the Shahpuri verb phrases represented?
2. How are the number, gender, person, case, tense, and agreement exhibited in Shahpur verb phrases?

Literature Review

This chapter provides a comprehensive literature review related to the current study. The author organizes the review thematically and establishes a logical structure that progresses from general linguistic concepts to the research focus. First, this chapter starts with language documentation and description while making clear links to the field of linguistics. Following this, the chapter explores the role of fieldwork in the documentation and description of an endangered and under-documented dialect like Shahpuri by setting the stage for the methodological underpinning of the study. Subsequently, the review discusses morphology and syntax relating to Morphosyntax,



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presented from the local perspectives. Following this, the chapter deepens our knowledge of the local language of Pakistan, Punjabi, and its dialects, thus leading to the previous studies focusing on the socio-cultural depth of Shahpuri, a dialect of Punjabi. After reviewing relevant literature, the study explores a research gap to address the current study. Finally, the study concludes by summarizing the key findings and explaining their contribution to the field of the Morphosyntax of the Shahpuri verb phrases.

To protect the cultural and constructed social identity of the speakers, it becomes necessary to save languages from extinction, especially endangered and under-documented dialects. As the global linguistic landscape evolves, many languages risk extinction due to globalization, urbanization, and language shift.

Language endangerment is a significant concern worldwide. According to Dressler (2018), 43% of the existing languages are classified as endangered. In addition, Ting and Hsu (2024) contend that indigenous languages are at risk of critical endangerment. Languages are endangered by declining speakers, poor transmission, and dominant languages (Joven-Romero, 2020). It has become a challenge to save endangered varieties of language.

Shahpuri, a regional dialect of Punjabi spoken in some parts of Punjab, Pakistan, is an endangered variety. Following this, the speakers' social and cultural identities are also at risk. To protect the speakers' social and cultural identities through language, the importance of description and documentation of the Shahpuri dialect increases.

Language documentation is a new field of linguistics, also known as documentary linguistics. Austin (2014) reports that language documentation emerged as a subfield of linguistics in 1955. In the contemporary period, this field has received significant scholarly attention due to growing concerns about the extinction of endangered languages. This new subfield of linguistics records data on endangered varieties for multiple purposes through language documentation.

The primary purpose of language documentation is to store natural language. Woodbury (2003) states that language documentation records the world's languages and their patterns of use. Austin further reports that language documentation deals with creating multipurpose records of languages through audio and video recordings of speakers and signers and with annotation, translation, preservation, and distribution of the resulting materials. By doing this, the linguists save linguistic literature for upcoming generations. Language documentation is critical in language maintenance, revitalization, and descriptive linguistics.

The scholars offer different but interrelated definitions of language documentation. Krauss (1992) takes it as documentation of syntax, a dictionary, and a corpus of writings. Additionally, Schultze-Berndt (2015) refers to documentation as grammar, lexicon, and corpus of texts. Both definitions emphasize recording natural language data, compiling and preserving grammar, lexicon, and language use in real life, and applying specific methodological frameworks.



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Language documentation is considered a methodology and theoretical framework. Himmelmann (2006) contends that language documentation relates to methods, tools, and theoretical underpinnings for compiling a representative and lasting multipurpose record of a natural language or one of its varieties. This methodology is not only a digital archive (both audio and video recordings) of language data. In addition, it also involves a complete process of language documentation. As Schultze-Berndt (2015) states, language documentation as a process consists of interaction in the fieldwork on the part of a researcher with the members of the concerned speech community whose language is going to be documented. Then, it includes the compilation of a sample of primary data. After that, the annotation of primary data is undertaken. This involves the creation of secondary data, transcriptions, and translations into the language of wider communication. It aims to create a lasting and multipurpose record to be available for the next generations of potential users, including linguists, historians, anthropologists, etc. It is both a practical and theoretical endeavour to combat the endangerment of a variety and supports language revitalization efforts worldwide by applying systematic processes.

The language documentation process offers a practical aspect since it records naturally occurring data rather than a theoretical framework. As Furbee (2010) contends, it does not develop a theory but describes and objectively analyzes a language. As Himmelmann (1998) reports that the goal of language documentation is "to provide a comprehensive record of the linguistic practices of a given speech community" (p. 166), and "comprehensive" is intended to include both observable linguistic behaviour and native speakers' metalinguistic and ethnographic knowledge about language use.

Critically speaking, language documentation, a subfield of linguistics, is different from other subfields of linguistics based on unique methodologies and frameworks. It includes the record of natural language use, multi-modal collection, and long-term preservation. It aims to record the concerned speech communities' linguistic diversity and cultural perspectives. Language documentation contains various characteristics for the protection and documentation of a language.

Language documentation possesses unique characteristics compared to the other sub-fields of linguistics, as Himmelmann (2006) highlights the main traits of language documentation that make it different from other approaches to human language.

- i. Language documentation focuses on collecting and analysing primary data for language users.
- ii. Language documentation ensures the long-term storage and preservation of primary data for language users.
- iii. Language documentation is not limited to linguistics. Instead, it is an interdisciplinary approach.
- iv. Language documentation demands active involvement and collaboration with speech community members as producers of language materials and co-researchers.



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Grinevald and Bert (2011) state that the documentation of a language can help save it from endangerment. This study contributes to protecting the Shahpuri dialect by describing and codifying it. Compiling the inventory of the Shahpuri dialect of the Punjabi language is one of the milestones toward the documentation and codification of this under-documented dialect. Traditionally, the technological and methodological framework of corpus linguistics has been primarily developed for corpora of major languages with established writing systems and standards. In contrast, documentary linguistics has evolved to address the challenges of working with spoken language data, particularly from minority and endangered languages. Now, we discuss methodologies employed in documentary linguistics.

Fieldwork methodology serves as the fundamental research method of a descriptive study, according to Schultze-Berndt (2015). Native-speaker collaboration lies at the core of fieldwork methodology because it produces essential knowledge about a language's morphosyntactic features that written texts and traditional theoretical frameworks typically exclude. Considering variations of the speakers of Shahpuri and dialectal differences, it becomes essential to implement this process in language studies because of its neighbouring language influences. Participation and cooperation between the researcher and native speaker during fieldwork activate natural data collections that reveal dialectical variations and contextual shifts. Fieldwork provides researchers with an opportunity to explore linguistic structures along with their cultural and discourse context functioning. Direct observation of speakers amid their ordinary environment stands as the only approach to understanding the formal or gendered aspects of their language. The data collection method establishes the fundamental framework to acquire genuine elastic data derived from Shahpuri speakers' native environment because this dialect does not have enough written documentation. This methodology builds essential empirical evidence for studying language structures within their social and cultural environments, thus making it vital for Shahpuri documentation. However, demographic aspects of the speech community change the dimensions of the fieldwork. Now, the study introduces foreign and local scholars in the field of language documentation to follow their guidelines in this area.

Both the foreign and local scholars in the area of Fieldwork have contributed to documenting the under-described and endangered dialects. However, their approaches are different in scope, perspectives, and contexts, with each group offering unique contributions to the field. Fieldwork can be different depending on the interlocutors, researchers' backgrounds, social settings, political settings, time frames, and budgets. Therefore, it is necessary to seek guidance and understand practices from other researchers who have research experience in that language area. The current study follows the guidelines set by the following foreign linguists/ experts in the fieldwork area.

- i. Crowley (2007) focuses on discussions and examples of interpersonal dilemmas arising during fieldwork.
- ii. Bower (2010) focuses on a number of practical issues, such as grant application writing, technology, and archiving.
- iii. Newman and Ratliff (2001) and Thieberger (2012)



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- iv. Abbi (2001) (with a focus on Indian languages)
- v. Storch (2011) (with a focus on African languages)
- vi. Cook (2013)
- vii. Ruffolo (2004)

Now, we discuss local scholars in the fieldwork.

Along with foreign scholars in the field of language documentation, it is also helpful to focus on specific guidelines presented by local linguists in the fieldwork to situate the study in local settings and demography. The linguists who have explored the grammatical and morphosyntactic features of the Indigenous languages of Pakistan are as follows:

- i. Shackle (1977)
- ii. Babrakzai (1999)
- iii. Lunsford (2001)
- iv. Lothers and Lothers (2007)
- v. Perder (2013)
- vi. Bhatti (2021)
- viii. Afzal, Qasim & Chohan (2024)
- ix. Hasan (2022)

Now, we develop a rationale for Fieldwork methodology for the current study.

This study uses fieldwork methodology for data collection based on the following reasons:

- i. Shahpuri lacks existing resources for documentation of grammar, lexicon, etc. The fieldwork methodology aims to obtain primary and accurate data to describe how the language works in real life.
- ii. The morphosyntactic features can best be understood or analysed through native speaker insight. Fieldwork allows the researchers to ask speakers directly about grammaticality, acceptability, and meaning, which is impossible with existing texts.
- iii. Since Shahpuri does not have written texts, spoken data has to be relied upon. The morphosyntactic features primarily exist in natural speech. Asking speakers makes the methodology natural. Fieldwork can record spontaneous conversations, elicited stories, and traditional narratives that reflect real morphosyntactic patterns.
- iv. Shahpuri varies from village to village and speaker to speaker due to language contact with other regional languages. In fieldwork, linguists can find out variations and language shifts after engaging directly with the community.



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- v. The researchers design elicitation tasks targeting specific morphosyntactic features (e.g., tense, aspect, agreement, etc.). This allows them to probe complex or rare constructions that might not appear in written texts.
- vi. Understanding how morphosyntactic forms function in cultural and discourse contexts is key to complete analysis. Fieldwork provides context: e.g., is a construction formal? Polite? Gendered? Regional? Only through immersive interaction can you understand this.

Hence, fieldwork can provide first-hand, flexible, culturally grounded, and speaker-informed data. For a dialect like Shahpuri, none of the other methods can substitute the richness and accuracy that fieldwork offers. Dedicated fieldwork stands out as a cornerstone of language documentation. Fieldwork also provides the empirical foundation for capturing authentic language use and understanding linguistic structures within their cultural and social contexts. After developing a rationale for the study's methodology, we turn to review studies relating to the morphology, syntax, and morphosyntactic features of South Asian Languages to locate the present study.

The early studies (before the 21st century) on South Asian Languages did not focus on Morphosyntax; rather, they explored morphology and syntax separately. However, one thing the earlier studies shared was that they used fieldwork methodology for data collection. Now, the current study reviews the research on South Asian Languages spoken in Pakistan conducted in the field of morphology and syntax before the 21st century and Morphosyntax in the 21st century. First of all, we start a review of the studies on South Asian Languages from the Torwali language in the area of morphology and syntax.

Torwali is a language spoken in the Swat valley, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. The inquiry on Torwali investigated its basic morphology and syntax. Lunsford (2001) worked on the Torwali language and highlighted its linguistic features. The study introduced the Torwali language, its sociolinguistic situation, and its relation with other languages. It also described syntactic categories, features of morphology, clause-level, and discourse features in detail. This study on Torwali used fieldwork methodology for data collection.

This study is a comprehensive study of linguistic features. It studies Torwali at the word, phrase, clause, and sentence levels. It uses fieldwork methodology for data collection. The fieldwork methodology is a suitable methodology for lesser-documented varieties like Torwali and Shahpuri. After reviewing literature on Torwali, this study examines research on the Urdu language.

Urdu is the national language of Pakistan. This language was also investigated in the area of grammar. Schmidt (2005) presented a complete description of the grammar of the standard Urdu language. She compiled the inventory of grammatical structures from existing textbooks used in Urdu classes. Furthermore, Schmidt (2005) discussed basic declarative clauses, noun phrases, tense, aspect, and related categories, adverbials, coordination, subordination, and other clause



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types (negative, interrogative, and imperative) of the Urdu language. It also described Persian and Arabic elements in Urdu and ceremonious and pious speeches. Schmidt (2005) employed a descriptive approach to studying the Urdu language.

The work describes word classes, word order, and agreement in sentences and types of sentences in detail. This study of Schmidt explores the influences of Arabic and Persian on Urdu, making it a historical language. It provides a detailed description of the Urdu language. However, Schmidt's study (2005) explores standard dialect. It does not include regional varieties. Moreover, it is a reference grammar rather than a pedagogical guide, and the learners of Urdu exploring structural analysis cannot benefit from it. After discussing the Urdu language, we move to a local language, Dameli.

Dameli is a language spoken in the southwest part of Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Perder (2013) explored the grammatical features of the Dameli language. He gave a detailed description of its morphology and syntax. The section on the morphology of this study described nouns, pronouns, adjectives, numerals, verbs, postpositions, and minor or questionable word classes. The section on the syntax of Dameli was based on the development of clauses and their types.

This study of Perder provides detailed findings on parts of speech, phrases, clauses, and sentence levels in Dameli. However, it does not cover complex sentences of Dameli and does not use extensive fieldwork. At the end of the review of the studies on Dameli and other South Asian Languages spoken in Pakistan, the study discusses Pashto.

Pashto is a language spoken in Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and in some areas of Baluchistan, Pakistan. The syntax of Pashto was also investigated at the end of the 20th century and the start of the 21st century. Babrakzai (1999) explored the syntax of Pashto. The study gave an introduction to Pashto and a brief description of earlier research on it. He discussed typological characteristics, grammatical categories, word classes, agreement and clitics, ergativity, and argument encoding with examples of Pashto. Moreover, this study of Pashto also gives an insight into tense, mood, grammatical relations, experiencer construction, voice, and complex sentences.

Babarakzai provides a detailed examination in this study of Pashto syntax, which evaluates ergativity in combination with argument encoding and grammatical relations. The research offers helpful benefits by presenting complete explanations about tense structures, moods, and complex sentence patterns. Various aspects of Pashto need improvement because the work lacks original field data and excludes cross-linguistic analysis. Now, a critical summary of the studies of South Asian Studies conducted in Pakistan is provided in Table 2.1.



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Table 2.1

Summary of Previous Studies on South Asian Languages in Pakistan

Language	Author (Year)	Focus	Methodology	Scope	Limitations
Torwali	Lunsford (2001)	Basic morphology and syntax, sociolinguistic situation, syntactic categories, clause-level and discourse features	Fieldwork methodology	Comprehensive analysis at word, phrase, clause, and sentence levels; relation with other languages	None explicitly noted; suitable for lesser-documented varieties.
Urdu	Schmidt (2005)	Grammar of standard Urdu, including word classes, word order, agreement, sentence types, Persian/Arabic influences	Descriptive approach (compiled from existing textbooks)	Detailed description of declarative clauses, noun phrases, tense, aspect, adverbials, coordination, subordination, and other clause types	Focuses on standard dialect only; excludes regional varieties; not pedagogical
Dameli	Perder (2013)	Morphology (nouns, pronouns, adjectives, numerals, verbs, postpositions) and syntax (clause development)	Descriptive approach (limited fieldwork)	Detailed findings on phrase, clause, and sentence levels, focusing on parts of speech	Does not cover complex sentences; limited use of extensive fieldwork.
Pashto	Babrakzai (1999)	Syntax, including typological characteristics, grammatical categories, agreement, clitics, ergativity, argument encoding, tense, mood, voice, and complex sentences	Descriptive approach (no original field data)	Detailed examination of ergativity, grammatical relations, and complex sentence patterns	Lacks original field data; excludes cross-linguistic analysis.



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Table 2.1 presents an annotated summary of the South Asian Languages spoken in Pakistan. This Table (2.1) shows various methodologies used in the South Asian Languages as discussed in section 2.6. For instance, the studies on Torwali and Dameli utilized fieldwork, focusing on the primary data. This fieldwork methodology is suitable for lesser-documented dialects. However, the study of Dameli did not mention the number of speakers/ participants in the study.

On the other side, the studies on Pashto and Urdu used a descriptive method, relying on secondary data. The last column on the Table (2.1) displays limitations of these studies, which help in developing the rationale for the current study. After reviewing the studies on the South Asian Languages spoken in Pakistan, we now discuss previous studies on the Punjabi language.

Etymologically speaking, the word, Punjabi originates from Punjab, which is derived from Indo-Iranian meaning “the land of five rivers” (Bedi, 1998). Punjabi got significant changes during the 15th and 16th centuries, particularly under the influence of Guru Nanak Dev Jee’s teachings. Presently, the Punjabi language is spoken widely and considered the official language of Indian Punjab.

Punjabi is rich in dialectal diversity. Zia (2011) reports that about 66 dialects of Punjabi are spoken in Punjab. These dialects include Awankari, Chinavari, Dogri, Ghebi, Rachnavi, Riasati, Saraiki, Shahpuri, Gujarati, Haryanvi, Hindko, Jangli, Jandali or Rohi, Jhangochi, Jhangvi, Khatki, Khetrani, Majhi, Malwai, Multani, Pahari, Pothohari, Raangri, Rajasthani, Dhani, Derawali, Sakaiki, and Thalochi. On the other side, Sir Richard C. Temple (1883) classifies Punjabi into four major dialects: Majhi, Multani, Potohari, and Pahari. Conversely, Shackle (1970) divides Punjabi into four major groups: Dogri, Majhi, Eastern dialects, and Western dialects.

The Majhi dialect is also called eastern Punjabi. Moreover, Majhi is considered the purest form of Punjabi. According to Ethnologue, Majhi is thought to be the purest form of the Punjabi language. There is one standard dialect, and the remaining varieties are its regional dialects. Majhi is taken as a standard dialect. Researchers prioritize Majhi as the standard form of Punjabi (Shackle, 1979; Gill & Gleason, 1969). Furthermore, Grierson (1916) states that Majhi is the standard dialect of eastern Punjabi, and Shahpuri is the standard dialect of western Punjabi. Some Muslim researchers criticized this division of Grierson. For instance, “Grierson did not know all the dialects of Punjabi, so his opinion about Punjabi dialects cannot be given any value” (Khan 1996, p 124).

Majhi is spoken in the districts of Punjab, like Lahore, Gujranwala, Sheikhpura, Kasur, etc. It is also spoken in Amritsar and Gurdaspur in Indian Punjab. Shackle (1970) states that Majhi has been spoken in the major territories of Punjab, including the main cities of Lahore and Amritsar, for at least 300 years. This dialect is the basis for the literary language of Punjabi. In contrast to Eastern Punjabi, Western Punjabi is spoken in the western region of Punjab.

Western Punjabi, primarily spoken in the Punjab province of Pakistan, is part of the Lahnda language group. Lahnda, as defined by Campbell (1991), literally means 'western' and refers to



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the broader group of dialects, which includes Western Punjabi. Western Punjabi assimilates more Sindhi in the southwest than Punjabi (Tolstaya, 1981). Western dialects of Punjabi differ from the other dialects, Majhi and Siraiki. Let us discuss Jhangvi as a dialect of Western Punjabi.

Jhangvi (or Jangli) is a dialect of Western Punjabi spoken primarily in the Jhang district, which is located in the Punjab province of Pakistan (Campbell, 1991). It is part of the broader Lahnda (Western Punjabi) language group. It is also spoken in some areas of the districts of Faisalabad, Chiniot, and Khanewal. The Jhangvi dialect, while considered a non-standard variety, plays an essential role in rural communication in the Jhang district. It shares many features with other Western Punjabi dialects, but it is distinguished by its unique vocabulary and pronunciation peculiarities (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2008). Shahpuri shares some regional variations with Jangli since both are dialects of Western Punjabi. The next dialect is the Potohari dialect.

The Potohari dialect of Punjabi is spoken primarily in the Pothohar Plateau region, which includes areas like Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Murree, Jhelum, and parts of Abbottabad. Potohari is often regarded as a transitional dialect because of its geographic location between Western Punjabi (Lahnda) and Hindko, with some features influenced by Pashto and Hindko due to its proximity to regions where these languages are spoken (Bhatia & Ritchie, 2008).

Hindko is a variety of the Western Pahari-Potwari dialects spoken primarily in the north-western regions of Pakistan, particularly in the parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) (Rahman, 2009). This dialect is primarily used by the speakers in urban and rural areas of these regions, including cities like Peshawar, Abbottabad, Mansehra, and the Hazara region (Khan, 2000). Hindko is a neighbouring dialect of Shahpuri, and both Shahpuri and Hindko are parts of Western Punjabi. Another dialect, Malawi, is also part of Western Punjabi.

Malwa is located in the Indian state of Punjab in its south, east, and central parts. It is spoken in Ludhiana, Ambala, Bathinda, Ganganagar, Maleerkotla, Fazilka, and Ferozepur. The people of Haryana, Hissar, Sirsa, Kurukhetra, etc., also speak this dialect. This variety shares some commonalities with the Shahpuri dialect. For example, the word for 'house' is "*ghar*" in both Shahpuri and Malwi, which is also common in Haryanvi and Hindi. After Malawi, Doabi is also spoken in some regions of Indian Punjab.

Doabi originates from the Doaba region, situated between the Beas and Sutlej rivers in Indian Punjab. Doabi has come from two words, *do* (two) and *Aabi*, which means water. The people living between the Satluj and Beas rivers speak this dialect. These people of Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur use this dialect (Kaur, 2023). Similarly, another regional variety within the Punjabi linguistic range is Siraiki, spoken in Southern Punjab, Pakistan, which—like Doabi—shares historical and linguistic roots with Punjabi.

There are two contradictions about whether Siraiki is a dialect or a language. According to Sir Ershmire Perry (1853), as mentioned by John (2009), Multani/ Siraiki is a dialect of Punjabi. Shackle (2003) and Garcia & Sandhu (2015) also take it as a dialect of the Punjabi language. On the other hand, the other group of researchers treats Siraiki as a language. Their claim of Siraiki



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as a language is not linguistic but social, political, and emotional (Maldonado Garcia & Sandhu, 2015). Siraiki is considered controversial due to various structural criteria and socio-political and geopolitical grounds.

The government of Pakistan declared Siraiki as an individual language due to literary significance and socio-political factors (Shackle, 2003). The Siraiki community claims a separate province, and they have a so-called separate linguistic system (Siraiki language). The linguists living in the area of the Siraiki community also support their idea (Garcia & Sandhu, 2015). Hence, Siraiki is considered a language instead of a dialect of Punjabi. Now, we discuss the morphosyntactic features of the regional dialects of the Punjabi language explored so far. First, we discuss the Morphosyntax of the Thali dialect.

Much work has not been done on the Punjabi dialects in the area of Morphosyntax. Some recent works have been carried out in Punjab, Pakistan, on the Morphosyntax of local languages (dialects of the Punjabi language). Bhatti (2021) explored Thali (also called Thalochi), a dialect of the Punjabi language spoken in Thar (the area between Jhelum and Sindh). He described noun morphology, verbal morphology, and derivational morphology. Over and above, he also discovered syntax and morphosyntactic features in different sentences of Thali. The findings of the morphosyntactic features of Thali are as follows:

- i. Thali follows a Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) word order, which is common among many Indo-Aryan languages.
- ii. The aspect system in Thali is simpler, consisting of two main aspects—perfect and progressive—each with past and present forms. This system is more straightforward compared to the English aspect system, which employs auxiliary verbs for similar functions.
- iii. Thali verbs are conjugated based on tense, aspect, mood, person, number, and gender, with extensive inflectional morphology. This is in contrast to English, where verb conjugation is generally less complex.

The study of Bhatti (2021) is an endeavour to document under-described dialects in the modern age in the Pakistani context. This study provides guidelines to the researchers in the area of language documentation and language description of the under-described dialects of Punjabi and other indigenous languages. The structural differences between Thali and English, especially in terms of word order, case marking, and aspectual constructions, may pose challenges for the Thali speakers learning English. The study should have been compared with other dialects and languages to understand the Morphosyntax of Thali in a wider picture. The researcher employs fieldwork methodology for data collection, which is a traditional methodology in the fields of language documentation and language description. Thali is considered a neighbouring dialect of Shahpuri. Hence, Thali would have effects on the Shahpuri dialect. Apart from Thali, Dhani is also a neighbouring dialect of Shahpuri.

Morphosyntax of Dhani, a dialect of Punjabi, spoken in Chakwal, Punjab, Pakistan, has been explored recently. Hasan (2022) described the morphosyntactic features of Dhani. He



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investigated the relationship between number, gender, tense, aspect, and noun, respectively. He explored the following verb morphology from Dhani.

Verbs in Dhani contain stems along with some inflectional morphemes. On the other side, some verbs possess only roots. Both finite and non-finite verbs are found in Dhani. Main verbs show transitivity, intransitivity, and causativity. These verbs conjugate and mark subjects according to gender, number, and person with the help of inflectional suffixes. Number, gender, person, case, tense, and aspect change the forms of the verbs. Three tenses (present, past, and future) are found in Dhani. Both the tenses present and future possess simple, perfective, and imperfective aspects. Past tense contains preterite, immediate, remote, and imperfective aspects. Auxiliary and compound verbs are also found in Dhani. Infinitive, gender, and participle are the types of non-finite verbs found in Dhani. The same forms of gerund and infinitive are observed in Dhani, and they can be replaced with nouns alternatively. Dhani participles show gender and number agreement with nouns. Finite verbs of Dhani possess transitive, intransitive, double transitive, and causative. Suffixes (-*dā*, -*dī*, -*de*, -*diāh*, -*nā*, -*erā*, -*erī*, *tiāh*, *tā*, *tī*, *te*, *yā*, *iyā*, *ṅā*) are used with verbs for inflection. Verb phrases are formed by auxiliary verbs, main verbs, and auxiliary + main verbs. Many verb phrases are formed by two or more words, i.e., base form and verb phrase marker. Adverbs of place, time, manner, frequency, and degree are found in Dhani. Like adjectives, adverbs in Dhani are also used for comparison.

This study employed fieldwork methodology for the data collection. The researcher conducted interviews of 36 participants and recorded conversations with native Dhani speakers in the community where the dialect is spoken, such as the areas in and around Chakwal (where Dhani is mainly spoken). This allows for the collection of real-life, natural language use in various contexts. It uses a text-discourse approach to analyse the data. Moreover, the researcher has adopted Comrie's approach to morpheme-to-morpheme analysis as a method of analysis in Morphosyntax. However, this study does not include details regarding phrases, clauses, and sentences. Like Thali, Dhani has also used fieldwork methodology.

The findings of the studies of Thali and Dhani indicate that both these dialects of Punjabi have been explored with regard to the morphosyntactic features; however, there are some gaps in these studies. First, a comparative understanding across the Punjabi dialects in Pakistan remains incomplete. Secondly, both studies have been conducted in one respective district. Next, the sample size of both studies is relatively small: 36 participants and 60 participants in Dhani and Thali, respectively. The studies do not address the morphosyntactic features at the levels of phrases, clauses, and sentences in detail. These are the limitations in both studies: Thali and Dhani. To fill these gaps, a morphosyntactic analysis of verb phrases of the Shahpuri dialect should be addressed, which is geographically and linguistically very close to the Punjab dialects of Dhani and Thali.

Following the methodological traditions set by Bhatti (2021) and Hasan (2022), the current study (A Morphosyntactic Study of Verb Phrases in Shahpuri) also uses the same methodology,



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fieldwork, to fill the identified gaps found in the verb phrases of Dhani and Thali, the Punjabi dialects. Now, we undertake a detailed discussion on the Shahpuri dialect in a separate section.

The linguists have not studied Shahpuri in detail. Therefore, limited information is available on this dialect. However, a few scholars have contributed to its exploration:

- i. Wilson (1898) described literary works and the lexical aspects of Shahpuri.
- ii. Chohan and Garcia (2022) explored the phonological levels of Shahpuri.
- iii. Afzal, Qasim, and Chohan (2024) investigated the morphosyntactic features of the Shahpuri noun phrase.

Let us discuss the previous studies (i-iii) on Shahpuri one by one.

Some scholars have explored the phonological levels of Shahpuri. There are seven short vowels (*a, e, è, i, o, u*) and 10 long vowels (*ā, ē, ī, ū*) in the Shahpuri dialect (Wilson, 1898). According to him, all vowel sounds are nasalized. Shahpuri shares the feature of vowel sounds with that of Western Punjabi since all vowels are nasalized in the dialects of Western Punjabi. According to Wilson, there are 37 consonants in the Shahpuri dialect.

Besides Wilson, Chohan, and Garcia have also studied the phonological aspects of Shahpuri. Chohan and Garcia (2022) have also worked on some aspects of this dialect. They have worked on the phonological level of Shahpuri by comparing it with the standard dialect, Majhi. They use the framework of the Levenshtein algorithm for the comparison of the phonology of Shahpuri and that of Majhi. They find that both dialects, Majhi and Shahpuri, contain 45 consonants. Out of which, 32 sounds have 100% similarity. In this way, the similarity index between Majhi and Shahpuri is 86.51%, and only 13 sounds (13.49%) are spoken by the speakers differently between the two dialects. Both dialects share the same number of vowel sounds. There are 20 vowel sounds in both dialects. Hence, the similarity index in terms of vowel sounds is 100%, and the difference is 0%. So, the cumulative percentage of the similarity index in terms of both the consonants and vowels is 86.51%, and the difference is 12.49%.

From the above two studies, it is found that both groups of researchers count a number of consonants and vowels differently in the Shahpuri dialect. According to Wilson (1898), there are 37 consonants, whereas Nadeem and Garcia take 45 consonants of Shahpuri. Likewise, Wilson counts 17 vowels, and the other group of researchers takes 20 vowels of Shahpuri. Both studies vary from each other concerning the phonological levels of Shahpuri. Time passed affects word composition because Wilson explored the Shahpuri dialect in 1898, while Chohan and Garcia studied it in 2022. The Shahpuri dialect is likely to have developed expanded lexical categories throughout this notable period (1898-2022), ultimately changing its Morphosyntax. Now, we discuss the lexical categories of Shahpuri.

Lexical categories refer to classes of words that share common grammatical functions and properties in a language. Wilson (1898) explored some lexical categories of Shahpuri to some extent. He investigated gender, number system, and case system.



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Like English, the words that denote males are masculine, and those that denote females are feminine. For example, *ghōṛā* (horse) is masculine, and *ghōṛī* (mare) is feminine. Then, he expresses the general rules for denoting the gender of nouns, which are as follows.

- i. The words that end in ‘-ā or -ā̃’, and the words of more than one syllable having the letter ‘u’ in the last syllable are usually masculine, e.g., *āṭā* (flour), *neā* (justice), *janggul* (forest), *bālun* (firewood), *chikkur* (mud).
- ii. The words are taken generally feminine, which end in -ī or I, and words of more than one syllable having the letter i in the last syllable are also feminine, e.g., *tallī* (palm), *kukkiṛ* (hen).
- iii. The very large class of masculine nouns and adjectives ending in -ā, and past participles in -eā, form the feminine by changing that termination into -ī. Masculine and feminine words are given by Wilson (1858) in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2

Gender System in Shahpuri

Masculine	English Meaning	Feminine	English Meaning
<i>Janā</i>	Man	<i>Janī</i>	Woman
<i>ghōṛā</i>	Horse	<i>ghōṛī</i>	Mare
<i>Lēlā</i>	he-lamb	<i>Lēlī</i>	she-lamb
<i>Vachchhā</i>	male-calf	<i>Vchchhī</i>	female-calf
<i>Changā</i>	Good	<i>Changī</i>	Good
<i>Kālā</i>	Black	<i>Kālī</i>	Black
<i>Māreā</i>	Struck	<i>Mārī</i>	Struck
<i>Bērā</i>	large boat	<i>bērī</i>	small boat
<i>būṭā</i>	large plant	<i>būṭī</i>	small plant
<i>Bēā</i>	Other	<i>Beī</i>	
<i>Gēā</i>	Gone	<i>Geī</i>	
<i>Pēā</i>	Fallen	<i>Peī</i>	
<i>dhēā</i>	been given	<i>dheī</i>	

The followings are found based on the Table 2.2.

If a masculine ends in a consonant, the feminine is formed by adding -ī, ṛī, if the final consonant is *r*, by adding *ṛī* to the masculine. For instance, *lohār* (masculine) to *lohāī* (feminine).

- i. In a large class of words where a masculine noun of more than one syllable ends in a consonant preceded by *u*, the feminine is formed by changing the *u* into *i*, and if the vowel in the penultimate syllable is *ō*, it is changed into *ē*. For instance, masculine *kukkiṛ* (cock) to feminine *kukkiṛ* (hen), and masculine *vōhur* (young bull) to feminine *vēhiṛ* (heifer).



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- ii. A noun or adjective ending in *-ī* forms its feminine sometimes by changing the *-ī* into *-in*, or sometimes by changing the *-ī* into *-eāñi*, and shortening the vowel of the preceding syllable. If the masculine ends in *-āī* or *-āī*, the feminine generally changes this termination into *-ēñ*. For instance, from masculine *mirāsī* (bard, musician) to *mirāsīñ*, and from masculine *môchī* (cobbler) to feminine *mucheāñī* (she-cobbler).
- iii. Many common words have the feminine form from an entirely different root from the masculine or in an irregular manner, for instance, from masculine *peō* (father) to feminine *māñ* (mother).

After discussing the gender system in Shahpuri, we now turn to the number system, which is an important category in the grammar of a language.

In linguistics, the number system refers to how a language grammatically distinguishes between quantities. Wilson (1898) documents the rules relating to the number system as follows:

- i. Masculine ending in a consonant or in any vowel except *-ā* generally make no change in the absolute plural, e.g., *ghar* (house), *dānd* (bullock), *kā* (crow), *nāī* (barber), *peō* (father), *taññū* (pony), *mushkī* (black).
- ii. But masculine nouns of more than one syllable ending in a consonant preceded by u change the u into a; and if the vowel in the penultimate syllable is *ô*, change it into *ā*. For instance, from singular *chhōhur* (boy) to plural *chhōhar* (boys), and from singular *vōhur* (young bull) to plural *vāhar* (young bulls).
- iii. Masculine endings in *-ā* and participles ending in *-eā* change it in the absolute plural into *-ē*. For instance, from singular *kuttā* (dog) to plural *kuttē*, and from singular *māreā* (struck) to plural *mārē*. But exceptions are there, for instance, singular *bhrā* (brother) to plural *bhrā*, and singular *gēā* (gone) to plural *gēē*.
- iv. Feminine nouns usually form the absolute plural by adding *-āñ* to the singular; if the singular ends in *-ā*, they add *-vāñ*, for instance, from singular *bhēñ* (sister) to plural *bhēñāñ* (sisters).
- v. Many feminine nouns, especially monosyllables, form the absolute plural by adding *-ī* or *-ū* to the singular, for instance, from singular *gā* to plural *gāñ*.

The number system interacts with the case system in a sentence. According to the change in the number system, the case system also changes.

In a case system, grammatical categories such as nouns and pronouns change their form to indicate their syntactic roles, such as subject or object. Wilson (1898) documents the case system in Shahpuri. He records various types of cases in Shahpuri as follows.

- i. Absolute Singular: The absolute form of a noun or adjective is used when the word is in the normative and may also be used as an accusative, e.g., *ē mērā ghōrā* he (this is my horse), or *mērā ghōrā ān dē* (bring my house). In all other cases (except in the locative



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case of specific nouns), the absolute form of the noun or adjective is apt to change into what may be called the oblique form, regarding which the following rules may be given.

- ii. Oblique Singular: (i) Feminine, whatever be their termination, and masculine regarding ending in a consonant, or any vowel except $-\bar{a}$ or $-\tilde{a}$ usually do not change from the oblique singular, e.g., *chhōhir f.* (girl), *chūchī f.* (chicken), *nāī m.* (barber). But exceptions are there. For instance, *peō m.* (father) becomes *piū*, *mā f.* (mother). (ii). But masculine nouns of more than one syllable ending in a consonant preceded by u (including all infinitives in uṅ) change the u into an in the oblique singular; and if the vowel in the penultimate syllable is ô, change it into â, thus making the oblique singular the same as the absolute plural. For instance, *chhōhur* (absolute singular) becomes *chhōhar* (oblique singular). (iii). The large class of masculine words ending in \bar{a} changes it into \bar{e} in the oblique singular, thus making it the same as the absolute plural. For instance, *ghōrā* (absolute singular) becomes *ghōrē*. But exceptions are there. For instance, *bhrā* changes to *bhrāū*. (iv). In the dialect of the Salt Range, many nouns, and especially monosyllables ending in a consonant, to form the absolute singular, add to the absolute form an e if masculine and an i or u if feminine. For instance, the absolute singular *ghar* (house) becomes oblique singular *ghare*, and the absolute singular *majjh* (buffalo-cow) becomes oblique singular *majjhi*.
- iii. Oblique Plural: Where the absolute plural ends in \tilde{a} , \tilde{i} , or \tilde{u} , it does not change the oblique form. In all other cases, the oblique plural is formed by adding \tilde{a} to the absolute plural, but in masculine nouns, if the absolute plural ends in any vowel, whether nasalized or not, except e, a w is inserted. For instance, the absolute plural *māwā* remains the same (*māwā*) in oblique plural, and the absolute plural *kutte* (dogs) changes into oblique plural with *gharā*. But exceptions are there. For instance, *peō* (fathers) makes *pēwā*, *jō* (barely) *jawā*. *dhēr* (many) becomes *dhērnā*.
- iv. The Agent Case: The agent case, use of the subject when the verb is a transitive verb in a tense expressed by the past participle and its compounds, is, in all cases, the oblique form of the noun without any termination. For instance, *piū kītā* (the father did it).
- v. The Genitive Case: The genitive case is formed by adding to the oblique form the post-position *dā*, which resembles the ('s) in English, but converts the noun into a sort of adjective declined like an adjective in \bar{a} , to agree with the following or governing noun in gender, number, and case (see Table 2.3). *jaṇē dā ghōrā* (the man's horse) is an example of the genitive case.



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Table 2.3

Gender and Possession in Shahpuri

Post-Position of Genitive

Number and Case
of the Following
Noun

Masculine	Feminine	
<i>Dā</i>	<i>Dī</i>	Absolute singular
<i>dē</i>	<i>Dī</i>	Oblique singular
<i>dē</i>	<i>diā</i>	Absolute singular
<i>deā</i>	<i>diā</i>	Oblique plural

- i. The Dative Case: The dative case, which may also be used as an accusative, is formed by adding the post-position *nū* to the oblique form. For instance, *ghōrē nū* (to the horse)
- ii. The Locative Case: The locative case means *to*, *at*, or *in* a place or time. It is formed as follows. (i) A masculine in *ā* changes the *ā* into *ē*, e.g., *khūrē* at *khūrā*. (ii). A masculine noun in the singular ending in a consonant either remains unchanged or adds *e* or *i* to the root, or if it ends in a syllable containing a short *u*, it changes the *u* into *i*, and if the preceding vowel is *ō* changes it into *ē*. For instance, *ghar gēā* (he has gone home).
- iii. The Vocative Case: (i) Masculine. If *ā* is added to the oblique case, it becomes the vocative case. For instance, *ē sachcheā Rabbā* (O true God), *bachrā* (darling), etc. (ii) Feminine. If *ē* is added to the root, it becomes the vocative case. For instance, *nī māē* (O mother), *nī ranne* (O wife). (iii). The plural (for both masculine and feminine). If *ō* or *hō* is added to the oblique form, it becomes the vocative case, for instance, *nī dhīāhō* (O daughters), etc.

While the case system in Shahpuri marks the grammatical role of a noun in a sentence—whether it acts as subject, object, or possessor—diminutives alter the noun to express size, affection, or social intimacy. Both systems illustrate how morphological changes in Shahpuri enrich meaning and structure in communication. The next category is diminutives.

Diminutives are changed forms of nouns. They are used to express small size or affection. Diminutives are formed, in the case of inanimate objects, by changing a masculine noun into a feminine. For instance, *chappa* (a large oar) and *chappī* (a small oar), *bērā* (a large boat) and *bērī* (a small boat).

Wilson (1898) gives a small space to collective nouns (*kutīr* for a pack of dogs), contractions of names (Jallu for Jalāl Khan), and extended nouns (*kitāb shtāb* for book & *ōtrā nikhattra* for without child or land). In Shahpuri, just like in standard Punjabi, you can connect two diminutives (or one diminutive and one regular word) using conjunctions.

Conjunctions are words that are used to connect phrases, clauses, and sentences. Wilson (1898) enlists the following conjunctions in Table 2.4 that are commonly used in Shahpuri.



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Table 2.4

Conjunctions Used in Shahpuri

Shahpuri Conjunction	English Conjunction	Shahpuri Conjunction	English Conjunction
<i>te, ate, hor</i>	And	<i>haḍḍô</i>	however
<i>Je</i>	That, if, as, because	<i>vat, mur</i>	then, again
<i>Jēkar</i>	If	<i>jaduṅ.... taduṅ</i>	when.....then
<i>Par</i>	But	<i>kīkuṅ</i>	How
<i>Ke</i>	Or	<i>hikke.... kike</i>	either, or

However, Wilson did not describe the types of conjunctions, postpositions, and interjections. He only explored the types of verbs, some types of nouns, and adverbs. Wilson himself states at the very start of his book, “Grammar and Dictionary of Western Panjabi as Spoken in the Shahpur District (1898)” that this book does not cover every aspect of Western Panjabi.

Afzal, Qasim, and Chohan (2024) explored the morphosyntactic analysis of the Shahpuri Noun Phrases. This study maps how Shahpuri builds noun phrases. It shows that speakers use many parts of speech to form simple and complex structures. The data confirms that proper nouns, common nouns, material nouns, abstract nouns, and compound nouns all work as independent noun phrases. Shahpuri also combines these nouns with adjectives, possessive forms, cardinal numerals, ordinal numerals, interrogative adjectives, adverbs, and conjunctions. Each element agrees with gender, number, and person.

The study reports that Shahpuri often uses meaningless words with meaningful nouns. These words still show systematic behavior inside noun phrases. When joined with adjectives, they create longer and more complex structures. The results also show that multiple nouns can connect through possession to form one extended noun phrase.

The findings prove that Shahpuri holds a wide range of morphosyntactic patterns. Noun phrases follow clear agreement rules, use varied constructions, and reflect a rich grammatical system. The study shows that Shahpuri has diverse resources for building noun phrases and needs further documentation in other linguistic domains.

A review of the existing literature reveals a significant gap in the documentation and analysis of Shahpuri, particularly in the morphosyntactic domain. While Chohan and Garcia (2022) conducted an important phonological study on Shahpuri, focusing on the sound system and its distinctive features, their work is limited to phonology. It does not extend to the syntactic structure of the language. On the other hand, Wilson (1898) provided an early exploration of some lexical categories of Shahpuri, such as nouns and verbs. However, his study remains outdated and lacks a comprehensive analysis of the syntactic structures, particularly at the



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phrase, clause, and sentence levels. Moreover, Afzal, Qasim, and Chohan (2024) restrict their study to the exploration of the morphosyntactic structures of the noun phrase of Shahpuri.

Furthermore, Wilson's work did not delve into the deeper complexities of the syntax of Shahpuri, such as sentence structure, word order, or the interaction between different syntactic elements. His study primarily focused on the morphological aspects of the language, and even then, it was restricted to the analysis of individual word categories without a thorough investigation into how these words function within larger syntactic units like phrases, clauses, and sentences. This leaves a substantial gap in our understanding of the syntax of Shahpuri, especially with regard to verb phrases.

Additionally, there is an absence of studies on the syntax of Shahpuri in comparison to other regional languages or dialects of Punjabi. While some work has been done on languages spoken in the same geographic region, such as Torwali, Urdu, and Dameli, these studies have not addressed Shahpuri directly. As a result, the syntactic features of Shahpuri remain underexplored. The existing research fails to consider how the syntax of Shahpuri aligns with or diverges from other dialects of Punjabi, particularly in terms of the structures of verb phrases.

The present study aims to fill this gap by providing a detailed analysis of the morphosyntactic features of Shahpuri in the area of verb phrases. By focusing on verb phrases, this research will contribute to a deeper understanding of the syntactic structure of Shahpuri, addressing the underrepresentation of this dialect in the field of linguistic documentation. Through fieldwork and the collection of natural language data, this study will explore the verb phrases of Shahpuri in relation to other regional languages, thereby contributing to the preservation and documentation of this endangered dialect. The findings from this research will provide valuable insights into the broader typology of Punjabi dialects and their syntactic structures while also offering an important resource for future research in this area.

Research Methodology

The present study is a descriptive study. It describes the Morphosyntactic features of the Shahpuri verb phrases. We have employed a text and discourse-centered approach in the study. This approach focuses on observing how and for what purposes native speakers use their language in everyday life. This approach was also employed by Munshi (2018) and Bashir and Connors (2019). The text and discourse-centered approach is the best way for describing the grammar of a language (Chelliah, 2013).

We also analyze the current study (A Morphosyntactic Study of Verb Phrases in Shahpuri) through a text and discourse-centered approach after collecting data through two techniques.

We utilized two techniques to collect the data in the current study. The data were collected through structured and semi-structured interviews with the native speakers of Shahpuri residing in the districts of Sargodha, Khushab, Mianwali, and Bhakkar (including these districts in the Sargodha division). Ten participants from each district were taken for interviews. Interviews of



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all four districts comprised 40 participants. The second technique for data collection was Focus Group Discussions. Under this technique (FGD), four groups (each of eight members) were engaged in discussion from the Sargodha division (one group from every district). There are 72 participants in total for the collection of the data under two techniques: interviews and focus group discussions.

The descriptive procedure was applied in this study. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and elicitation tasks. A morpheme-based approach (Haspelmath & Sims, 2010) was adopted to categorize the data and interpret the linguistic structures found in Shahpuri, aligning with descriptive linguistics goals. Now, we outline the procedure for coding the data.

Coding refers to the procedure of breaking down and labeling raw data into meaningful units. The following steps were followed for coding the raw data in the current study.

- i. The recorded data of every participant was transcribed manually into Shahpuri, using Indological IPA according to ISO 15919:2001, and saved in folders separately.
- ii. Then, this data was cross-checked by replaying the audios to ensure accuracy. The research Assistants helped in ensuring the accuracy of the transcriptions.
- iii. This transcribed data was presented in tabular form. One column in the tables contained Indological IPA transcription of the Shahpuri responses, and the other glosses in English (English translation).
- iv. It was segmented into morphemes using the item and arrangement method (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011). For example, in the word *karendā'* (doing), codes were assigned as: root (*kar*), progressive marker (*-end-*), and agreement suffix (*ā*).
- v. Then, the data was tagged with respect to POS and glossed per Leipzig rules (Comrie et al., 2008). In addition, some extra categories (see List of Abbreviations) were introduced to capture features specific to Shahpuri.
- vi. In the end, the data was categorized under the groups of morphology, syntax, and Morphosyntax.

The procedure of coding the data is also presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Procedure for Coding the Data

Step	Description	Example from Shahpuri Data
1. Transcription	Convert audio to IPA text	<i>mein dispenser dā kōrs karendā pēyān</i>
2. Cross-Checking	Verification of data	The data was verified through three Research Assistants
3. Tabular Form	The transcribed data was placed in tabular form	In one column, the transcription was given, like <i>karendā</i> and in the other



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			its gloss in English (doing).
4. Segmentation	Break into morphemes		<i>mein</i> (root), <i>dispenser</i> (root), <i>dā</i> (possessive), <i>kōrs</i> (root), <i>kar-end-ā</i> (root-progressive-agreement), <i>pēyān</i> (auxiliary)
5. POS Tagging	Assign grammatical categories		PRO, N, POSS, N, V-PROG-AGR, AUX
6. Categorization	Group into paradigms		Morphology: Verb inflection; Syntax: Noun phrase

The morpheme-based approach was employed because it allows for precise identification of linguistic structures in under-documented languages (like Shahpuri) (Haspelmath & Sims, 2010).

Morpheme-based approach analyses word forms as arrangements of morphemes. For instance, in the word '*indecipherability*,' *there are six morphemes: 'in, de, cipher, able, and ity.'* In this word, *cipher* is a root morpheme, and the remaining morphemes are derivational morphemes. This approach to analysing words is also called the item-and-arrangement method. It takes words as they are made of putting (concatenating) different morphemes together (Aronoff & Fudeman, 2011). So, morpheme-based approach is very suitable for the descriptive studies which carry morpheme concatenation.

The present study adopted a morpheme-based approach, as presented by Aronoff and Fudeman (2011), for morphological analysis. Haspelmath and Sims (2010) contend that the morpheme-based model is very much like syntactic rules that combine words. They support this model based on two reasons. First, morpheme concatenation is the most common kind of morphological pattern. Second, it treats morphological structure as syntax treats a string of words. Moreover, this model allows clearer comparison with previous descriptive studies of related Indo-Aryan languages (e.g., Munshi, 2018; Bashir & Connors, 2019; Bhatti, 2021; Hasan, 2022). Many of these studies also employ morpheme-based analyses.

For a description of data, however, the other studies of Perder (2013) on Domeli, Munshi (2018) on Srinagar Burushaski, Bashir and Connors (2019) on Hindko, Punjabi, and Saraiki, Bhatti (2021) on Thali, and Hasan (2022) on Dhani were consulted and followed as guidelines and direction during the data analysis. Rules or general patterns were explained through examples selected from the data. The description was divided into sections describing morphology and syntax, discussing individual subjects such as word classes, phrase types, and sentence structures. The following steps were adopted for the analysis of the morphosyntactic features.

- i. The coded morphemes were examined to identify recurring forms, especially verb conjugations that show tense and aspect patterns, such as progressive forms like *karendā*.



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The data was analysed to address the research questions. The first research question of the study was: ‘How are the Morphosyntactic features of the Shahpuri verb phrases represented? And the second research question was: How are the number, gender, person, case, tense, and agreement exhibited in Shahpuri verb phrases? To answer these research questions, the Morphosyntactic features were explored in terms of the types of verb phrases. Now, we are reporting an analysis of modality and verb phrases found in Shahpuri.

VP and Modality

Modality shows the attitude of the speaker toward a state or action described by a verb. Modal verbs express possibility, necessity, obligation, and uncertainty. These verbs occur after the main verbs in the verb phrases in Shahpuri. In the present, *è* (is) occurs at the end of the singular present sentence, whereas *hā’ī* (was) is used for the singular past. In Shahpuri, the most occurring modal verbs are in tabular form (see Table 4.1)

Table 4.1

Modal Verbs as Verb Phrases in Shahpuri

Shahpuri Modal	Tense	Person	Number	English gloss
<i>sakdā è (M)</i>	Present	3 rd Person	Singular	He can
<i>sakdī è (F)</i>	Present	3 rd Person	Singular	She can
<i>sakdā hin</i>	Present	1 st Person	Singular	I can
<i>sakdē ò</i>	Present	2 nd Person	Singular	You can
<i>sakdē ā̃ (M)</i>	Present	3 rd Person	Plural	They can
<i>sakdī ā̃ (F)</i>	Present	3 rd Person	Plural	They can
<i>ho sakdī è (F)</i>	Present	3 rd Person	Singular	It may
<i>ho sakdā è (F)</i>	Present	3 rd Person	Singular	It may
<i>sakdā hā’ī (M)</i>	Past	3 rd Person	Singular	He could
<i>sakdā hā’ī</i>	Past	1 st Person	Singular	I could
<i>sakdē hā’ī</i>	Past	2 nd Person	Singular	You could
<i>Sakday hā’ī (M)</i>	Past	3 rd Person	Plural	They could
<i>sakdī hā’ī (F)</i>	Past	3 rd Person	Plural	They could
<i>ho sakdī hā’ī (F)</i>	Past	3 rd Person	Singular	It might
<i>ho sakdā hā’ī (M)</i>	Past	3 rd Person	Singular	It might
<i>lāzmī hā’ī</i>	Past	All persons	Singular	Necessity
<i>chāhīdā hā’ī</i>	Past	All persons	Singular / plural	Necessity

The table (4.1) shows the types of modal verbs used in the Shahpuri dialect. These modal verbs are used as verb phrases in Shahpuri. These verbs show possibility, ability, and necessity in Shahpuri. The structure of modal verb phrases in Shahpuri is found as follows:

Modal verb stem + Gender/ Number Marker + Auxiliary



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Verb Phrases and Helping Verbs

Helping verbs include *be*, *have*, and *do*. ‘Be’ verbs include *is*, *am*, *are*, *was*, and *were*. ‘Have’ verbs include *has*, *have*, and *had*. ‘Do’ verbs are used to form questions, negative statements, and emphatic expressions. They help main verbs convey their meaning.

Helping verbs alone or with other words work as verb phrases in Shahpuri. *è* (*is/are*) is used at the end of the sentences of Shahpuri. Some speakers speak *hāṭ* (*was*) to talk about past events. Some speakers use *vañj* (*do*) as an auxiliary verb. *ã* (*are*) is used for both singular and plural 1st person. The helping verbs in Shahpuri are summarized in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Types of Helping Verbs Used in Shahpuri

Shahpuri Helping Verbs	Tense	Person	English Gloss
<i>È</i>	Present	3 rd person	Is
<i>hāṭ</i>	Past	All persons	was/were
<i>ã</i>	Present	1 st & 3 rd persons	am, are
<i>Õ</i>	Present	2 nd person	Are
<i>Hin</i>	Present	2 nd person	Are
<i>nē</i>	Present	3 rd person	Are
<i>ã</i>	Present	1 st person	Am
<i>Gè</i>	Future	All persons	will / shall

Table 4.2 enlists the helping verbs used in Shahpuri. The helping verbs change as the tenses and persons change. Shahpuri uses some helping verbs for all persons. For instance, *hāṭ* (*was*, *were*) is used for all persons (1st, 2nd & 3rd persons). Some helping verbs are used for more than one person. For example, *ã* (*am*, *are*) is used for both for two persons 1st & 3rd persons. The helping verb, *gè* (*will*, *shall*), is used for the future tense.

4.4 Reduplication of Verbs in Verb Phrase

There are two ways to form some verb phrases in Shahpuri. First, the stem is repeated. Secondly, the word after the stem is replaced with another word as in the examples (1-2):

- (1) *bhaj bhaj*
Run. V run. V
‘run’
- (2) *bhaj pê*
run.V start.AUX
‘start running’



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In example (1), the first verb is reduplicated. These two words make a noun phrase in Shahpuri. In example (2), the second word in example (1) is replaced with *pê* (start). This word, *pê* (start), changes the meaning of the entire verb phrase. These two sentences are imperative also. Now, we discuss linking verb phrases in Shahpuri. Sometimes, a linking verb is used to add a subject to the predicate:

Linking Verb as a Verb Phrase

A linking verb joins the subject to its predicate in Shahpuri:

(3)	<i>Islām</i>	<i>tō</i>	<i>ḍorī</i>	<i>saḍā</i>	<i>āpnā</i>
	Islam.N	from.POST	distance.N	our.POSS	own.PRO
	<i>qaṣor</i>	<i>è.</i>			
	Fault.N	is.AUX			

‘Distance from Islam is our own fault’

In sentence (3), the verb phrase, *è* (is), acts as a linking verb, which links the subject, *Islām tū ḍorī* (distance from Islam), with the complement, *saḍā āpnā qaṣor* (our own fault). So, in this sentence, only the linking verb, *è* (is), forms a verb phrase in Shahpuri. The linking verb, *è* (is), is used when the subject is singular. Morphosyntactically speaking, the linking verb, *è* (is), agrees with the subject, *Islām tū ḍorī* (distance from Islam).

Compound Verb Phrases

A verb phrase that consists of more than one word is called a compound verb phrase. A compound verb phrase is also found in Shahpuri:

(4)	<i>Islām</i>	<i>taraqqī</i>	<i>dī</i>	<i>rāh</i>	<i>icc</i>
	Islam. N	Progress.N	of.POST	path.N	in.POST
	<i>rokāvaṭ</i>	<i>paida</i>	<i>nahī</i>	<i>kaṛdā</i>	
	hurdle.N	create.V	not. Adv	do.AUX	

‘Islam does not create hurdle in the path of progress.’

In sentence (4), the main verb, *paida* (create), shows the action of creating, *kaṛdā* (do) is the auxiliary verb to indicate present habitual tense, and *nahī* (not) negates the action. The combination of the main verb, *paida* (create), auxiliary verb, *kaṛdā* (do), and negation, *nahī* (not) forms a compound verb phrase, *paida nahī kaṛdā* (does not create). Morphosyntactically, negation changes the meaning of the sentences.

(5)	<i>itnā</i>	<i>nuqsān</i>	<i>jītnā</i>	<i>huṇ</i>	<i>ho-rā</i>
	Such.Adj	Loss.N	so much as.RP	now.Adv	happen.V
	<i>pehlē</i>	<i>kadī</i>	<i>nahī</i>	<i>hoyā</i>	
	before.Adv	ever.Adv	not. Adv	did.AUX	

‘Such a loss as is happening now never happened before.’



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The verb phrase, *kadī nahī hoyā* (never happened), is a compound verb and shows the past action, indicating that this level of loss did not happen before. This sentence (5) contains two verb phrases. The first, *ho-rā* (occurring), shows an ongoing action. The second, *hoy* (happened), is in the past tense, showing that the action (loss) is in the past tense. In example (5), *hoyā* (did) shows that the action occurred in the past.

Compound Verb Phrase Containing an Adverb

Verb phrase in Shahpuri also carries an adverb:

- (6) *log mobaḷā tō haṭde hī*
People.N mobiles.N from.POST stop.V at all.Adv
nahī
Not.Adv
'The People do not stop using mobiles at all.'

In sentence (6), *haṭde* (stop) is the main verb, *hī* (at all) is an emphasis particle (Adv), stressing the action of not stopping, and *nahī* (not) is a negation particle, indicating that the action does not occur. The verb phrase in the example (6), *haṭde hī nahī* (do not stop at all), is a compound verb phrase since it consists of three words. In this noun phrase, *hī* (at all) is an adverb. This is a negated verb phrase with an emphasis. The main verb *haṭde* (stop) is negated by *nahī* (not), and the inclusion of *hī* (at all) emphasizes the fact that the action (of stopping) does not happen at all.

Verb Phrase and Placement of Negation

Let us discuss the placement of the adverb and negation within a verb phrase.

- (7) *tuhānū nahī patā o kī kar-rahe*
You.PRO not.Adv know.V they.PRO What.Q doing.V
nē
Are.AUX
'You don't know what they are doing.'

In sentence (7), there are two verb phrases. The first one is, *nahī patā* (do not know). The second verb phrase is *kar-rahe nē* (are doing), expressing an ongoing action (they are doing something). The first verb phrase consists of an adverb, *nahī* (not), and the verb, *patā* (know). The negation happens before the verb within the verb phrase, as in the example (7), *nahī patā* (do not know).

Verb Phrase and Impact of Number

A verb phrase also agrees with the subject in number. Let us take examples (8-10):

- (8) *Ō jandē nē Sargodhā*
They.PRO go.V do.AUX Sargodha.N



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- (9) ‘They go to Sargodha’
English medium school acē jā rahē
English.N medium.N school.N well.Adj go.V ing.PROG
hin.
are. AUX
‘English medium schools are going well’
- (10) *ōnā-dī ta`līm thoṛī kam ho ga`ī*
Their.PRO education.N a little bit.Av less. Adj become. V
è
have.AUX
‘Their education has become a little bit less’

In plural sentences for the third person, the subject takes ‘*nē*’ at the end of these sentences, as in example (8). In such plural sentences, the singular verb, *jandā*, also changed to *jandē*. The last sound changes from *ā* to *ē*. In this way, the verb agrees with the subject. Shahpuri takes ‘*hin*’ (are) at the end of the sentences where the subject is plural, as in example (9). In singular sentences containing the third person, *è* (has) occurs as in the example (10).

Verb Phrase and Gender

Verbs of Shahpuri take different forms for the two genders: masculine and feminine.

- (11) *lohārā dā kam karenḍe ā*
Blacksmiths. N of.POST work.N do.V are.AUX
‘We do the work of the blacksmiths’
- (12) *lohārā dā kam karendī ā*
Blacksmiths. N of.POST work.N do.V are.AUX
‘we do the work of the blacksmiths’

The verb phrase in example (11) is *karenḍe ā* (do), and *ā* occurs at the end of the verb, which shows that the subject is masculine plural. On the other side, the verb phrase in the example (12) is *karendī ā* (do), and *ī* happens at the end of the verb that shows that the subject is plural feminine. The plural sentences containing male or feminine subjects use *ā* at the end of the respective verbs.

Intransitive Verb Phrases

Shahpuri also uses an intransitive verb, as is given in example (13).

13. *mē kal bāzār giā.*
I.PRO yesterday.Adv bazar. N went.V



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‘I went to the market yesterday.’

In example (13), the verb phrase, *giā* (went), has been used. This verb phrase refers to a past event, as the present form of *giā* (went) is *jandā* (go). This verb is an intransitive verb as it does not take a direct object. This verb is an action verb as the subject moves to the goal, *bāzār* (market). The masculine subject, *mē* (I), agrees with the verb. The verb, *giā* (went), also hints that the subject is singular, as *gae* (went) is the plural form of this verb. We analyse transitive verbs in the past tense.

Transitive Verb Phrases

A transitive verb takes a direct object in Shahpuri. Example (14) shows the composition of a transitive verb.

14. *Oh baccē nū māriyā.*
He.PRO Child.N to.POST hit.V
‘He hit the child.’

The verb phrase, *māriyā* (hit) in example (14) is in the past tense. This verb is a transitive verb since it takes a direct object, *baccē* (child). This verb is in the perfective aspect. The present form of *māriyā* (hit) is *mārdā* (hits), adding the habitual suffix, *dā*, with the stem, *mār*. This sentence is in active voice because the subject, *Oh* (he), acts as an agent and performs the action. The verb in the example (14) appears at the end of the sentence, following the usual word order of SOV of Shahpuri. Let us see another example of a transitive verb in Shahpuri in example (15).

15. *asī kām kar rahē āñ.*
We.PRO work.O do.V ing.ASP are.AUX
‘We are working.’

kar rahē āñ (are) is a transitive verb that takes a direct object, *kām* (work/task). In Shahpuri, three words, *kar* (do), *rahē* (ing), and *āñ* (are) make one helping verb of English, i.e., are.

Ditransitive Verb

In the Shahpuri dialect, ditransitive verbs take both direct and indirect objects.

16. *mē baccē nū sabāk cikhāyā.*
I.PRO child.N to.POST lesson.N taught. V
‘I taught the child a lesson.’

In example (16), *cikhāyā* (taught) is a ditransitive verb since it takes two objects. *Sabāk* (lesson) is a direct object, whereas *baccē nū* (to the child) is an indirect object. This verb is in the perfective aspect. The present form of *cikhāyā* (taught) is *cikhāndā* (teaches), adding the habitual



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suffix, *dā*, with the stem, *cikhān*. This sentence is in active voice because the subject *mē* (I) acts as an agent and performs the action. The verb in the example (16) appears at the end of the sentence, following the usual word order of SOV of Shahpuri.

Reflexive Transitive Constructions

Shahpuri also uses a reflexive transitive verb. In a reflexive transitive, the subject does not take a direct object. In a reflexive transitive, the object is the same as the subject. A reflexive pronoun is used in such a type of sentence as the example (17) shows.

17. *Oh* *apṇē-āp* *nū* *dhoyā*.
He.PRO himself.REF to.POST wash.V
'He washed himself.'

Example (17) demonstrates a reflexive transitive construction. This example consists of a subject, *oh* (he), a reflexive pronoun/objective *apṇē-āp* (himself) that is joined by a possessive element, *apṇē* (own") with *āp* (self), together meaning "himself." *nū* (to) words as an object marker that shows that the reflexive pronoun serves as the direct object of the verb. *dhoyā* (washed) is in past form and functions as a transitive verb. The verb, *dhoyā* (washed), agrees with the subject in gender and number.

Findings and Discussions

A verb or verb phrase is the main part of a sentence. It is used to denote an action or state. Bickford (1998) considers a verb as an action, relation, or experience. Verbs in Shahpuri exhibit rich inflectional morphology, primarily through suffixation, and may occur either as single-word units or as multi-word constructions.

Verbs take inflectional morphology in Shahpuri. Based on inflection, Shahpuri verbs take different forms. Morphologically speaking, inflections mean the use of suffixes. Most of the verb phrases are single words in Shahpuri, but Shahpuri verb phrases may also take more than one word. The process of suffixation marking inflectional morphology of the Shahpuri dialect aligns with the structures of Urdu and Hindi, where verbs similarly encode agreement and TAM categories morphologically (Butt & King, 2004).

There are two types of verbs in Shahpuri: auxiliary and main verb/ action verb/ principal verb. Auxiliary tells the time of occurrence of the action. Sometimes, main verbs form verb phrases alone in Shahpuri, and sometimes, main verbs with auxiliaries make a verb phrase. Auxiliary verbs include modal verbs (Table 4.1). Let us discuss modal verbs in Shahpuri.

Modality in Shahpuri shows the attitude of the user/ speaker towards the proposition, including the notions of possibility, ability, and necessity. As opposite to English, modal verbs follow the main verbs. Composition of the modal verbs in the Shahpuri dialect would be under:

Modal + gender/ number marker + Auxiliary



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Tense, person, gender, and number can change the structures of the modal verbs after agreeing with the subject, i.e., (*sakdā è*, ‘he can’) and necessity (*chāhīdā hā’ī*, ‘it is necessary’). There is a distinctive difference between a main verb and an auxiliary verb. While main verbs encode lexical meaning, auxiliary verbs convey tense, aspect, and modality. The Shahpuri verb phrases may consist of a main verb or combine with auxiliaries to form complex predicates. Helping verbs in Shahpuri correspond broadly to English *be*, *have*, and *do*, though their distribution differs. Forms such as *è*, *hā’ī*, *ā*, *hin*, and *gè* encode tense and agreement. Some auxiliaries are generalized across persons (e.g., *hā’ī* for past), while others show person-specific usage. These auxiliaries function either independently as verb phrases or in combination with main verbs. Along with other types of verbs, including auxiliaries, Shahpuri employs the reduplication morphological process in verb phrase formation. Main verbs are repeated for emphasis or lexical variation, or combined with auxiliary-like elements (e.g., *pê* ‘start’) (Table 4.2). In the modal constructions of the Shahpuri dialect, modality occurs after the verb. This postal-verbal placement of modal elements in Shahpuri supports the head-final typology identified for South Asian languages (Masica, 1991).

Shahpuri employs reduplication as a productive morphological process in verb phrase formation. Verb stems may be repeated for emphasis or lexical variation, or combined with auxiliary-like elements (e.g., *pê* ‘start’) to alter aspectual meaning (examples, 1-2). Such constructions may also convey imperative force. In Shahpuri, other verb phrases are also found. Reduplication of the Shahpuri dialect is also found in the Bengali and Tamil as Abbi (1992) notes reduplication as a productive morphological process in Bengali and Tamil, where it conveys emphasis, intensity, or aspectual nuances.

The next forms of verb phrase are linking verbs and compound verbs. In Shahpuri, linking verbs connect subjects with their complements. These linking verbs agree with the subject in number and gender. Linking verbs, particularly *è* (‘is’), function to connect subjects with their complements, showing agreement with the subject (example, 3). This aspect of Shahpuri is also found in Hindi and Urdu, as found out by Bhatt (2005). Compound verb phrases consist of various parts. These parts are the main verb, auxiliary, and negation (examples, 4-6). These elements in compound verb phrases convey tense, aspect, and polarity. Negation is also an element found in compound verb phrases. Like English, negation (*nahī*) precedes the verb within the verb phrase. This negation works as an adverbial element (example, 7). Verb phrases in Shahpuri contain other adverbial elements, such as *hī* (at all), that modify or intensify the action. Verb phrases also observe agreement. The compound verb phrases of the Shahpuri dialect align with those of Indo-Aryan languages, as Butt (1995) testifies that complex predicates consisting of a main verb and light/auxiliary verbs are a defining feature of Indo-Aryan languages. Shahpuri constructions, where auxiliaries encode tense, aspect, and modality while main verbs retain lexical meaning, parallel similar structures in Punjabi and Saraiki.

Shahpuri verb phrases exhibit agreement with the subject in both gender and number. Plurality may be marked through changes in verb morphology (e.g., *-ā* to *-ē*) and the use of auxiliaries such as *nē* or *hin*. Gender distinctions are reflected in suffixes (*-e* for masculine, *-ī* for feminine),



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demonstrating systematic Morphosyntactic alignment (examples 11 & 12). This agreement pattern is closely linked to transitivity, as the alignment of the verb may shift depending on whether the clause is transitive or intransitive. Verb phrases agree with the subject in number. In plural third-person sentences, the subject takes “*nē*” and the verb changes form, such as from *jandā* to *jandē*, showing plurality. Auxiliary verbs also reflect this agreement, with “*hin*” used for plural subjects. In contrast, singular third-person sentences use the auxiliary “*ē*” (has) (examples, 8-10). Overall, both verb forms and auxiliaries adjust to match whether the subject is singular or plural. The Shahpuri verb phrases show agreement with gender and number. This agreement of Shahpuri aligns with that of Punjabi and Saraiki (Bhatt, 2007).

The Shahpuri dialect incorporates transitive, intransitive, ditransitive, and reflexive transitive constructions. In Shahpuri, intransitive verbs do not take direct objects, expressing actions or states (example, 13), whereas transitive verbs take direct objects, appearing in perfective or habitual forms (examples, 14 & 15). A ditransitive verb takes both direct and indirect objects, making a complex argument structure (example, 16). The Shahpuri dialect also follows reflexive transitive constructions, where the subject and object are co-referential, marked by reflexive pronouns, *apṇē-āp* (myself) (example, 17). Across these categories of the Shahpuri dialect, verbs consistently appear in clause-final position, reflecting the canonical SOV word order of Shahpuri. The classification of transitivity of the Shahpuri dialect is also parallel to Hindi and Urdu, as investigated by Masica (1991).

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore Morphosyntactic features of verb phrases in the Shahpuri dialect, focusing on the role of grammatical categories such as number, gender, person, case, tense and agreement. The data were collected from 72 participants from the Sargodha division through focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. Then, the data were analyzed using Leipzig Glossing rules. The findings show that the Shahpuri dialect demonstrates a highly systematic and productive Morphosyntactic framework. Verb phrases in Shahpuri convey lexical meaning and grammatical information with the help of inflectional morphology and auxiliary constructions. Auxiliaries mark tense, aspect and modality whereas main verbs or action verbs convey lexical meaning, and Modal constructions follow a post-verbal pattern (Modal + agreement marker + auxiliary), reinforcing the head-final typology characteristic of South Asian languages.

The analysis uncovers that the constructions of the verb phrases in Shahpuri range from one word to multiple words, with suffixation serving as the primary mechanism for making tense, aspect, gender, and number. This mechanism of morphology aligns Shahpuri within the typological profile of South Asian languages.

This study also shows the complex predicates and compound verb phrases in the Shahpuri dialect, where main verbs combine with auxiliaries, negation, and adverbial elements to express nuanced meanings.



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The auxiliary system in Shahpuri shows some simplification, but it is not random. For example, *hāṛī* is used for different persons in the past (Table 4.2), while forms like *ā*, *hin*, and *ō* still show some person differences. This means that some distinctions are reduced, but the system still works clearly. In the same way, Shahpuri makes strong use of light verbs in sentences like *paida nahī kardā* (example 4) and *kar rahē ān* (example 15). Here, the main verb gives the basic meaning, while verbs like *kar* ('do') and *ho* ('become') add extra meaning such as action, change, or aspect. This pattern is also found in other Indo-Aryan languages, but in Shahpuri the roles of each part are clearer and more regular.

Moreover, the striking Morphosyntactic feature of agreement also appears as a central organizing principle in Shahpuri verb phrases, with verbs systematically aligning with the subject in terms of gender and number. Variations such as the alternation between *-ā* and *-ē*, and the use of auxiliaries like *hin* and *ē*, demonstrate a strong agreement system. Shahpuri uses *-e* for masculine and *-ī* for feminine, as seen in examples (11) and (12), and Likewise, Shahpuri also mark plural forms clearly. This suggests that strong agreement system of Shahpuri. Importantly, this agreement interacts with transitivity, reflecting ergative tendencies in certain constructions. The study also confirms that Shahpuri maintains canonical SOV word order, with verbs consistently appearing in clause-final position.

Over and above, the Shahpuri dialect exhibits a rich transitivity. Verb phrases appear in Shahpuri in the forms of intransitive, transitive, ditransitive and reflexive transitive constructions. The word, *apṇē-āp* (myself), marks reflexive transitive constructions. Reflexive forms like *apṇē-āp nū dhoyā* (example 17) are also stable and regularly used. Finally, Shahpuri follows a strict SOV order, where the verb and all its parts come at the end of the sentence, as seen in many examples (4–10, 15). This gives the sentence a clear structure and shows that Shahpuri has a well-organized verb phrase system, which makes it slightly different from other Punjabi dialects.

Moreover, negation patterns, particularly the pre-verbal placement of *nahī*, and the integration of adverbial elements within verb phrases, contribute to the complexity and expressiveness of Shahpuri Morphosyntax. Negation in Shahpuri is also quite fixed. The word *nahī* usually comes before the main verb and stays inside the verb phrase, as in examples (4), (6), and (7). This makes the meaning easy to understand because the position of negation does not change much. Another interesting feature is reduplication. In examples (1) and (2), forms like *bhaj bhaj* or *bhaj pē* do more than just add emphasis—they show repetition or the start of an action.

Overall, Shahpuri verb phrases display a rich interplay of morphology and syntax, characterized by inflectional variation, auxiliary support, and flexible multi-word constructions. The system encodes tense, aspect, modality, agreement, and argument structure through systematic patterns, highlighting the complexity and typological significance of Shahpuri within Indo-Aryan languages.



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This study reveals that Morphosyntactic traits of Shahpuri show distinctive patterns in their degree of transparency, distribution, and structural organization. One of those features is the presence of split ergative alignment conditioned by aspect, particularly visible in perfective transitive constructions such as example (14) and (16), where the verb form and argument structure suggest alignment patterns.

In contrast, non-perfective constructions, such as the progressive form *kar rahē āñ* in example (15), follow a nominative pattern, where the subject agrees directly with the verb. This shows that Shahpuri changes its alignment based on aspect. In simple terms, tense and aspect affect how the verb agrees with the subject and object. Because of this, the alignment system in Shahpuri appears clearer and easier to observe than in some other Punjabi dialects, where these patterns are not always so obvious.

Another striking feature of Morphosyntax of the Shahpuri dialect is how Shahpuri builds its verb phrases step by step using different elements. In examples like *kar rahē āñ* (15) and *kar-rahe nē* (7), each part has a clear role. The main verb *kar* gives the basic meaning (do), *rahē* shows that the action is ongoing, and the auxiliaries (*āñ*, *nē*) shows tense and agreement. Instead of packing everything into one word, Shahpuri spreads this information across separate words. This kind of structure is also found in other Indo-Aryan languages, but in Shahpuri these layers remain clearer and more consistent, which makes the verb structure easier to understand.

This study highlights Shahpuri as an important Indo-Aryan dialect, where Morphosyntax plays a central role in shaping grammatical meaning. The findings place Shahpuri within the broader South Asian linguistic context and point to directions for further research,

Future research should further explore areas such as ergativity, alignment patterns, and the development of auxiliary systems in Shahpuri, especially through comparative studies with other Punjabi dialects. Quantitative methods are also recommended to examine variation across speakers and contexts, which may provide deeper insights into the evolving morphosyntactic structure in the verb phrases of the dialect.

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