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## Contrastive Analysis of English and Pashto Adjectives

### Keywords

English and Pashto adjectives, Contrastive analysis, similarities, differences



## Contrastive Analysis of English and Pashto Adjectives

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### Abstract

Language is a systematic means of communication that employs sound or conventional symbols. Using a foreign language can be problematic when attempting to communicate or translate written or spoken language from one's native language due to structural differences between languages. Among the most widely spoken languages in the world, English is understood by approximately half of the global population. However, it is neither an official nor a second language in our country. Nonetheless, due to its significance, it is often taught as a foreign language at schools, institutes, and universities. As previously mentioned, Pashto, our language, shares structural similarities and differences with English, which can challenge learners. To address these difficulties in learning English, this paper presents a contrastive analysis of English and Pashto adjectives, examining their similarities and differences. The study employs a descriptive and contrastive methodology.

**Keywords:** English and Pashto adjectives, contrastive analysis, similarities, differences

### Introduction

Contrastive analysis has been a matter of controversy for a long time. It has been used to describe languages since the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Europe (Fisiak, 1981). A contrastive methodology was explicitly formulated after the Second World War, when the importance of foreign language learning was recognized in the U.S., and research on immigrant bilingualism emerged (Weinreich 1953, Haugen, 1956). English has remained the language of education and medium of instruction for all subjects in most countries. Mastering English is one of the prerequisites for admission into most higher institutions; therefore, English has become so important that we cannot avoid speaking or writing the language in a universally accepted way. An appreciable degree of

competence is expected from English learners. From this point of view, languages should be compared in terms of grammar, linguistics, and so on because a native student knows all aspects of their language and does not have problems using different elements of speech, such as verbs, pronouns, adverbs, and adjectives. While learning foreign languages, students face problems or cannot specify the differences between the mother tongue and the target language. The students always encounter problems, and teachers ignore that fact. Thus, applied contrastive analysis and English grammar are two essential ways in English that must be considered, especially for those who learn English as a foreign language.

Adjectives are grammatical features in English. Contrasting the target and mother tongue can help learners improve their knowledge of the target language. Considering these differences and similarities can enable the language learner to find their errors easily.

Adjectives are vital to productive and receptive skills in English and other languages, so learning them can help you use the language correctly. This is why it is essential to work on the problematic areas and reveal possible difficulties that learners encounter in learning Pashto and English adjectives, which can help students learn the language correctly. A more empirical investigation is needed in the case of contrasting Pashto and English grammatical features; one of them was a C.A. (contrastive analysis) of adjectives in English and Pashto. Several structural differences between English and Pashto can make learning English challenging for Pashto speakers. Here are some examples:

- **Word Order:** English and Pashto have different word orders. The typical word order in English is subject-verb-object (SVO), whereas in Pashto, it is subject-object-verb (SOV). This difference can be confusing for Pashto speakers when constructing sentences in English.
- **Tense and Aspect:** English has a complex system of tenses and aspects that convey information about the time and continuity of an action. In contrast, Pashto uses a relatively simple system of past, present, and future tenses. Pashto speakers may find it challenging to master the intricacies of the English tense system.

- **Articles:** English uses articles (a/an, the) to indicate whether a noun is general or specific. Pashto does not have articles, so speakers may need help with when and how to use them in English.
- **Adjectives:** English and Pashto use adjectives differently. In Pashto, the adjective usually comes after the noun, while in English, it often comes before the noun. Additionally, Pashto does not have a superlative form, which can confuse Pashto speakers when expressing degrees of comparison.
- **Pronunciation:** English has a complex system of vowel and consonant sounds that may be difficult for Pashto speakers to produce accurately, mainly if these sounds do not exist in Pashto.

These structural differences can make learning English challenging for Pashto speakers, but with practice and guidance, they can be overcome.

### English Adjectives

According to Huddleston and Geoffrey (2002), adjectives are properties of objects, persons, and places related to age, size, shape, weight, color, merit, or quality, and so on. An adjective can be defined as modifying nouns and pronouns; modification means specifying another word's exact meaning. As a modifier, an adjective does not change the basic meaning of the word it modifies; for instance, a good teacher is still a teacher. The modifier, 'good,' merely tells us something more specific about the word it modifies. Adjectives may be more than one word that describes, limits or makes its meaning more nearly exact. Other researchers do not limit the adjective definition to modifying nouns and pronouns, as Frank (1993) believed all determiners such as articles, numbers, possessives, demonstratives, relatives and interrogatives, clauses, and prepositional phrases are adjectives.

Quirk (1972) mentioned the four features of adjectives: comparative and superlative forms, attributive position, predictive position, and pre-modified by identifiers; however, modern researchers have called these features traditional and nowadays are not further features of adjectives.

Adjectives are divided into two major classes:

- A. Simple adjectives that are subdivided into based and derived.
- B. Compound adjectives that include phrases and clauses.

### *Simple Adjectives or Normal Adjectives*

A.1. If the nouns precede them, they are called attributive and are different types.

- Numerical (cardinal and ordinal): *One, two, three, first, second, third*, and so on.  
*Twenty* students are in the class.
- Quantitative: *Some, more half, more than enough*, etc.  
The baby ate *some* cake.
- Qualitative: *Size, color, smell*, and so on. Interrogative: *whose, which, what*, and so on.  
She likes *red* cars.
- Demonstrative: *This, that, these, and those*.  
*That* book is mine.
- Articles are particular types of adjectives: *a, an, and the*.  
*The* pen is there.
- Possessive adjectives *my, our, your, and there are*.  
They came to my graduation party.
- Adjectives can be used to describe color. *the red book*, give an opinion about something *a good teacher*, describe the size *of the tall woman*, describe the age *of an older woman*, describe shape *a square window*, describe the origin of *a Japanese car*, describe something made of *a plastic bag*, describe the distance *of a long walk*, describe the temperature *of a cold night*, describe the time *of the late end*, use it as a noun adjunct, she is the *crime* reporter.

A.2. Predicative adjectives are considered as complements of verbs.

a. After linking verbs, they are subject complement.

He felt *excited*. Her new coat *seems* tight.

b. "a verb expressing a perception, judgment, or change can allow its direct object to take an object complement" (Garner, 2009). These verbs include *paint, like, keep, find, and make*.

I painted the plaster walls *white*. They *found* him calm.

c. They can be an object complement to a clause.

My teacher believes working hard is *good*.

A.2.1. Derived adjectives are formed by adding suffixes to stems. They come before nouns: *less* (useless), *-ly* (locally), *-y* (faulty), *-ous* (famous), *-like* (manlike), *-ish* (selfish), *-ful* (helpful), *-ic* (comic), *-al* (national), *-wide* (nationwide), *-ery* (fishery). Some suffixes can be added to verbs, for instance, *-ing* (surprising), *-ant* (significant), *-ed* (interested), *-ive* (active), *-ible* (visible), *-ent* (convenient), *-able* (workable). Adding *-er* and *-est* to adjective stems for comparison, faster, fastest.

### Compound Adjectives

B. Compound adjectives are two forms of infinitives and participles.

B.1. Infinitive adjectives: They can modify a noun or sentence and function as an adjective.

Haroon needs water *to drink*.

Here is your food *to eat*.

B.2. Participial adjectives

Participial phrases modify a noun or pronoun as an object of a verb and function as the subject of a preposition, a verb complement.

The *crying* baby kept her parents up all night.

She was really *tired*.

The boy *talking* to his father is deaf.

Haroon drew *many pictures showing birds in flight*.

B.3. Participants' phrases can show cause of time in place of adverbial clauses.

*Putting on her hat*, Haroon ran out to see his mother. (time)

*Working hard all afternoon*, he decided to go to bed early at night. (cause)

## Pashto Adjectives

Adjectives are called *ستایانوم stāyanum* in Pashto, and they modify nouns in ways parallel to English that come before the nouns they modify.

[loy khān] [big<sup>Mi</sup> khan] خان لوی it means 'an important khan.'

[pinjə škwalə n̄junə] [five pretty<sup>Fii</sup> young girls] پنج ښکلې ښځې it means 'five pretty girls.'

Adjectives agree with the nouns they modify in gender, number, and case.

MDS <sup>iii</sup> : [təgay halak obə ɣwāri]	تري هلک اوبه غواړي.
[thirsty boy water wants]	'The <u>thirsty boy</u> wants water.'
MDP <sup>iv</sup> : [təgay halakān obə ɣwāri]	تري هلکان اوبه غواړي.
[thirsty boys water want]	'The <u>thirsty boys</u> want water'
FDS <sup>v</sup> : [təgay n̄ləy obə ɣwāri]	تري ښځې اوبه غواړي.
[thirsty girl water wants]	'The <u>thirsty girl</u> wants water.'
FDP <sup>vi</sup> : [təgay n̄ljune obə ɣwāri]	تري ښځې اوبه غواړي.
[thirsty girls water want]	'The <u>thirsty girls</u> want water.'

Adjectives also occur in predicates, as they do in English, with the Pashto equivalents of 'be' and with other predicates like 'become' [keḡ-] کېدل and 'seem' [škār-] ښکار. These predicate adjectives agree with their subjects in gender, number, and case (which is always direct because predicate adjectives always occur in intransitive constructions). In the examples above, the agreement can be seen with the noun 'mouth' [xulə] خوله which is female<sup>1</sup>, and the adjective 'dry' [wač] وچ, which is an Adjective.

Most adjectives can be used as nouns in ways parallel to the English adjective *poor* in 'the poor ye always have with you' but more extensively than in English. (In many cases, the Pashto adjective-as-noun- translates as 'the \_\_\_\_\_ one,' as seen in the example below.) In some dialects, adjectives-as-nouns occur with adjectives ending, but others occur with noun ending; in the central dialect, however, any adjective that can be used as a noun takes on the ending of the noun class



most similar to the adjective. In the example below, the adjective 'injured, hurt' [zaxmi] زخمي is used as a male noun, direct plural form.

[zaxmyān royṭun ta rāylal]

زخميان روغونت راغلل.

[injured hospital to came]

'The injured (ones) came to the hospital.'

In the following example, the Adjective 'mounted on horseback' [spor] سپور is used as a female noun in direct plural form.

[spare wādə ta rāyle]

سپري وادته راغلي.

[mounted wedding to came] The mounted ones (f) (i.e. horsewomen) came to the wedding.'

Pashto adjectives also change according to gender, whereas nouns are masculine or feminine, but not both. It means that the gender of a noun determines the gender of the adjectives that modify it. For instance, the form of the adjective for 'short' [tit] تیت in the following phrases:

'Short boy' [tiṭ halak] تیت ملک

'short girl' [tiṭa n̄ləy] تیتنه لای

### Types of Pashto Adjectives

The types of Pashto adjectives are contradictory according to the Pashto linguists. Rashtheen (2016) mentioned six types of Pashto adjectives: 1. Descriptive adjective (وصفي صفت) 2. Proper adjectives (نسبي صفت) 3. Numeral adjectives (عددي صفت) 4. Demonstrative adjectives (نشان دهنده صفت) 5. Interrogative adjectives (سوال دهنده صفت) 6. Functional adjectives (فعلی صفت) which is divided into two parts: a. subject participle (فعلی صفت) b. object participle (فعلی صفت). Hashimi (2000) divided Pashto adjectives into two types: 1. Descriptive adjectives (وصفي صفت) are those which identify and clarify something, for example, [skwale ban] 'beautiful garden,' [sə halak] 'good boy.' 2. Comparative or descriptive adjectives (قياسي و تفيصلي صفت) Are those which compare one thing with another or one person with another or show the amount or degree of modification of one or more persons or things. It has two features:

A: Adding *more* [der] 'میر' before an adjective.

[dā qalam tər hyə qalam der škwalay day] دآ قالم تر مخ وړمیر ښکل دی.

'This pen is more beautiful than that pen.'

B: adding *more* or *most* [zyāt] 'خورا اوزیات' before adjectives to make both comparative and superlative degrees.

[zāma wrur tər mā ɖer huşyār day] 'My brother is more/most clever than me.

Other examples:

[Hārun lə zyāt Abubakar ɟag day] هارون ل مبلوکو زیات چگ دی.

[Haroon from Abubākar from tall is] Haroon is taller than Abubakar.

[xuʃl pə ɬolgi kə tolo halakāno zyāt ɟag day] خوشالپ هصرن فکې لېقولو ملکړی زیات چگ دی.

[Khushal in class all boys tall is] 'Khushal is taller than all the boys in the class.

Tagey and Robson (1996) divided Pashto adjectives into four classes, two of which have sub-classes and a few irregular adjectives.

1. This class of adjectives has forms similar to masculine and feminine noun class forms shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Adjectives which are similar to masculine and feminine nouns.*

Male-noun	DS: [tɪt] تیت 'short'	DP: [tɪt] تیت 'short'
Male-adjective	DS: [tɪt] تیت 'short'	DP: [tɪto] تیتو 'shorts'
Female-noun	DS: [tɪta] تیتا 'short'	DP: [tɪte] تیتې 'short'
Female-adjective	DS: [tɪte] تیتې 'short'	DP: [tɪto] تیتو 'shorts'

2. Adjectives in this class have masculine forms which end in [-ay] ی-، for the plural form add [-i] ی، the feminine form which ends in [e] ې or [ə] ی، the plural form ends in [-o] و.

Table 2 shows the singular and plural forms of masculine and feminine.

**Table 2**

*The singular and plural forms of Pashto adjectives.*

Male	DS: [təgay] تگری 'thirsty'	DP: [təgi] تگری 'thirstys'
	DS: [tagi] تگری 'thirsty'	DP: [təgo] تگریو 'thirstys'

Female	DS: [tagi] تږې 'thirsty'	DP: [təgo] تږو 'thirstys'
	DS: [narəy] نرې 'thin'	DP: [narəyo] نړو 'thins'

3. The masculine direct singular ends in a consonant, and the plural ends in [ə] ه; the masculine direct singular ends in [ə] ه, and the plural ends in [e] ې; this is illustrated in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Direct masculine singular and plural form.*

Male	DS: [ziğ] ځړ 'rough'	DP: [ziğə] ځړه 'roughs'
Female	DS: [ziğə] ځړه 'rough'	DP: [ziğe] ځړې 'roughs'

4. Adjectives in this class for feminine and masculine singular ends in [-a] ه, and plural ends in [-wo] و, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*The plural form of feminine and masculine which ends in [-a].*

Male	DS: [šāysta] ښایست 'pretty'	DP: [šāysta] ښایسته 'pretty' Or: [šāystawo] ښایستو 'prettys'
Female	DS: [šāysta] ښایسته 'pretty'	DP: [šāysta] ښایسته 'pretty' Or: [šāystawo] ښایستو 'prettys'

### *Irregular Adjectives*

There are very few irregular adjectives in our Pashto word list. One of them is a group of adjectives, the masculine singular forms of which end in the syllable [-ar] -ر, for example, 'skinny' [dangar], ډنگر. Other examples of adjectives in this group are 'observant' [stargawar] ستارگور, 'brave' [zrawar] زړور, and 'fortunate' [baxtawar] بختور.

The only irregular adjective is 'lively' [mastāna] مېستله which is the same for masculine and feminine.

The feminine form for irregular adjectives is made by adding [a] in the end, for instance, 'skinny' [dangara], ډانگاره, 'observant' [stargawara] سترگوره, 'brave' [zrawara] زړوره, and 'fortunate' [baxtawara] بختوره

### Order of Adjectives

Adjectives in English come before a noun and are usually put in more or less the same order. For instance, (*a nice, handsome young man*), (*a handsome, friendly young man*), (*a big black Afghan car*), And (*a big black Afghan car*). Pashto has no such limitation, and adjectives can come in any order.

A fat old woman (= ywa čāya zara šaja) یوه چاغه زړه ښځه

An old fat woman (= ywa zara čāya čāya) یوه زړه چاغ ښځه

In Pashto, demonstrative adjectives, which modify nouns, come before nouns, and like other adjectives, they have one form; they neither agree in gender nor in the noun that they modify. In Pashto, we do not say [*haghe ketabon*] هغه کتابونه (= those books); however, we say [*haye kitābuna*] هغه کتابونه (= those books). Table 5 contains proximal and distal demonstratives in English and Pashto.

**Table 5**

*Proximal and distal demonstratives in English and Pashto*

Language	Proximal	Distal
	[dā šowanji]	[haya šowanji]
Pashto	دا ښونځي	هغه ښونځي
English	These schools	Those schools

### Compound Forms

The basic demonstratives are combined with specific words and make compound demonstratives, as shown in Table 6.

**Table 6***Compound Forms of Proximal and Distal Demonstratives in English and Pashto*

Language	Proximal	Distal
English	this/these/the same	that/those/the same
	Like this/these, such as ...this/these	Like that/those; such ...as that/those
Pashto	[dā dawal]/[dā ranga] دا رنگه/دا ډول	[haya dawal]/[haya ranga] ه اغ رنگه/ه اغ ډول

More examples of proximal and distal adjectives:

- [Dā ranga kitāb] دارنگ کتاب – such a book (Like English, the infinite article follows nouns)
- [Dā ranga kitābona] دا رنگ کتابونه – such books (English does not have plural indefinite articles)
- [Dā dawal yani xalak] دا ډول غني خلک – such rich people
- [Hāyō lə mā sara dā dawal mrasta wakṛa] ه اغ له ماسره دا ډول مرسته وکړه. – he did such a help with me.
- [Kala ham dā šakula xobuna ma wina] کل ه م د بنال خوبنه مه ونه. Never dreamed of such beauty.

### Possession (Normal Form)

Possessives come with noun phrases and show possession. Table 7 contains English and Pashto possessive adjectives.

**Table 7***English and Pashto possessive adjectives*

Singular	Plural
[zamā] / my زما	[zamuḡ] / our زموږ
[stā] / your ستا	[stāso] / your ستاسو
[haɣa <sup>M</sup> ] (male) / his هغه ناوونه	[haɣuy] / their هغوی
[haɣa <sup>F</sup> ] هغه (female) / her	
[haɣa] هغه (animal or thing) its	

Examples of possessive adjectives in English and Pashto.

- [zama mor] زما مور – my mother.
- [haɣa lə mur sara mina lari] هغه له مور سره مينه لري. – she loves her mother.
- [satā num cə day] (singular) ستانوم څه دی. what is your name.
- [satāso numuna cə day] (plural) ستاسونومونه څه دي. – what is your name.
- [haɣa dars wāyi] هغه درس وایي. – he studies the lesson.
- [haɣa zamā kitāb paṭ karay] هغه زما کتاب پټ کړی. – he stole my book.
- [da haɣe maktab band day] ده غې ځای بند دی. – her school is closed.
- [da haɣa kor zamā lə kora ɣə day] ده غې کور زما له کور ښه دی. – his house is better than me.

**Superlative Adjective**

Pashto has only two degrees of adjectives. It forms comparative statements like 'Haroon is taller than Abubakar' by means of prepositional phrases that do not involve special adjective suffixes like English comparative—*er* or superlative—*est* suffixes. These typically include the word 'more' [zayāt or der] زیات یا ډیر or 'less/few' [laḡ] لږ as shown in Table 8.

**Table 8***English and Pashto comparative and superlative adjective*

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
[ṣə] (good) ښه	[ḍer/zayāt ṣə] (better than) ډېر / زيات ښه	--- (the best) ----
[xarāb] (bad) خراب	[ḍer/zayāt xarāb] (worse than) ډېر / زيات خراب	--- (the worst) ---
[yat] (big) غټ	[ḍer/zayāt ghāt] (bigger than) ډېر / زيات غټ	--- (the biggest) ---
[ṣāyasta] (beautiful) ښايسته	[ḍer/zayāt xāyasta] (more beautiful) ډېر / زيات ښايسته	--- (the most beautiful) ---

### Conclusion

The comparison of various aspects of English and Pashto adjectives reveals certain similarities in structural usage and notable differences, particularly in degrees and order. These differences can challenge language learners and those who speak or translate written or spoken Pashto and English. While both languages use simple predicative and attributive adjectives, the absence of a superlative form in Pashto, as found in English, and using morphological constructions can lead to confusion and errors. It is evident that English is a richer language in adjective clauses, and students may encounter difficulties using them, particularly in possessive and demonstrative adjectives. As such, teachers must be aware of minor and significant differences between the two languages and provide students with sufficient practice to overcome difficulties and achieve understanding.

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<sup>i</sup> Male

<sup>ii</sup> Female

<sup>iii</sup> Male Direct Singular

<sup>iv</sup> Male Direct Plural

<sup>v</sup> Female Direct Singular

<sup>vi</sup> Female Direct Plural