
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

A Comparative Analysis of the English Verb to be and the Defective Verbs of Pashto Language

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| ABSTRACT

After comparing, analyzing and researching the Pashto and English languages, we have come to the conclusion that these two languages have very close relationships with each other in terms of their linguistic structure and structure, because the two languages are from a linguistic family. Are counted from in this comparative research article, various works of other linguists have been read for the genetics and personal kinship of the mentioned languages, in order to help in analyzing and analyzing the linguistic, structural and emotional differences of the two languages. In this research paper, we have practically compared the linguistic examples of participle or auxiliary verbs of both languages. From the analysis and comparison of this examples, we have come to the conclusion that there is a similarity in the structural system of both languages. The purpose of this research and comparative article has two dimensions, one is to get familiar whit closeness of Pashto and English speakers and two is open a new way for further development in this field in the future.

| KEYWORDS

Assertive Verbs, Pashto Verbs, English Verb to be, Verbal Comparison

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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Introduction

In the field of Pashto literature, significantly more scholarly attention has been given to literary criticism than to linguistics. Only in recent decades—particularly in the modern era of Pashto studies—have a limited number of linguists made commendable efforts to explore linguistic aspects of the language. Among these underexplored areas is the topic selected for this research: “*Shared Features of Modal (Defective) Verbs in Pashto and English.*” The importance of this topic lies in the fact that, despite the existence of several Pashto grammar books, there has been little to no focused study on this particular aspect. This gap highlights the novelty and necessity of the research. Given that both Pashto and English originate from the same language family (the Indo-European family) and share certain genetic and structural features, examining these shared characteristics is valuable for understanding not only historical and genetic relationships between the two but also for contributing to the broader development of comparative linguistics.

Objectives of his Study

- To explore the concept of the verb and its various types.
- To examine the shared features of modal (defective) verbs in Pashto and English.

Before discussing the genetic relationship between these two languages, it is essential to clarify what is meant by a “language family.” In linguistics, a language family is a group of languages that share similar phonological, morphological, syntactic, and

lexical features, which are believed to have evolved from a common ancestral language. Historical linguistic analysis helps trace these similarities and establish the genetic lineage of the languages within a given family.

Methodology

This study employs a combination of comparative, descriptive, analytical, and bibliographic methods to investigate the common features of modal verbs in Pashto and English.

Shared Features of Modal (Defective) Verbs in Pashto and English

As the central focus of this study revolves around the genealogical relationship between the Pashto and English languages, it is essential to begin by identifying the linguistic family to which each belongs. According to linguistic scholar Rafiullah Niazi, in his work *"A Comparative Study of Indo-European Languages,"* English is classified as a West Germanic language, falling under the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family. He further notes that: *"English is one of the major West Germanic languages within the Germanic sub-branch of the Indo-European family."* Michel Malherbe adds that: *"Today, English is the official language of over 40 countries, and approximately 67% of the world's scientific publications are written in English."* Due to its global reach and the rapid pace of its development, English has emerged as a primary medium of international communication.

In parallel, Pashto also belongs to the Indo-European language family, specifically to the Northeastern group of the Eastern Iranian branch within the Indo-Iranian subfamily. It is considered one of the ancient living languages of the region. According to Professor D. N. MacKenzie, who included Pashto in *The World's Major Languages*, Pashto is spoken across a vast region — from the Amu Darya in the north to the Makran coast in the south, and from Chitral in the east to Sibi in the west. These regions constitute the historical and cultural homeland of the Pashtun people. (Niazi, 2019: pp. 126, 283).

1) Preliminary Discussion on the Verb.

Before delving into the main subject of this study, it is essential to provide a foundational overview of the verb as a linguistic element. The concept of the verb has been defined and discussed by various linguists in different grammatical sources. Although the phrasing may vary, these definitions revolve around a common core understanding.

Khwaishki (2016: 141), defines the verb in Pashto grammar as *"The verb, as a core component of speech, denotes the occurrence of an action or event within a particular tense."* Similarly, Saeedi (2018: 153) offers an English definition: *"The verb is one of the parts of speech used to express an action, state, possession, ownership, presence, or absence within a sentence."* Karimi (2014: 19) notes the Latin origin of the word: *"The term verb is derived from the Latin word 'verbum', meaning 'word'."*

A verb can be defined as a linguistic unit or a part of speech that indicates the performance or non-performance of an action or event within a specific time frame. Universally, the semantic concept of a verb exists across all human languages; however, its morphological structure and syntactic realization vary from language to language. This diversity in structure means that grammatical frameworks in one language cannot be directly imposed onto another.

In Pashto grammar, verbs are categorized in different ways based on meaning and structure. Most Pashto linguists generally agree on the major types of verbs. To avoid excessive detail and keep the discussion focused on our research objective, we will briefly highlight the classification most relevant to our topic. According to descriptive linguist Professor Nasir Ahmad Taheri, Pashto verbs are semantically classified into six main types:

1. Intransitive Verb: A verb that requires only a subject and not a direct object.
 1. Example: *Ahmad arrived.*
2. Transitive Verb: A verb that requires both a subject and a direct object.
 1. Example: *Ahmad reads a book.*
3. Active Verb: A verb whose subject is explicitly stated and known.
 1. Example: *Ghurzang cries.*
4. Passive Verb: A verb in which the subject is not specified.
 1. Example: *The Qur'an is recited.*
5. Affirmative Verb: A verb that denotes the performance of an action.
 1. Example: *Zalmai works.*
6. Negative Verb: A verb that indicates the non-performance of an action.

Example: Zarmina does not work. (Taheri, 2020: p. 116).

This foundational classification helps us understand how verbs function in Pashto, and serves as a stepping stone toward examining modal (defective) verbs and their shared features with English verbs.

2) Independent and Auxiliary Verbs in Pashto Grammar: A Foundation for Cross-Linguistic Comparison

In the same work referenced earlier, Professor Nasir Ahmad Taheri presents a comprehensive classification of Pashto verbs under the heading *"Identification and Characteristics of Independent and Dependent (Auxiliary) Verbs"*. This classification provides an essential theoretical basis for our present study.

Taheri (2020: p. 117–118) explains: "An independent verb refers to an independent morpheme that conveys meaning on its own. That is, even when used alone, it retains a complete semantic function. It belongs to the class of free morphemes and can serve as one of the core elements of a sentence—sometimes even conveying the full meaning of a sentence. Examples include: 'Zha' (Go!), 'Wolola' (Read!), 'Zhm' (I go), etc."

In contrast: "Dependent or auxiliary verbs do not carry meaning on their own. When used in a sentence, they do not convey a full meaning independently, but function in conjunction with nouns or main verbs to complete the predicate. In essence, these verbs neither express meaning alone nor form a complete predicate independently. Rather, when paired with an independent verb, they help form the second core part of a sentence (i.e., the predicate)."

Another respected Pashto linguist, the late Professor Sadiqullah Rashtin, in his work *Pashto Grammar*, also categorizes Pashto verbs into two primary groups: main verbs and auxiliary verbs. He defines auxiliary verbs as:

*"Verbs that consist of all conjugated forms and tenses, and which function to support the formation of compound verbs, particularly in combination with main verbs." (Rashtin, 2010: p. 290. Or: verb is a word that shows on action or state (Karimi, 2014: p. 19). Modern linguist Professor Dr. Mujawir Ahmad Zyar, in his grammar reference *Pashto Pakhwa (Pashto Grammar)*, provides the following interpretation of modal (defective/auxiliary) verbs:*

"These are verbs which, by nature, do not function independently. Rather, they perform the supportive role of conveying tense or aspect in conjunction with a main verb. When used with nouns, they can form relational constructions, thereby temporarily adopting the role of a main verb." (Zyar, 2017: p. 145).

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that Pashto verbs can generally be divided into two main categories:

1. Complete (Main) Verbs.
2. Auxiliary (Helping) Verbs.

Since the primary focus of our research is to examine the shared characteristics of auxiliary verbs in Pashto and English, our next step will be to begin with a structural and functional exploration of the English verb "To be."

3) Verbs of Existence: The "To Be" Verbs

According to Jahangeer (2013: 25), *"To be verbs are used to show state and existence in a sentence."*

In Pashto:

"Existential verbs are those verbs that express a state or the presence of something in a sentence."

In English, some of the common auxiliary "To be" verbs include:

is, am, are, was, were.

A key structural feature of these auxiliary verbs is that when used without a main verb, they adopt the role of main (complete) verbs themselves. In such cases, they express identity, condition, or existence. This grammatical phenomenon is equally applicable in the Pashto language, where equivalent structures demonstrate similar behavior.

To illustrate this shared syntactic property, the following examples show the use of "To be" verbs in English, followed by their Pashto counterparts:

a) English Examples:

1. I am a teacher.
2. Ahmad is a doctor.
3. They are babies.

In each of these examples, the "To be" verb (am, is, are) performs as the main verb of the sentence, expressing a state of being or identification. Similarly, in the Pashto examples (am, is, are), the verbs serve the same grammatical and semantic function. This parallel use of existential verbs between Pashto and English reflects a fundamental shared structural feature in both languages.

4) *The Use of "To Be" Verbs to Express Existence in Past Tense: A Comparative Perspective*

In the previous example, the verb "were", a past-tense form of the defective verb "to be", functions as a main verb. It does not describe an action, but rather indicates existence or presence in the past. In this context, the verb "were" is used to state a condition—that *we were at their house*. No dynamic event occurred; only a state of being is expressed through the auxiliary verb.

The English sentence:

We were at their house.

can be translated into Pashto as:

In the Pashto version, "وړ" is also a defective verb that takes on the role of the main verb, similarly expressing past existence. It conveys no action, only presence, just as the English "were" does.

Likewise, in another sentence, we see a similar case with the verb "was", the singular past form of "to be":

I was at the hotel.

In this case, "was" also functions independently as the main verb of the sentence. There is no additional verb present, and "was" merely indicates the subject's existence at a location in the past. No action is performed.

The Pashto translation of this sentence is:

Here, the verb "was"—another defective verb—serves the same grammatical purpose. Although inherently an auxiliary verb, in the absence of a main verb, it assumes the function of the main verb. It indicates a state of being rather than any performed action.

From these examples, we observe that in both English and Pashto, defective verbs such as "was," "were," "wer," and "was" share structural and functional similarities. They primarily convey existence rather than action, and can independently serve as the main verb when no lexical verb is present. This illustrates a significant shared grammatical trait between the two languages.

5) *Temporal and Locational Reference Using Defective Verbs*

A further noteworthy similarity lies in the way defective/to be verbs are used in both languages to refer to time, place, or condition. In English, such verbs can be used to identify days of the week, months, seasons, time references, and environmental states. Pashto demonstrates a nearly identical grammatical capability.

a) *Examples in English:*

1. Today is Friday.
2. It is April.
3. The weather is sunny.

Each of these sentences uses a "to be" verb (is) to mark temporal or situational identity, again without conveying an active verb or dynamic process. The Pashto equivalents follow the same pattern and use defective verbs like to convey the same function. From the above discussion and comparative examples, it is evident that both English and Pashto use defective verbs in similar structural contexts—to indicate states of being and existence across time and space. These shared features highlight a strong parallel between the two languages in their treatment of auxiliary verbs, particularly the "to be" forms, reinforcing their genetic and typological relatedness within the Indo-European language family.

6) *Conclusion*

Language is regarded as a fundamental tool and medium for communication, understanding, and the transfer of feelings and thoughts among human beings. Since its inception and development, language has undergone numerous transformations across different historical periods. While linguistics and literary studies were once treated as a single discipline, contemporary scholars have distinguished them as separate fields of study. In the modern linguistic revolution, linguistics itself has been subdivided into various branches. Both English and Pashto belong to the larger Indo-European family—English to the Germanic branch and Pashto to the Indo-Aryan branch. Due to their shared ancestry, these languages exhibit a range of common features.

This comparative research article has focused on the defective (auxiliary) verbs in both languages. Through practical examples, analysis, and comparison, it has become evident that English and Pashto share several similarities in the structure and function of auxiliary verbs.

The presence of these shared linguistic features not only confirms the genealogical closeness between English and Pashto but also offers a beneficial framework for the further development and enrichment of both languages. This study demonstrates that exploring such commonalities can provide valuable insights and practical pathways for advancing linguistic understanding and pedagogy.

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