



## The Placement of Adjectives in Pashto with Regard to their Change in Meaning



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**Abstract:** *This paper examines Pashto adjectives to delineate their placement and order with respect to their morphological change and modification of meaning. The aim of this paper is to address the occurrence of Pashto adjectives at the initial, middle, and final positions at the sentence level. Furthermore, the main focus in these occurrences is to find the prenominal initial, prenominal middle, postnominal middle, and final positions of Pashto adjectives at the sentence level. For doing this, the researchers collected data from native speakers and focused on adjectives and their use in sentences. They also read different written materials and found adjectives at various positions. The finding of the study showed that three adjective orders are correct and normal in Pashto, including prenominal initial, prenominal middle, and postnominal medial adjective orders. The results also showed that the postnominal position of an adjective is rarely found in spoken, but not in written at the final position of a sentence. In addition to it, the postnominal adjective of Pashto brings emphasis to the sentence, causes incorrect syntactic order, and also affects the meaning of the sentence.*

**Key Words:** Pashto Adjectives, Placement of Adjectives, Meaning of Pashto Adjectives

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### Introduction

Language is a system of communication and the identification of its speakers (McMenamin, 2002). Trask (2007) states that about six thousand languages are spoken on the planet. These languages serve as the identity of their speakers and the Pashto language is one of them which is the identity of Pashtuns. Pashto is spoken in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Rahman (1995) believes that

Pashto is the national language of Afghanistan. It belongs to the Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family, with more than 25 million native speakers, 16 to 17 million of whom live in Pakistan and 8 to 9 million in Afghanistan.

According to Zahoor, Naz, Khan and Razzak (2020), Pashto is widely spoken by 50 million people worldwide, mainly Pashtuns. Overall, the language has a traditional culture dating back nearly 7,000 years, as old

as that of the Pashtun ethnic groups, which typically originate from Afghanistan. Pashto not only has a rich historical background but it is a language with deep-rooted norms, values, heritage, and traditions. Every language has word classes such as: nouns, pronouns, verbs and adjectives. In this paper, the study is delimited to the use of Pashto adjectives and their meanings in terms of placement and morphological changes.

### Research Objectives

1. To delineate the placement of adjectives in the Pashto language.
2. To explore the order of adjectives in Pashto.
3. To point out the morphological change in the Pashto language.

### Research Questions

1. How are adjectives placed in Pashto?
2. How does the order of different adjectives in Pashto affect the meaning?
3. How are Pashto adjectives being identified with morphological change?

### Problem of the Statement

Like many other languages, Pashto has its own word classes, in which the focus remains on adjectives in this study. Pashto speakers are aware of changes in the meaning of adjectives relative to their place in the spoken varieties of Pashto, but they are not aware of such changes in the written variety of Pashto. The purpose of this study is to focus on Pashto adjectives, their placement, order, and how the order of adjectives affects the meaning in a sentence. Additionally, this study addresses the question of how adjectives convey a meaning when they appear at the initial, middle, and final position a sentence.

### Significance of the Study

This paper has the following significance.

First, Pashto speakers and learners around the world can gain a better understanding of Pashto's adjective usage. Secondly, researchers who are doing their research in the same field (adjectives) can access a lot of information related to their topic. Third, it will enable people to learn different meanings of a word when it is used at different positions in a sentence. Also, it can help people understand the order and placement of Pashto adjectives.

### Literature Review

Ali, Khan, and Awan (2016) conducted a study on the contrastive analysis of English and Pashto adjectives. Their study showed and highlighted similarities and differences in the use of English and Pashto adjectives. Moreover, they pointed out mistakes made by Pashto and English speakers in the use of adjectives. Their study also gave some basic information about English and was also beneficial for expanding the knowledge of L1 influence in ESL learning. Another work had been done in the same field by (Naeem & Khan 2005) which focused on the different derivations of Pashto nouns from adjectives. The subject of the study was the analysis of derivational morphological change in Pashto. It addressed the question of how words change their class from adjective to noun. It also helped in the development and improvement of word classes (parts of speech) in Pashto. It made such improvements by pointing to the derivation or conversion of an adjective from one class to another word class. In addition, it enables the readers to better understand the difference between the two types of derivatives; class change, and class retention.

Ali (2019) focused on investigating similarities and differences in Pashto and Dari adjectives. He also compared both Pashto and Dari in terms of their adjectives and pointed out the differences and similarities in the adjectives of both languages. His study also contributed to the

grammar of both languages, which can help other researchers and learners of these languages. He also touched upon the structure, order, and concept of adjectives in the Dari language while in Pashto he only examined the concept of adjectives. He also addressed the question of how to use Pashto adjectives after or before nouns.

Nicolus and López (2022) conducted their study of adjective placement in English/Spanish: mixed determiner sentences. Their study explored the order of noun-adjectives within code-switched determiner phrases. They came up with several definitions of order such as "order is a property defined by the noun or adjective and its property is governed by carrier phrase". Further, they investigated the issue of whether or not adjective classes are homogeneous. At the same time, they said that the major class of adjectives is the same, but there are subclasses that differ in various languages. In addition to the above arguments, they tried to find the elements that determine the order of adjective-noun in determiner phrases (DP). They conducted an experiment in which about 30 English/Spanish speakers participated. They used English/Spanish code-switching to indicate the element, determining the order of adjectives in the determiner phrases. Their experiment results varied but they said that the noun was the element that determined the word order in a determiner phrase. Moreover, their study helped to understand the role of grammatical elements/features in syntactic dependencies. At the end of their study, they presented two scenarios about adjective ordering. The first scenario asserted that the order of nouns and adjectives in determiner phrases depended on the language of the adjective. The second scenario stated that the order depends only on the language of the noun. Ultimately, they pointed out that, in order to find adjective order, it is necessary to separate adjectives

from their types because the order of an adjective varies depending on its type.

Pettibone, Leroux, and Klassen (2021) conducted their study on adjective placement in indigenous and non-indigenous Spanish. The main priority of the paper was to examine the intuition of native and non-native speakers of Spanish to interpret the order of adjectives in pre-nominal and post-nominal positions. They extended the inquiry by asking L2 learners about their intuitions regarding adjective order. In this process of querying the two sequences, pre-nominal and post-nominal in adjective positions, many participants took part. As a result of the inquiry, many native and non-native Spanish participants accepted the post-nominal order of adjective.

Wulff (2015) studied the analysis of adjective order in English. His study addressed the question of what factors actually govern the placement of adjectives in position before nouns. To face such factors, he adopted a corpus-based methodology which proved to be a widely applicable tool for linguistic analysis. At the end of the adjectival analysis, he stated that adjectival order is superficially a purely syntactic phenomenon but can be determined by different variables at different levels of linguistic analysis.

Jitpranee (2017) evaluated the types and functions of adjectives in science articles. He took about 25 popular science articles for analysis to find adjective types. After the analysis of these randomly selected scientific articles, the results showed that there were about ten (10) types of adjectives based on scientific articles, and among these ten types, descriptive adjectives were at the top according to their use in classification. Their estimated usage in these science subjects was 66.52%. In contrast to the use of descriptive adjectives, exclamatory adjectives ranked as the least used of the ten types found. After all, he believed that science texts differ from research texts in many ways.

Smeds (2007) identified the comparison of adjectives in contemporary British English. He believed that there are two main ways to compare adjectives, one of them is analytical, which uses words like "more" as in "more beautiful" and "most" as in "most beautiful". Another way he used to compare adjectives is "synthetic" by adding an inflectional morpheme to an adjective like fast, faster, fastest, etc. and the inflectional way of comparison in English, on the other hand, nowadays many adjectives can be compared synthetically or analytically. Furthermore, he asserted that in the last twelve centuries, there was the use of synthetic, analytic, and inflectional way of forming comparison in English while on the other hand, today, many adjectives can be compared either synthetically or analytically. He took about one hundred adjectives for investigation from two British newspapers 'The Guardian' and 'The Observer' and took the adjectives used in these newspapers from 1990 to 2005. These adjectives differed from each other in that he studied their comparison. He then compared the results to six types of grammar that had existed over the past 50 years. When he collected the data, he found how the adjective comparison had changed from 1990 to 2005. It addressed how adjectives are compared in English today, how modern grammar is being reconciled with written English, and whether or not there is any recent changes to adjectives. At the end of the investigation, he looked at the data and concluded that the synthetic way of comparison had gradually decreased from the past.

Davis, Lingwood, and Arunchalam (2019) revealed in their research the functions and forms of adjectives in English child-directed speech. In their study, they focused on 3- to 4-year-old children's exposure to adjectives in order to measure the syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic variation of adjectives in children's directed speech. They argued that in British English, adjectives occur more

frequently in the prenominal position than in postnominal syntactic construction. They believed that adjectives play an important role in the creation and recognition of language and that they expanded children's repertoire of describing entities beyond nouns. Adjectives also help children to expand their vocabulary and predict upcoming nouns. They further said that a 30-month-old baby has about 50 adjectives but cannot use them flexibly until the child is four years old.

Another study has been done by Qasim (2012) in which she pointed out adjectives and adjective phrases. The study of adjectives and adjective phrases is considered a difficult area to learn in the English language. She said that some adjectives consist of one word, called simple adjective, while others consist of more words, called compound adjectives. She also stated that traditionally adjectives are determiners but modern linguists have separated them. Furthermore, in an adjective phrase, the adjective acts as a head and its syntactic role is either attributive or predicative in the adjective phrase. She said that simple adjectives are used more commonly than compound adjectives. The results also showed that the adjectives "good" and "beautiful" were most commonly used, the adjective "big" was also more frequently used, while large, quiet, afraid and worried were rarely used in student writing.

## Research Methodology

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### Nature of the Study

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The study was mainly based on the qualitative method in which the researchers studied adjectives, placement, and order of adjectives in Pashto. Apart from this, the researchers focused the morphological change of adjectives in Pashto. In addition to it, the researchers have included some Pashto adjectives and their usage in Pashto sentences. They identified the specific positions/placement of Pashto adjectives by

providing a table for the initial, middle and final positions. The adjectives at different positions at the sentence level were provided in various tables below.

## Data Collection

To collect data, the researchers engaged with elderly Pashto speakers and observed the way they used adjectives in their language. The researchers recorded the discussions, utterances and speeches of Pashto speakers. Additionally, the researchers studied different written materials including books, articles, and newspapers, and then consulted the dictionary of Pashto for further

information. They also observed the Pashto text in which they focused on the use of adjectives.

## Data Analysis and Conclusion

The following data were collected from Pashto native speakers, various books, newspapers, and dictionaries. The adjectives in the sentences listed in Table 1 below are mixed because some are in the initial, middle and final position. Then, Tables 2, 3, and 4 were arranged accordingly that show the placement of adjectives in initial, middle and final positions.

Table 1

Stimuli Used for the Placement of Adjectives

Adjectives	Meanings	Sentences
χα	Good	haya jaw χα insa:n δε
yat	Big	δαया yat mez δε
oxja:r	Clever	haya jaw oxja:r halak δε
haya	That	δα zama haya kiṭa:b paka:r δε
lag	Less	δα ka:r lag δε
tol	All	haya χpal tol ma:l obaib
finza	Five	zama pinza gwaṭi: di:
awal	First	itwa:r δa haṭe awala wraṣ δa
δα	This	δα qa:biḥ halak δε
χkole	Handsome	da maḥṣom χkole δε
sost	Lazy	haya jaw sost halak δε
χpal	Own	ali: ma: pa χpalo ṣṭargu: oli:do
pura	Enough	zama sara pese di: pura
spin	White	haya sara kiṭa:b δε spin
saxṭ	Hard	δα ka:r saxṭ δε
χα:li:	Empty	δα jaw χα:li: dabe δε
lonḍ	Wet	haya tol lonḍ δε
yalat	Wrong	δα yalat,ka:r δε
zalme	Young	δα zalme halak δε
yale	Quite	ahmad jaw yale halak δε
nawe	New	haya sara kiṭa:b nawe δε

## Order of Pashto Adjectives

In the order of Pashto adjectives, the researchers talked about the positions where Pashto adjectives are being placed. Adjective order consists of four positions; pre-nominal

initial position, prenominal medial position, postnominal medial position and postnominal final position. These placements and positions have been described in the following tables.

Table 2

*Pre-Nominal Pashto Adjectives in Initial Position at Sentence Level*

Sentences	Meaning
1 <b>loja</b> wana ki: deri: sa:ngi: wi:	A big tree has many branches.
2 <b>sya</b> uba ma skar	Do not drink dirty water.
3 <b>lari</b> : xalaq der waχt pas kor ta ra:zi:	People from far away come home after a long time.
4 <b>stare</b> dzwand insa:n zar buda ki:	A hard life makes a person old quickly.
5 <b>yala</b> t ka:r nadi: kawal paka:r	No need to make mistakes.
6 <b>qa:bil</b> mafum zja:tj: nambari: axli:	An intelligent child gets more marks.
7 <b>xkole</b> kita:b da har fa: xwaχ wi:	Everyone loves a good book.
8 <b>tp</b> r rang xpal rang na baqla wi:	Black color does not change its color.
9 <b>kamzore</b> sare da ugde na:ruytja zyam na lari:	A weak man cannot bear a long illness.
10 <b>na:ra:st</b> insa:n pa lag ka:r der waχt axli:	A lazy person spends too much time on small tasks.

The above bold words in the sentences are Pashto adjectives that precede nouns. These sentences show that Pashto adjectives can occur perfectly at the prenominal initial position at the sentence level without

affecting the meaning of a sentence. Furthermore, the aforementioned placement of prenominal Pashto adjectives in sentence-initial position suggests that it also has no effect on sentence structure.

Table 3

*Pre-Nominal Pashto Adjectives in Medial Position at Sentence Level*

Sentences	Meanings
1 da ya <b>loja</b> wana der sore warka wi:	That big tree gives more shade.
2 da <b>lwa</b> ra aba:dj: da	It is a tall building.
3 da <b>ma</b> far insa:n tadzroba zjata ji:	An old man has more experience.
4 da <b>ta:za</b> sabzi: xwaal der xa ji:	Eating fresh vegetables is good.
5 pa <b>yata</b> wana ki: zja:t largi: ji:	A big tree has more wood.
6 zini: xalaq <b>ma:lg</b> in xura:k na ka wi:	Some people do not eat salty foods
7 da <b>sapa</b> xwaal na natj:dza yalata na ji:	The result of clean foods is not bad.
8 aksar <b>waf</b> sare zja:t xwara:k ka wi:	Most slim men eat more food.
9 yari:b sare <b>gra:n</b> sa:ma:n nafj: ayiste	A poor man cannot buy expensive things.
10 da <b>loja</b> la:r da xu gra:na na da	It is a long way but not difficult.

The above bold words in the table are Pashto adjectives placed before nouns. If the table is focused, each adjective is followed by a noun. From the use of adjectives in the above table, it is found that Pashto adjectives are

commonly placed in the prenominal medial position at the sentence level without affecting the meaning and structure of the sentence.

**Table 4**

*Post-Nominal Pashto Adjectives in Medial Position at Sentence Level*

Sentences	Meanings
1 <i>ḍa</i> la:r <b>loja</b> <i>ḍa</i> <i>χu</i> gra:na na <i>ḍa</i>	This route is long but not difficult.
2 <i>ḍa</i> wana <b>yata</b> <i>ḍa</i> <i>χu</i> sɔre ji: niʃtɔ	It is a big tree but it has no shade.
3 <i>ḍa</i> ūba <b>χari:</b> <i>ḍi:</i> skal ji: na di: paka:r	The water is dirty, don't drink it.
4 <i>ḍa</i> saʃe <b>boda</b> de zaka kamzɔre <i>ḍe</i>	This man is old and weak.
5 <i>ḍa</i> sabzi: <b>tɔ:za</b> <i>ḍa</i>	This vegetable is fresh.
6 <i>ḍa</i> <i>χwara:k</i> <b>ma:lɔm</b> <i>ḍe</i>	This food is salty.
7    zama kiʃtɔ:b <b>χkole</b> <i>ḍe</i>	My book is beautiful.
8    haya ga:de <b>nawe</b> aʃiʃtɔ <i>ḍe</i>	He bought a new car.
9 <i>ḍa</i> la:r <b>landa</b> <i>ḍa</i> <i>χu</i> gra:na <i>ḍa</i>	This rout is short but difficult.
10 <i>ḍa</i> ga:de <b>χiran</b> <i>ḍe</i> , safaji: ji: paka:r <i>ḍa</i>	This car is dirty and needs to be cleaned.

The bold words mentioned in Table 4 are Pashto adjectives placed in the postnominal middle position in Pashto sentences. Table 4 shows that the placement of Pashto

adjectives in this position is correct and does not affect the structure as well as the meaning of the sentences.

**Table 5.**

*Post-Nominal Pashto Adjectives in Final Position at Sentence Level*

Sentences	Meanings
1 <i>ḍa</i> la:r <i>ḍa</i> <i>χu</i> <i>ḍa</i> <b>loja</b>	It is a way but it is long.
2 <i>ḍa</i> kursai <i>ḍa</i> <i>χu</i> <i>ḍa</i> <b>zaʃa</b>	It is a chair but it is old.
3 <i>ḍa</i> ya la:r <i>ḍa</i> <i>χu</i> <i>ḍa</i> <b>gra:na</b>	That is a way but difficult.
4 <i>ḍa</i> ya ga:de <i>ḍe</i> <i>χu</i> <i>ḍe</i> <b>nawe</b>	It is a car but it is new.
5 <i>ḍa</i> <i>χwara:k</i> <i>ḍe</i> <b>χɔg</b>	This food is sweet.
6 <i>ḍa</i> large <i>ḍe</i> <i>χu</i> <i>ḍe</i> <b>saxt</b>	It is wood but hard.
7 <i>ḍa</i> ze <i>ḍe</i> <i>χu</i> <i>ḍe</i> <b>ḍang</b>	It is a place but it is high.
8 <i>ḍa</i> ka:r <i>ḍe</i> <b>asa:n</b>	It is an easy task.
9 <i>ḍa</i> ka:r waka <i>χu</i> <b>χkole</b>	Do this work gracefully.
10   haya sara ga:de <i>ḍe</i> <i>χu</i> <b>zɔr</b>	He has a car but an old one

The above bold words in Table 5 are Pashto adjectives placed in the postnominal final position at the sentence level. This table shows that Pashto adjectives do not occur correctly in the postnominal final position at the sentence level. Such sentences are not available in Pashto written literature while in the spoken form they are very rarely available. Also, the above sentences are not grammatically correct. If these adjectives come in the final position of Pashto sentences, they will show extra emphasis on the sentence, incorrect syntactic order, and

impact on the meaning of the sentences. The effects of placing adjectives in the final position are given below.

### Emphasis on Adjective

If we look at sentences 1-10 in Table 5, all of them have an occurrence of emphasis on adjective in the sentence. For example, *ḍa* *χwara:k* *ḍe* **χɔg**. Here in this sentence, the adjective **χɔg** is being emphasized by the rest of the sentence.

## Wrong Syntactic Order

The order of adjectives in the sentences in Tables 2, 3, 4, and 5 is quite different as in Tables 2, 3 and 4, the adjectives are placed in prenominal initial, middle and post-nominal middle positions which is correct and does not affect the order or meaning of the sentence. Whereas in Table 5, adjectives are placed in the postnominal final position resulting in incorrect sentence order as well as effects on sentence meaning.

## Impact on the Meaning of Words

The meaning of a word depends on its placement in sentences. When the placement of adjectives in pre-initial, medial, and postnominal in middle positions in Tables 2, 3, and 4 are focused, they are adjectives that are correctly placed without affecting the sentence, syntactic order, and meaning. On the other hand, if the position of the same adjectives at the end of the sentence in Table 5 is focused, these adjectives do not convey the same meaning as they do in prenominal initial, middle, and postnominal middle positions.

## Morphological Change in Pashto Adjectives

Yule (2009) states that the term morphology was primarily used in biology, but since the mid-nineteenth century, it has also been used to refer to the basic elements used in language, and these elements are known as morphemes. Morphology exists in every language and is the property of Pashto as well. Changes in morphology vary across languages and their elements. Here, the focus has been given on the morphological change that takes place in Pashto adjectives. Pashto adjectives change morphologically with respect to a noun (gender) like masculine and feminine. For this clarity, examples have been given below:

1. *der saji: (men)*
2. *deri: χazi: (women)*

In the above Pashto phrases, phrase (1) uses the masculine noun "*saġi*" is preceded by the adjective "*der*" while the second phrase uses the feminine noun "*χazi:*" and is preceded by the same adjective as "*deri:*" because the gender of the noun changes from masculine to feminine. A similar process is followed in the following examples.

1. *qa:bil halak ( intelligent boy)*
2. *qa:bila đġmai (intelligent girl)*
3. *yat mez (big table)*
4. *yata korsai (big chair)*

In phrases 1 and 2, the adjectives *qa:bil* and *qa:bila* are used. The adjective *qa:bil* is used for a boy, a masculine noun, while the adjective *qa:bila* in phrase 2 is used for a girl, a feminine noun. Similarly, in phrase 3, the noun *mez* is treated as masculine (*yat mez*), and the adjective *yat* is used while in phrase 4, the same adjective *yat* is used differently as *yata* because the noun *korsai* (chair) as a feminine noun (*yata korsai*) in Pashto.

## Conclusion

An adjective is one of the common grammatical elements that convey the state and quality of a noun. Pashto adjectives are studied in terms of their places in the Pashto text, their changes in meaning, and their morphological changes. In some positions, Pashto adjectives can be placed correctly while in other places they affect the meaning and order of the sentence. Adjectives are accordingly divided into four positions, which are mentioned individually above. To conclude, Pashto adjectives can occur correctly in their prenominal (initial and medial position) and postnominal (medial) positions without affecting the syntactic structure and meaning of the sentence. On the other hand, placement of Pashto adjectives in postnominal final position is not available in Pashto text, it is grammatically incorrect and it is very rare in Pashto spoken form. Apart from that, it brings impact on



syntactic order, and meaning of the sentence and generates emphasis on the adjectives being used in the sentences. Finally, the analysis on the basis of collected data for the paper demonstrates that the placement of Pashto adjectives in the initial and middle

positions of Pashto sentences is well and good while its placement in the final position of the sentence is not correct because it affects the meaning as well as syntactic order of Pashto text.

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