# EXPLORING COPULATIVE COMPOUNDING IN SINDHI: A MORPHO-SEMANTIC STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

*This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to investigate morphological and semantic feature of copulative compounds in Sindh language. The data was collected through observations in local settings such as homes, markets and informal settings. The present study analyzed 12 copulative compounds of Sindhi language. The findings reveal that Sindhi copulative compounds are formed by combining two semantically equivalent elements often verbs, nouns, or adjectives that mutually tend to constitute elements that functions cohesively as a unit without being subjected to morphological fusion. These compounds have different uses such as expressing entertainment, nourishment, familiarity, conflict, and cultural values. Unlike English compounds that usually merge into single lexical items, Sindhi copulatives keep their respective shapes while functioning as a unit of meaning.*

*Keywords:* *Sindhi language, copulative compounds, morpho-semantics, compound structure, semantic coordination*

## Introduction

Compounding is indeed a crucial process for vocabulary expansion across languages, particularly in agglutinative languages like Turkish, Finnish, and Korean (Hacioglu et al., 2004). This word formation process is prevalent in both spoken and sign languages, with American Sign Language demonstrating familiar properties of compounds and even featuring a modality-specific simultaneous compounding where each hand contributes a separate morpheme (Meir et al., 2010). The process of compounding varies across languages and can involve complex linguistic structures. In Japanese, a unique type of noun + verb compound formation has been observed that involves a sentential structure as its input and occurs in the phonological component, challenging the strong lexicalist hypothesis (Shibatani & Kageyama, 1988). Additionally, the structure of compounds can be influenced by linguistic factors, as seen in Chinese, where subordinate and coordinative structures are easier to compound than subject-predicate and verb-object structures (Liu & Mcbride-Chang, 2010).

Copulative compounds, also known as *dvandva* or coordinative compounds, are a distinct type of word formation where two or more lexemes combine to form a new lexical unit with a coordinated meaning. Unlike subordinative compounds (e.g., *blackboard*, where *black* modifies *board*), copulative compounds treat each constituent as semantically and syntactically equal, often implying a conjunction-like relationship (Bauer, 2017).

Sindhi, an Indo-Aryan language spoken primarily in Pakistan and India, has a rich morphological system, but research on its compounding patterns is limited. Early grammatical work like Trumpp (1872) briefly mention Sindhi compounds but do not focus on copulative types. Existing study on Sindhi morphology of Bughio (2011) discuss nominal and verbal compounds but do not provide a detailed analysis of copulative formations. The present study aims to bridge these research gaps by presenting a descriptive analysis of copulative compounds in Sindhi. The research does not prescribe to a particular linguistic theory, but instead involves a naturalistic approach to observe the language and its use. This way, this research aims at understanding on how copulative compounds are formed and interpreted by the native Sindhi speakers in their pervasive linguistic usage. The main aim of the study is to explore the morphological and semantic properties of copulatives in Sindhi.

## Research Objectives

- To examine the morphological and semantic features of copulative compounds in Sindhi

## Research Questions

- What are the morphological and semantic features of the copulative compounds in Sindhi?

## Literature Review

Morphology is the science of words, which explains how words are created from smaller units of meaning (Godby et al., 1982). Gleason (1963) explains morphology is the study of language structure and the identification or classification of the minimal meaningful units of grammar. A compound is a morphological unit composed of more than one free morpheme. According to the definition given by Delahunty and Garvey (2010), a morpheme is the smallest form that has either grammatical function or meaning.

## Compounding

Compounding is a cross-linguistic morphological process whereby two or more lexemes are combined to create a new word with a new meaning (Lieber, 2010). Compounds can be classified according to their syntactic and semantic relationships into endocentric (head+dependent), exocentric (headless), and copulative (coordinative) compounds (Booij 2005). Contrastively, copulative compounds consist of two or more members of equal semantic and syntactic value (Scalise & Vogel, 2010). For instance, in English, actor-director means someone who performs as an actor and also directs. Compounds have been the centre of the research among others in Sanskrit (called dvandva in Petereit, 1996), Greek and GermanicBauer (2017).

## Copulative Compounding in Indo-Aryan Languages

Indo-Aryan languages demonstrate complex and productive compounding paradigms with many copulative compounds in use especially in Sanskrit, and in Hindi and Bengali (Dhakal, 2011). In Sanskrit, dvandva compounds such as rāma-lakṣmaṇau ("Rama and Lakshmana") show coordination without explicit conjunctive (Whitney, 1889). For example, in Hindi, 'mother and father' is expressed as a compound mātā-pitā where both the conjuncts share same status (of equality) (Kachru, 2006). However, the formations of compounds depend on the semantics and syntax of the languages.

## Sindhi Language

The Sindhi is an Indo-Aryan language spoken mainly in the Sindh region of Pakistan, and is the dominant indigenous language of the province. Sindhi with a rich history of literature spanning over the Indus Valley Civilization Scholars believe that it developed from Prakrit, which later on received influence from Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, and finally Dravidian languages, owing to regional contacts (Mukhopadhyay, 2021). This linguistics amalgamation is a reflection of Sindh's pivotal location as a place where trade and cultures exchange.

Sindhi is remarkable for the occurrence of implosive consonants in this context (e.g., /ɓ/, /ɗ/), an unusual feature among Indo-Aryan languages but one that is found in neighboring

languages such as Saraiki (Cole et al., 2021). Its script, based on Arabic in Pakistan (adopted by the state in 1948) and Devanagari in India, symbolises its duality in sociopolitical terms. The language also presents a rich verbal morphology consisting of inflections for tense, aspect, and gender, which makes it agglutinative in nature (Rawlani et al., 2018).

Despite its vitality, Sindhi faces challenges in preservation. In Pakistan, Urdu and English dominate education and media, marginalizing Sindhi in formal domains (Hussain, 2022). Conversely, in India, the language benefits from constitutional recognition under the Eighth Schedule, though its usage remains confined to diaspora communities (Govindani, & Menon (2024). UNESCO classifies Sindhi as "vulnerable," citing declining intergenerational transmission in urban areas (UNESCO Atlas, 2017). Culturally, Sindhi literature thrives through Sufi poetry, notably the works of Shah Abdul Latif Bhittai, whose *Shah Jo Risalo* remains a cornerstone of Sindhi identity. Modern initiatives, such as digital platforms promoting Sindhi script literacy, aim to revitalize the language among youth (Sindhi Language Authority, 2022).

**Research Methodology**

The present study is quantitative in approach. The data of the present study was collected by observing Sindhi spoken in real life situations such as homes, markets, and local meetings. The study utilizes the purposive sampling to collect 30 copulative compounds in which both components equally provide semantic input. The selected compound words were selected at their common use in the society. Moreover, the researcher includes those compounds words that met the structural and semantic requirements. The data was analyzed morphologically and semantically to identify patterns in structure and meaning. Ethical concerns were addressed for the fact that speakers are anonymous and linguistic data are the only topic of this study. This study aims to find out the usage of copulative compounds of native Sindhi speakers in their daily life.

**Findings**

This section of the study presents the selected copulative words in Sindhi language and interprets their morpho-semantic features. The researcher has analyzed and interpreted the selected compounds based on their grammatical structure, semantic coordination, and communicative function in everyday language.

**Table 1: Copulative Compounds in Sindhi**

| Sindhi Compound (سنڌي) | Phonetic Transcription | Part of Speech | English Gloss | English Meaning |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ناچ + ڳانو | /naːtʃ + gɑːno/ | V+V | Dance and song | Entertainment |
| مار + ڪٽ | /maːr + kʌʈ/ | N+N | Beat and hit | Physical aggression or conflict |
| ڀڄ + ڊوڙ | /bʰədʒ + ɖoːɽ/ | V+N | Run and Race | Fast or intense movement |
| ڳالھ + ٻولھ | /gɑːlʰ + boːlʰ/ | N+N | Conversation and talk | Verbal interaction or discussion |
| کائڻ + پيئڻ | /kʰɑːɳ + piːɳ/ | V+V | Eat and drink | Acts of nourishment |
| ٿورو + گھڻو | /tʰoːro + gʰəɳoː/ | Adj+Adjj | Less and more | Range or quantity variation |
| رت + پگھر | /rət + pəgʰɑːr/ | N+N | Blood and sweat | Hard work and physical effort |
| مٽي + ڌوڙ | /məʈi + dʰoːɽ/ | N+N | Dust and dirt | Untidiness or poor conditions |
| سوچ + سمجهه | /soːtʃ + səmgəʰ/ | N+N | Thought and understanding | Wisdom or intellectual depth |

| Sindhi Compound (سنڌي) | Phonetic Transcription | Part of Speech | English Gloss | English Meaning |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ڏِٺو + ڄاتو | /ɖɪʈʰo + ʤɑːʈo/ | V+V | Seen and known | Familiarity or prior knowledge |
| کٽڻ + هارڻ | /kʰəʈəɳ + hɑːrəɳ/ | V+V | Win and lose | Success and failure |
| روڪ + ٽوڪ | /roːk + ʈoːk/ | V+V | Obstruction and interruption | Hindrance or interference |

## Discussion

The findings of the present study reveal that copulative compounds in Sindhi are used for daily communication by combining two semantically associated elements that are balanced together to create new lexical item. English compounds like greenhouse or blackboard that generally fuse words in toward either an orthographic or phonological new lexical item, Sindhi copulative compounds maintain their independence orthographically and phonologically, yet have a single semantic unit. This brings up a morpho-semantic behavior in which force of expression is based on semantic coordination and not on structural fusion.

One of the prominent functional domains is the entertainment or performance, in the compound ناچ + ڳانو / naːtʃ + gɑːno/ 'dance and song'. It is a combination of two similar movements that are familiar to the Sindhi community on festive occasions, weddings and other public events. The noun gaano (song) and naach (dance) equally contribute to create the meaning of both signify joy and artistic expression, but their combination has lent itself to an expression that ties up with the country and the culture. This reveals how copulative compounds function not merely as a linguistic category, but as a social and cultural one, inscribing collective practices in language.

Lexically and grammatically, the compound کائڻ + پيئڻ (kʰɑːɳ + piːɳ) "eat and drink" is a very common copula that brings together two fundamental activities. No doubt, however, the verbs are not so much about life and breath as they are about functions; thought together, they represent life, sustenance and consuming in order to maintain the life. In Sindhi they are commonly employed for multiple purposes such as eating, drinking, care, hospitalities, or even mode of life. A counter example is ڏِٺو + ڄاتو (/ɖɪʈʰo + ʤɑːʈo/; "seem and know"), which describes the effect of experience and familiarity. This is a very popular set of verbs to indicate an affinity or empathy with someone or something. For example, in social terms, someone "ditho jato" is known not just visually but also on a personal level, perhaps suggesting a relationship like friendship or trust. This example also illustrates how copulative compounds such as these in Sindhi may have emotional or relational overtones, based on the mutual reinforcement of the two constituents.

Cultural representation is another feature of copulative compounds. Couples like رت + پگهر (/rət + pəgʰɑːr/, "blood and sweat") are deep within the cultural fabric of the language, representing hard toil, martyrdom, and commitment. These phrases are all indicative of culturally approved traits, particularly amongst the working classes. They are frequently wielded in political or poetic phrases that offer tribute to hard work and endurance. Interestingly, copulative compounds in Sindhi are not formed via morphological (unlike their common English counterparts). Where English might assimilate two phrases into one word, as in notebook or sunlight, Sindhi keeps the two elements as separate words in writing and speech. The linkage is semantic, coordinated in meaning; it depends at times on rhythm of speech, context, and idiomatic usage for unification. This specific feature is a salient sign that copulative compounding in Sindhi is a semantic process rather than orthographic phenomena.

## Conclusion

The findings of the present study revealed that the copulatives compounds in Sindhi are the combination of two semantically equivalent elements in general with the patterns V+V, N+N, Adj+Adj, V+N etc., and these compounds work with no morphological fusion, and they never lose their independence while creating a lexeme. Furthermore, the present study found that copulative compounds does multiple functions such as Entertainment, Nourishment, Conflict , Intellectual expression, Familiarity and Cultural values. These foregoing expressions are part of everyday conversation, idioms, and cultural anecdotes. Unlike English compounds, Sindhi copulative compounds are structurally distinct, but semantically unified. Overall, the study found that copulative compounding in Sindhi language are productive and culturally embedded phenomenon that draws on both linguistic form and social significance.

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