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STRUCTURAL AND SEMANTIC FUNCTIONS OF INTERFIXES IN URDU NOMINAL CONSTRUCTIONS: A CONSTRUCTION MORPHOLOGY PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract
This study examines the morphological process of interfixation in Urdu noun formation, focusing on its structural, phonological, and semantic functions. As a contact language shaped by Arabic and Persian, Urdu displays a complex nominal system influenced by multiple linguistic traditions. Drawing on Geert Booij's Construction Morphology (2010), which conceptualizes morphological patterns as form–meaning pairings, the study reconceptualizes interfixes as meaningful linking elements rather than purely phonological connectors. It specifically analyzes forms such as izāfat (-e-), coordinative (-o-), and Arabic genitive (-ul-), demonstrating that they function as constructional morphemes encoding relational, genitive, and coordinative meanings within nominal compounds. Using qualitative data from authoritative lexicographic sources, including Rekhta and Feroz-ul-Lughat, the study identifies systematic and rule-governed patterns of interfix insertion. The findings reveal that interfixation enhances both morphological productivity and semantic cohesion, reflecting the hybrid and cognitively motivated nature of Urdu morphology. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of noun-internal structure in Urdu. It highlights the broader typological significance of interfixation, while suggesting avenues for future research on other regional Pakistani languages.

Keywords: *Interfixation, Urdu Nouns, Construction Morphology, Morphosyntactic*

1. Introduction

Language serves as a framework for organizing meanings, cultural values, and cognitive patterns in addition to being a tool for communication. The morphological system of a language, especially the processes involved in word production, is one of the most significant ways that it reflects its internal organization. Because of Urdu's historical evolution and long-standing contact with Arabic and Persian, the language's noun construction exhibits extraordinary richness. As a result, Urdu nouns often have complex internal structures that extend beyond simple suffixation or prefixation (Batool & Saleem, 2023; Daud et al., 2017; Islam, 2012; Saleem & Yasmin, 2024).

Interfixation is an important but little-researched internal process that influences the morphological, phonological, and semantic structure of Urdu nouns. Due to the interaction of Indo-Aryan grammatical roots, Urdu is a contact-based language with a strong lexical influence from Persian and Arabic. Because of this interplay, native structural processes and borrowed roots coexist in hybrid morphological forms (Mangrio et al., 2013; Qadri et al., 2024; Saleem & Ahmad, 2025). Internal noun structures, in which morphemes occur within words or serve as connecting elements between nouns, have received less attention than compounding, derivation, and inflection

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in traditional studies of Urdu morphology. Such internal morphological mechanisms include infixation, the insertion of a morphemic element into a word, and interfixation, the use of linking components between two nouns (Iqbal et al., 2021; Saeed et al., 2025).

These processes follow identifiable patterns and systematically contribute to the formation of Urdu's grammatical order and meaning; they are neither exceptional nor random. Examining how interfixation functions in the creation of Urdu nouns and proving that these processes are rule-governed and semantically significant are the main goals of this study. Without changing the word's grammatical category, this study examines how interfix insertion affects nouns' internal structure, phonological flow, and semantic interpretation.

The research investigates how interfixes serve as structural connections in nominal compounds and how they contribute to the creation of cohesive meanings that frequently go beyond the literal meanings of the constituent parts. This study offers a thorough and targeted examination of internal morphology, which has received little systematic attention in Urdu linguistics, by focusing on nouns.

This topic is chosen due to both theoretical and descriptive considerations. While Urdu compounding has been widely examined, the structural and semantic role of interfixes as constructional linking devices has not received systematic attention. An improved knowledge of how non-concatenative morphology functions in Indo-Aryan languages influenced by Semitic and Persian patterns can be gained by examining infixation in Urdu nouns. Many interfixated compounds, such as dil-o-jān, dunyā-o-ākhirat, and ḥuqūq-ul-ʿibād, are ideal for linguistic analysis because they are firmly ingrained in Urdu literary and cultural expression.

This study is important because it advances knowledge of internal mechanisms of word production in Urdu morphological studies. This study emphasizes the functional importance of interfixes in producing semantic unity, plurality, abstraction, and metaphorical extension by treating them as significant morphological pieces rather than phonological fillers. Linguists working in morphology, applied linguistics, and South Asian language studies should find the research's conclusions valuable. Additionally, by offering more comprehensible explanations of intricate noun structures that are frequently taken for granted in usage but remain analytically unexplored, this research can help educators and lexicographers.

Even with the increasing amount of research on Urdu morphology (Batool & Saleem,2023; Daud et al., 2017; Mangrio et al., 2013; Islam, 2012; Nabi et al., 2025; Qadri et al., 2024; Saleem & Yasmin, 2024; Saleem & Ahmad, 2025), there is still a visible research gap. Prior research (Jabbar et al., 2025; Safdar, 2021) has mostly focused on surface-level affixation and compounding, frequently interpreting interior connecting parts as phonological devices rather than separate morphological units. Several theoretical frameworks acknowledge internal modification, though they do not consistently focus on interfixation, especially in noun creation. Because of this, the internal structure of Urdu nouns has not been sufficiently examined in terms of the interplay between meaning, form, and function. The prevalence and cultural significance of these forms in Urdu literature, religious discourse, and daily communication make this disparity particularly clear. By providing a systematic review of interfixation in Urdu nouns within the context of Construction Morphology, the current study fills this gap. By doing this, it shows these processes as cognitively grounded and structurally motivated patterns rather than as marginal or unique. The study highlights how these processes enhance the descriptive and theoretical comprehension of Urdu by promoting morphological productivity and semantic coherence. The following research questions serve as a guide for the study to accomplish the goal:

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1. What structural patterns underlie interfixated nominal constructions in Urdu?
2. What semantic relations (e.g., coordination, genitive specification, and institutional reference) are encoded by interfixes such as -e-, -o-, and -ul-?

2. Literature Review

Urdu, like other Indo-Aryan languages, displays notable morphological complexity, including infixation. Its morphological system is shaped by a combination of native elements and borrowed components such as roots, stems, and affixes derived from Arabic and Persian, which together enrich its word-formation processes (Mangrio, 2016; Noor, 2021). This integration of multiple linguistic influences results in structurally complex expressions that reflect the morphological depth of Urdu. Such expressions are widely employed across daily communication, literary texts, and artistic discourse, highlighting their functional and cultural significance (Batool & Saleem, 2023). Therefore, analyzing these complex morphological patterns is essential for both theoretical and applied linguistic domains.

Linguistic research has long examined the interplay of semantic and morphological processes in word formation, particularly within complex languages like Urdu. As an Indo-Aryan language with intricate inflectional and derivational mechanisms, Urdu presents a valuable case for studying compounding as a primary word-formation process (Khan et al., 2025; King, 2008; Noreen et al., 2024). Compounding allows Urdu to generate nuanced, culturally resonant meanings, integrating native roots with influences from Persian and Arabic. While previous studies have explored this process, many analyses have focused on surface-level features, such as phonological patterns and morphological adjustments, without delving into the complex interaction between constituents' meanings and the overall compound semantics (Daud et al., 2017).

Akhtar et al. (2016) specifically investigate Urdu word segmentation from the perspective of the multiword expression approach. The focus of the research is on identifying compounds in the text. The research employed a corpus-based and computational approach. The research shows that the Urdu language has numerous compounds with semantic unity. The research has significant implications for the role of semantic unity in the formation of compounds. However, the research has the limitation of not going into the detailed morphological structure of the words. The limitation of the research is significant in the context of the present research because it extends beyond word segmentation to include interfixation.

The criteria for identifying Urdu compounds have also been explored by Qureshi & Hassan (2019). In this study, the authors have applied the model proposed by Plag (2002). This study has also focused on distinguishing Urdu compounds from similar processes such as phrase formation, derivation, and conversion. This study finds that Urdu compounds are morphologically regular and semantically unified. The study, however, has remained restricted to the identification of Urdu compounds at the surface level and has not explored the internal linking elements in Urdu compounds, specifically interfixes as morphological units. The present study has explored interfixation as a constructional phenomenon, specifically its function as a meaning mediator in Urdu noun compounds.

Earlier work by Sharif and Saleem (2025) on Urdu morphology has mainly focused on compounding and affixation, while internal morphological processes, such as interfixation, have received far less attention. Their study shows that most Urdu compounds are right-headed and endocentric, and that Construction Morphology provides a useful framework for explaining the mixed nature of Urdu word formation, which reflects Indo-Aryan structural patterns alongside

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strong Perso-Arabic lexical influence. They also briefly highlight the role of phonological factors in compound formation, which indirectly suggests the presence of internal linking elements. However, their analysis remains limited to surface-level compounding, and internal material within nouns is largely treated as a phonological feature rather than as an independent morphological unit. This limitation creates a clear space for the present study, which adopts the Construction Morphology framework used by Sharif and Saleem (2025) but moves beyond it by offering a systematic analysis of noun-internal interfixation that has not been adequately explored in previous research on Urdu morphology.

Similarly, Batool and Saleem (2023) investigated diminutive morphology in English and Urdu using a qualitative, morphology-based approach. Their data were drawn from corpora, dictionaries, literary texts, and native speaker judgments. The study demonstrates that Urdu possesses a more productive and semantically rich diminutive system than English, with bound morphemes that often involve internal changes to noun stems and convey meanings such as affection, familiarity, and emotional closeness. Despite these valuable insights, the analysis largely categorizes these forms as suffixes or inflectional elements and does not clearly distinguish interfixation as a distinct morphological process. Although internal modification is acknowledged, the internal structure of nouns is not examined in depth. This gap is directly addressed in the present research, which builds on the Construction Morphology framework used by Batool and Saleem (2023) and focuses specifically on interfixation as an independent and systematic process in Urdu noun formation.

3. Methodology

In the present study, a qualitative approach (Davis, 1995; Obeyd, 2021) is employed to examine the morphological process of noun interfixation in Urdu. This approach is adopted because the research focuses on how interfixes form new word structures. As the objectives of this study involve explaining how words are formed, how interfixes function, and how they interact with meaning and grammatical organization, a qualitative morphological analysis is appropriate for the current research.

Furthermore, Interfixation is a linguistic process that is descriptive in nature and requires significant interpretation of language structure and language borrowings, including Arabic/Persian influences on the language. These processes illustrate the versatility of the Urdu language, in which native lexicological patterns are combined with borrowed morphological patterns from other languages. The qualitative method used in the study allows detailed examination of linguistic processes, which aligns with the aims of an Applied Linguistics study. Qualitative research methods are particularly well-suited for investigating language-related topics, as they allow for an in-depth examination of the data and capture the richness and nuances of diminutive forms in both languages (Weidhaas & Schmid, 2015; Winters & Nathan, 2020).

Moreover, Savin-Baden and Major (2023) contend that qualitative research methods in theoretical linguistics recognize the critical role of interpretation and that language is a subjective and meaning-laden system. This study uses a purposive sampling method, selecting Urdu nominal words based on whether they exhibit evident morphological features of interfixation. This research uses the mobile apps Urdu Lughat and Rekhta Dictionary, which are highly credible lexical corpora that provide normalized words, including details on morphology and evolution. In this study, sixteen nominal lexical items were collected for research by using interfixation. These sixteen nominal lexical items are examples of interfixation. For a qualitative morphological analysis, this proposed study finds the sample size adequate for its scope. It proposes an in-depth analysis of

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each chosen word based on its inherent morphological structure, grammatical form, and meanings. Additionally, the chosen nominal words are quite frequent in Urdu, indicating morphological diversity.

The data is analyzed using a qualitative descriptive morphological approach. Each selected nominal word is examined for interfixation by carefully segmenting into root morphemes and inserted elements. The research is guided by the principles of Construction Morphology, which enable the application of the framework to study the structures associated with interfixation in Urdu nominal words, with a focus on internal structural analysis.(Booij, 2010). By applying the theory of Construction Morphology, there is flexibility to represent both indigenous and borrowed morphological structures, whether from Arabic or Persian sources, thereby ensuring proper representation and analysis of morphological processes in Urdu. This analysis focuses on the description of interfixes within nominal structures in contributing to word formation and meaning. The selected words for analysis are presented in Table 1, which shows word forms, morphological segmentation, grammatical classification, and meanings.

Table 1:

Interfixation Patterns in Urdu Compounds: Morphological Structures and Semantic Functions

Sr. no	Compound Word	Interfix	Grammatical Category	Meaning
1.	Dil-o-Jaan	-o-	Compound Abstract Noun	Heart and soul
2.	Ilm-o-Hunar	-o-	Compound Abstract Noun	Knowledge and skill
3.	Duniya-o-Akhirat	-o-	Compound Abstract Noun	This world and the hereafter
4.	Deen-o-Duniya	-o-	Compound Abstract Noun	Religion and worldly life
5.	Khidmat-e-Khalq	-e-	Compound Abstract Noun	Service to humanity
6.	Gul-e-Laala	-e-	Compound Concrete Noun	Tulip flower
7.	Raaz-e-Hayāt	-e-	Compound Abstract Noun	Secret of life
8.	Shab-e-Qadar	-e-	Compound Abstract Noun	Night of Power
9.	Jaan-e-Jahaan	-e-	Compound Abstract Noun	Life of the world / beloved
10.	Dil-e-Nadaan	-e-	Compound Abstract Noun	Innocent heart
11.	Ishq-e-Mohabbat	-e-	Compound Abstract Noun	Love and affection
12.	Shair-e-Mashriq	-e-	Compound Abstract Noun	Poet of the East
13.	Feroz-ul-Lughat	-ul-	Proper Noun	Name of an Urdu dictionary
14.	Haqooq-ul-Ibaad	-ul-	Compound Abstract Noun	Rights of humans
15.	Dar-ul-Uloom	-ul-	Compound Concrete Noun	Institution of knowledge
16.	Noor-ul-Huda	-ul-	Compound Abstract Noun	Light of guidance

Efforts are made to ensure the authenticity and representativeness of the collected data. The current research remains ensured through appropriate verification and checking of the chosen lexical items. The Urdu Lughat app and the Rekhta Dictionary have been consulted for initial verification of the chosen words to ascertain their standardized forms and meanings. Moreover, the instructor at the University of Central Punjab, an expert in Morphology, examines the chosen words, which demonstrates the appropriateness of the chosen lexicon. These words also appear in Urdu novels, short stories, and poetry, as well as in modern prose. These words have been used in numerous literary pieces across the chosen genres, and a standard form of their nomination exists

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in Urdu; their presence in literature helps reinforce their authenticity and validity in the current research.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The following section presents a detailed analysis of Urdu nouns formed through Interfixation within the theoretical framework of Construction Morphology.

1. Dil-o-Jaan

In the compound Dil-o-Jaan, the pattern of construction is [N1 – o – N2] wherein the interfix -o- serves as the coordinating linking morpheme of the two nouns of Persian origin. Dil-o-jaan (dil- = heart.NOM – o- = COORD – jaan = soul. NOM/life.NOM), which means 'heart and soul'. The two nouns dil (dil = heart.NOM) and jaan (jaan = soul. NOM/life.NOM) are connected by -o- (-o- = COORD), thus encoding a coordinative relation that binds both into one conceptual whole. In Construction Morphology, this is considered a form–meaning pair, not merely syntactic but semantic. The interfix itself does not have its own lexical semantics; rather, it encodes a coordinative relation that binds the two into a single conceptual whole.

Significantly, however, the coordination is not strictly additive. Unlike coordination between two units, the structure creates an integrated semantic meaning in which both dil (dil = heart.NOM) and jaan (jaan = soul.NOM/life.NOM) constitute one's emotional and existential whole. In other words, the use of the interfix -o- (-o- = COORD) serves as a mediating meaning element in creating the meaning of the construction, thus allowing for an extended, figurative meaning to be derived.

About its grammatical nature, the operation is categorially invariant since the inputs and outputs share the same category in that the input elements are nouns, while the output is a noun as well and acts like a whole word in syntactic constructions. The necessity for -o- (-o- = COORD) is therefore clear since this helps both in ensuring grammaticality and phonological smoothness of the construction.

With respect to productivity, it can be said that the [N1 – o – N2] schema is only half-productive in Urdu. However, this template allows the generation of several coordinative compounds, such as Dil-o-Jaan (dil-COORD-jaan = heart-COORD-soul), which have become fully conventionalized and lexicalized phrases. Therefore, it may be said that interfixation in Urdu is a phenomenon that operates at the crossroads of productivity and lexicon, as it constructs both meaning and structure.

2. Ilm-o-Hunar

Ilm-o-Hunar is a compound whose construction type is [N1 – o – N2]. In this construction, -o- is a coordinating linker morpheme that connects two nouns of Arabic or Persian origin. ilm-o-hunar (ilm- = knowledge.NOM – o- = COORD – hunar = skill.NOM). This compound means "knowledge and skill." The first element, ilm (ilm = knowledge.NOM), and the second element, hunar (hunar = skill.NOM), are linked by the interfix to form a single nominal unit. From the point of view of Construction Morphology, the interfix expresses the idea of coordination in semantics (-o- = COORD) and is not just a phonological connector but a unified conceptual field.

Grammatically, it is a category-preserving structure, meaning that both are nouns, and the entire structure behaves as a single noun phrase that can be used as a subject or an object in syntactic constructions. Structurally speaking, the interfix -o- (COORD) is required to link the two components together in terms of phonology. The Leipzig glosses of the whole structure are ilm-o-hunar, which means ilm-COORD-hunar, or knowledge-COORD-skill.

From the perspective of semantics, the concept of Ilm-o-Hunar signifies the combination of concepts, where both coordinating nouns together constitute a unity that stresses the complementary nature of cognition and practical competence, ilm meaning "knowledge" and

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hunar meaning "skill.NOM." The semantic integration reflects the meaning of the Urdu compound, which is commonly used in literary, educational, and professional settings.

In terms of productivity, the [N1 – o – N2] type is only partially productive. Although other combinations of words may be constructed, 'Ilm-o-Hunar' (ilm-COORD-hunar = knowledge-COORD-skill) is an established collocation that is familiar in Urdu. It shows how interfixation effectively represents coordinative relationships, helps build semantic unity, and aids in forming abstract nominal phrases.

3. Dunyā-o-Ākhirat

Dunyā-o-Ākhirat is a compound of type [N1 – o – N2] with interfix –o-, which acts as a linking element used to coordinate two nouns that are derived from Arabic languages. dunyā-o-ākhirat (dunyā- = world.NOM – o- = COORD – ākhirat = hereafter.NOM), meaning 'world and hereafter.' Nouns dunyā (dunyā = world.NOM) and ākhirat (ākhirat = hereafter.NOM) are connected by interfix –o- (-o- = COORD). In Construction Morphology, this type of construction is considered a lexically stored form-meaning pairing with a particular semantic link encoded within the interfix. The relationship established in this compound can be viewed as one of coordination, but it is more conceptually integrated than simply additive. Although the meaning can be understood as "this world and the hereafter," the structure actually represents a domain of conceptual unity signifying completeness. In this respect, the interfix -o- (-o- = COORD) is a constructional meaning mediator since it brings together the two opposing ideas within the same semantic domain. It means that the meaning goes beyond mere conjunction, implying a holistic approach where any activity undertaken in dunyā (dunyā = world.NOM) is inherently related to any consequence in ākhirat (ākhirat = hereafter.NOM).

In terms of grammar, this category is also preserved, as both items belong to the category of nouns, and the structure as a whole represents an abstract noun phrase. In syntax, it functions as a unit and is used in positions where nouns occur without any division into two components. The use of -o- (-o- = COORD) is mandatory, since it creates coherence of both grammatical and phonological nature for two items. As far as productivity is concerned, the [N1 – o – N2] construction is considered productive in Urdu, especially in formal or literary contexts, where conceptual pairings are often used.

4. Deen-o-Dunyā

The word Deen-o-Dunyā is formed with the construction type [N1 – o – N2] and consists of the interfix -o-, which acts as a coordinating linking morpheme between the two noun heads, both of which have etymologies in Arabic/Persian. deen-o-dunyā (deen- = religion. NOM/faith.NOM – o- = COORD – dunyā = world.NOM / worldly_life.NOM), which means 'religion and worldly life'. It should be noted that the word Deen (deen = religion. NOM/faith.NOM) combines with the other word dunyā (dunyā = world.NOM / worldly_life.NOM) through the help of the interfix -o-. Through Construction Morphology, the interfix -o- is responsible for encoding the semantic function of coordination (-o- = COORD).

In terms of grammar, this word construction assigns both constituents to the noun category; the combination constitutes a nominal phrase that can be used syntactically as a subject, an object, or a complement. The interfix -o- (-o-= COORD) is indispensable for phonologically joining the two nouns together. As far as the semantics are concerned, Deen-o-Dunyā is an example of how Urdu interfixation can combine two abstract notions into one conceptually unified whole. Through the interfixation, the semantic relationship between the two notions can be described as the harmony between the spiritual sphere (deen = religion, NOM/faith, NOM) and the mundane one (dunyā =

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world, NOM/worldly life, NOM). The meaning of the word is not limited to the mere joining of two terms but has become conventionally applied. Productivity-wise, the [N1 – o – N2] paradigm is semi-productive. Even though other coordinating compounds can also be derived in a similar fashion, such terms as Deen-o-Dunyā (deen-COORD-dunyā = religion/faith-COORD-world/worldly life) are extremely lexified. In other words, interfixation helps encode coordinative relationships and leads to the construction of meaningfully linked nominal complexes in Urdu.

5. Khidmat-e-Khalq

Khidmat-e-Khalq is a compound word based on the pattern [N1 – e – N2]. In this pattern, the morpheme that serves to link the two nouns together is the interfix -e-. Khidmat-e-Khalq (khidmat- = service. NOM-e – e- = REL – khalq = creation. NOM/humanity.NOM). It can be interpreted to mean "service of humanity". Both Khidmat and Khalq are Arabic-derived nouns (khidmat = service, NOM; khalq = creation, NOM/humanity, NOM). Nevertheless, the use of the relational interfix -e- is a construction pattern completely assimilated into Urdu. In Construction Morphology, this construction pattern constitutes a form-meaning pairing where -e- encodes a particular relation.

The relationship involved in this expression is genitive and defining, in that the noun khalq (khalq = creation. NOM/humanity.NOM) semantically constrains the semantic domain of khidmat (khidmat = service.NOM). It means that khidmat is not used in a broad sense to mean "service," but rather "service of humanity." The role of the interfix -e- (-e- = REL) is to act as the mediator of constructional meaning by linking the two nouns in such a way that the latter modifies the former.

As far as grammar is concerned, this is a category-conserving structure since the constituents that go into the formation belong to the same grammatical category and create one noun phrase. Syntactically, this structure functions as a single element and can occupy noun slots in a sentence. The use of the linker -e- (-e- = REL) is compulsory because leaving it out would disturb the grammatical structure of the compound. According to the Leipzig glossing system, the structure can be fully segmented as follows: khidmat-e-khalq = khidmat-REL-khalq = service-REL-creation/humanity.

Given the schema's productivity, it can be claimed that the [N1 – e – N2] schema is productive in Urdu, especially in formal, literary, and religious contexts. Whereas there are some expressions such as Khidmat-e-Khalq (service-REL-creation/humanity), other instances of [N1 – e – N2] can still be produced since it is semantically permissible. Thus, it could be concluded that the interfixation by using the suffix -e- helps express the relationship between words semantically.

6. Gul-e-Laala

The compound Gul-e-Laala is of the form [N1 – e – N2], and here the interfix -e- is the relational linking morpheme that is found in the izāfat construction in the Persian language. Gul-e-Laala (gul- = flower.NOM – e- = REL – laala = tulip.NOM). Both the stems, gul (gul = flower.NOM) and laala (laala = tulip.NOM) are nouns derived from Persian and are connected by the interfix -e- (-e- = REL) in such a way that the whole construction is one noun in Urdu.

This relation can be described as being attributive and specific. In this case, the second noun laala (laala = tulip.NOM) acts as a specifier of the semantic field of gul (gul = flower.NOM) and therefore denotes a certain kind of flower. It does not present an equal relation between two objects, but rather a hierarchical relation in which laala plays the role of a classifier of gul. Interfix -e- (-e- = REL) acts as a mediator in meaning construction here, thus allowing us to interpret this combination as "flower of the kind of tulip," i.e., "tulip flower."

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From a grammatical point of view, the structure is a category-preserving structure, since both elements are nouns and together they form a single noun. In terms of syntax, it works as a lexical unit without the need for extra grammatical modification. The interfix –e– (-e-= REL) is essential from the perspective of both grammar and phonology. Applying Leipzig Glossing to the whole structure, we will see gul-e-laala = gul-REL-laala = flower-REL-tulip.

As far as productivity is concerned, the schema is highly productive in Urdu, particularly in its descriptive and literary varieties (Saleem et al., 2021). It means that speakers can form other examples using the same schema. On the other hand, phrases such as Gul-e-Laala (gul-REL-laala = flower-REL-tulip) prove the lexical entrenchment of interfixation in nominal compound construction in the Urdu language.

7. Shab-e-Qadr

The compound Shab-e-Qadr is made up of the morphosyntactic pattern [N1 – e – N2], in which the interfix "e" functions as the relational link morpheme, derived from the Persian izāfat pattern. shab-e-qadr (shab- = night. NOM-e – e- = REL – qadr = power. NOM/value. NOM/decree.NOM) meaning "night of power/value." The two nouns, "shab" and "qadr," are combined using this interfix to create one unitary nominal expression. In Construction Morphology, this pattern constitutes a form-meaning pairing in which the interfix serves as a semantic link.

The relationship conveyed in this compound is genitive and specifying, in which qadr (qadr = power. NOM/value. NOM/decree.NOM) provides semantic definition and elevation for shab (shab = night.NOM). Thus, the meaning can be described as "night of power/value," but the semantics are not completely compositional. Rather, it represents a fully conventionalized phrase referring to a particular religious event within the culture. The interfix -e- (-e- = REL) functions as a semantic mediator of the construction through its ability to relate the nouns to form a meaning that is cultural and institutionalized.

Grammatically speaking, this is an example of category preservation because both constituents are nouns, and the structure itself functions as a proper noun. The structure functions as a single lexeme syntactically, occurring in nominal roles without modification. The inclusion of -e- (-e- = REL) is crucial to the structure because without it, there would be no grammatical connection between the two constituent parts. In terms of productivity, while the [N1 – e – N2] schema is generally productive in Urdu, forms like Shab-e-Qadr (shab-REL-qadr = night-REL-power/value/decree) are fully lexicalized and stored as fixed expressions. This shows that interfixation not only encodes relational meaning but also contributes to the formation of conventionalized and institutionally recognized nominal constructions in Urdu.

8. Dil-e-Nadan

Dil-e-Nādān is a compound based on the pattern [N1 – e – N2]. In this structure, the interfix -e- acts as a relational linking morpheme in accordance with the izāfat construction in the Persian language. Dil-e-nādān can be described as dil-e-nādān (dil- = heart.NOM – e- = REL – nādān = naive.ADJ / innocent.ADJ) meaning 'heart of the naive/innocent'. The first noun stem dil (dil = heart.NOM) and the second noun stem nādān (nādān = naive.ADJ / innocent.ADJ) come together using this interfix to create a nominal construction, which becomes lexicalized as a whole in the language of Urdu.

The relationship captured in this construction is one of attribution and qualification. The second constituent, nādān (nādān = naive.ADJ / innocent.ADJ), qualifies the first constituent, dil (dil = heart.NOM). This construction can be interpreted as "naive heart" or "innocent heart." In this regard, the interfix -e- (-e- = REL) acts as a mediator of constructional meaning, connecting the

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two constituents in such a way that results in the formation of an overall conceptual meaning. However, the meaning of the constructed form goes beyond its literal meaning. In this sense, the construction can also be taken to mean vulnerability, impulsiveness, or loss of rationality.

From a grammatical point of view, this formation is category-conservative since the result can be viewed as a noun phrase even though one of the elements has an adjective nature. In terms of syntax, the expression operates like one linguistic unit and can be used in nominative slots without any internal change within itself. The inclusion of -e- (-e- = REL) is structurally important because it helps achieve structural coherence and a good pronunciation link.

When we look at the productivity aspect, the [N1 – e – N2] pattern retains its productivity in Urdu, especially in literary usage, so that such attributive constructions can still be constructed. However, examples such as "Dil-e-Nādān" (dil-REL-nādān = heart-REL-naive/innocent) are highly lexicalized, illustrating the potential for both systematicity and conventionality that comes from interfixation.

9. Jaan-e-Jahaan

The compound "Jaan-e-Jahaan" follows the constructional template [N1 – e – N2], in which the interfix "-e-" serves as a linking morpheme indicating the relationship between the two noun phrases, borrowed from the Persian izāfat construction. jaan-e-jahaan (jaan- = life. NOM/soul.NOM – e- = REL – jahaan = world.NOM / beloved.NOM), meaning 'life of the world'. These two nouns, "jaan" (jaan = life, NOM/soul, NOM) and "jahaan" (jahaan = world, NOM / beloved, NOM), have come together under the influence of the interfix to form one singular construction.

In this complex noun, there exists a genitive and specifying relation. The second noun, jahaan (jahaan = world.NOM / beloved.NOM), specifies or delimits the reference of jaan (jaan = life. NOM/soul.NOM). Consequently, the expression is either interpreted as "life of the world" or "beloved of my life." The interfix -e- (-e- = REL) serves as the meaning mediator of the construction, which imposes an interdependency on the components to generate a relationship meaning that goes beyond the lexical meanings of the nouns involved.

In terms of grammar, the phrase can be termed category-preserving, since both words are nouns and the entire combination works together to form one noun phrase. As far as syntax is concerned, it forms a unit that can be used either as a subject or an object in a sentence. As for phonology, the use of -e- (-e- = REL) helps ensure easy pronunciation and that the combination fits the structure of Urdu.

Productively, the [N1 – e – N2] pattern is productive in Urdu, specifically within literary and poetic contexts, even though words such as Jaan-e-Jahaan (jaan-REL-jahaan = life/soul-REL-world/beloved) represent lexicalized and culturally entrenched examples. It shows how interfixation in Urdu serves not only to express genitive or specificative relations but also to create culturally meaningful nominals.

10. Raaz-e-Hayāt

Raaz-e-Hayāt is an example of a compound with the structural formula [N1 – e – N2]. Here, the interfix –e-, which is the relational linker morpheme of the compound, originates from the Persian izāfat construction. raaz-e-hayāt (raaz = secret.NOM – e = REL – hayāt = life.NOM). The nouns used in forming the compound are raaz (raaz = secret.NOM) and hayāt (hayāt = life.NOM), which have been combined using the interfix to create a new noun in Urdu. From the perspective of Construction Morphology, the interfix here is more than just phonology, but represents the genitive/specifying relationship (-e- = REL).

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From the semantic perspective, the second noun hayāt (hayāt = life.NOM) delimits the meaning of raaz (raaz = secret.NOM), leading to the interpretation "secret of life." The interfix -e- (-e- = REL) functions as a construction meaning mediator, enabling the derivation of a conventionalized and abstract meaning in the compound, which is more than just a simple combination of its constituent elements.

From a grammatical perspective, it is category-preserving because the two items are nouns, and the final compound itself is also a noun phrase. Syntactically, it is one cohesive unit that can function in the same way that any other noun phrase would without having to modify anything within it. The structural requirement for the -e- (-e- = REL) element is essential for both its grammatical unity and phonetic linking of the two items.

In terms of productivity, the [N1 – e – N2] schema is partially productive in Urdu. Though such a pattern can create other genitive structures, the compound Raaz-e-Hayāt, meaning "secret of life," is well-established and lexically fossilized, especially in the poetic discourse. Thus, it becomes clear that interfixation plays an important role in encoding relations and creating meaningful nouns.

11. Ishq-e-Mohabbat

Ishq-e-Mohabbat is an example of [N1 – e – N2] construction pattern. Here, the interfix -e-, which is a linking relational morpheme, is extracted from the izāfat construction in Persian. ishq-e-mohabbat (ishq- = love.NOM – e- = REL – mohabbat = affection.NOM), meaning "love of affection". Both the first constituent, ishq (ishq = love.NOM), and the second constituent, mohabbat (mohabbat = affection.NOM), are of Arabic/Persian roots. These two constituents are combined using the -e- morpheme (-e- = REL) to form a single noun. In Under Construction Morphology, the interfix is not simply a phonological linking device but also conveys relational meaning.

From a semantic point of view, the term mohabbat (mohabbat = affection.NOM) indicates the nature or scope of ishq (ishq = love.NOM), thereby conveying the meaning of "love of affection" or, simply put, a more intensified form of emotional bond. In terms of function, the interfix –e– (-e- = REL) acts as a mediating element in meaning, allowing the fusion of both nouns to form an enhanced meaning rather than simply their addition. It shows that meaning cannot be considered completely compositional, since it relies on both linguistic and literary conventions.

From a grammatical standpoint, the formation is also a category-preserving one since both members of the construction belong to the same grammatical category, that is, both are nouns, and hence, the outcome of the process is an abstract noun that may appear either as a subject or as an object within a sentence. The inclusion of the element -e- (-e- = REL) is mandatory for coherence and euphony purposes.

In terms of productivity, the [N1 – e – N2] structure in Urdu is moderately productive. Even though it allows the formation of other genitive/relational constructions, Ishq-e-Mohabbat (ishq-REL-mohabbat) remains highly conventionalized and is frequently used in poetry and literature. The example demonstrates how interfixation in Urdu is an effective means of representing relations, facilitating semantic consistency, and forming culturally ingrained nominal compounds.

12. Shair-e-Mashriq

The compound Shair-e-Mashriq is based on the pattern [N1 – e – N2]. Here, the morpheme -e- works as an interfix that establishes a relational relation between the two nouns in question based on the construction in the Persian language known as izāfat construction. Shair-e-Mashriq (shair = poet. NOM-e – e- = REL – mashriq = east.NOM) meaning "poet of the East." Here, the noun

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shair (shair = poet.NOM) and the other noun mashriq (mashriq = east.NOM) are united into one morphological structure through the interfix -e-. In Construction Morphology, -e- expresses the relation of genitive/specifier.

From the standpoint of semantics, the second element of the compound, mashriq (mashriq = east.NOM), defines the semantic area of shair (shair = poet.NOM), and thus the translation of the entire nominal compound is "poet of the East." The role of the interfix, -e- (-e- = REL), is that of a mediator of the conceptual content of the word, helping the whole expression acquire a specific meaning that goes beyond the simple sum of its two constituent elements.

Grammatically speaking, the structure is category-preserving: the two parts are nouns, and when combined, the resultant structure functions as a single noun phrase that can be incorporated into a sentence without undergoing any structural changes. The interfix "-e-" (-e- = REL) serves as a mandatory constituent in the structure, allowing it to fit grammatically and phonologically.

Productivity-wise, the [N1 – e – N2] pattern is productive only up to some extent in Urdu. Although such genitives are possible to create in Urdu, phrases like Shair-e-Mashriq (Shair-REL-mashriq: poet of the east), among others, are quite idiomatic and sometimes fixed expressions. The example clearly shows how relational meaning can be encoded through interfixing, leading towards the semantic integration of expressions.

13. Feroz-ul-Lughat

The construction of Feroz-ul-Lughat can be said to follow the pattern of [N1 – ul – N2]. In this case, the interfix "ul" serves as a genitive link of Arabic language origin, which has become a norm in Urdu, especially for naming institutions. feroz-ul-lughat (feroz = Feroz.NOM – ul- = GEN – lughat = dictionary. NOM/lexicon.NOM), meaning "Feroz's dictionary." It is clear from the foregoing that the two elements, feroz and lughat (feroz = Feroz.NOM and lughat = dictionary.NOM/lexicon.NOM) have been merged through an interfix to form one syntagmatic unit.

In this example, the semantic relationship between the two is genitival and identificatory. Lughat is the head noun (lughat = dictionary. NOM/lexicon.NOM) and is identified and specified by the second noun feroz (feroz = Feroz.NOM), leading to the translation "the dictionary of Feroz." -ul- is the interfix (-ul- = GEN) that mediates the semantic relationship between the two, creating a compound that has an independent meaning as a proper noun. It does not require a compositional meaning interpretation every time.

From the grammatical point of view, the structure maintains its grammatical categories, since both segments are nouns, and the whole construct serves as a proper noun. This construction syntactically functions as one word, serving as a noun and allowing no modification. The use of -ul- (-ul- = GEN) is absolutely mandatory for this construction, providing not only its grammatical connection but also phonological cohesion between the parts.

About productivity, the [N1 – ul – N2] construction is rather limited in scope and confined mostly to academic and institutional circles. Words such as Feroz-ul-Lughat (feroz-gen-lughat = Feroz-gen-dictionary) belong to this type, and their occurrence is fairly frequent, thus revealing that the productivity of this construction type is lower than that of other interfix types.

14. Haqooq-ul-Ibaad

Haqooq-ul-Ibaad belongs to the constructable type [N1-ul-N2], with -ul- being the genitive linking morpheme of Arabic origin, used in Urdu, especially in formal and religious contexts. Haqooq-ul-Ibaad (haqooq- = rights.PL-ul- = GEN-ibaad = humans. NOM/servants.NOM), meaning "rights of humans." Here, the noun haqooq (haqooq = rights, PL) and ibaad (ibaad = humans, NOM/servants,

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NOM) are combined using the interfix -ul-. From the point of view of Construction Morphology, this constructible type is a lexical entry that comprises a specific form-meaning relationship, in which the interfix expresses a semantic relationship between the head noun and its modifier.

This relation involves a genitive specification, in which ibaad (ibaad = humans. NOM/servants.NOM) serves to define the semantic field of haqooq (haqooq = rights.PL). Thus, the resulting interpretation becomes "the rights of humans." The interfix -ul- (-ul- = GEN) mediates between these two nouns by creating a dependency relation in which the latter specifies the former to provide its meaning fully. This process creates a conventionalized interpretation, since such a noun compound represents an established concept in Islamic tradition regarding human rights and responsibilities.

From the point of grammar, the structure is category-conserving since both members belong to the same category (noun), and the derived word works as an abstract noun. In terms of syntax, it operates as one lexical item that can be used in any nominal slot without changing its internal composition. The inclusion of -ul- (-ul- = GEN) is syntactically required for the structural integrity of the compound. In terms of Leipzig glossing, haqooq-ul-ibaad = haqooq-GEN-ibaad = rights-GEN-humans/servants.

As far as productivity goes, the [N1 – ul – N2] construction appears less productive and is confined mostly to institutional domains. Lexicalizations such as Haqooq-ul-Ibaad (haqooq-GEN-ibaad = rights-GEN-humans/servants) demonstrate that the formation of such compounds is not productive but rather conventional, meaning that these constructions have already been lexicalized into set phrases and carry a specific semantic meaning.

15. Noor-ul-Huda

The compound Noor-ul-Huda follows the constructional format [N1 – ul – N2], where the interfix "ul" serves as a genitive linking morpheme borrowed from Arabic and now fully incorporated into Urdu, especially in literary usage. noor-ul-huda (noor = light.NOM – ul = GEN – huda = guidance.NOM). This compound can mean "light of guidance." The noun "noor" (noor = light.NOM) and the noun "huda" (huda = guidance.NOM) are combined using an interfix to make a compound noun. In terms of Construction Morphology, this is an instance of storing form-meaning pairs, where the interfix expresses relational meanings.

In terms of semantic analysis, the meaning conveyed by this construction shows a genitive relationship: the noun huda (huda = guidance, NOM) indicates the scope of the noun noor (noor = light, NOM), yielding the meaning "light of guidance." The interfix -ul- (-ul- = GEN) acts as a meaning mediator that brings together both nouns in such a way that the second word is an extension or modifier to the first one.

From a grammatical point of view, the phrase structure is category-preserving, since both words are of the same lexical category (noun) and can be used together as a single entity serving as a noun. The use of -ul- (-ul- = GEN) is compulsory to ensure the structural integrity and phonetic compatibility of the components. As far as productivity is concerned, the [N1 – ul – N2] construction can be considered quite conventionalized within the Urdu language, especially in the domains of religion, philosophy, and literature. Although the pattern is capable of producing genitives with a similar structure, phrases like "Noor-ul-Huda" (lit. noor-GEN huda 'light-GEN guidance') show how interfixation captures meanings and helps create nominals.

16. Dar-ul-Uloom

The compound "Dar-ul-Uloom" is based on the construction template [N1 - ul - N2], in which "ul-" is the genitive specifier linking morpheme of Arabic origin and has been incorporated into the

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nominal morphological system of Urdu, particularly in institutionalized settings. Dar-ul-uloom (dar- = house.NOM/institution.NOM – ul- = GEN – uloom = knowledge.NOM/sciences.NOM) with the literal meaning of "institution of knowledge". Both N1 (dar – "house"/"institution") and N2 (uloom – "knowledge"/"sciences") are combined into one morphological unit by means of the genitive specifier "ul-". As per Construction Morphology, this combination constitutes a form-meaning pair, where the function of "ul-" is the specification of a genitive relation (ul- = GEN).

From the semantic point of view, the noun uloom (uloom = knowledge. NOM/sciences.NOM) defines the field of dar (dar = house. NOM/institution.NOM), giving the meaning "institute of knowledge." The interfix -ul- (-ul- = GEN) serves as a mediator for the meaning of the whole compound, making the meaning of the whole word dependent on its components. In this way, the semantic meaning of the compound word becomes conventionalized and exceeds the literal meanings of the words that compose it.

From a grammatical perspective, the construction is a category-preserving structure, meaning that both members of the compound are noun forms and can be syntactically used as one noun without undergoing any change in their internal form. The presence of -ul- (-ul- = GEN) is essential for structural cohesion. From the point of view of productivity, the pattern [N1 – ul – N2] is less productive and is mostly found in formal situations. Examples of such compounds include Dar-ul-Uloom (dar GEN uloom = house GEN knowledge/sciences). It is clear from these examples that the process of interfixing in Urdu involves both the formation of genitive phrases and the creation of compound words.

5. Conclusion

This research reveals that the qualitative examination of selected Urdu nouns shows that interfixation in Urdu is a systematic, constructionally governed, and productive process rather than an irregular phenomenon. It is shown that the interfixes serve as category-conserving (N → N) linkers, preserving grammatical consistency in the construction of compound nominals. Furthermore, the analysis shows that interfixes encode particular semantic relationships, such as coordination, possession, specification, and institutional affiliation, which contribute to creating semantic coherence within compounds. According to Construction Morphology, interfixes function as entrenched constructions in morphological schemas, supporting the notion of word formation through form-meaning correspondences. Interfixation is found to play an important role in compound noun formation by joining unrelated lexical units into unified constructs that often have metaphorical or culturally conventionalized meanings. The findings show that interfixes are more than just phonological connectors; they are structurally motivated features that promote semantic cohesion and conceptual integration (Khan, 2020; MMAPITSO, 2022; Saee, 2016).

The findings demonstrate the hybrid characteristics of the Urdu morphological system, which includes productive integration of Arabic and Persian morphological structures into the language itself. This study provides a language-internal perspective on Urdu morphology by evaluating Urdu nouns in their natural usage rather than treating them solely in terms of inherited Arabic or Persian grammatical rules. It fills a significant gap in the existing literature, which has primarily focused on surface-level compounding while ignoring noun-internal morphological processes. Furthermore, interfixation shows how productivity and conventionalization interact dynamically, with some constructions remaining productive while others are lexically fixed.

Despite its limited dataset and qualitative breadth, the study adds to our understanding of Urdu as a hybrid, contact-based language with a morphological system that reflects both cognitive structure and cultural expression (Sabah et al., 2026). To better investigate the productivity and distribution

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of interfixation patterns, future studies may benefit from quantitative analysis, corpus-based validation, or cross-linguistic comparisons with similar Indo-Aryan languages to better understand the typological relevance of interfixation.

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