

Asymmetrical Subject-Verb Agreement in Standard Arabic and Urdu Languages: A Comparative Study

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This study attempts to demystify the structural patterns in Arabic and Urdu languages in order to justify that both languages technically belong to two unrelated language families and despite a lot of intercultural similarities and patterns in both, each has distinct sentence structures. In this paper, the researchers specifically investigate subject-verb agreement in Arabic and Urdu languages. Arabic is a language that uses Verb-Subject-Object (VSO) and Subject-Verb-Object (SVO) word order. Verb initial word orders like in Classical Arabic are relatively rare across the world's languages. Urdu uses the Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) order, which in linguistic typology, is one in which the subject, object and verb of a sentence usually appear in that order and this label is often used for Ergative languages too that do not have subjects but have an agent-object-verb order. This research paper explains various alternations of these word orders in both Arabic and Urdu to show how this agreement asymmetry is reflected in these sentence structures. The paper hence highlights how verbs assign agreement in both languages.

Key words: *Arabic sentences, Subject-verb agreement, Urdu sentences, word orders.*

Introduction

Urdu is an Indo-European language which is fallaciously understood as linguistically related to Arabic. Derived from Mongolian/Turkish term "*Ordu*" meaning "tent/camp/army", it originated when the Farsi-speaking Muslim Turks and Persians/Afghans conquered North India and adapted their language to then spoken language of north India, Sanskrit. Post-conquest, Sanskrit was replaced with a blend of Persian/ Turkish, which later was coined as Urdu. This research paper is based on the proposition that languages cannot be a conglomeration. There can be language trees and language roots, or even sister branches that have common ancestors. If Urdu shares a few words of another language, such as Persian or Arabic, or has commonness in script, grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation with Arabic and Persian, it does not necessarily mean that Urdu is derived from Arabic or Persian. It is also a common assumption that Urdu shares many linguistic patterns, including those of grammar and vocabulary, with Arabic (Dua, 1992). There are several words in Urdu derived from Arabic like *qanun* (*law*), *siyasai* or *siyasat* (*politics*), *akhbar* (*news*), and *jumuriyat* (*democracy*). But most of these words were coined under the Persian influence, though Persian too used many Arabic loanwords. The script of Urdu was also not formed directly out of the Arabic script, but from the Persian script (Dua, 1992; Kachru, Kachru & Sridhar, 2008). Moreover, the scripts of Arabic, Persian and Urdu are stylistically different: Arabic has 28 letters in the alphabet while Persian has 32 and Urdu has 38, or 32, 52 or 58, due to several cultural factors which often pidginize Urdu.

It is therefore important to demystify Urdu and its' sentence structures in order to justify that Arabic and Urdu technically belong to two unrelated language families and despite a lot of similarities in both languages, each can often be mutually incomprehensible to speakers. The current study has a limited scope as it is restricted to identifying the differences between subject-verb agreements in both Arabic and Urdu languages, as well as rigorously investigating the characteristics of SOV (Urdu) and VSO/ SVO (Arabic) patterns.

Subject-Verb Agreement

Arabic has two ways of creating a simple verbal sentence: the subject-verb (SV) and the verb subject (VS) sentence patterns. Several grammarians and experts (AL-Shorafat, 2012; Baker, 2008; 2011; Al-Horais, 2005; Al-Horais, 2009; Hoyt, 2004; Fassi-Fehri, 1988; Ryding, 2005) have discussed the complex inflexion of verbs in SV agreement in Arabic in terms of number, gender and person. According to these studies, in Arabic there are two different word orders that build two types of sentences: *AlJumlah AlIsmiah* (nominal sentence) and *AlJumlah Al Fi'liah* (verbal sentence). The former is the nominal sentence wherein the first word is a noun. While the latter is a verbal sentence wherein the first word is a verb

- 1a. *Ahmad-u qaabala Aliy-an*
Ahmad-Nom met.3sm Ali-Acc
'Ahmed met Ali'
- b. *qaabala Ahmad-u Aliy-an*
met.sm Ahmad-Nom Ali-Acc
'Ahmed met Ali'

Both types of word order are recognized by the noun or the verb used at the initial position.

A contrary view is held by other critics with regard to normal and verbal sentences (Wechsler, & Zlatic, 2003; Barker and J. Nicol, 2000; Franck, Lassi, Frauenfelder, & Rizzi, 2006; Mohammad, 1990; Ouhalla, 1994; 2003) According to them, a nominal sentence in Arabic is one which has a verb (2), while the verbal sentence is one which has an overt verb (1).

2. *al-bab-u mughlaq-un*
The-door closed-Nom
'The door is closed'

A sentence is nominal when it starts with a noun (subject), followed by a predicate that could be a noun, a pronoun, an adjective, an adverb, or a prepositional phrase. Hence, in the verbless sentence (2), the subject is *albab* 'the door' and the nominal predicate is *mughlaq* 'closed'. The nominal Arabic sentence is also a declarative sentence that starts either with a noun or a verb (1a-b). The sentence (1a) has the same meaning that the verbal pattern (1b) has, but with more focus on the subject to hold the declarative meaning rather than expressing an action (Ryding, 2005). In nominal Arabic sentences, the verb-free stative or declarative sentence (called Equational Sentence) is also a special unique structure that starts with a subject followed by a predicate (the complement).

On the contrary, any Arabic sentence starting with a verb is used to express an action (Ryding, 2005). The word order in simple verbal sentences can take the form of VSO style like (1b), or the Verb-Object (VO) style (surface structure) like the following:

3. *?akala t-tuffahat-a*
Ate.sm the-apple-Acc
'He ate the apple.'

The action expressed in this pattern of sentences is represented by the verb that has to occur at the beginning of the sentence. Hence, sentences such as (1b) are analysed as a verbal

sentence, in which *Ahmad* is the subject that agrees with the verb in gender, person (Ryding, 2005).

Moreover, such differing views and division of word order into nominal and verbal sentence patterns has also raised several issues and invited a lot of criticism (Hoyt, F. (2004; Soltan, U (2006). For instance, Soltan (2004; 2006; 2007) asserted very strongly, with examples, that SV word order in Arabic has full SV agreement while it is a partial agreement in VS word order. That is, if the word order is SV, there is a full agreement of number, gender, and person while in the VS order, it is partial because it only agrees with gender (Ryding, 2005). Accordingly, a plural and masculine subject will take a plural and *masculine* verb according to the subject's person with no regard to its number. This means that a singular and masculine subject can take a singular/ plural verb but it must be a *masculine* verb.

The same rule applies if the subject is feminine; the verb shall also be feminine. Thus the verb agrees only with gender in this sentence pattern. The case of conjoined subjects in VS order further complicates the issue, since, the verb only agrees with the first subject and its gender. Since the verb does not recognize two conjoining subjects as one whole subject and it also cannot agree with both subjects, the gender of both subjects shall be an issue if they belong to two different genders. While in SV order, the verb agrees with the whole conjoined subject taking it as singular and masculine gender, unless the gender of both conjoining subjects is feminine. These are known as subject verb agreement asymmetries which are sensitive to person, gender and number (Harrison, Branigan, & Pickering, 2005). Chomsky (1995) also provided a minimalist phase-based framework that can be applied to SV order in Standard Arabic, and can be utilized for cross-linguistically empirical support in order to compare it with Urdu.

Urdu is a head-final SOV language where the verb is in agreement with subject at all levels - person, gender, and number, when there is a subject to perform the action. In a few cases it agrees with the object. All inflections of verbs follow affixations; however post-position verbs (agreeing with objects) are syntactical and their affixation is largely suffixal. In Urdu, there is also a syntactic relationship between verb and subject owing to which the nominal and the verbal elements have their own inflection categories; to be discussed as rules in the next section. Like Arabic, the *conjunct* verb construction is also a complex structure posing a big challenge to understanding SV word orders (Harrison, Branigan, & Pickering, 2005).

In Urdu, the verb satisfies the number and gender of the object if there is either no subject to perform or if the object is absolute (*maf'oolun muTlaqq*); that is, it is detached from the subject. Hence, Urdu, unlike Arabic, does not follow a single-system of agreement such as SV agreement. It also has OV agreement without alternating with the SV structure. Urdu thus is like an Ergative language, where often the subject of an intransitive verb behaves like

the object of a transitive verb. Since there is no separate system of object-verb agreement in Urdu, one cannot deny the possibility of object-verb agreement in this language. Often this phenomenon is known as ‘the simultaneity of subject and object verb agreement’ (Soltan, 2006; Hoyt, 2004)

The next section highlights the similarities and differences in the light of existing grammatical practices for sentence structures.

Sentence Structures in Arabic and Urdu

This section first examines the SV structures in both Arabic and Urdu languages in light of the previous studies and also the manner in which the verbs are conjugated in order to communicate with respect to gender, person, number, and tense. Other variations such as conjugation of verbs with respect to aspect, mood, voice, or verb manipulations through nouns and adjectives have not been included in the framework of this study. The objective was to make this study more consistent and focused.

Listed below are the rules, both formal and informal, related to verb conjugations in both Arabic and Urdu languages.

The Arabic Language: VSO or SVO Type

i. The Verbal Sentence (VSO Structure)

A verbal sentence in Arabic should always have a verb in agreement with its subject in number and/or gender, however with several variations of verb conjugations listed below:

(1) Rule # 1 : If the verb precedes the subject in VSO patterns, it only agrees with the subject in gender, and it is restricted the singular form.

In VSO pattern, since the subject of the sentence normally comes after the verb, it can be singular (sentences 1, 4, 7), dual (sentences 2, 5, 8) or plural (sentences 3, 6, 9) as displayed in Table 1. The first three sentences (1,2 and 3) of Table 1 reveal that the verb for a masculine subject is not affected by the tense or the number of the sentence whether perfective or imperfective. Likewise, if the subject is feminine, only the feminine marker (-*t sukoon*) is appended to the end of the verb as shown in sentences 4, 5, and 6. Such markers are not added to the verbs in the sentences when subjects are masculine. Similarly in imperative sentences (7, 8, & 9) in spite of the absence of the subjects, the number can be easily determined from the verb at the initial position and remains the same for both masculine and feminine.

Table 1: Arabic VSO Sentence Patterns: Past and Imperative Tenses

English	Transcription	Arabic
1. The boy ate the apple.	<i>akala al-walad-u at-tufaahata.</i>	Ate.3sm the-boy-Nom the-apple-Acc
2. The boys (dual S) ate the apple.	<i>akala al-waladaan-i at-tufaahata.</i>	Ate.3sm the-boys-Nom.dual the-apple-Acc
3. The boys (Plu. S) ate the apple.	<i>akala al-awlaad-u at-tufaahata.</i>	Ate.3sm the-boys-Nom the-apple-Acc
4. The girl ate the apple.	<i>akala-t al-bint-u at-tufaahata.</i>	Ate.3sf the-girl-Nom the-apple-Acc
5. The girls (dual S) ate the apple.	<i>akala-t al-bintaan-u at-tufaahata.</i>	Ate.3sf the-girls-Nom.dual the-apple-Acc
6. The girls (Plu. S) ate the apple.	<i>akala-t al-banaat-u at-tufaahata.</i>	Ate.3sf the-girls-Nom the-apple-Acc
7. Eat the apple! (Male)	<i>kul at-tufaahata!</i>	eat.3sm the-apple-Acc
8. Eat the apple! (Female)	<i>Kul-i at-tufaahata!</i>	eat.3sf the-apple-Acc
9. Eat (for dual S) the apple!	<i>kul-aa at-tufaahata!</i>	eat.3m.dual the-apple-Acc
10. Eat (for plural S) the apple!	<i>kul-uu at-tufaahata</i>	eat.3pm the-apple-Acc

Moreover, in sentences 7, 8, 9, & 10 (Table 1) though the subjects (in the surface structure) are not appearing, they can be understood from the form of the verb that initiates each sentence. For instance, the imperative verb in sentence 9 ends up with the marker (*kul -aa*) and it indicates that the null subject (called *mustatir*) refers to dual masculine or/and feminine subjects. In sentence 10, the verb ends up with the marker (*kul -uu*) to refer to a plural masculine or/and feminine subject. However, when the imperative action is meant to refer to a singular masculine subject only, the basic verb is used without any markers added as in sentence 7. However, when it refers to a feminine hidden subject, the imperative verb should end up with the short vowel /i/ or a marker called (*kasrah*) so as to agree with the subject in gender and number.

(2) Rule # 2 : *if the subject is not appearing in the surface structure) it is often indicated by markers (e.g . pronouns) at the end of a verb in a sentence, it is a case of subject-verb agreement in gender and number.*

If the subject is left out in verbal sentences, as shown in the examples in Table 2, these sentences continue to be true but with the addition of the dual marker (*-aa*) and (*-taa*) at the end of the verbs for both masculine and feminine subjects (sentences 2 & 5 respectively), and

the plural masculine markers (-uu) and plural feminine marker (-na) as in sentences 3 & 6, respectively.

It is also important to point out that when the subjects of the sentences are in a plural case, as shown in sentences 3 & 6 of Table 1, and in sentences 3 & 6 in Table 3 below, the verbs are still singular but they agree with subjects only in gender. However, if we drop the subject from these two sentences of Table 1, beside the gender feature, the verb would also indicate the number. And so, the verbs would become plural again as in sentences 3 & 6 of Table 2. In other words, if the verb occurs in a position that is located before a subject (VS argument) it remains singular and agrees with the subject and gender irrespective of the tense.

Table 2: Arabic V(Hidden S)O Sentence Patterns: Perfective (Past Tense) Verbs

English	Transcription	Arabic
1. (the boy – sing. masc. S, hidden) Ate the apple.	<i>akala at-tufaahata.</i>	Ate.3sm the apple-Acc
2. (the boys – dual masc. S, hidden) Ate the apple.	<i>akalaa at-tufaahata.</i>	Ate.3m.dual the apple
3. (the boys - plu. masc. S, hidden) Ate the apple.	<i>akaluu at-tufaahata.</i>	Ate.3pm the apple-Acc
4. (the girl – sing. fem. S, hidden) Ate the apple.	<i>akala-t at-tufaahata.</i>	Ate.sf the apple-Acc
5. (the girls – dual fem. S, hidden) Ate the apple.	<i>akala-taa at-tufaahata.</i>	Ate.3f.dual the apple-Acc
6. (the girls - plu. fem. S, hidden) Ate the apple.	<i>akalna at-tufaahata.</i>	Ate.3pf the apple-Acc

This rule (Rule 2) also applies to the examples shown in Table 3 which have the imperfective (present tense) verbs. For the first three sentences (1, 2 & 3) in Table 3, the masculine gender of the subjects requires starting the verbs with the masculine marker (*ya*) and so the verbs agree with the gender of the subjects.

(3) Rule # 3: *in cases of imperfective verbs of the VSO pattern, verbs agree with the subject in gender but not necessarily in number.*

As stated above, the masculine gender of subjects entails starting the verbs with the masculine marker (*ya* – *يـ*) and so the verbs agree with the gender of the subjects as shown in sentence 1, 2, & 3 in Table 3. In order to keep the same agreement between the subjects and the verbs, the next three sentences (4, 5, & 6 in Table 3) appear with (*ta* - *تـ*) marker preceding the verbs because of the feminine subjects. This concludes that, in imperfective

verbs of the VSO pattern, there is a subject-verb agreement in gender but not necessarily in number. Therefore, it becomes clear that Arabic sentences occurring in the VO pattern (with hidden subjects) share the type of agreement regardless of the verb form used, whether perfective or imperfective.

Table 3: VSO Pattern: The Verb (Present Tense) Agreement with Subject Gender

English	Transcription	Arabic
1.The boy eats the apple.	<i>ya'kul-u al-walad-u at-tufaahata.</i>	Eating.3sm the boy-Nom the-apple-Acc
2.The boys (dual S) eat the apple.	<i>ya'kul-u al-waladaan-i at-tufaahata.</i>	Eating.3m.dual the boys-Nom the-apple-Acc
3.The boys (Plu. S) eat the apple.	<i>ya'kul-u al-awlaad-u at-tufaahata.</i>	Eating.3pm the boys-Nom the-apple-Acc
4.The girl eats the apple.	<i>ta'kul-u al-bint-u at-tufaahata.</i>	Eating.3sf the girl-Nom the-apple-Acc
5.The girls (dual S) eat the apple.	<i>ta'kul-u al-bintaan-u at-tufaahata.</i>	Eating.3f.dual the girls-Nom the-apple-Acc
6.The girls (Plu. S) eat the apple.	<i>ta'kul-u al-banaat-u at-tufaahata.</i>	Eating.3sf the girl-Nom the-apple-Acc

ii. *The Nominal Sentence (SVO Structure)*

A nominal Arabic sentence starts with a noun. This sentence can have two patterns: (1) The SVO structure; (2) The SP (subject + predicate) structure.

The SVO Structure

Sentences of this type start with a subject that could be singular, dual or plural as shown in Table 4. This type of subject in such structures affects the form of the verb that follows according to the number and gender it indicates.

(4) Rule 4: *Depending on the subject and the perfective verb forms in SVO sentences, it is noticed that the subject agrees with the verb, in number as well as gender.*

The *masculine* singular subject, under this guideline, should be followed by the basic perfective verb without any addition. The same is true for the *feminine* singular subject, but with the addition of the female marker (*-t*) at the end of the perfective verb that follows (compare sentences 1 & 4, Table 4). For the dual case of the subject (sentences 2 & 5, Table 4), it is noticed that the subject ends with the dual masculine marker (*-aan*) as in sentence 2, and the dual marker (*-aa*) is also added to the verb. In cases of having a feminine dual

subject, different markers should be added to the subject and the verb in order to indicate the dual meaning. For instance, in sentence 5 (Table 4), the dual feminine marker (*-aan*) is added to the subject, and another feminine dual marker (*-taa*) is added to the verb.

Table 4: Nominal Arabic Sentence (SVO Pattern): Perfective (Past Tense Verbs)

English	Transcription	Arabic
1.The boy ate the apple.	<i>al-walad-u akal-a at-tufaahata.</i>	The-boy-Nom ate.3sm the apple-Acc
2.The boys (dual S) ate the apple.	<i>al-waladaan-i akal-aa at-tufaahata.</i>	The-boys ate.3m.dual the apple-Acc
3.The boys (Plu. S) ate the apple.	<i>al-awlaad-u akal-uu at-tufaahata.</i>	The-boys-Nom ate.3pm the applAcc
4.The girl ate the apple.	<i>al-bint-u akala-t at-tufaahata.</i>	The-girl-Nom ate.3sf the apple-Acc
5.The girls (dual S) ate the apple.	<i>al-bint-aan-i akala-taa at-tufaahata.</i>	The-girls-Nom ate.3f.dual the apple-Acc
6.The girls (Plu. S) ate the apple.	<i>al-banaat-u akal-na at-tufaahata.</i>	The-girls-Nom ate.3pf the apple-Acc

Similar changes happen when the sentence indicates plural subjects, either masculine or feminine (sentences 3 & 6, Table 4). In the case of the masculine plural subject, more changes should take place. For instance, the singular subject in sentence 1 (Table 4 - the boy = *al-walad-u*) has now been affixed by two markers (*-a*) and (*aa*) in order to get a new word structure to indicate a masculine plural subject (sentence 3, Table 4). Such infixes are also needed to build the plural feminine subjects and verbs. It can be noticed that in order to transform sentence 4 (Table 4) into the plural form, the infix (*-aa*) is added to the subject and (*-na*) is added to the verb. The addition of these infixes to the subject and the verb in sentence 4 leads to a new structure displayed in sentence 6 (Table 4) (*al-banaat-u akal-na at-tufaahata*) indicating a plural feminine subject.

(5) Rule 5 : When *the imperfective (present tense)verb is used in the SVO sentence pattern, verbs and subjects agree in number and gender, but markers are added to indicate the present tense of the verbs.*

A similar subject-verb agreement in the SVO pattern of Arabic sentences was seen in the case of the perfective (past tense) verb in Rule 4 and is also noticed in imperfective (present tense) verbs (Table 5). The examples illustrated in Table 5 show that the verbs agree with the subjects in number and gender, but the markers added to derive verbs are slightly different so as to accommodate the present tense used in these examples.

Table 5: Nominal Arabic Sentence (SVO Pattern): Imperfective (Present Tense Verbs)

English	Transcription	Arabic
1. The boy ate the apple.	<i>al-walad-u ya 'kul-u at-tufaahata.</i>	The-boy-Nom ate.3sm the apple-Acc
2. The boys (dual S) ate the apple.	<i>al-waladaan-i ya 'kul-aani at-tufaahata.</i>	Eating.3m.dual the boys-Nom the-apple-Acc
3. The boys (Plu. S) ate the apple.	<i>al-awlaad-u ya 'kul-uuna at-tufaahata.</i>	Eating.3pm the boys-Nom the-apple-Acc
4. The girl ate the apple.	<i>al-bint-u ta 'kul-u at-tufaahata.</i>	Ate.sf the apple-Acc
5. The girls (dual S) ate the apple.	<i>al-bint-aani ta 'kul-aani at-tufaahata.</i>	Ate.3f.dual the apple-Acc
6. The girls (Plu. S) ate the apple.	<i>al-banaat-u ya 'kul-na at-tufaahata.</i>	Eating.3sf the girl-Nom the-apple-Acc

The SP (subject + predicate) structure

In the Arabic language, the verb ‘to be’, or its variations such as “is/are”, do not exist structurally. One can create “is/are” sentences in Arabic by manipulating indefinite and definite nouns and adjectives. When an indefinite noun is used with an indefinite adjective, it creates an indefinite phrase. Similarly, when a definite adjective is added to a definite noun, one creates a definite phrase. But when a definite noun is combined with an indefinite adjective, it produces an “is/are” sentence similar to what one gets when the verb “to be” is used in English. For example, to a defined noun *al-kitaab* (the book), the indefinite adjective *jadeed* (new) is added, the resulting phrase is *al-kitaab jadeed*, which means “The book is new.”

(6) Rule 6: *There is full agreement between the subject and the predicate (adjective) in gender and number, in all cases, in subject predicative sentence pattern.*

This type of sentence pattern in the Arabic language, which follows the subject + predicative structure, is considered a clause structure by some grammarians (Sultan; 2006), and requires a noun/subject followed by a predicate. This predicate part of the sentence could occur as an adjective word or phrase, as shown in Table 6. The SP sentence structures presented in this table clarify that there is full agreement between the subject and the predicate (adjective) in gender and number, in all cases. Similar markers to those used in Table 5 are added to the verb and the adjective to build up the six sentence structures displayed in Table 6.

Table 6: Nominal Arabic Sentence (Subject + Predicate) showing use of adjectives

English	Transcription	Arabic
1. The boy is happy.	<i>al-walad-u sa?yed-un.</i>	The-boy-Nom happy-Nom
2. The boys (dual S) are happy.	<i>al-waladaan-i sa?yd-an.</i>	The-boys-Nom happy-Nom
3. The boys (Plu. S) are happy.	<i>al-awlaad-u su?adaa-un.</i>	The-boys-Nom happy-Nom
4. The girl is fat.	<i>al-bint-u sa?idat-un.</i>	The-girl-Nom happy-Nom
5. The girls (dual S) are happy.	<i>al-bint-aani sa?idataan.</i>	The-girls-Nom happy-Nom
6. The girls (Plu. S) are happy.	<i>al-banaat-u sa?idaat.</i>	The-girls-Nom happy-Nom

To sum up, in addition to these SV rules, there are several other methods to form sentences in Arabic, e.g by manipulating definite and indefinite nouns and adjectives, or by pulling together nouns, adjectives, and verbs, or even by creating a complete sentence with a subject, object, and verb without actually using a verb. Such variations, involving nouns, adjectives or any other structures affecting the verb conjugation, fall outside the scope of this study. The researchers have focused only on subject-verb agreement to maintain consistency, and have not considered other variables such as voice, aspect and mood, which can affect SV agreement in a few exceptional cases. Further research can be conducted by examining these patterns and their implications on SV agreement.

The Urdu Language: SOV Type

In the Urdu language, the verb can agree in gender, number and person. A singular third person subject for instance will only accept a singular verb appropriate to its person and gender. The verb triggers if there is a slight change of gender, number or person in the subject. The object in all sentences precedes the verb in Urdu.

i. SOV- SV Argument

(1) Rule 1: *if the sentence is written in the present tense, the verb agrees with the subject, in both gender and number.*

In SOV- S-argument, the verb is triggered immediately as a change is made in the gender and /or number of the subject. Sentences 1 and 2 exemplify this rule when a change in the verb is noticed if the subject becomes plural (*khataa* changes into *khate*), with the main verb supported by a nasal ending or a *noon ghuna* (the nasal /ŋ/). However, it is also noticed that if

the subject is feminine, the verb remains unchanged in both the singular and plural, as seen in sentences 3 and 4 (Table 7), except that a nasal sound (-in/en) is affixed with the verb. The object precedes the verb but does not affect it unlike those shown in Rule 2 and 3 below.

Table 7: Agreement of the verb with the subject, in both gender and number

English	Transcription	Urdu
1.The boy eats an apple	<i>ladka ek saib khataa hai</i>	The-boy-Nom an apple-Acc eating.3sm
2.The boys (dual &Plu) eat an apple	<i>ladke ek saib khatein hain</i>	The-boys-Nom an apple-Acc eating.3pm
3.The girl eats an apple	<i>ladkee ek saib khatee hai</i>	The-girl-Nom an apple-Acc eating.3sf
4.The girls (Dual and Plu) eat an apple	<i>ladkiya ek saib khateen hain</i>	The-girls-Nom an apple-Acc eating.3pf

ii. SOV-OV-Argument

(2) Rule 2 (a): *if the sentence is written in the past tense, the verb agrees with the object (O-argument) irrespective of the gender and number of the subject :*

An Ergative case is noticed where the transitive verb in the past tense (Table 8) does not agree with the agent of a transitive clause but agrees with the object in gender/ number. For example, the subject in sentences 1, 2, 4 & 5 differ in number but have the same verb (*khaya*) with the singular object. But when the object is changed into plural (sentences 3 & 6), the verb is changed into (*khayein*) with a nasal ending and *noon ghuna* (nasal /ŋ/), irrespective of the number / gender of the subject.

Table 8: Agreement of the verb with the object, masculine gender

English	Transcription	Urdu
1.The boy ate an apple (Masc, S)	<i>ladke ne ek saib khaya</i>	The-boy-Nom an apple-Acc ate.3sm
2.The boys (D+P) ate an apple	<i>ladkon ne ek saib khaya</i>	The-boys-Nom an apple-Acc ate.3sm
3.The boy(s) ate apples (Mas.P)	<i>ladke/ ladkon ne saib khayein</i>	The-boy-Nom apples-Acc pm ate.3pm
4.The girl ate an apple (Masc S.)	<i>ladkee ne ek saib khaya</i>	The-girl-Nom an apple-Acc ate.3sm
5.The girls (D+P) ate an apple	<i>ladkiyon ne ek saib khaya</i>	The-girls-Nom an apple-Acc ate.3sm

6.The girl(s) ate apples (Masc P)	<i>ladkee/ladkiyon ne saib khayein</i>	The-girls-Nom apples-Acc ate.3pm
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Rule 2 (b) *But in O-argument case, if the object is feminine (e.g bread, book) the verb remains unaffected, unlike the Rule 2(a),*

The Ergative case is also noticed if the object of a transitive verb is feminine in form (e.g bread, butter, key, etc) and the verb will have the same form in all situations irrespective of the number/ gender of the subject or object. The examples (sentences 1 to 6 in Table 9) are evidence of this rule. Similarly with sentences 3 and 6 of Table 8 having a plural object, in sentences 3 & 6 (Table 9) the verb ends with a nasal ending (*khayeen*) and *noon ghuna*, irrespective of the number / gender of the subject.

Table 9: Agreement of the verb with the object, feminine gender

English	Transcription	Urdu
1. The boy ate a bread(Fem. S)	<i>ladke ne roti khayee</i>	The-boy-Nom a bread-Acc ate.3sf
2. The boys (D+P) ate a bread	<i>ladko ne roti khayee</i>	The-boys-Nom a bread-Acc ate.3sf
3. The boy(s) ate breads (Fem. P)	<i>ladke/ ladkon ne rotiya khayeen</i>	The-boys-Nom breads-Acc ate.3pf
4. The girl ate a bread(Fem. S)	<i>ladkee ne roti khayee</i>	The-girl-Nom a bread-Acc ate.3sf
5. The girls (D+P) ate a bread	<i>ladkiiyon ne roti khayee</i>	The-girls-Nom a bread-Acc ate.3sf
6. The girl(s) ate breads (Fem. P)	<i>ladkee/ladkiyon ne rotiya khayeen</i>	The-boy-Nom breads-Acc ate.3pf

In both 2(a) and 2 (b) above, since Ergative identifies the doer of an action as the object rather than the subject, in all examples *bread* and *apple* are doers of the action and hence are ergative case markers of the noun. However, it is also true that if the Ergative marker is removed by change of tense in present simple or continuous, or by changing the subject's case in nominative, the verb will again agree with the gender and person of the subject as seen in Rule 1 (Table 9). In general, it is also noticed that all singular masculine forms of verbs take 'aa' (*jaata, sota, khata*) upper letter sound, while the singular feminine form takes 'ei' (*jaatei, sotei khaatei*), lower letter sound. In the case of plural or singular forms with second or third level of honour they take 'ay' (sound), upper letter, and 'een' (sound) lower letter with *noon ghuna*.

Observations and Conclusions

This study has found evidence of both individualistic and simultaneous subject-verb agreement for both Arabic and Urdu languages. The verbal sentence (VS-Structure) in Arabic always starts with a verb. This verb can occur in three cases: (a) perfective (past tense) like sentences 1 to 6 of Table 1; (b) imperative or command sentences (sentences 7 to 9 of Table 1); or (c) imperfective (present tense) like sentences 1 to 6 of Table 5.

However, the Urdu usage is a quite different. With Urdu being an SOV language, we understand that subject-object-verb will appear only in SOV order. This is originally a characteristic of an Ergative language such as ancient Greek, classical Latin, or even Asiatic languages like Pashto (Afghanistan and Pakistan), in addition to several regional languages in India including Marathi, Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu. These languages get their meaning not by the subjects head word order but by an agent-object-verb order. Such construction may not be acceptable in other languages like English.

This study has thus made a classification of SV agreement practices in both Arabic and Urdu. Both languages have their respective subject-verb agreement patterns, as stated earlier. Arabic has two principal word orders: SVO, pre-verbal and VSO, post-verbal while Urdu has only one, SOV. In Arabic, the preverbal subject (SVO) triggers number, gender and person agreement, whereas post-verbal subject (VSO) triggers only gender and person. Arabic also has rich agreement paradigms with singular and plural subjects, with a dual feature in the post-verbal word order. In Urdu however, the situation is altogether different as it does not have any dual subject; there exists no verbal duality as in the Arabic language. In Urdu, the verb usually agrees with the gender/number of the subject. Hence, the two languages, Arabic and Urdu, have both similarities and dissimilarities in sentence structures. A close examination of these word orders in this study has supported this argument.

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