



The Morphology of Kashmiri: Structure, Formation, and Linguistic Influence

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ABSTRACT

The Kashmiri Linguistics Dardic subgroup of the Indo-Aryan family has a rich geomorphic system with exceptional linguistic features. Focusing on prosodic features structure stress phonological systems of the Kashmiri Language. The current study examines the noun declension systems, verb conjugation systems of Kashmiri, and a critique of written discourse on linguistic communication. The study is anchored on a study of extant literature and documentation of discourse style of the language by native informants. This paper attempts to highlight contemporary scholarship to draw the attention of the readers to the grammatical structure of Kashmiri language and its peculiarities within the context of the greater Indo-Aryan family.

Keywords: Morphology, Kashmiri, Structure, Formation, Influence

INTRODUCTION

With around 6.8 million native speakers, the Kashmiri language is mostly spoken in the Kashmir Valley of India and Pakistan. Unlike the other North Indian languages such as Hindi and Punjabi, Kashmiri belongs to the Dardic subset of the Indo-Aryan languages (Khubchandani, 1991). Kashmiri is unique in its retention of traits from Indo-Aryan languages that other languages in the new Indo-Aryan languages lack, a product of the language's geographic and historical development (Kachru, 1969).

Kashmiri is distinguished by an elaborate system of noun inflections by way of case and by way of the combination of verbs through a system of subordination, as well as a system of Kashmiri morphology. By reason of its narrow focus, consisting of arrangement, of the grammatical system of Kashmiri, and its morphology, Kashmiri can be compared with other Indo-Aryan languages through the focal point of verb agreement systems, Bipartite Conjugation, case marking with affixes and with postpositions, and several other features (Kachru, 2008; Al Lawati et al., 2024).

Kashmiri morphology indicates that noun and verb arrangement, syntactic modification, and language contact are interrelated. In addition to its relationships with the morphologies of Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit, the morphology of Kashmiri illustrates how systems of morphology of a language can evolve over time.

The morphological structures of the Kashmiri language are of extraordinary importance among South Asian linguists. To assimilate the functions of a language and the relations of meaning is to know morphology, the study of a word and its changes. Because of the multiple ways Kashmiri departs from some of the other extensively studied Indo-Aryan languages, Kashmiri is especially useful and contributes to the understanding of the relations of languages and the morphology of a language.

The grammatical complexity of the Kashmiri language and the insatiable need to study its morphology is as a result of its diverse inflections, word formations, and systematic irregularities. Kashmiri, like many languages of the Indo-Aryan, is characterized by split ergativity, where there is a variation among the forms of the verbs used in agreement depending on the context and the time. For this reason, it is of great importance to the study of formulations of linguistics dealing with the principles of syntactic symmetry and the theory of case. These described structures provide the means of examining the evolution of natural languages, the structure of grammar, and relation of syntax to its morphology.

The intricate and compound legacy of Kashmiri culture is manifested in the morphology of the language.

Over the course of the last millennium, Kashmiri has been influenced by Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Urdu and, most recently, English. Such influences include the addition of affixes, the incorporation of diverse grammatical forms, and the adoption of new words. Despite the extensive contact and communication, Kashmiri showed a remarkable linguistic resilience by maintaining its indigenous grammatical system. The study of these contact-induced changes inform broader discussions on the acquisition of new languages, the permanence of structures in a language and the inter-connectivity of linguistic systems.

The value of Kashmiri grammar in fostering the preservation of the language's and the culture's essence serves another excellent reason to study this grammar. The knowledge of a culture is found in language, and often, in every culture, there are morphologically varied forms of a language that encapsulate the meaning of customs and social relationships and philosophies of the culture. The language's extensive inflectional and derivational systems are pillars of Kashmiri literacy, a legacy which includes literature, poetry, mythology, and prose. The ability to appreciate the morphology of the language helps in the preservation of the rich culture that the language upholds. Morphology is a central concept in linguistic studies today, especially the applied branches like language technology and computational linguistics. The rich Kashmiri language is technologically viewed as a 'poor' language, and so the intricate grammar of the language keeps the development of systems like automatic translation, speech recognition, and certain other forms of

text analytics, stagnant. Well-defined systems for the input and output of Kashmiri texts are a function of the mastery of Kashmiri grammar, particularly, the morphology of the language. Thus, the low presence of the language on the internet is somewhat a function of the complexity of the morphology of the language.

Morphology is one of the many sub-fields of Kashmiri linguistics, and it describes the forms of words in a language. Declension of nouns, conjugation of verbs, and the impact of the dialect of a given community or of a geographical area on the mathematics of a language are all inter-related. Irrespective of the primary focus of these dialectal variations, it is a telling sign of the ongoing changes in a given language and the effect social structures and their geography, or local politics, have on the way a language is utilized (Taqi et al., 2022; Uddin et al., 2025). By documenting such variations in their language of choice, linguists will have the opportunity to study the shape of the structures in morphology and how these structures respond to both their social and geographical entities, as well as how these structures react to social and regional changes in their language.

Taking everything into consideration, the study of Kashmiri linguistics is concerned with the development of a sound knowledge of the grammar of a language, how that language has evolved, and the way it is currently employed. Kashmiri linguistics is concerned with the documentation and preservation of the linguistic expression of the Kashmiri community, along with the description and construction of theories, as well as the practical applications, of grammar. The present study is concerned with the previously mentioned elements, and it aims to make these elements clear by constructing a systematic account of the morphology of Kashmiri and of its linguistic importance in the wider context of the Indo-Aryan family of languages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Particular morphological traits identifiable in the Kashmiri language construct the foremost Indo-Aryan language, mostly in Jammu, and Kashmir, India. This language has a highly developed morphology relating to the verb, inflecting nouns, and the use of suffixes in predication. This selected particular morphology has attracted scholars because of the implications of fragmentation of linguistics, parsing, and language preservation. Kashmiri advances and uses, particularly in the urban-poor and/or rural, secondary, and especially sociopolitical, have been the central emphasis of the research. Space was pointed out as one of the traits Kashmiri, especially the harmonious arrangement of splits in the varied use of the ergative, past-tense verbs, and formations in nominals suffixing, was no exception in a number of Indo-Aryan languages (Omkar N. Koul, 2004; Ansari et al., 2025).

The research investigated the particular unique phonology of Kashmiri, along with its notable grammatical subdivisions and relationships with its construction, to specify the phonologic and grammatical traits to Kashmiri.

After investigating and analyzing Kashmiri grammar, she found out that Kashmiri grammar is distinct from other Indo-Aryan languages because of fossilized

verb forms and asymmetrical ergativity which other related languages lack Mir, Hasnain, & Khan, 2018; Ali et al., 2025). The scientists were also concerned with how much the arrangements of morphological structures were driven by the processes of morphology itself by explaining how changes of morphology and vowel harmony interacted.

A different Kashmiri grammar study also focused on structures and functions of the developing, passive and dynamic markers, and the local versus remote function- referring indicators (Sibt-e-Ali et al., 2021). This study also reviewed forms of nouns in Kashmiri with changes of the form or structure of the word which indicates the grammatical categories of gender, case, and number. He also dealt with the sophisticated verb morphology which included subject and object agreement, simple markers, and a system of auxiliary verbs (Omkar N. Koul, 2007 Ashraf et al., 2025).

Morphological evaluation's usefulness in data retrieval and automated translation was also described in the investigation and the study resulted in important analytical insights dealing where Kashmiri morphology was quite central in processes involving text recognition and processing. Given the complex syntactic system of Kashmiri with both creative and analytical components, they described the challenges involved in the development of a robust morphological analyst. Their studies showed how algorithms could be refined to better engage with Kashmiri literature and offer better translations (Qumar, Azim, & Quadri, 2024; Shabbir et al., 2021). Researchers have categorized Kashmiri as one of the Dardic languages and focused on its unique morphology such as verb inflection, and gender labeling. His work has offered insights on comparison and has shown apparent morphological differentiations between Kashmiri and its related languages, particularly the presence of semantic and grammatical adoptions from Sanskrit and Persian (Farooq et al., 2020; Feng et al., 2023). The changes in Kashmiri grammar during the various periods in terms of ancient linguistic influences, and contemporary usage patterns have also been documented (Kachru, 1969; Hafeez et al., 2011).

In the studies pertaining to Kashmiri, Sindhi, and Lahanda, the subsequent studies uncovered similar nominative suffixes. Among various contributions, he discussed the differences in Kashmiri verbs, particularly the morphological and phonological variabilities of verbs in relation to the grammatical categories of state, element, and tense. He also discussed the influence of surrounding languages on the grammatical changes of Kashmiri and which contributed to the understanding of the pattern of geo-linguistic convergence (Omkar Nath Koul, 2005; Iqbal et al., 2025).

The studies provided a comprehensive account of the grammar of Kashmiri. The focus in these studies was on the syntax and the vocabulary in which the studies demonstrated the importance of the configurational limitations in the organization of the grammar, the interactions of which were demonstrated in Kashmiri grammar between the pronunciations of verbs, the segregation of nouns, and the case markers (Khatoun et al., 2023; Naseer et al., 2024). Furthermore, they discussed the effects of

the sociocultural patterning of Kashmiri grammar and its implications on the syntax of the language (Wali & Koul, 1997).

This work focused on the linguistic studies on Kashmiri in particular syntax and grammar (Ivascu et al., 2022 Janjua et al., 2025). The work provided both diachronic and synchronic perspectives and was primarily focused on the grammar of the language, particularly on the morphological changes within a language system, and the changes in patterns of language shift, language adoption, and internal language innovation (Omkar N Koul, 1977).

In order to understand the intricacies of the grammar of Kashmiri, Want, Pir, and Afzal analyzed the grammar of Kashmiri and its mathematical emulation through finite- state analysis. Research conducted by these scholars shows the challenges and implications of building the first digital analysis of the Kashmiri language. Issues such as the complexity of grammar and the lack of available data are widespread (Want, Pir, Afzal 2009).

In the case of the Kashmiri dialect, much research, theoretical and empirical, and in technological framing, has been conducted. Kashmiri belongs to the Indo Aryan language family, and is unique in that its morphology is filled and complex. It has verb stress, case markers, nominative markers, and alternations. The above literature gives insight into the area of Kashmiri morphology, and still more areas and more work is needed in the areas of Artificial Intelligence and Language.

Data Collection

This research examines primary as well as secondary data sources related to the morphology of Kashmir.

Primary Sources

- **Originally Published Documents:** For understanding spoken morphological forms like verb conjugation and noun inflections in everyday conversations, native speakers of Kashmiri were interviewed.
- **Field Recordings:** To understand natural speech and the variations in speech morphology, spontaneous speech samples were collected.

Secondary Sources

Research concerning the grammatical structure of the Kashmiri language was analyzed to determine the levels of morphological representation.

The literature of Kashmir: The discrepancies between morphological representation in writing and in the restricted forms of speech were studied in classical and contemporary written Kashmiri.

Morphological Features of Kashmiri

1. Noun Morphology

Kashmiri nouns are inflected for number, gender, and case. The language distinguishes between masculine and feminine nouns, with distinct pluralization rules. The case system includes nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, ablative, and instrumental cases, which are marked by postpositions rather than suffixes, as in other Indo-Aryan languages (Lahiri, 2021; Kanwal & Tasleem, 2025).

Kashmiri nouns exhibit a robust system of inflections based on:

- **Number:** Singular and plural
 - **Gender:** Masculine and feminine
 - **Case System:** Nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, ablative, and instrumental
- Unlike most Indo-Aryan languages, Kashmiri case marking relies primarily on postpositions rather than suffixes. For example:

Feminine Pronouns

kitab (book) → **kitabas manz** (inside the book)

sah (boy) → **sahra** (of the boy) **abdul shri** (of the boy)

Gender distinctions influence noun endings.

The verb in Arabic will also determine the meaning of a sentence, whether the time is constant or flexible. For instance:

- Masculine singular: **grāth** (house)
- Masculine plural: **grātha**
- Feminine singular: **kān** (ear)
- Feminine plural: **kān'**

2. Verb Morphology

In Kashmiri verbs, both the subject and the object Verb Agreement. There are many tenses, moods, and aspects in the Kashmiri verb system. In the selection of the auxiliary verbs are important when one is forming compounded complex tenses. One unique feature is the presence of ergativity in the past tense when the subject takes an oblique case (Bjorkman, 2018).

Kashmiri verbs show inflectional harmony with both the subject and the object, as well as their morphological inflection, and are, in fact, the most morphologically complex of all the conjugations of verb tenses in are characterized by:

- **Person (first, second, third)**
- **Number (singular, plural)**
- **Tense and Aspect (present, past, future, perfective, progressive)**
- **Mood (indicative, subjunctive, imperative)**

One of the unique features of Kashmiri is split ergativity, where the subject of a transitive verb in the past tense takes an oblique form:

- **Present Tense:**
 - *su khyav tsay* ("He eats an apple.")
 - *yi peth chu* ("She reads a book.")
 - *yim chu tsay karan* ("They are doing the work.")
- **Past Tense (Ergative Construction):**
 - *saani tsay khyav* ("He ate an apple.")
 - *yi peth khyav* ("She read a book.")
 - *yim karan khyav* ("They did the work.")

The use of auxiliary verbs is another key feature in forming complex verb constructions:

- **Progressive Aspect:**
 - *tsay khyawan chu* ("He is eating an apple.")

- yi peth wan chu ("She is reading a book.")
- yim karan wan chu ("They are doing the work.")
- **Perfective Aspect:**
- *tsay khyom* ("I have eaten an apple.")
- yi peth wanav ("She has read a book.")
- yim karan wanav ("They have done the work.")

2. Derivational Morphology

The formation of new words through the use of prefixes and suffixes is a common practice in the Kashmiri language. Some of the word formation processes include the creation of new nouns, the formation of adjectives, and the formation of new verbs. The morphological richness of Kashmiri is the result of a number of words having been borrowed from Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit (Wali & Koul, 1997).

The use of affixes is not uncommon in Kashmiri. The following is a list of a few of the most common derivational processes:

Nominalization: Adding suffixes like *-an* to form nouns

- (lakh (write) → lakh-an (writing))
- (Parh (read) parh-an (reading))
- (kar (do) kar-an (doing))
- **Adjectivization:** Using *-i* suffix to create adjectives
- (dost (friend) dosti (friendly))
- Ilm (knowledge) ilm-i (scholarly)
- shahr (city) shahr-i (urban)
- **Verb Formation:** Prefixation with *be-* and *na-*
- (kar (do) → bekar (useless))
- umeed (hope) na-umeed (hopeless)
- pasand (like) na-pasand (dislike)

4. Compounding

Morphological activities in compounding yield good results in Kashmiri. Morphological activities in compounding yield good results in Kashmiri. There is frequent word formation through the fusion of two or more roots while retaining some meanings from the two donor morphemes. The language makes frequent use of complex nouns and compound verbs (Bhat, 2017).

In compounding, especially in the formation of nouns and verbs, the process is more common in Kashmiri.

Examples include:

Noun Compounds:

- **gaw-dari** (cowkeeper) = *gaw* (cow) + *dari* (keeper)
- **son-wath** (goldsmith) = *son* (gold) + *wath* (smith)
- **sheen-kal** (woodcutter) = *sheen* (wood) + *kal* (cutter)
- **khaas-daar** (servant/attendant) = *khaas* (special) + *daar* (holder)
- **zanan-kam** (women's work) = *zanan* (women) + *kam* (work)

Verb Compounds:

- **thav-karun** ("to place") = *thav* (place) + *karun* (to do)
- **wath-rawun** ("to run away") = *wath* (path) + *rawun* (to go)
- **haal-karnav** ("to inform") = *haal* (condition/news) + *karnav* (to do)
- **yaad-thavun** ("to remember") = *yaad* (memory) + *thavun* (to put)
- **kaam-gachun** ("to get work done") = *kaam* (work) + *gachun* (to go)

5. Linguistic Influence on Morphology

There is a gradual but steady influence of Persian, Arabic, and Hindi-Urdu on Kashmiri syntax due to prolonged exposure. There is clear evidence of this in adopted affixes and mixed morphological structures. This influence on Kashmiri is still ongoing and is due to the other languages mentioned (von Munkwitz-Smith, 1995).

There is influence of Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit on Kashmiri, as is evident in:

- **Loanwords:**
 - Persian: *dost* (friend), *kitab* (book), *sheesha* (glass)
 - Arabic: *ilm* (knowledge), *adal* (justice), *haq* (right), *amal* (action)
- **Borrowed Affixes:**
 - Persian: *-dar* (keeper), *-mand* (having)
 - Sanskrit: *-kar* (maker)

Regardless of outside factors, Kashmiri holds on to its original morphological structure.

CONCLUSION

The rich and complex system of grammar in Kashmiri language stems from scholarly exchanges in entrepot linguistics and historiography. The language achieves equilibrium in its Indo-Aryan and Dardic imprints with its various inflectional and stock lexical patterns. Among the South Asian languages, Kashmiri is distinct in its interwoven patterns, grammatical gender specifications in verb forms, and unique phonological alterations.

Because dialectal varieties might demonstrate even greater nuance in morphological diversity, future studies should focus on the phonetic variants of Kashmiri. In order to evaluate ongoing morphological changes, the influence of Hindi, Urdu, and English on Kashmiri needs to be studied further. The structure of Kashmiri can be preserved and studied using The sophisticated and complex system of Kashmiri grammar springs from inter-linguistic and historical relationships. The language maintains this balance with its Indo- Aryan and Dardic roots because of its rich morphological system. Of the South Asian languages, Kashmiri is exceptional because of its integrated system, the complex morphological structure of verbs that is sensitive to gender, and its remarkable phonetics. Because of the morphological and phonetic diversity Kashmiri dialects display, subsequent studies should focus on diarist accounts of the spoken language. More study needs to be done on the interactions of Hindi, Urdu, and English with Kashmiri in order to evaluate ongoing changes in the morphology of the language. The structure of Kashmiri can be

preserved and studied using synthetic linguistic tools like automated translators and morphological analyzers. Such tools will aid in the creation of educational and language resource materials to ensure the language of Kashmiri is preserved for future generations.

There are sociolinguistic studies on Kashmiri morphology that consider adjustment within the diaspora, where default sociolinguistic contexts often inhibit language maintenance. There are wider psychological dimensions shifts and stabilities around these phenomena, and with respect to that, the Kashmiri lexicon remains a significant area of research and provides evidence of the language's history and its present and future use. Kashmiri grammar has a profound impact on the record and theoretical aspects of a language. The relation of grammar to morphology in Kashmiri, in respect of divergent ergativity and consistency, challenges more simplistic frameworks on the Indo-Aryan word structure. Because of these theoretical and syntactic attributes, Kashmiri is pertinent in addressing and refining issues surrounding theoretical morphology, particularly with respect to the axial and inflectional type of diversity.

Instruction on Kashmiri morphology will inform better strategies on curriculum and pedagogy. Understanding grammatical theories will assist the formulation of instructional grammar and teaching materials for first and second language through instructional materials. This is especially critical in circumstances where there is little or no intergenerational transmission since Kashmiri is not the dominant language of the curriculum. Improving the knowledge of the morphological features of the language will assist the cause of language revitalization. This study improves the need for the timely documentation of neglected/abandoned and the emerging endangered languages. Greater depth of study in morphological analysis will provide a permanent linguistic and ethnological artifact and testimony on the shifting and endangered uses of the Kashmiri language due to globalization. These efforts will help sustain the Kashmiri endangered ethnolinguistic group to preserve and maintain their distinct Kashmiri culture. This study will help foster an ethnolinguistic identity and contribute to the Kashmiri scholarly community and the overall South Asian academic discourse. This study will contribute to the immense discourse on language documentation by amplifying research on the Kashmiri language. It will enhance efforts to minimize underappreciation of the linguistic diversity in the Kashmiri language.

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