PHONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF NICKNAMING IN URDU

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ABSTRACT

This paper relates a mapping from a given name structure to its possible nicknames syllable template depending upon the syllable structure of a name. The names are categorized depending upon the number of syllables in name and the characteristics of first syllable. The focus in this paper are only those nicknames, which have connection with the name, however a passing remark is also made to the nicknames that do not have any connection with their respective names. Furthermore, three rules are formulated, which can be applied to names with different syllable templates.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Nicknaming is a very common practice all over the globe. All names can have more than one nickname depending on who is giving that nickname and to whom.

The paper has tried to explore all the patterns on which the nicknames are based on and to find out the mechanism, which makes the transition from a given name to a nickname.

This paper explores the nicknames in Urdu language and also gives a brief introduction to Japanese nicknaming conventions.

1.2 Problem Statement

To find a phonological rule governing the transformation of names to nicknames in **Urdu**.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

There is no phonological rule found for other world languages that could explain the transition of names to nicknames.

A dialect of Japanese has a phonological rule for a subset of names and is explained below.

2.1 Japanese rustic girls' nicknames

The nicknames of this subset are formed by taking the full name and circumscribing off the first two moras to form the nickname (Poser 1990). The rule is that three entities can form a nickname: an open syllable with a long vowel, a consonant-vowel-nasal sequence, and two light syllables. These fall into a natural class as two moras, or a bimoraic foot. The table shows the process:

TABLE 1: Formation of nicknames in Japanese

Full Name	Circumscribe two moras	Truncated nickname
Yuuko	$[Yu_{\mu}u_{\mu}]ko_{\mu}$	o-Yuu
Ranko	$[Ra_{\mu}n_{\mu}]ko_{\mu}$	o-Ran
Yukiko	$[Yu_{\mu}ki_{\mu}]ko_{\mu}$	o-Yuki

3. METHODOLOGIES

3.1 Data Collection

Names of almost 150 college boys and girls were picked up. The friends of those students were asked to tell the nicknames of their friends. The nicknames for the same set of names were asked from some other people who did not directly have a friend with such a name. They were also asked to form nicknames on their own if they did not know it before. Every one was given the option that if he could not think of a name he can pass on to the next name.

The names with simple words were selected which have different lengths. The names

with compound words were not considered. For example the names such as Karamat-Ullah were not considered as a whole, instead only the first part of the name Karamat was considered.

3.1.1 Analysis

The analysis was done with the intension to find some structural change in the syllable of the name to the nickname. Firstly all possible syllable structures that exist in Urdu names were jotted down and then all the possible structures that exist in the nicknames were written. An attempt was made to formulate a way or a rule that could do the conversion from name to nickname structure. The most commonly used syllable structures were taken out by finding out their percentage of occurrences. The starting point was to take into consideration the number of syllables (Napoli) that a name has and then formulate a rule for that transition. The categorization was done on the basis of the structure of the first syllable of the name.

3.2 Nicknaming of English Names

In the second experiment the names used were from English but the subjects were asked to make their Urdu nicknames. Thus the structural transition could be figured out and analyzed whether they follow some rule.

3.2.1 Analysis

In the experiment an attempt was made to find the consonants and vowels that were induced in the nickname and in the analysis it was tried to relate a relation between the names and the nicknames.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Syllable structure of Nick Names

The syllable structures of the nicknames were observed and a large variation was found.

Almost all-possible syllable structures are written below. Long vowels are denoted by VV and short vowels by single V.

TABLE 2: All possible syllable structures found in nicknames.

Syllable	Nicks
VV CVV	ɑ ʃi
CVV CVV	gɑ mɑ
CVC CVV	bIl li
CVVC	nɔʃ
CV CV	ɪm ʈɪ
VC CVV	əs su

4.1.1 Percentages of occurrences of different syllable structures

From the data collected the following percentages of different syllable structures was found.

TABLE 3: Percentage of syllable templates found out in nicknames.

Syllable Structure	Percentage of occurrence
VV CVV	6%
CVV CVV	60%
CVC CVV	20%
CVVC	3%
VC CV	1%
VC CVV	10%

4.2 Syllable Transitions

The categorization can be done on the basis of the first syllable structure.

This table explains the classification of the names. The classification was done on the basis of number of syllables in names and the characteristics of the first syllable. The characteristics of first syllable can be defined on the basis of presence and absence of coda and onset in the first syllable.

TABLE 4 Classification of names depending upon onset and coda in first syllable and their following nick name templates.

Onset in first syllable	Coda in first syllable	No of Syllables	Nickname Template Structure
Yes	Yes	1	CVV CVV
No	No	2	CVV CVV
No	No	2	VV CVV
No	No	2	CVC CVV

No	Yes	2	CVV CVV
No	Yes	2	VC CVV
No	Yes	2	CVC CVC
Yes	No	2	CVV CVV
Yes	No	2	CVC CVV
Yes	No	2	CVVC
Yes	Yes	3	CVC CVV
No	Yes	3	CV VCC
No	Yes	3	VCVC
Yes	No	3	CVV CVV

4.3 Consonants Sequence rule

If we make a nickname by choosing consonants from the name then the order of consonants observed in the nickname is same as in the name.

4.4 First Vowel Rule

1. If a name starts with a consonant and its nickname starts with any consonant of the original name then the first vowel in the nickname would be same as the first vowel after that consonant in the original name.
2. If a name starts with a vowel and its nickname template has a vowel in start then the nickname would start with the same vowel.

4.5 Last vowel Rule

The last vowels can be anyone of the following.

1. a
2. i
3. u

The preceding consonant of the last vowel does not show any phonetic property that could determine the exact vowel.

4.6 No one to one mapping

There is no one to one mapping from names to nicknames. So as we can formulate a rule that can guide us in transforming from a given name belonging to one class to a class of nicknames where all possible nickname structures will be present. Still few exceptions could be found as was witnessed when English names were changed to Urdu nicknames. The consonants can be picked up from anywhere in the name and they even cannot be from the name. Every person has a wish and liking, whenever he hears a nick that is stored in his mind, and when needs to form a nick the person thinks. The nick that he likes the most is selected. All the syllable rules and the rules I defined holds if the person likes to choose a nick by shortening the name, and even in that case consonants can be arbitrary positions and syllable of the name.

4.7 Effects of surroundings

Sometimes nicknames have no connection with their corresponding names. Nicknames can be given due to three different reasons.

1. Nickname given on the physical appearance of the person.
2. Nickname of some other person having resemblance in name, without knowing why the given name was nicked originally.
3. Every person has a liking and whenever he cannot find out any suitable nick, he tries to map the nickname onto the one he likes the most. Hence no explanation can be given for his act.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Single Syllable names

It was found accurately that the transformation was quite predictable in these transitions.

All the names that I found out were of syllable structure CVVC.

TABLE 5: Few examples of single syllabic names.

Names	Transcribed	Nicks
Shaan	ʃɑn	ʃɑ ni
Saad	sɑd̪	sɑ d̪i
Zaen	zæn	zæ ni
Noor	nʊr	nʊ ri

As we can see from table 5, that there were only two consonants involved in the

nickname and were same as those in the name.

As we can see that the syllabic structure of the name itself was similar to that of the possible nickname structure but majority of the people formed a nickname with a structure with a higher liking.

So our consonant sequence rule, first vowel rule and last vowel rule hold for this class.

5.2 Two Syllables

For a two-syllable name, no explicit rule could define the transformation. However if we divide the data into the following two categories then we can to some extent predict the syllable structure of the nicknames but the exact nickname is highly unpredictable.

1. Starting with a vowel (first syllable does not have an onset)
2. Starting with a consonant (first syllable with an onset)

5.2.1 First Syllable does not have an onset

For a name starting with a vowel, there are four different types of the syllable structures that can be observed in the data.

TABLE 6: Table showing two syllable names starting with vowels.

Name	Syllable Structure	Transcribed
Aufeef	VV CVVC	ɔ fif
Abid	VV CVC	ɑ b̪id
Arshad	VC CVC	ər ʃəd
Aziz	VC CVVC	ɑ ziz

These names could be divided into 2 categories on the basis of first syllable.

1. No coda.
2. Have a coda.

5.2.1.1 No coda

If the first syllable does not have a coda, then the nicknames were formed with the following syllable structures.

TABLE 7: Names that don't have neither coda nor onset.

Name	Syllable	Nick	Syllable
ɔ fif	VV CVV	ɔ fi	VV CVV
ɑ bid	VV CVV	ɑ b̪i	VV CVV
ɔ fif	VV CVVC	fi fɑ	CVV CVV
ɑ bid	VV CVVC	bi d̪ʊ	CVV CVV
ɑ bid	VV CVVC	bɪ d̪ dʊ	CVC CVV

So we can conclude that for a bi syllabic name there can be more then one nicknames syllabic transitions. So we cannot predict which form the nickname will take. For this class, our consonant sequence rule, first vowel rule and last vowel rule holds.

A name can be transformed to any form that is totally dependant on the will of the person. In these syllable structures the probability of the transitions to different types of the allowed structures is given below in the table on twenty different names with the following structures.

TABLE 8: The percentage of transformation of given syllable structure to different possible nickname syllable templates.

Original	Converted	Prob.
VV CVC	VV CVV	.4
VV CVC	CVV CVV	.5
VV CVC	CVC CVV	.1
VV CVVC	VV CVV	.2
VV CVVC	CVV CVV	.6
VV CVVC	CVC CVV	.2

5.2.1.2 Coda in first Syllable

Second type of the syllable structure that was categorized was starting with a syllable structure VC

TABLE 9: Table showing bi syllabic names starting with vowel having coda with variations in second syllable of name

Name	Structure	Nick	Structure
Imran	VC CVVC	mɑ ni	CVV CVV
Imran	VC CVVC	ɪm mi	VC VCC
Afzal	VC CVVC	fəz lu	CVC CVV
Afzal	VC CVC	əpʰ pʰu	VC CVV

Umer	VC CVC	mɑ ru	CVV CVV
Umair	VC CVVC	ʊm mi	VC CVV
Ashraf	VC CVC	əʃ ʃu	VC CVV
Ashraf	VC CVC	ʃər ʃu	CVC CVC

As we can see from the data that this time even the consonants are not predictable. The first consonant can be from the first syllable as in 'Imran' and can be from the second syllable as in 'Arshad' (having nick shada).

The data was converted to the following three types.

TABLE 10: Names structures and their corresponding possible nickname templates.

Name Structure	Nick Structure
VC CVVC/CVC	CVV CVV
VC CVVC/CVC	VC CVV
VC CVVC/CVC	CVC CVV

The syllable conversion is highly unpredictable, however if the nick has the *CV CVV* structure then the first vowel is the vowel with which the name is starting with and the first consonant is the first consonant in the name (glides are exempted from this rule). This rule holds only for this class.

TABLE 11: Examples of 2nd case of first vowel rule

Name	Nick	Transcription
Awais	əs su	VC CVV
Usman	əs su	VC CVV
Imraan	ɪm mi	VC CVV

We can see that our consonant sequence, first vowel and the last vowel rule holds for even the most complex examples where complex transitions took place.

TABLE 12: Examples of consonant sequence rule

Name	Nick	Transcription
Ashraf	Sharfoo	ʃər ʃu
Afzal	Fuzloo	fəz lu

5.2.2 First Syllable having a Consonant Onset

Let us start with listing all the possible first syllable types.

TABLE 13: All possible template structures of names having onset.

Name	Struct	Nick	Transcription
Noman	CVV CVVC	nomi	nomi
Rashid	CVV CVC	rashee	ra ʃi
Sania	CVV CVVV	Sani	Sa ni
Murad	CV CVVC	moda	mu d̤a
Hina	CV CVV	hani	ha ni
Sadaf	CV CVC	saffoo	səf fo
Salman	CVC CVVC	sallu	səl lu
Fatma	CVC CVV	fati	fa t̤i
Sarmad	CVC CVC	muda	mu d̤a

So continuing the old strategy of dividing the name on the basis of the structure of their first syllable.

5.2.2.1 First syllable without coda

For all the names with the first syllable as CVV were converted to the CVV CVV most of the time with the highest possibility. However there was a tendency towards the formation of a syllable structure CVVC that was not found in any other category.

TABLE 14: Table showing nicknames their structure and possible nickname template structures

Name	Struct.	Nick	Tans.	Struct.
Nosheen	CVV CVVC	Shini	ʃi ni	CVV CVV
Nosheen	CVV CVVC	Noshee	nɔ ʃi	CVV CVV
Nosheen	CVV CVVC	Nosh	nɔ ʃ	CVVC

Our consonant sequence rule, first vowel rule and the last vowel rule were applicable most of the time.

The vowel rule can be demonstrated from the following example

TABLE 15: First vowel rule application

Name	Struct.	Nick	Tans.	Struct.
Nosheen	CVV CVVC	shene	ʃe ne	CVV CVV
Nosheen	CVV CVVC	noshee	ne ʃe	CVV CVV

But an exception was found when further data was analyzed. The example of such case is of a name 'Maham'.

TABLE 16: Exception in first vowel rule

Name	Struct	Nick	Trans	Struct
Maham	CVV CVC	Momo	mo mo	CVV CVV
Maham	CVV CVC	Mama	ma ma	CVV CVV

Since no other example was found so it might be the effect that the nick 'mama' could not be formed because of the reason that it's meaning in the language is mother and for a young girl you cannot give such a nick. So the rule for making nicks should not result in something, which has a meaning clashing with the personality of the person.

Though sequence rule was also quite applicable but there was an exception found during the analysis of this class.

TABLE 17: Exceptions in consonant sequence rule

Name	Struct.	Nick	Trans	Struct
Jaffar	CVV CVC	Feeju	fi dʒu	CVV CVV

The syllable transition was again found out to be unpredictable. All the possible transitions are listed below.

TABLE 18: Example of all possible nickname syllable templates.

Name	Struct.	Nick	Trans.	Struct.
Sajid	CVV CVC	Sadi	sa d̪i	CVV CVV
Sajid	CVV CVC	Sajju	sədʒ dʒu	CVC CVV
Sajid	CVV CVC	Saaj	sadʒ	CVVC

5.2.2.2 First Syllable with a coda

If a name has a first syllable having a coda, then the following transformations were observed.

TABLE 19: Structure of nicknames and their corresponding possible nickname templates

First Syllable of name	Nick Structure
CVC/CVVC	CVV CVV
CVC /CVVC	CVC CVV

Which can be seen and observed from the data shown below.

TABLE 20: names and their corresponding nickname syllable templates

Name	Nick	Trans	Structure
Hufza	Huffo	həf fo	CVC CVV
Sulman	Sallu	səl lu	CVC CVV
Fatma	Faati	fa t̪i	CVV CVV

5.3 Three syllable Name

Now lets analyze three syllable names and classify them on the basis of the first syllable.

TABLE 21: listing different possible syllable templates of three syllable names

Name	Structure	Nickname
Mustafa	CVC CV CVV	Musti
Usama	VC CVV CVV	Assu
Zunaira	CV CVV CV	zuni
Iftakhar	VC CV CVVC	Ifti
Jahanzeb	CV CVVC CVVC	Jayzee
Sheharyaar	CVV CVC CVVC	Sherry
Zulqarnain	CVC CVC CVVC	Zulqi

5.3.1 No onset and have a coda

If the first syllable of the name is of the form CVV then the resulting nick is of the form VCVC or VCVCC

TABLE 22: First syllable template and the corresponding nickname template

Name Structure	Nickname Structure
VC	VC CV

VC	VC CVV

One Consonant was taken from the first syllable and the second consonant taken from the second syllable. The consonant sequence rule, first vowel rule and the last vowel rule are true for this class without any exception.

TABLE 23: Different name and their corresponding nickname transformations

Name	Struct	Nick	Tran.	Struct
Imtiaz	VC CV CVVC	Imti	ɪmt̪i	CVCV
Iftakhar	VC CV CVVC	Ifti	ɪf ti	CVCV

5.3.2 First Syllable having Onset but no Coda

The nickname is formed with the syllable structure CVV CVV, and no exception was found.

TABLE 24: Examples of names that have first syllable having onset but no coda

Name	Struct	Nick	Trans	Struct
Jahan-zeb	CV CVVC CVVC	Jaezi	dʒe zi	CVV CVV
Shehar-yaar	CVV CVC CVVC	shery	ʃe ri	CVV CVC

The consonant sequence rule, first vowel rule and the last vowel rule were also applicable to this class.

5.3.3 First Syllable having Consonant onset and coda

The name with the following first syllable structure was converted to the CVC CVV and CVV CVV structures, which is inferred as a result too.

TABLE 25: Examples of names that have first syllable having onset and coda

Name	Struct	Nick	Trans	Struct
Zulfiqar	CVC CV CVVC	Zulfi	zʊl fi	CVC CVV
Mustafa	CVC CV CVV	Musti	mʊs t̪i	CVC CVV

5.4 No one to one mapping

The transition of the syllable structure is to some extent predictable but there does not exist any one to one correspondence between names and nicknames. It all depends on what the people have in their minds. If it was not the case then the people should form a similar nick for most names but when the survey was conducted with the English names, there was a large variability in the nicks formed by various people, which can be seen in the appendix.

5.4.1 Single Syllable name

Hence it can be seen that the rule formulated above for the 1-syllable names that are of the form CVVC is verified from the data and can be seen below with the help of few examples from the English names.

TABLE 26: Examples of single syllable names from other languages.

Name	Nick	Trans
Tom	Tomy	t̪o mi
Raam	Rami	ra mi

The vowel ‘i’ was appended at the end of the name.

5.4.2 Two Syllable name

The variability between nicknames was to such an extent that 10 different people gave almost five different nicknames for each of the name.

5.4.2.1 First Syllable having no code

As we concluded before that a name with the first syllable structure, can be converted

to following three different syllable structures unpredictably.

1. CVV CVV
2. CVC CVV
3. VC CVV

The data of the English name Ada is shown below.

TABLE 27: Examples of bi-syllabic names from other languages.

Name	Nick	Trans.	Prob.
Ada	Dama	ɖa ma	.4
Ada	Aedi	æ ɖi	.1
Ada	Aadam	a ɖəm	.2
Ada	Dunno	ɖʊn no	.1
Ada	Aadi	a ɖi	.2

And we can see that the nick rule was applicable but if we changed the consonants like in 'Dunno' and then there can be no rule applicable.

Now let us turn our attention to a name Thomas that has the same syllable structure as of 'Tahir'. For Tahir people formed different nicks but for Thomas they were unable to formulate. There was a large variability in the nicknames formed by the people.

TABLE 28: Variations in bi-syllabic name from other languages.

Name	Nick	Trans.
Thomas	Thom	ʈʰo m
Thomas	Thomy	ʈʰo mi
Thomas	Tom	ʈɔm
Thomas	Tony	ʈɔ ni
Thomas	Thomu	ʈʰo mu

As we can see that the all the possible transformations were same as for the Urdu names and if the consonants are not changed then the nick rule is applicable.

5.5 Effects of surroundings

There is no particular rule for nicknames. However it is sometimes that the physical appearance leads to some nickname. Also it is possible that you give some nick just because you heard it somewhere else corresponding to that name and you liked it. It is also possible that you have heard some nick without knowing its original name and then you give that nick to any name without any reason.
Let us look at the names of the few cricketers like Graham, Bret and Dannis.

TABLE 29: Table showing nickname names that have no connection with the names.

Name	Structure	Nick name	Transcription	Structure
Dannis	CVV CVC	Lilly	lɪl li	CVC CVV
Graham	CVV CVC	Gary	ga ri	CVV CVV
Bret	CCVC	Lee	li	CVV
Allan	VV CVC	Dona	ɖo na	CVV CVV

Now see the nickname against Dannis. It is something totally unrelated. It is because the data provider knew the cricketers with second name and that he liked the second name because it's already on the syllabic structure on nicknames. So he formed the nick of the 'Dannis' simply 'lilly'. Same is the case with Bret and Allan. Allan was given the nickname donna which cannot have any phonological relation to that name.

6. REFERENCES

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