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MORPHOSYNTACTIC FEATURES OF DHUNDHARI

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ABSTRACT

This research paper explores the relationship between morphology and syntax collectively known as morphosyntax in Dhundhari. Morphosyntactic features pertain to the ways in which morphemes and syntactic structures interact within a language. The paper aims to examine key morphosyntactic elements such as noun gender, number, case, agreement, and tense, aspect, and mood in Dhundhari. Furthermore, this paper addresses the syntactic structure of the language, including word order, word typology, and the interaction between morphology and syntax. The paper highlights how Dhundhari morphosyntactic system contributes to the language's overall linguistic structure and meaning. Findings show that Dhundhari has the dominant SOV word order with agglutinating and fusional features in the word constructions. The language has two genders, two numbers, and three persons. The gender differentiation can be seen in [-animate] objects too. The case marking is majorly of three types- nominative, objective or oblique, and post positional. Nominative case is covertly marked; whereas other case markers are overtly marked that follow the nouns and pronouns. Dhundhari expresses tense, aspect, and mood through verb inflections. The language has three tenses-past, present, and future. Aspect and mood is also distinguished in the verb forms. Subject-verb agreement is very clearly distinct in the vowel at the word final position of the copula verb. The copula verb 'cʰə' is the identifying feature of Dhundhari that distinguishes this variety from the other varieties of Rajasthani.

KEYWORDS*:* Dhundhari, Linguistic Features, Morphosyntax, Descriptive Study

1. Introduction

Morphosyntactic features are integral to understanding the intersection of morphology and syntax. These features include grammatical elements like tense, number, person, case, gender, and aspect, all of which are expressed either through inflections or syntactic relations. This paper aims to explore how morphosyntactic features are

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realized in Dhundhari, and how they shape sentence formation, word order, and meaning. Understanding the morphosyntactic properties of the lesser known language is crucial for gaining insight into its grammatical structure, which is distinct from that of many other languages.

2. Literature Review

Very less work been done on the Dhundhari language. One of the first linguists to work on Dhundhari and a few other Rajasthani dialects was George Abraham Grierson. In the *Linguistics Survey of India* (1908) Vol IX, part II, Grierson included Gujarati and Rajasthani and provided a brief description of the Dhundhari grammar system. The writings of Lakhan Gusain are regarded as important contributions to the Rajasthani language and related dialects. Gusain's grammatical descriptions of Shekhawati (2001) and Dhundari (2005) concentrate on the language's sociolinguistic context, identity, and grammatical sketch. *The Languages of Rajasthan* (2014), edited by Madan Meena and Suraj Rao, is included in "*Bharatiya Bhasha Lok Sarvekshan*," also known as "*Peoples Linguistic Survey of India*," Vol. 26. Dhundhari is mentioned in chapter VIII of this book. Theodor Gipson Benjamin and Liahey Ngwazah conducted a sociolinguistic survey on Dhundhari and Shekhawati as part of the *Sociolinguistic Survey of Selected Rajasthani Speech Varieties of Rajasthan, India Volume 5: Dhundari and Shekhawati* (2012), sociolinguistic survey series of several Rajasthani dialects. Dr. Govind Shankar Sarma covered the four Rajasthani dialects—Marwari, Mewari, Dhundhari, and Hadauti—in *Rajasthani Bhasha Shastra* (2011). The doctoral dissertation *Acoustic Study of Vowels in Dhundhari* (2020) by Sonam Meena examines the differences in vowel pronunciation between speakers of Dausa, Sawai Madhopur, and Jaipur. A research paper has been written by S. Meena. titled "Reduplication in Dhundhari and Adi"(2019). '*A Comparative Study between Dhundhari and Shekhawati Stemming: Case of Very Closely Related Languages*' (2024) by Verda Pareek and Nisheeth Joshi attempted to demonstrate and contrast the stemming accuracy of Dhundhari and Shekhawati.

2.1. Objective of the Study

The purpose of this research work is to find out the basic linguistic features of the language. Major objectives of this study are:

(a) Find out the key morphosyntactic features of Dhundhari

(b) To find out how the various morphological and syntactic categories contribute to the construction of the language's syntactic structure

3. Data Collection and Methodology

3.1. Data Collection

Both the primary as well as secondary data has been collected for the study. All the primary data has been collected from the native

speakers of Dhundhari through structured and semi-structured interviews. Informants were asked questions and given questionnaires for collecting primary data. Most of the language informants are from the age groups in between 22-50, and they were engaged in various professions. Primary data were also collected from informal discussions with the native speakers of the language that helped to collect the real speech data. Secondary data have been collected from the existing literature. Even though the amount of secondary data is very less, it helped to understand the basic linguistic features of the language.

3.2. Data Analysis

This work is a descriptive-qualitative study based on the real speech data. For data transcription, International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) were followed. Phonemic transcription was not focused much as this study is limited to basic morphosyntactic analysis of the language. Glossing is done by using the Leipzig Glossing Rules (revised version, February 2008).

3.3. Theoretical Framework: Morphysyntax

The study of morphology focuses on the internal structure of words, such as prefixes, suffixes, stems, and roots. Syntax, on the other hand, concerns the rules governing the arrangement of words in phrases and sentences. Morphosyntax, therefore, addresses how morphological elements (e.g., inflections) are integrated into syntactic structures. The two components are deeply interrelated, as morphemes often determine the syntactic relations in a sentence. This study focuses on the subject-verb agreement, case marking, and TAM features (tense, aspect, mood) which plays a major role to build the morphosyntax of the language.

4. Language Background

Dhundhari [dʱʊndʱaɾi] is an Indo Aryan language under the central group of Rajasthani language family. The speakers are inhabitant of Jaipur, Dausa, Tonk, Sawai Madhopur, and a few parts of Gangapur City, and Dudu district. The natives are one of earliest inhabitants of Rajasthan. According to the Census 2011, the overall population of the speech community is 1.8 million. The term *Dhundhari* has been etymologically derived from the name of a mountain known as '*Dhund'* [dʱʊndʱ] or '*Dhundhakriti'* [dʱʊndʱakɾiti] mountain
that is located inJaipur near Jobner or on the state's western border.
Grierson has mentioned several other names of Dhundhari that includes Dhundhari- Jaipuri, Dhundhali, Dhundhahdi, Jhadshahiboli and Kai-kui boli, and it is alternatively termed as 'Dhundhari' by the natives of Rajasthan. "Alternative names for Dhundari include Dhundari-Marwari, Dhundhali, Dhundhahdi, Jhadshahi boli, Kai-kui boli, and Jaipuri" (Benjamin et el., 2012).

Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India (1908) is one of the earliest accounts labeling the genetic classification of the languages. Dhundhari has been identified as an Eastern-Rajasthani group of language.

Ethnologue classifies Dhundhari as a descendent of Indo-Aryan, belongs to the central zone. The schematic presentation of the genetic classification of Dhundhari (Following the Ethnologue).

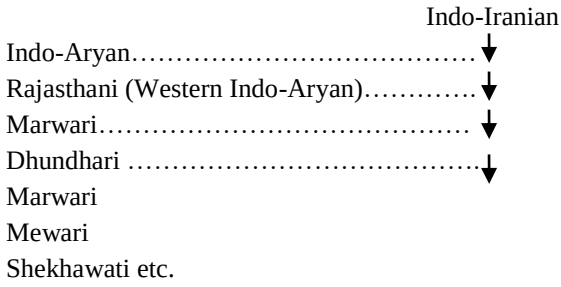


Fig 1: Genetic Classification of Dhundhari (https://www.ethnologue.com/subgroup/3/)

4.1`Sociolinguistic Situation

The sociolinguistic situation of the state is very complex and diverse. There are several dialects of Rajasthani and the dialects are mutually intelligible. In the sociolinguistic survey, done by Benjamin and Ngwazah as a series of the sociolinguistic study of the selected Rajasthani dialects, they came to notice that Hindi seems to have encroached into the language domain. "Both Dhundari and Shekhawati subjects reported that the mother tongue is widely used in most of the vital domains of life: at home, in the village, for marriage songs, with neighboring villagers, and even in government offices where the officer is a mother tongue speaker" (Benjamin et.el, 2012). Their survey shows that almost 92% of the people agree that the younger generation speaks Dhundhari as their mother tongue but other 8% does not agree to that. The new generation speaks a Hindi-mixed Dhundhari. The Older generation still retains the original form of Dhundhari. This arise the multilingualism situation in the region.

4.1.1 Mutual Intelligibility

Dhundhari shares affinity with the other Rajasthani languages, therefore, the mutual intelligibility rate between Dhundhari and the other varieties of Rajasthani is very high.

Table 1: Shows the lexical relatedness between Dhundhari and other Rajasthani Languages:

Dhundhari	**Marwari**	**Mewari**	**Shekhawati**	**Gloss**
gʰoɾo	gʰoɾo	gʰoɾo	gʰoɾo	'Horse'
tabaɾ	tabaɾ	tabaɾ	tabaɾ	'Child'
nɛɲ	nɛɲ	nɛɲ	nɛɲ	'Eye'
kaɭ	kaɭ	kaɭ	kaɭ	'Tomorrow'
lʊgai	lʊgai	lʊgai	lʊgai	'Wife'
atʰe	atʰe	atʰe	atʰe	'Here'

Table 1: Lexical Similarities between different Rajasthani Languages (Meena, Rao, 2014)

However, a word may be used in multiple contexts in one variety that may not be applicable in another, or a lexical item may have multiple meanings in one variety that are not present in the other variety.

The younger generation likewise has a very high rate of code-mixing and code-switching. One of the main causes of code-switching and code-mixing is the introduction of other languages, such as Hindi and English, to the younger generation for a variety of reasons, including education and commerce.

5. Findings

I. Typological Features of Dhundhari

Typology arranges the world languages into different types based on the construction of word structure and sentence structure. "A Typology is simply a division of a range of phenomenon into types" (Payne, 1997). The typological characteristics of Dhundhari are briefly discussed in the ensuing subsections.

I.a Word Order

Like most of the Indo-Aryan Languages, Dhundhari has a dominant word order Subject-Object-Verb (SOV). The subject occurs at the word initial position and the verb at the word final position. Although the language has a dominant word order, it is a free word ordered language.

1. ɹadʰa ek cʰoɹi cʰə (SOV)
   Radha one girl be.3F.PRS
   'Radha is a girl.'

In the above sentence, the subject *ɹadʰa* 'Radha' is in the sentence initial position, the object *cʰoɹi* at the word medial position and the verb is in the sentence final position.

II. Morphological Typology

Dhundhari is a morphologically rich language. The words are agglutinating and fusional in nature. Single morpheme denotes multiple grammatical, syntactic, and semantic features (fusional). Dhundhari words also use agglutination, where multiple morphemes are concatenated together. Some of the morphemes are easily identifiable and easy to segment in smaller chunks as the boundaries between the morphemes are very clear. But some of the morphemes are characterized by fusional morphology where multiple grammatical features are combined within a single morpheme. An overview of the language's morphological typology will be provided in the following sections through the data analysis.

II. Phi Features: Person, Number, Gender

Person, Number

Dhundhari has a three-tier of person distinction-first, second, third, and a two-tier number system-singular and plural. "The most common

number distinctions are singular vs. plural; less common are singular, dual, and plural" (Payne, 1997). Since Dhundhari is an Indo-Aryan language, it adheres to the first viewpoint. Table [2] demonstrates the presence of phi features in the language through personal pronouns:

Person	SG (M)	SG(F)	PL(M)	PL(F)
1st	mə	mə	mʰe (Incl.) apa (Excl.)	mʰe (Incl.) apa (Excl.)
2nd	tu	tu	tʰe	tʰe
3rd	o (Prox.) bo (Dist.)	a (Prox.) ba (Dist.)	e (Prox.) e (Prox.)	e (Prox.) be (Dist.)

Table 2: Representation of Phi Features in Dhundhari Personal Pronouns

Gender differences in pronoun usage are evident in the third-person singular form. Dhundhari first person plural form has two forms mʰe and apa This feature is specific to Dhundhari only. The term *mʰe* is used when the speaker and the addressee is not a member of the same group, whereas *apa* is used when the speaker and the others belong to the same group. The language uses a two-tier of proximity to distinguish the position of the objects in the third person. Gender is marked in third person but not marked in first and second person.

III. Gender and Number Differentiation in Nouns

Dhundhari distinguishes between the genders of [+animate] and [-animate] objects. The gender of the [+animate] objects is based on the biological evidence. To figure out the gender of the inanimate objects, the native speaker's intuition plays a vital role. For instance, within the vehicles, cars are categorized as feminine, while trucks are classified as masculine. Not every vehicle can be categorized as either masculine or feminine. Likewise, not every house is thought to belong to the same gender. There is a particular kind of cottage in Rajasthan that is typically found in rural locations. These little dwellings are constructed using wood, leaves, cow dung, and other organic elements. These cottages are referred to as feminine, but those with better architecture, superior facilities, and comparatively bigger in size are seen as masculine. Nevertheless, the courtyard that is a part of every house is regarded as masculine. The vowel in the inflectional markers plays an important role to show the gender distinction of the objects which will be discussed in the later sections.

IV. Case Marking

Case is considered as a grammatical category that establishes the relationship between the arguments of a verb. Case markers are inflectional markers always associated with the nouns. In Dhundhari case marking is mainly of three types: Nominative, Objective or oblique, and post positional. Oblique case takes the case markers other than the nominative one. Oblique case cannot be used independently. The case relation can be shown only when it is accompanied by a postposition, which is always present in the sentence, sometimes as

overt and sometimes as covert marker. The case markers in Dhundhari are presented in table [3]:

Case	***Markers***
Nominative	Ø
Accusative	nə
Dative	nə
Ergative	nə
Instrumental	sjũ
Ablative	sjũ
Possessive/Genitive	ɾo, ɾi, ko, ki
Locative	mə, maɻe, pəɾ etc

Table 3: Case Markers in Dhundhari

(i) Nominative: Nominative marker is not overtly marked. It is shown as of a null morpheme and the existence of the case marker is represented with the null symbol Ø

2. mə-Ø bɲde ʤaula

I.NOM there go.1.FUT

'I will go there.'

(ii) Accusative: Accusative case markers get attached to the direct objects. Accusative, dative, and ergative cases are marked by the similar morpheme *nə.*

3. mə binə bulajo cʰo

I.NOM she.ACC call.PERF COP.2.PST
'I called her.'

(iii) Dative: The dative case in Indo-Aryan languages is used to indicate the indirect objects or the recipients of an action.

4. mə binə kitab dijo
I she.DATbook give
'I gave her the book.'

(iv) Ergative: Stronski (2009) argues that old Rajasthani has a clear evidence of ergative case markers that can be found in old Rajasthani scripts. But in the modern period this feature is disappearing from the Rajasthani language. Omitting the ergative case marker still makes sense and it is able to show the argument relationship. The marker *nə* is used as both ergative and dative or accusative marker in Dhundhari.

5. (a) tabaɾnə has dijo
baby.ERG laugh do-PERF
'The baby laughed.'

or

(b) tabaɾ has dijo
baby laugh do-PERF
'The baby laughed.'

(v) Instrumental: Instrumental case is used to indicate the instrument or the thing that is used to perform an action.

6. maː kʰud ka hatʰa sjũ kʰaɳo banajo cʰə
mother self GEN hand INST food cook-PERF be.3.PRES
'Mother has cooked food with her own hands.'

(vi) Ablative: Ablative case is used to indicate the source, origin and starting point of an action or state.

7.mə gʰaɾa sjũ aː ri cʰu
I home from come PROG.F COP.1.PRS
'I am coming from home.'

(vi) Possessive/Genitive: Possessive marker is used to indicate the possession. The use of possessive case marker shows the gender of the possessum. Possessive case is marked by *ro,ri, ko,ki.* These phonemes get suffixed to the nouns and pronouns where the occurances of word ending vowels depends on the gender of the possessum. If the gender of the possessum is considered as female then the word ending vowel is /-i/, whereas if it is masculine, then it is /-o/.

8. o mʰaro kuɾto cʰə
that my.POSS.M shirt COP.3.PRS
'That is my shirt.'

(vii) Locative: Locative case is used to indicate the location or place. It is used to show the place where an action takes place or where something is situated. All the locative case markers are considered as post positions in Dhundhari, since all of them are free lexical items that follow the nouns and pronouns and indicate the location.

9. kitab table maɭe che
book table on COP.3.PRS
'The book is on the table.'

V. Tense, Aspect, Mood

Dhundhari expresses tense, aspect, and mood through verb inflections. Based on the use of tense, verbs are categorized into two types: finite verb and non-finite verb. Finite verbs carry the tense and non-finite verb does not carry any tense.

6. Tense

The grammatical category of tense is used to convey the duration and time of an activity. The, auxiliary and copula verbs, particles, and inflectional marks on verbs are typically used to indicate tense. "Tense is the grammatical expression of the time of an event to some reference point of time, usually the moment the clause in uttered" (Payne, 1997). All Indo-Aryan languages use the three basic tenses—past, present, and future- as is often believed. Dhundhari, being an Indo-Aryan language, uses the present, past, and future tenses.

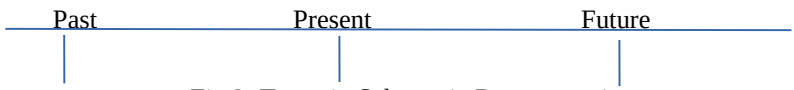


Fig 2: Tense in Schematic Representation

10.(a) mə ɽoʈi kʰau cʰu (Present)
I.NOM chapatti eat.HAB.PRS COP.1.PRS
'I eat chapatti.'
(b) mə ɽoʈi kʰavə cʰo (Past)
I.NOM chapatti eat.PRT COP.1.PST
'I ate chapatti.'

(c) mə ɽoʈi kʰaula (Future)
I.NOM chapatti eat.FUT
'I shall eat chapatti.'

Present tense is marked on the use of copula verb in 10(a) with the person agreement marker /-u/. Past tense is marked with the vowel /-o/ at the copula verb in 10(b), which is also marked for person agreement. Future tense is marked with the morpheme /-la/ that is suffixed to the verb stem *kʰa* 'eat' in 10(c). From this analysis it can be claimed that the word-final in the tense inflections changes in accordance to the person.

VI. Aspect

Aspects describe the nature of an action and the internal temporal shape of an event. The aspects of Dhundhari are as discussed below:

(i) Perfective Aspect: This aspect focuses on the completed nature of an action, without regard to its internal temporal structure. Perfective aspect is marked with /jo/ that adjoins with the verb stem.

11. mə ɽoʈi kʰajo
I. chapatti eat.PERF
'I ate chapatti.'

(ii) Perfect Aspect: Perfect aspect indicates the completion of an action. Grammatical gender is marked in the perfect marker- /lijo/ for masculine and /li/ for feminine. The perfect aspect marker immediately follows the main verb.

12.(a) mə ɽoʈi kʰa lijo cʰu
I.NOM chapatti eat.PERF COP.1.PRS
'I have eaten chapatti.'
(b) ba ɽoʈi kʰa li cʰə
she chapatti eat PERF COP.3.PRS
'She has eaten chapatti.'

(iii) Progressive or Continuative Aspect: Progressive aspect shows the continuation phrase of an action whether in past, present or the action is going to happen in the near or far future. A progressive participle is followed by a copula or auxiliary that carries the tense, indicates the progressive aspect. Gender of the subject is also marked in progressive aspects. The aspectual marker *rijo* for male and *ri* for female is followed by the copula verb that carries the tense.

13.(a) mə ɽoʈi kʰ rijo cʰu
I.NOM chapatti eat PROG M COP.1.PRS
'I am eating chapatti.'

(b) ba ɽoʈi kʰa ri cʰə
she chapatti eat PROG.F COP.3.PRS
She is eating chapatti.'

VII. Mood

Mood is one of the grammatical categories of verb that expresses the attitude of the speaker towards the actions. It shows whether the sentence is a command, a query, a wish, a condition, or a statement of fact. According to Payne (1997: 244) "Mode is the speaker's attitude toward a situation including the speaker's belief in its reality or likelihood". It is regarded as a process that changes the verb form through verb conjugation.

(i) Imperative: Speakers use imperative mood to generally talk or give command/order to the people of same age or younger to them. For imperative mood the speakers use *lɛ* that immediately follows the main verb.

14. ɽoʈi kʰa lɛ
chapatti eat take.
'Eat chapatti.'

(ii) Indicative: Speakers use indicative mood to give a statement of fact. Indicative mood in Dhundhari is expressed with root form of the verb followed by cʰə.

15. ba ʤave cʰə

she.NOM go.HAB COP.3.PRS

'She goes.'

(iii) Conditional: Conditional mood is used to indicate hypothetical situations or conditional statement. Dhundhari uses conditional adverbs to indicate conditional mood.

16. bo aulo ʤdi mə ʤaula
he come.FUT then I go.1.FUT
'If he comes, then I will go.'

VIII. Subjects-Verb Agreement

Subject-verb agreement is the agreement relationship between the sentence's subject and verb. This agreement is based on different features such as number, person, and gender.Indo-Aryan languages have subject-verb agreement. Dhundhari exhibits subject verb agreement for all the three persons. These agreement markers are number sensitive but not sensitive towards gender. Agreement markers are also change according to the tense. Table [4] shows the agreement markers in Dhundhari:

Person	PRES		PST		FUT	
	SG	PL	SG	PL	SG	PL
1st	-u	-a	-o	-e	-la	-lo
2nd	-e	-o	-e	-e	--lo	-lo
3rd	-ə	-ə		-e	--lo	-lo

Table 4: Agreement Markers in Dhundhari

IX. Copula verb 'cʰə'

The copula verb 'cʰə' is the identifying feature of Dhundhari that distinguishes the variety from the other varieties of Rajasthani. In Marwari and other dialects, of Rajasthani the copula verb is *hə* whereas in Dhundhari it is *cʰə*.

17.(a) mə ɽoʈi kʰau cʰu
(Dhundhari)
I.NOM chapatti eat.PRS COP.1.PRS

'I eat chapatti.'

(b) mə ɽoʈi kʰau hu
(Marwari)
I.NOM chapatti eat.PRS COP.1.PRS
'I eat chapatti.'

7. Discussion

The morphosyntactic features of the language throw light on the structure of this variety like most of the Indo-Aryan languages, Dhundhari uses the same dominant word order subject-object-verb (SOV). However, depending on the speaker's choice and the circumstances, the word scrambling is also possible in the language. The presence of phi features—number, person, and gender—are demonstrated by the nouns and pronouns in Dhundhari. The language has three persons, two numbers, and two grammatical genders. The gender distinction is primarily shown in animate and non-animate nouns. The gender of the non-animate objects is based on native speakers' intuition. The phonemes /-o/ and /-i/ stand for male and female, respectively, for the majority of inflectional markers. The first person plural pronoun has two forms- mʰə and apa that depends on inclusion and exclusionary of the speaker. Third-person personal pronouns have two degrees of proximity. Unlike Marwari and Hindi, the personal pronouns in Dhundhari lack honorific distinctions.

Three types of case relations—nominative, objective, and post-positional—can be seen in Dhundhari. The nominative case is null which aligns with most of the Indo-Aryan languages. The accusative/dative is marked with the case marker *nə*. The genitive/possessive case is marked with *ɾo,ɾi, ko,ki;* where these markers get suffixed to the nouns and pronouns. In this case as well, the word ending vowel /-o/ represents male and /-i/ represents female. Instrumental and ablative case markers are homophones, i.e,

represented with the marker *sjũ.* The locative case is post-positional. The use of the copula verb *cʰə* is the primary identifying feature that sets Dhundhari apart from the other Rajasthani dialects. Subject-verb agreement is marked in word final vowel in the copula verb. The use of number, person, gender, case marking, and subject-verb agreement in Dhundhari provides evidences of the richness and complexity of the morpheme structure in the language.

Abbreviations

1-1st Person

2-2nd Personal

3-3rd Person

COP-Copula

F-Feminine

FUT-Future

HAB-Habitual

INST-Instrumental

M- Masculine

NOM-Nominative

PERF-Perfect

PL- plural

PROG- Progressive

PRS-Present

PRT-Particle

PST-Past

SG-Singular

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