

FARSI PUNS: PHONOLOGICAL SIMILARITY IN TERMS OF SYLLABIC STRUCTURE

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PUN

- a sub-genre of humor
- phonological similarity
 - script overlap
 - target recoverable from pun.
- What does **halogen** stand for? It refers to **jens (genes)** that are **haloo (foolish)**.


PUNS VS. IMPERFECT PUNS

- Perfect pun: phonological identity
- Imperfect pun: phonological similarity
 - /Hal**o**ʒen/ > /Hal**u**ʒen/ (foolish genes!)

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

- ▶ phoneme as main subunit of corresponding targets and puns has been confirmed by all studies
- ▶ Vitz and Winkler (1973):
 - considered environment: position of the phoneme with respect to syllable and word
 - grouped differing phonemes into onset, nucleus, and coda positions
- ▶ Hempelmann (2003) applied optimality theory to account for tolerable phonological difference between English imperfect puns and their target.
- ▶ Guidi (2012) examined the validity of previous findings, Hempelmann in particular, across languages from different language families.

IMPERFECT PUNS IN FARSI

- ▶ current study considers the phonological similarity between puns and their targets
 - ▶ 100 Farsi puns
 - ▶ in terms of syllabic structure:
 - ▶ onset
 - ▶ nucleus
 - ▶ coda
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DATA ANALYSIS: EXAMPLE

- ▶ Promoting arboriculture would take place more effectively with the following slogan:

“Dear fellow hookah smoker today’s nahaal (plant) is tomorrow’s zoghaal (charcoal) today bekaar (plant it), and tomorrow bechaagh (burn it).”

ANALYSIS

▶ zoghaal > nahaal

✓ 1st syllable:

▶ /z/ > /n/

▶ onset:

▶ *manner of articulation (fricative to nasal)*

▶ /o/ > /a/

▶ nucleus:

▶ *back to front, high mid to near low*

✓ 2nd syllable:

▶ /G/ > /h/

▶ onset:

▶ *place (uvular to glottal)*

▶ *manner (stop to fricative)*

▶ *devoicing*

ANALYSIS

▶ bechaagh > bekaar

✓ 2nd syllable:

▶ /tʃ/ > /k/:

▶ onset:

▶ *place: post-alveolar to velar*

▶ *manner: affricate to stop*

▶ /G/ > /r/:

▶ coda :


▶ *place: uvular to alveolar*

▶ *manner: stop to liquid*


FINDING

Onset	Nucleus	Coda
97	21	29 (4 word final)

FINDING

- . The findings indicate the importance of rhyming in Farsi puns.
 - . Also, nucleus (as the main component of the syllable) is the least often manipulated segment.
 - . Syllabic structure plays an important role in preserving the phonological (dis)similarity between the pun and its target.
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A HYPOTHESIS

- ▶ In defining a threshold for tolerable phonological difference in pun-target pairs:
 - ▶ not only should we count the number of manipulated segments,
 - ▶ but we need to consider how phonological dissimilarity is distributed across syllables.
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A HYPOTHESIS

For instance:

- ▶ If we have a *manipulation of nucleus* in a syllable of the punning word, we hypothesize that we may not observe *similar dramatic changes in other syllables* of the pun.

FUTURE STUDIES

- ▶ Count the number of dramatic manipulations of syllable (e.g., change of nucleus) relative to less dramatic changes in a punning word.
 - ▶ Come up with a ratio of possible distribution of phonological dissimilarity across syllables.
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