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Phonological Cues to Gender in Arabic Hypocoristics Used by Muslims in Pakistan

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Abstract

The current paper on Arabic Hypocoristics and nicknames tends to focus on the phonological choices employed in nicknames used for males and females in a positive sense (i.e. friendliness and endearment) by the users (family and friends). One notion stems out as an argument that names are not supposed to have semantic content and thus are pure referencing expressions in which the link with referent is arbitrary (Saussure, 1916; Hockett, 1977; Coates 2006). Contrary to this, an emerging trend in the literature is in support of some phonological traces, which link sound and meaning known as sound symbolism. Many studies (see Slater & Feinman 1985; Cutler et al., 1994; Crystal, 1995; De Klerk, V., & Bosch, 1996; Cassidy et al. 1999) suggest that the phonological preferences may link to gender-specific given (first) names as well as nicknames and suggest the phenomena of sound-symbolism at work in nicknames (Cutler et al. 1994; De Klerk, V., & Bosch, 1996). The current study analyses the phonological patterns of Arabic HCs reportedly used in intimate social circles in

Pakistan. The phonological features tend to reveal that there are some phoneme preferences and syllable structure and size which echo with the theory of sound symbolism by linking these phonological patterns with the sex-typed gender-specific categories (male and female), as well as some instances, favor the arbitrariness in Arabic HCs. This variation in the data of given and nicknames suggests that instead of sound symbolism or arbitrary relationship between sound and referent in action, there is rather a continuum that shows the degrees of arbitrariness and symbolism in the whole phenomenon of given and nicknames. In addition, the cultural context in which these names (nicknames) are used also plays a role in patterns shown in the data.

Keywords: Hypocoristic (HC), sound symbolism, syllabic structure

1. Introduction

Nicknaming is a referring expression that recognizes a person and it differs from the given (first) names of the referent (person). There are different social drivers, which trigger to assign nicknames. For example, nicknames are commonly associated with the user's physical characteristics (e.g. colour complexion, hair color, social class, etc.), cultural or ethnic background to enhance the cultural differences (cf. Liao, 2006 for Taiwanese; Wardat, 1997 for Jordanian Arabic; Allen, 1956 for Nicknaming in Egyptian Arabic; Yassin, 1978 for Personal names of address in Kuwaiti Arabic). Hypocorism (HC hereafter) is another type of nickname used as a form of both reference and address, and its formation involves modification in a given name by truncation (or clipping), by affixation in which the most common form is the inclusion of a hypocoristic suffix /ɪ, o, u/, which is sensitive to the segmental content of the shortened form (as in current analysis [ˈkɑ:m.rɑn] first name →[kɑːm$_{[truncated\ form]}$]+/i/$_{suffix}$]→ [ˈkɑ:.mi]$_{HC}$) or reduplication. HCs indicate attitudinal information about the affection of the speaker towards the person referred to (Newman & Ahmad, 1992:159; Allen, 1956: 79).

There are two theories which are in the current literature in debate in relation to personal and nicknames. One of the notions by some phonologists (de Saussure, 1916; Hockett,1977) argues that human language is the arbitrary relationship between sound and the meaning of a word. For instance, it is hard to infer the sense/meaning from the sound of an unknown word because there is no systematic connection between the sound of a word and its semantic concept. Contrary to the arbitrariness of language, there is another notion that suggests that language is systematic and suggests a concept of sound symbolism which claims that sound (individual phonemes) can be inherently meaningful. In simple words, sound-symbol association shows that the sound of a word can directly express its meaning. At the phonological level, many studies show a link between phonological preferences and gender-specific nicknames and support their argument through the phenomenon of sound symbolism (Cutler et al. Cutler et al.

1997; De Klerk and Bosch, 1994, 1996). Sound symbolism is the term, which shows a systematic relationship between sound and meaning (Ohala, J. 1994; Ohala, Hinton & Nichols, 1997). Ohala (1994) suggests the non-arbitrary connection between speech sounds and the meanings of the words or morphemes. For instance, in English, a vocalic ending /i/ (a diminutive suffix), a sequence [-it-] in Spanish shows the expression of smallness and thus the smallness is associated with the sounds. In Contrary to sound symbolism, Coates (2006) in agreement with Saussure, (1915) argues that language is arbitrary and names are only referring to expressions, which are used pragmatically, and any meaning we infer from them is strictly related to the convention practiced in the relevant culture. The present study gives the hybrid view and considers the external factor, i.e. cultural context in nicknaming practice. This means that naming practice is neither completely arbitrary nor fully systematic and thus negates the arbitrariness and sound symbolism phenomenon in the nicknaming system.

At the phonological level, the researchers (see Cutler et al., 1994; DeVelrk and Bosh, 1994, 1996; Crystal, 1995) link phonological tendencies to gender in nicknames. A growing literature on nicknames reveals clear evidence of particular consonantal and vocalic preferences in nicknames, which can be argued to be linked to the sex-typed gender categories (i.e., male and female nickname bearer), which suggests evidence of some sound-symbolism at work in English nicknames (Cutler et al., 1994; Crystal, 1995; De Klerk, V., & Bosch, 1996,1997). For instance, in English, female nicknames start with nasal and liquid continuants and the unvoiced plosives /p/, /t/, and /k/ and these initial consonants attribute gentleness or smallness, whereas the male names prefer to start with voiced initial consonantal sounds /b/, /d/ and /g/ and associate with louder, harder and masculine characteristics of male names in terms of sound-symbolism (De Klerk, V., & Bosch, 1996). Similarly, the general preference for vocalic endings also tends to reveal the gender-specific categories of nicknames. For instance, many studies (such as Cutler et al. 1994:480; Lieberson & Mikelson 1995:937) suggest that there is a significantly higher rate of occurrence of the vowel in terms of diminutive-forming /iː/ suffix (a way of forming hypocoristic and is used in the current study) in female than male nicknames and this vowel ending signify the concept related to smallness, sharpness, and brightness (1994, p. 480). The study of Cutler et al. (1994) argues that 'if smallness is a concept associated with feminine characteristics rather than with masculine, then it may be that /i/ sounds will occur more often in females than in male names, not only in diminutive-forming suffixes but in stressed syllable nuclei as well' (p. 480).

The other phonological features such as syllabic structure and stress patterns also indicate some structural and social commonalities among HC and formal (first) names, which cue the sex-typing of names. For instance, women's names tend to have a larger number of syllables, end in a vowel, and display non-initial stress, while men's names

are shorter, end in a consonant, and have primary initial stress (Slater & Feinman 1985; Cutler et al. 1990; Barry & Harper 1995; De Klerk, V., & Bosch, 1996; Cassidy et al. 1999; Whissell, 2001).

The phonological aspects in nicknaming, especially hypocoristic names, are little explored in Arabic names used by Urdu native speakers (Urdu: a standard official language spoken in Pakistan). The present study tries to find the phonological features of Arabic HC nicknames, which are commonly used by Urdu speakers in a social context of endearment (e.g., among family and friend circles) in Pakistan. In Pakistan, the system of keeping the personal (first) names of Pakistani Muslims is correlated with perceptions of their religious (including sectarian: Sunni, Shias, etc.) identities. According to Rahman (2013:240) the occurrence of Arabic origin names like Osama, Saddam, or Arabic components like—umm (mother of), —ibn (son of) suggest the Islamisation and Arabisation of personal names in Pakistan and it shows the indicator of identity for being a Muslim.

This study is unique in the way that there is no previous study done on Arabic origin nicknames used by Urdu speakers in Pakistan which captures the phonological features including preferred sound segments, syllabic structures, and stress patterns in the nicknames. The current analysis will explore the phonological features of given names as well as HCs and will answer the main question posed in the current analysis: Are there any phonological cues, which can be linked to the gender bearer (i.e. male and female), which ultimately support the sound symbolism or arbitrary mechanism in Arabic HCs spoken by Urdu speakers or not?

The phonological structure of the Hypocoristic names of 90 university students – 45 male and 45 female HC were analyzed. Students were asked to provide the nicknames via questionnaire. Their age ranges between 18-24 years. The provided lists of HCs (nicknames) were phonemically transcribed by the author. Afterward, two linguists further evaluated the phonetic transcription into Urdu and the author filtered gender-specific nicknames on excel for the following structural features based on the previous studies on nicknames (De Klerk, V., & Bosch, 1996, 1997): phonetic preference (i.e. initial consonants and vowel endings of HCs), number of sound segments, length of syllables (mono, di, trisyllabic nicknames), type of syllables in a formal name vs nickname (i.e. open or closed), and stress patterns.

2. Preference for Sound Segments in Arabic HCs

2.1 Consonants

In a previous analysis of syllable structure of nicknames of more interest is the distribution of initial consonants, which is argued to cue gender in the naming system.

For instance, the nasal continuants and liquids occur more frequently in female nicknames, whereas in male nicknames voiced plosives /b, d, g/ occur more frequently than in female nicknames (De Klerk & Bosch, 1997: 9). Table 1 reports the findings in this study in relation to the preferred initial consonants in first (formal henceforth) and HC (interchange with nicknames only). Also, note that there is no attempt made to draw any statistical inferences except the percentile scoring from the data; the comparison simply aims to reveal interesting consistencies between male and female formal names vs nicknames.

In terms of plosives in male formal names and nicknames, the presence of voiced stop /b/ and the presence of unvoiced /p/ in female formal names and nicknames may link to gender. Nevertheless, the presence of these initial plosive consonants /p,b/ in the data set show less percentile score, i.e. 2.2% /b/and 4.4% /p/ in male and female nicknames respectively. Likewise, the presence of lateral /l/ in females and absence in male formal names and nicknames give a clue to link with the sex-typed category of first names and nicknames. Apart from these three sound segments /p, b, l/, there is as such no clear evidence of other consonantal sound segments, which support the gender preference.

Table.1 Consonantal preference in Arabic Given (First) and nicknames

Given Names	Initial Consonants				
Male	Obstruents=/b, t̪, d̪, k, f, v, s, z, ʃ, dʒ, h/ Sonorants= /m, n, r/				
common occurrence	**Obstruents**			**Sonorants**	
	Stops	**fricatives**	**Affricates**	**Nasal**	**liquids**
	/b/=1 (2.2%) /t̪/=2(4.4%) /d̪/=1 (2.2%) /k/=3(6.7%)	/f/=1(2.2%) /v/=1 (2.2%) /s/=2(4.4%) /z/=3(6.7%) /ʃ/=7(15.6%) /h/=3(6.7%)	/dʒ/=2(4.4%)	/m/=4(8.9%) /n/=3(6.7%)	/r/=2(4.4%)
Female	Obstruent= /p, f, k, s, z, ʃ, h/ Sonorant= /l, m, n, r/				
Common occurrence	**Obstruent**			**Sonorants**	
	Stops	**Fricatives**		**nasals**	**Liquids**
	/p/=2 (4.4%) /f/=4(8.9%) /k/=1(2.2%)	/s/=6(13.3%) /z/=5(11.1%) /ʃ/ =3(6.7%) /h/=3(6.7%)		/m/=4(8.9%) /n/=5(11.1%)	/l/=2(4.4%) /r/=4(8.9%)
Nicknames (HCs)					
Male (45/90)	Obstruents:/b, t̪, d̪, k, f, v, s, z, ʃ, j, dʒ, h/ Sonorants:/m, n,r/				
	Obstruents			**Sonorants**	
	Stops	**fricatives**	**affricates**	**nasals**	**liquids**

Common occurrence	/b/=1(2.2%) /t̪/=3(6.7%) /d̪/=3(6.7%) /k/=3(6.7%)	/f/=3(6.7%) /v/=1(2.2%) /s/=2(4.4%) /z/=2(4.4%) /ʃ/=8(17.8%) /j/=1(2.2%) /h/=2(4.4%)	/dʒ/=3(6.7%)	/m/=3(6.7%) /n/=3(6.7%)	/r/=2(4.4%)

Female (45/90)	Obstruent: /p, b, t̪, d̪, f, k, s, z, ʃ, h/
	Sonorant: /l, m, n, r/

	Obstruent		Sonorants	
Common occurrence	Stops	Fricatives	nasals	liquids
	/p/=1(2.2%) /b/=3(6.7%) /t̪/=1(2.2%) /d̪/=1(2.2%)	/f/=4(8.9%) /k/=1(2.2%) /s/ =5(11.1%) /z/=5(11.1%) /ʃ/ =3(6.7%) /h/=1(2.2%)	/m/=5(11.1%) /n/=4(8.9%)	/l/=3(6.7%) /r/=3(6.7%)

The above table (Table 1) suggests that there is no significant percentile score of the consonant ending in given and formal names which determines the gender-specific patterns Arabic given and nicknames spoken in Pakistan. There is approximately the same percentile score of plosives, fricatives, nasals, and liquids in given and nicknames of males and females.

2.2 Vowels

Vocalic preference is another phonological indicator, which is linked to cue the gender in formal and HC. De Klerk & Bosch's (1997) study suggests that a significantly higher proportion of stressed syllables and vowel endings in female nicknames are with /iː/. The vowels of the stressed syllables, which receive prominence, and vowel endings in formal names and nicknames were analyzed.

Table 2 (below) shows the patterns of distribution in the present study. In male formal names and male nicknames, /ɑː/ is the most stressed vowel in the data and was present 44.4% in formal names and 40% in nicknames of the sample size of 45. Similarly, in female data of formal names and nicknames, /ɑː/ is present in most stressed syllables, i.e., 22.2% and 26.7% in the sample size of 45 in female formal names and nicknames respectively.

Nicknames were also analyzed in terms of their vocalic endings. Since it is mentioned earlier that a great number of given male names are closed syllables and thus end with a consonant. Therefore, vowel endings are shown empty in the respective column in Table 2.

However, in nicknames, a large percentage of male nicknames also ends with /i:/ and thus makes 68.9% of the total size of the data set (of 45). However, female formal names end significantly with /ɑ: /=21(46.7%), whereas a large size of female nicknames also ends with /i:/, which makes 60% of the data set (of 45).

Table 2. Vocalic preference in gender-specific Arabic nicknames

Given Names	The vowel in Stressed syllables			Vowel endings	
Male	Front:/i:, e:, æ:, ɑ:/ Back: /o:, u:/ Central: /ə/			No Vowel ending	
Common occurrence	**Front**	**Back**	**Central**		
	/i:/=6(13.3%) /e:/=1(2.2%) /æ:/=4(8.9%) /ɑ:/=20(44.4%)	/o:/=3(6.7%) /u:/=4(8.9%)	/ə/=5(11.1%)		
Female	Front: /i:, æ:, ɑ:/ Back: /o:, u:/ Central:/ə/ Diphthong: /ɑɪ/			Front: /ɑ:/ Diphthong:/ɪɑ/	
Common occurrence	**Front**	**Back**	**Central& Diphthong**	**Front**	**Diphthong**
	/i:/=14(31.1%) /æ:/=4((8.9%) /ɑ:/=10(22.2%)	/o:/=6(13.3%) /u:/=2(4.4%)	/ə/=7(15.6%) /ɑɪ/=2(4.4%)	/ɑ:/=21(46.7%)	/ɪɑ/=5(11.1%)
Nicknames					
Male	Front: /i:, e:, æ:, ɑ:/ Back: /o:, u:/ Central: /ə/			Front: /i:, ɑ:/ Back: /u:/	
Common occurrence	**Front**	**Back**	**Central**	**Front**	**Back**
	/i:/=5(11.1%) /e:/= 4(8.9%) /æ:/=4(8.9%) /ɑ:/=18(40%)	/o:/=3(6.7%) /u:/=4(8.9%)	/ə/=6(13.3%)	/i:/=31(68.9%) /ɑ:/=6(13.3%)	/u:/=6(13.3%)
Females	Front: /i:, e:, æ:, ɑ:/ Back: /o:, u:/ Central: /ə/			Front: /i:, ɑ:/ Back: /o:, u:/	
Common occurrence	**Front**	**Back**	**Central**	**Front**	**Back**
	/i:/=12(26.7%) /e:/=1(2.2%) /æ:/=4(8.9%) /ɑ:/=12(26.7%)	/o:/=6(13.3%) /u:/=3(6.7%)	/ə/=8(17.8%)	/i:/=27 (60%) /ɑ:/= 2(4.4%)	/o:/=4(8.9%) /u:/=4(8.9%)

Our data suggest that male nicknames end far more frequently with /i:/ (i.e. 68%) than female nicknames (i.e. 60% of the sample size). However, in terms of stressed syllables, female formal/given names and nicknames contain more /i:/ (i.e. formal:

31.1% and nicknames 26.7%) than male given names (i.e. 13.3%) and nicknames (i.e.11.1%). This somehow conforms to the results of the previous studies (Cutler et al., 1994; De Klerk & Bosch, 1997), which argue that there is more presence of /iː/ in female nicknames than male ones.

3. Syllabic Structure in Arabic HCs

3.1 Occurrence of Syllable Type

In nicknaming, another phonological preference involved in syllabic structure is the syllable type in the formation of Urdu nicknames. We can find the patterns in the data, which tend to provide cues to the gender associated with the syllable structure of the names. Table 3 shows that all male formal names have the closed syllable structure, whereas female formal names have a higher ratio of occurrence of open syllables, i.e. 55.6% than closed syllables, i.e. 44.4%.

The occurrence of closed vs open syllable conforms to the previous studies, which state that male names end with consonants (Slater and Feinman, 1985; Cutler et al., 1994; Lieberson and Bell, 1992; Barry and Harper, 1995; Cassidy et al., 1999) and female names bear vocalic endings and thus are having open syllables (Slater and Feinman, 1985; Cutler et al., 1994; Barry and Harper, 1995; Cassidy et al., 1999). In contrast with the given (formal) names, nicknames however have heavy open disyllables (VC, VV, CVV, and CVC). They are favored more than the heavy closed mono and disyllables (CVC, CVVC). This may conform to the syllable structure of Urdu. The occurrence of open syllables is 95.6% in males and 93.3% in females, whereas the closed syllables only make 4.4% in males and 6.7% in female nicknames.

The most common syllable template of open and closed syllables in male and female nicknames is shown in Table (3) below.

Table. 3 Occurrence of syllable type in Arabic Given (first) and nicknames

Syllable types	Male (Given names)		Female (formal names)		
Open	0		(25/45) 55.6%		
			VV.CVV	[ˈaɪ. ʃaː]	'Ayesha'
			CVV.CVV	[ˈnɑː.zɪɑ]	'Nazia'
			CVC.CVV	[ˈlub.nɑ]	'Lubna'
			V.CVV.CVV	[ə.ˈnoː.ʃɑ]	'Anosha'
			CV.CVV.CVV	[nə.ˈbiː.lɑ]	'Nabeela'
			V.CVVC.CVV	[ə.ˈliːʃ.bɑ]	'Alishba'
Closed	(45/45)100%		(20/45)44.4%		
	CVVC	[ʃoeb] 'Shoib'	VC.CVC	[ˈən.nəm] 'Annum'	

	VV.CVC	[ˈɑː.ɖəl]	'Adal'	VV.CVC	[ˈiː.rəm]	'Irum'	
	V.CVVC	[əˈjɑːz]	'Ayyaz'	CVV.CVC	[ˈrim.ʃɑː]	'Rimsha'	
	CV.CVVC	[ʃəˈkiːl]	'Shakeel'	CVC.CVC	[ˈʃəb.nəm]	'Shabnam'	
	CVC.CVC	[ˈɖan.jɑl]	'Danyal'	CV.CVVC	[zəˈriːn]	'Zareen'	
	CVV.CVC	[ˈmuː.nib]	'Muneeb'	CVC.CVVC	[pərˈviːn]	'Perveen'	
	VC.CVVC	[ərˈfɑːn]	'Irfan'	CVV.CVVC	[noːˈʃiːn]	'Nosheen'	
	CVV.CVVC	[ˈmuː.dʒɑɪɖ]	'Mujahid'				
	CVVC.CVC	[ˈkɑːm.rɑn]	'Kamran'				
	CVC.CV.CVVC	[zul.fə.ˈkɑːr]	'Zulfiqar'				
syllable type	**male (nicknames)**			**female (nicknames)**			
Open	**(43/45)95.6%**			**(42/45)93.3%**			
	VC.CV	[ˈək.ki]	'Aki'	VC.CVV	[ˈən.nuː]	'Annu'	
	VV.CV	[ˈɑː.ɖi]	'Adi'	VV.CV	[ˈɑː.ʃi]	'Ashi'	
	CVV.CV	[ˈʃiː.ki]	'Shiki'	CVV.CV	[ˈnoː.ʃi]	'Noshi'	
	CVC.CV	[ˈsək.ki]	'Saki'	CVC.CVV	[ˈʃəb.bo]	'Shabo'	
Closed	**(02/45)4.4%**			**(03/45)6.7%**			
	CVC	[ˈnæn]	'Nain'	CVC	[ˈrim]	'Rim'	
	CVVC	[ˈkɑːz]	'Kaz'	CVVC	[ˈhiːr]	'Heer'	

The above table shows the large percentile score of the female given and nicknames with an open syllable structure, whereas in male given names the percentile score shows no presence of open syllable structure. However, surprisingly the male nicknames with open syllable structure are 95.6% in the data set which is more as compared to female nicknames, i.e., 93.3%. The absence and/or presence of open syllable structure in male given and nicknames does not favour the sound-symbol association in Arabic nicknames in Urdu.

3.2 Number of Syllables

Now, another parameter is the length of the syllables, which is somehow considered a sex-typed in formal names. A number of studies suggest that male names have fewer syllables in contrast with female names, which consist of a larger number of syllables (Slater & Feinman, 1985; Cutler et al., 1994; Barry and Harper, 1995; Cassidy et al., 1999). The current data conform to the previous studies and correlate the number of syllables with the gender-specific categories of formal names. The data (as shown in Table 4) reveal that the male (formal) names have fewer syllables and mostly are restricted to disyllabic words (93.3%), whereas female (formal) names have a higher ratio of trisyllabic words (22.2%) than male names, which comprise only 2.2% of the data set. Female names have a greater ratio of disyllabic words (77.8%) as well.

Contrary to given (first) names, the absence of trisyllabic nicknames does not show any link between the number of syllables and sex-typed gender cues to nicknames. The data reveal that the number of syllables in both gender-specific categories is confined

to the disyllabic words, which is a common characteristic of the size of nicknames. There are only two monosyllables (4.4% of a sample size of 45) and 43(65.6%) disyllabic male nicknames. In a similar vein, the majority of female nicknames are also disyllabic (i.e., 93.3% of a sample size of 45) and there are only 3 female nicknames, which are monosyllabic (i.e., 6.7% of a sample size of 45).

Table.4 Size of syllables in Arabic Given (first) and nicknames

Given Names	Monosyllables	Disyllabic words	Trisyllabic words	Total
Male	02(4.4%)	34(75.5%)	09(20%)	45
Female	0	35(77.8%)	10(22.2%)	45
Nicknames				
Male	02(4.4%)	43(95.6%)	0	45
Female	03(6.7%)	42(93.3%)	0	45

There is no correlation between the number of syllables and gender cues given and nicknames found in Arabic names used in Pakistan. Contrary to the studies (Slater and Feinman, 1985; Cutler et al., 1994; Barry and Harper, 1995; Cassidy et al., 1999) the male given names have approximately the same percentile score for having tri-syllables (20%) as in females (22.2%). Similarly, in nicknames, the maximum number of syllables in male and female is present in the approximately same ratio, i.e., 9.5.6% and 93.3% respectively. This parameter (number of syllables) again does not give an encouraging phonological cue to suggest the gender-based names in given and nicknames used by Urdu Pakistani speakers and hence negated the sound-symbol association in given and nicknames as well.

3. Stress Patterns in Urdu HC

In terms of lexical stress in nicknames a preference for disyllabic nicknames with stress on the second syllable is strong (De Klerk & Bosch, 1997). Contrary to this, our data reveal that disyllabic formal and nicknames is a common trend in Arabic given and nicknaming system (exceptions are in case of compound names, which are excluded here) used by Urdu speakers in Pakistan, where stress is assigned on the initial syllable (see Table 5). Since stress is correlated to syllable weight in Urdu (Nayyar, 2000), therefore super heavy syllables will be stressed in the case of disyllabic words (e.g. [həˈliːm]), otherwise, stress will be on the penultimate heavy syllable. Our data of given and nicknames of gender-specific categories thus conform to the native phonology. Similarly, on the pattern of the native phonology, a requirement is met by lengthening the vowel of (penultimate) syllable irrespective of the gender (e.g. [/ˈd̪an.jɑl/ → [ˈd̪ɑː.ni]). Likewise, if the penultimate syllable is a CV,

which contains schwa /ə/, the gemination takes place to make the penult syllable heavy to conform to the native stress rules (e.g., /no.ˈʃiːn/→ [ˈnoʃ.ʃi]).

Table 5. Stress Preference in gender-specific Urdu formal and nicknames

Given names	Initial Stress (penult)	Non-initial (final)
Male	36(80%) [ˈnoː.mɑn] [ˈhəs.sən]	9(20%) [nə.ˈdiːm] [ʃə.ˈkiːl]
Females	42(93.3%) [ˈniː.ləm] [nə.ˈt̪ɑː.ʃɑ]	3(6.7%) [zə.ˈriːn] [pər.ˈviːn]
Nicknames names		
Male	42(93.3%) [ˈʃæː.ri] [ˈmən.nuː]	3 (6.7%) [kɑːz] [ʃɑːm]
Female	43(95.6%) [ˈzər.ri] [ˈlɑː.ro]	2(4.4%) [hə.ˈliːm] [riːm]

4. Findings

The current analysis of Urdu HCs (nicknames) supports the previously reported phonological patterns, which confirm with an extent to previous studies (Cutler et al. 1994; De Klerk, V., & Bosch, 1996, 1997):

a) The common phonological parameter, in terms of syllabic structure, provides little evidence for gender cues in given and nicknames. There are a few cases in the data which somehow reveal the preference for certain consonants (i.e., /b/ vs /p, l/ in females), vowel ending /i/ (higher in female than male nicknames), and the number of sound segments (higher in females than males) in nicknames, which stem out from their first (formal) names (as truncated hypocoristic forms). This can be regarded as representative of preferred phonological patterns in Arabic origin names used by Urdu speakers, which cue gender-specific categories of the male and female nicknaming system in Urdu. Overall, these phonological preferences in gender-specific nicknames show very little traces of a link between phonological preferences and gender and support the arbitrary nature of language.

b) In a similar vein, vocalic endings also do not conform to the findings of Cutler et al. (1994) and De Klerk & Bosch (1997). The rate of occurrence of the

diminutive-forming /i:/ suffix is approximately in the same ratio in female and male nicknames.

c) The size of syllables in the male given names have approximately the same percentile score for having tri-syllables (20%) as in females (22.2%). Similarly, in nicknames, the maximum number of syllables in male and female is present in the approximately same ratio, i.e., 9.5.6% and 93.3% respectively. This parameter (number of syllables) again does not give an encouraging phonological cue to suggest the gender-based names in given and nicknames used by Urdu Pakistani speakers and hence negated the sound-symbol association in given and nicknames as well.

d) The size of sound segments (in terms of the number of consonants and vowels) is significantly higher in females than in males (91.1% vs 86.7%). These findings suggest that sound-symbolism is somehow at work in the Arabic nicknaming system in the Pakistani context, which gives the sex-typed gender categories to the nicknames.

e) Stress patterns conform to the native phonology, which highlights the fact that though nicknaming provides freedom for creativity with sound patterns (De Klerk & Bosch, 1997) within the limits of native phonology. Thus, in accounting for the differences, which have emerged in this phonological analysis, one has to consider morpho-syntactic language-specific constraints along with extra-linguistic factors such as religious and cultural norms of the society, which is however beyond the scope of this study.

5. Conclusion

The phonological patterns of nicknames reported here show fewer tendencies, which do not completely correlate with sound symbolism or arbitrary phenomenon related to sex-typed gender-specific categories of the bearer. The patterns- which are not gender-specific (e.g., stress) and can be considered as default patterns either to conform to the native constraints or may involve other linguistic rules (e.g., morpho-syntactic constraints) and social factors, were beyond the scope of this analysis. In the future, it would also be interesting to examine the syllabic structure and stress pattern of nicknames, which are not related to a bearer's formal name (HCs) but are based on physical and other cultural attributes. In conclusion, it is inferred from the variation in data that a continuum can best demonstrate the arbitrariness and sound symbols.

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