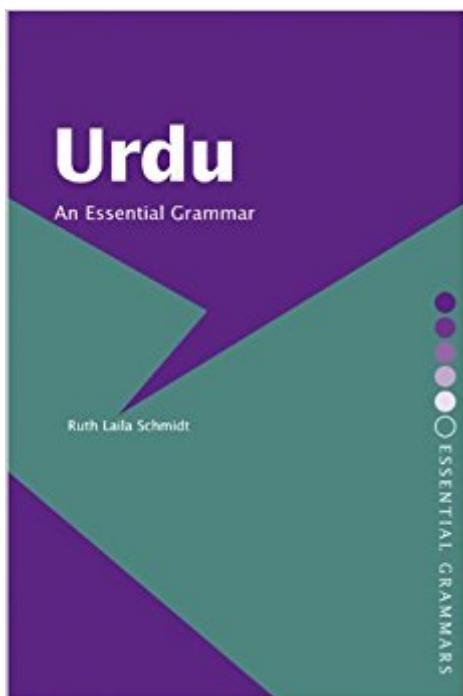


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Urdu: An Essential Grammar (Routledge Essential Grammars)



Synopsis

Urdu: An Essential Grammar is a reference guide to the most important aspects of the language as it is used by native speakers today. The complexities of Urdu are set out in short, readable sections. Explanations contain minimal jargon and emphasis has been placed on the aspects of Urdu that pose a particular challenge for English-speaking students. Features include:^{*} language examples throughout in both Urdu script and romanization^{*} user-friendly layout^{*} detailed contents list^{*} comprehensive index. Urdu: An Essential Grammar presents a fresh and accessible description of the language and will prove invaluable to students at all levels.

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Customer Reviews

This is a reference grammar of a traditional informal type. It provides much information about how different things are said, including such specialized constructions as dates and times, with numerous examples. It has a detailed index and a fair amount of cross-referencing. Examples are provided both in Arabic script and in romanization. A small complaint is that the romanization is not

explained. Instead, a reference is given to another book, one that can hardly be expected to be on every student's shelf. The main problem with this book is that it is weak on analysis and generalization. It is appropriate that a book intended for non-linguists learning Urdu should avoid excessive use of technical terminology and formalization, but the author's descriptions of grammatical constructions are so vague that one often cannot tell what is possible and what is not, or when exactly the construction or form is used. For example, in native Urdu noun phrases, most modifiers of the noun precede the noun. In particular, genitive phrases precede the noun, so that "Rahim's daughter" is "Rahim kii beTii" that is: Rahim GEN daughter. Urdu also has another construction, the izaafat construction, which is borrowed from Persian. In this construction, the order is reversed. The izaafat equivalent of the above would be: "beTii e Rahim": daughter of Rahim. So, is the izaafat construction simply a variant of the Noun Phrase in which the order of possessor and possessed is switched, otherwise like other, native, Urdu Noun Phrases? This book never answers that question. In fact, the answer is no. izaafats cannot have any other internal modifiers, such as adjectives or relative clauses. This is but one example of many.

Mr. Poser's review missed the point of this book, I think. Having studied from Barker off and on over many years, I passed over Essential Urdu both at conferences and libraries until the other day when I checked it out just to.... check it out. I haven't been able to put it down; I even read it while I'm cooking. Despite the reviewer, Mr. Prendergast, who said the book was good for beginners, too, I believe it is my vague familiarity with Urdu which gives the book so much impact on my understanding of how the language works. IMHO, only a linguistically sophisticated person would grasp the import of the fascinating structures found in everyday Urdu, let alone in the many borrowings from Arabic, Persian, Hindi, English, and so on. (One of my great frustrations is that when I trot out a new Urdu word for, say, school registration, my friends say, "Oh, we just say 'registration'"). To be fair to Mr. Poser's complaints, I do believe it is my wide if not deep readings in linguistics plus my study of Barker and others, including the Russian Klyuyev, that allow me to 'fill in' some of the gaps he cites. So, indeed, it may not be for beginners. But let me cite some elements of the book that I found so enlightening and helpful. The sections on particles and interjections, courtesy forms, time and dates, and causatives were particularly useful to me. Let me be clear here, I am comparing this book to all other such manuals; it could be that all in this series are as careful about covering as many aspects of speech as possible, but my experience of many years in using grammar manuals of many languages is that these elements are often skipped or slighted, or, at least, not presented in a compact way.

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