

A Phonological Study of Pashtu Spoken in Kashmir

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Abstract

The state of Jammu and Kashmir harbours many minority linguistic communities which live in 'close contact with each other. Although a minority language, Pashtu forms an important language in the linguistic landscape of the state. Being a very small minority language, it does not find any place in the educational curriculum at even the primary level. The problem gets further aggravated due to the non-availability of basic primers and books in the language. The children born in Pashtu speaking families cannot receive education in their mother tongue and, in the process, have to take recourse to English, Hindi, Urdu and Kashmiri languages. Although a good deal of research has been carried on Pashtu spoken in Afghanistan and North Western Frontier Province of Pakistan, Pashtu spoken in Indian part of Kashmir has largely been neglected. No descriptive study of the language has been carried out so far. It needs to be mentioned here that the Pashtu speakers have migrated to Kashmir some hundred years before. This formed the primary motivation for undertaking this work, where an attempt has been made to provide a thorough descriptive sketch of phonological system of the Pashtu spoken in Kashmir province of the Jammu & Kashmir state.

Key Words: Phonology, Vowel, Consonant, Syllable, Stress, Pashtu.

Introduction

The state of Jammu and Kashmir is a cradle of ethnic, religious and linguistic contact and variety. It is home to diverse intermingling minority linguistic communities. So is the Kashmir province of the state where languages belonging to different language families like Indo- Aryan, Dardic, Tibeto- Burman, Iranian are found. Besides, Kashmir valley is surrounded by different linguistic zones which add "various linguistic layers to the region" (Kachru, 2002). Kashmiri is the dominant language in Kashmir valley. It is also spoken in Doda, Bhandarwah, Kishtwar, etc., areas in Jammu region

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Pashtu, an Eastern Iranian language, is also spoken in Kashmir by immigrants from Afghanistan and the North-West Frontier, Pakistan, and some part of the Central Asia region. The major concentration of Pashtu speakers is at Gotlibagh (District Ganderbal) and Wantrag (District Anantnag). Pashtu speakers are also found in Baramulla, Budgam, Shopian and Kupwara districts of Kashmir valley.

Pashtuns and Pashtu Language

Pashtuns form the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan and comprise 42% of Afghanistan's population¹. It is estimated that about 1.5 million Pashtuns continue to live as refugees in Pakistan. Kabul and Kandhar form the two major strongholds of Pashtun culture in Afghanistan. After Afghanistan, the second largest ethnic group of Pashtuns is found in Pakistan which forms 15% of Pakistan's population, with a population of 28 million². They are very dominant in the cities of Peshawar and Quetta. However, it does not include the Afghan refugees who migrated to the country during the Soviet war in Afghanistan.

India, as a British colony, once had a large Pashtun population roughly equal to that of Afghanistan, mostly concentrated in what were then the British Indian provinces of the North-West Frontier Province and Baluchistan. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, the number of Pashtuns in all of India was nearly 31 million, but the speakers of Pashtu numbered less than 14 million³. Most of this population was allotted, along with its respective provinces, to Pakistan after the Partition of India. Today the Pashtuns in India can be separated into those who speak Pashtu and those who speak Urdu, with the latter being by far larger.

There is a large number of Pashtu speaking Pashtuns living in Kashmir valley of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. Although their exact numbers are hard to determine, it is estimated that there are more than 1, 00, 000 Pashtuns living in present day Kashmir but the accurate figures are not available. In Kashmir, the Pashtuns are spread in six districts of Kashmir division namely, Anantnag, Baramulla, Budgam, Ganderbal, Kupwara and Shopian districts. The major concentration of Pashtu speakers is found in Gotlibagh and Wantrag in Ganderbal and Anantnag districts, respectively. By and large the Pashtu speakers have been able to maintain their lingua-cultural identity to a great extent in these places. Besides Pashtu, the Pashtu community in Kashmir also speaks Urdu and Kashmiri.

¹ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/goes/af.html>

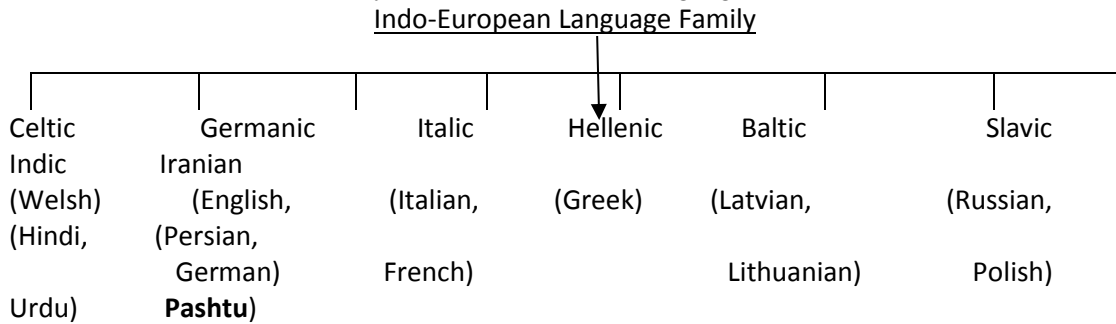
² Population Census Organization, Government of Pakistan-Population by Mother Tongue

³ "Pathan". Encyclopedia Britannica Eleventh Edition.

<http://encylopedia.jrank.org/PAS-PER/PATHAN.html>.

3 Language Family

Linguistically, Pashtu language is affiliated to the Iranian branch of the Indo-European family of languages. Persian, Kurdish, Buluchi, Tajik and Ossetian are its known and established relatives and these languages are spoken around Afghanistan. As noticed in the following diagram, which includes the major branches of the family and one or two well known languages belonging to each branch: Indo-European Language Family Celtic Germanic Italic Hellenic Baltic Slavic Indic Iranian (Welsh) (English, (Italian, (Greek) (Latvian, (Russian, (Hindi, (Persian, German) French) Lithuanian) Polish) Urdu) Pashtu) Though it is written with a variant of the Arabic abjad, and shares a considerable number of Arabic vocabulary, Pashtu language is neither related to Semitic language of Arabic, nor it is related to Turkic languages, like Uzbek and Turkman languages of Afghanistan. Pashtu language has preserved some otherwise lost archaic elements of the Iranian languages, such as its distinctive ergative construction. Again, nouns of Pashtu languages have masculine and feminine gender; unlike nouns in the other Iranian languages. Pashtu language shares some linguistic characteristics with the south Indic languages such as the presence of the retroflex consonants, which are totally absent in the Iranian language



The phonological system of Pashtu spoken in Kashmir can be described under the following headings

1. Vowels

Pashtu has eight phonemic vowels: i, e, a, o, u, i, ə and ɔ. Each vowel except ə, ɔ has a long counterpart and all short and long vowels also occur in nasalized form except i and ə vowels. However nasalization is not phonemic in Pashtu. The oral vowels occur in word initial, medial and final positions while as some nasalized vowels do not occur in all positions. The vowel inventory of Pashtu is given below:

	Front (unrounded)		Central (unrounded)	Back (rounded)	
High	i	i:	ɨ	u	u:
Mid	e	e:	ə	o	o:

Low		a	a:	ɔ
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1.1. Description of Vowels

The description of vowels involves contrast of tongue position, tongue height, and the rounding of lips as noted below:

/i/ (high, front, unrounded, short vowel)

izdah	‘learn’
biza:	‘goat’
aɖuki	‘bone’

/i:/ (high, front, unrounded, long vowel)

i:ra	‘ash’
fʃi:na	‘spring of water’
kulmi:	‘intestine’

/e/ (mid, front, unrounded, short vowel)

endʒi:	‘fisherman’
preki:gi:	‘brightness’
taba:xe	‘baker’

/e:/ (mid, front, unrounded, long vowel)

e:tiqa:d	‘trust’
me:ʃan	‘grinding stone’
avxe:	‘brother-in-law’

/i/ (high, central, unrounded, short vowel)

sixar	‘father-in-law’
va:di	‘marriage’

/ə/ (mid, central, unrounded, short vowel)

nəkrizi:	‘henna’
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/a/ (low, central, unrounded, short vowel)

age:gal	‘kneel’
xatla	‘climb’
u:ɖka	‘grinding’

/a:/ (low, central, unrounded, long vowel)

gɔza:n	‘ground nuts’
re:ra:	‘niece’

/u/ (high, back, rounded, short vowel)

uge:	‘hunger’
rataɖul	‘roast’
lun	‘wet’

/u:/ (high, back, rounded, long vowel)

u:bi	‘water’
lastũɖu:	‘sleeve’
lu:xi:	‘utensils’

/o/ (mid, back, rounded, short vowel)

ogun	‘tall’
moṭiya:n	‘big beans’

/o:/ (mid, back, rounded, long vowel)

na:ɖzo:ɖa	‘disease’
piʃo:	‘cat’

/ɔ/ (low, back, rounded, short vowel)

sɔzi:	‘envy’
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1.2 Nasal Vowels

All the vowels discussed above except /i/ and /ə/ have nasal counterparts

/ĩ/	ʃĩje:	‘insect’
/ĩ:/	/vilĩ:ʃu/	‘dissolve’
/ẽ/	/sẽzal/	‘burn’
/ẽ:/	mẽ:ge:	‘ant’
/ã/	tsãgal	‘elbow’
/ã:/	bã:gi:	‘cock’
/ũ/	pũda	‘heel’
/ũ:/	/ʃ ^h ũ:ɖkai	‘stick’
/õ/	xõd	‘taste’
/õ:/	/hõkale:/	‘dear’
/õ:/	/x õ:g/	‘sweet’

1.3 Phonemic Contrast in Vowels

The following minimal pairs illustrate the contrast in the vowels:

/a/ vs. /a:/

zar	‘gold’	za:r	‘poison’
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/o/ vs. /o:/

xor	‘sister’	xo:r	‘spread’
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/i/ vs. /i:/

pixa	‘mimicry’	pi:xa	‘surprise’
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/u/ vs. /u:/

/kuza/	‘jug’	/ku:za/	‘put down’
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/e/ vs /e:/

dake	‘stock’	dake:	‘full of’
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/ɔ/ vs. /i/

gɔra	‘choose’	gira	‘beard’
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/i/ vs. /u/

nim	‘name’	num	‘half’
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/ə/ vs. /e/

ugə	‘garlic’	uge	‘hunger’
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2. Consonants

The analysis of data portrays twenty four consonant phonemes for Pashtu, which are classified into different groups on the basis of their manner and place of articulation.

	Bilabia l	Denta l	Palata l	Retrofle x	Vela r	Uvula r	Pharyngea l
Stops							
Voices s	p	t		ʈ	k	q	
Voiced	b	d		ɖ	g		
Nasals	m	n					
Flap				ɽ			
Fricative s							
Voices s		s	ʃ			x	h
Voiced		z			ɣ		
Africates							
Voices s		ts	tʃ				
Voiced		dʒ					
Trill		r					
Semi- Vowels	v		j				

2.2. Description of Consonants

Stops

/p/ (voiceless, unaspirated, bilabial stop)

pirkha 'dew'
 ʈapas 'eagle'
 ʃəp 'despair'

/b/ (voiced, unaspirated, bilabial stop)

bā:gi: 'cock'
 taba 'fever'
 ta:b 'endure'

/t/ (voiceless, unaspirated, dental stop)

tja:ri 'darkness'
 dʒa:tke: 'infant'
 dʒa:risti 'vomiting'

/d/ (voiced, unaspirated, dental stop)

duzgar 'carpenter'
 ɽūd 'blind'
 u:dal 'knitting'

/ʈ/ (voiceless, unaspirated, retroflex stop)

ʈapas 'eagle'

	pəʈka	‘hide’	
	nargəʈ	‘(he) cat’	
/d/	(voiced, unaspirated, retroflex stop)		
	ɖu:ɖa	‘dust’	
	səɖe:	‘man’	
	pe:ɖ	‘fat’	
/k/	(voiceless, unaspirated, velar stop)		
	kɔ̃ɖa	‘widow’	
	zimakə	‘earth’	
	nuk	‘nail’	
/q/	(voiceless, unaspirated,		Uvular
stop)			
	qəʈʃ	‘butter’	
	tri:q	‘chilly’	
	muzqavul	‘pray’	
/g/	(voiced, unaspirated, velar stop)		
	gũge:	‘owl’	
	kāgal	‘ice’	
	jəg	‘bear’	
Affricates			
/ts/	(voiceless, unaspirated, dental affricate)		
	tsaʃal	‘lick’	
	gəʈso:l	‘cutting’	
	gəʈs	‘left’	
/tʃ/	(voiceless, unaspirated,		palato-alveolar
stop)			
	ʃarga	‘hen’	
	vʊʃle:	‘forehead’	
	kəʈʃ	‘butter’	
Fricatives			
/s/	(voiceless, alveolar, fricative)		
	səɖe:	‘man’	
	aspa	‘mare’	
	la:s	‘hand’	
/z/	(voiced,		alveolar,
fricative)			
	zo:ɖ	‘old’	
	biza:	‘goat’	
	badrāz	‘leprosy’	
/ʃ/	(voiceless, palato-alveolar fricative)		
	ʃal	‘paralysis’	
	riʃteh	‘truth’	
	maɖʊʃ	‘death’	
/h/	(voiceless, glottal fricative)		

	hamsa	‘step son’
	naha	‘nine’
	doh	‘two’
/y/	(voiced, velar, fricative)	
	yal	‘theft’
	buzyal:	‘seedling’
	daro:y	‘lie’
Nasals		
/m/	(voiced, bilabial nasal)	
	ma:xa:m	‘evening’
	lambe:	‘flame’
	ʃadʃam	‘mustard’
/n/	(voiced, alveolar nasal)	
	na:rasti:	‘yawn’
	dʒinai	‘girl’
	arza:n	‘cheap’
Trill		
/r/	(voiced, alveolar trill)	
	rɔz	‘day’
	gra:n	‘expensive’
	maʃar	‘elder’
/r/	(Voiced, retroflex flap)	
	rũd	‘blind’
	bʁastan	‘quilt’
Lateral		
/l/	(voiced, alveolar lateral)	
	lo:r	‘sickle’
	kula:l	‘potter’
	aval	‘first’
Semi-vowels		
/j/	(voiced, palatal semi-vowel)	
	jave:	‘plough’
	varja:z	‘clouds’
/v/	(voiced, bilabial semi-vowel)	
	vovra	‘snow’
	nave:	‘new’
	triv	‘sour’

2.3 Phonemic Contrast in Consonants

The following minimal pairs illustrate the contrast in the Consonants:

/p/ vs. /b/	poza	‘nose’	boza	‘bring’
/t/ vs. /d/	tu:ra	‘black’	du:ra	‘unconscious’

/t/ vs. /d/	ṭulaj	‘matress’	ḍulaj	‘half’
/k/ vs. /g/	kṶra	‘blank’	gṶ:ra	‘see’
/ts/ vs. /dʒ/	tsarga	‘hen’	/dʒarga/	‘conversation’
/m/ vs /n/	mo:r	‘mother’	no:r	‘more’
/r/ vs. /l/	la:r	‘way’	la:l	‘diamond’
/s/ vs. /z/	sa:r	‘morning’	za:r	‘poison’
/q/ vs. /ɣ/	qa:r	‘anger’	ya:r	‘den’

2. 4 Consonant Clusters

A consonant cluster is a group or sequence of consonants that appears together in a syllable without a vowel between them. Such clusters can occur at initial, medial and final positions. In Pashtu the consonant clusters occur at word initial and final position only.

Initial cluster of two consonants (—CC—)

/s+p/	spo:gmai	‘moon’
/b+r/	bre:kh	‘lightning’
/s+k/	skalu	‘drinkable’
/t+r/	trãḍ	‘flock’
/s+t/	starga:	‘eyelid’
/b+ṭ/	bṭastan	‘sleeve’
/ʃ+v/	ʃva:la:	‘bridegroom’
/d+r/	druzgar	‘carpanter’
/p+r/	preki:gi:	‘glow’
/v+l/	vla:ḍ	‘here’
/p+l/	plan	‘wide’
/ʃ+p/	ʃpag	‘six’
/g+r/	grunukarxa	‘grinding stone’
/c+ṭ/	cṭak	‘mud’
/z+r/	zrãda	‘lock’
/m+l/	m̄la:	‘back’
/s+t/	sto:gnizai	‘big space’
/t+y/	tya:ri	‘darkness’
/g+ṭ/	gṭaza:r	‘thunder’

Final cluster of two consonants (—CC)

/s+t/	dʒa:rist	vomit
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/x+t/	nagaxt	fold
/ʃ+t/	mja:ʃt	month
/n+d/	du:nd	fog
	talu:nd	rice
/n+d/	dənd	leg
	kond	ear

3. Syllable

A syllable is a unit of organization for a sequence of speech sounds. For example, the word water is composed of two syllables: *wa* and *ter*. A syllable is typically made up of a syllable nucleus (most often a vowel) with optional initial and final margins (typically, consonants). Syllables are often considered the phonological building blocks of words. They can influence the rhythm of a language, its prosody its poetic meter and its stress patterns. Pashtu allows at most three consonant clusters in the onset and at most two in the coda. ‘ə’ has a special nature of existing without onset and coda consonant. Words having three consonants in onset normally have no or at most one coda. The syllabic Pattern of Pashtu words is given below:-

3.1 Monosyllabic Pattern

V	ə	‘he’
VC	un	‘wool’
CV	gɔ	‘cow’
CVC	pe:d	‘fat’
	gal	‘thief’
	dũg	‘deep’

3.2 Disyllabic Pattern

V+CV	ubi	‘water’
	uge:	‘hunger’
CV+CV	mala	‘back’
	vəle:	‘shoulder’
VC+CV	aḍki:	‘coal’
CVC+VC	tsāgal	‘elbow’
V+CC	uʃt	‘high’

3.3 Polysyllabic Pattern

CV+CVCC	guṭund	‘blind’
CV+CV+CV	hokale:	‘dear’
CVC+CV+CV	spa:rʃāga	‘ladder’
VC+CV+CV	uspana	‘iron’
CVC+CV+ CVC+CV	paxtavurge	‘kidney’

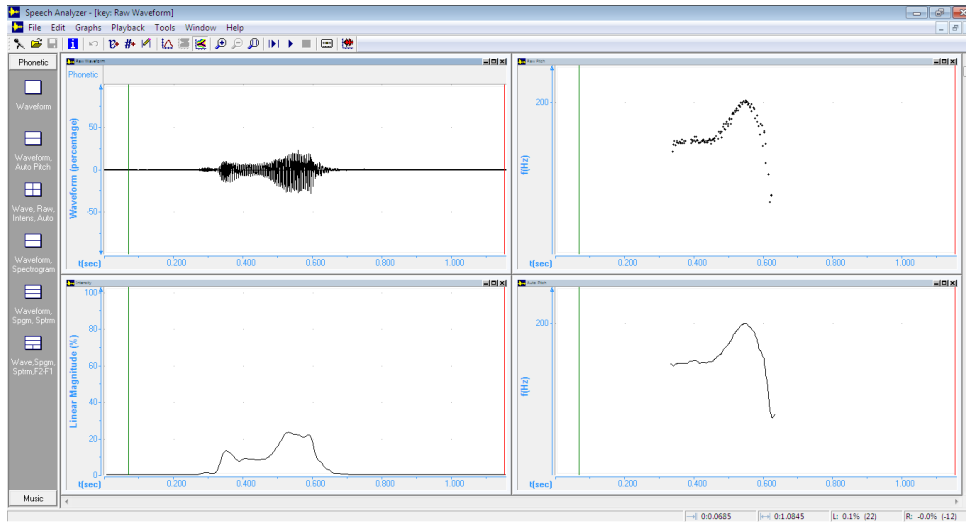
4. Stress

it was observed that within polysyllabic words one of the syllables bears heavy stress. This stressed syllable is pronounced with more emphasis and slightly higher pitch in comparison to the other syllables of the word. The stress is generally on the last syllable if the syllable ends in a consonant, and on next to last syllable if the last syllable ends in a vowel e.g.,

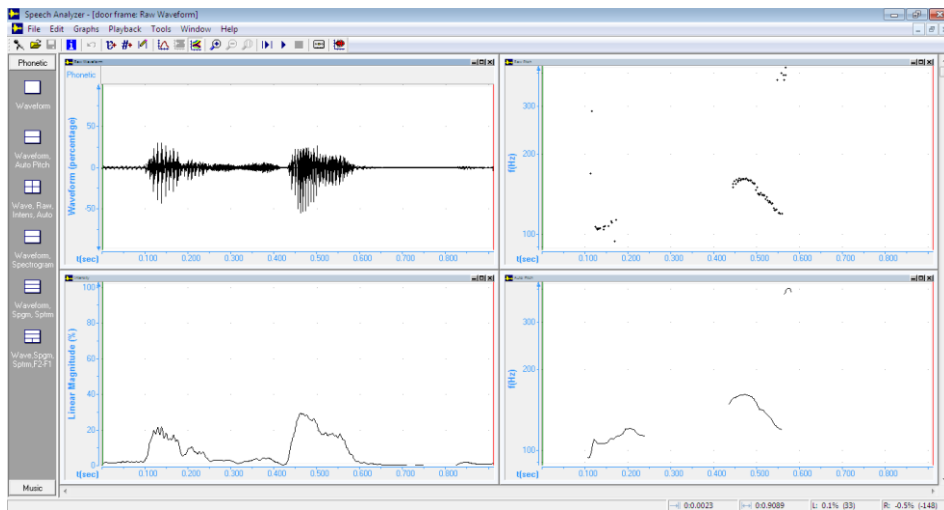
ta:vu’s ‘peacock’

ta:vu'sa 'peahen'

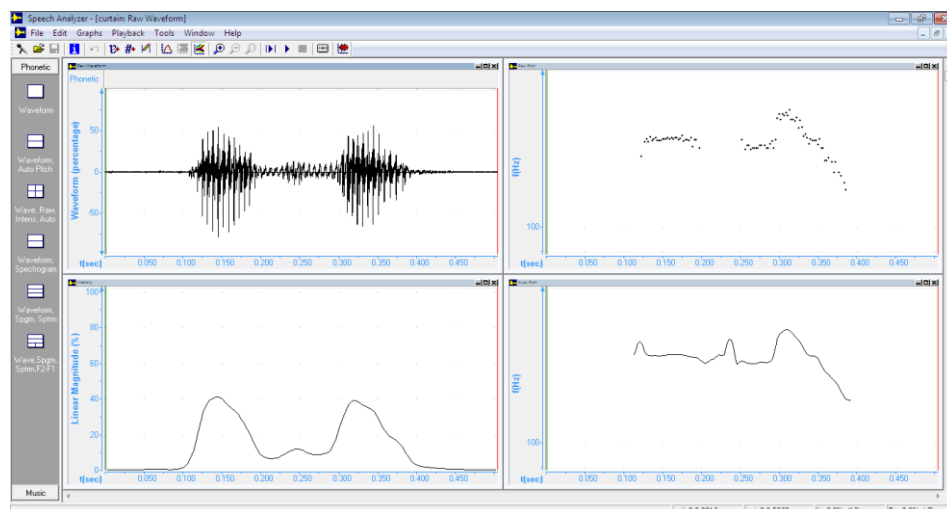
The following graphs are indicative of the stress pattern in Pashtu.



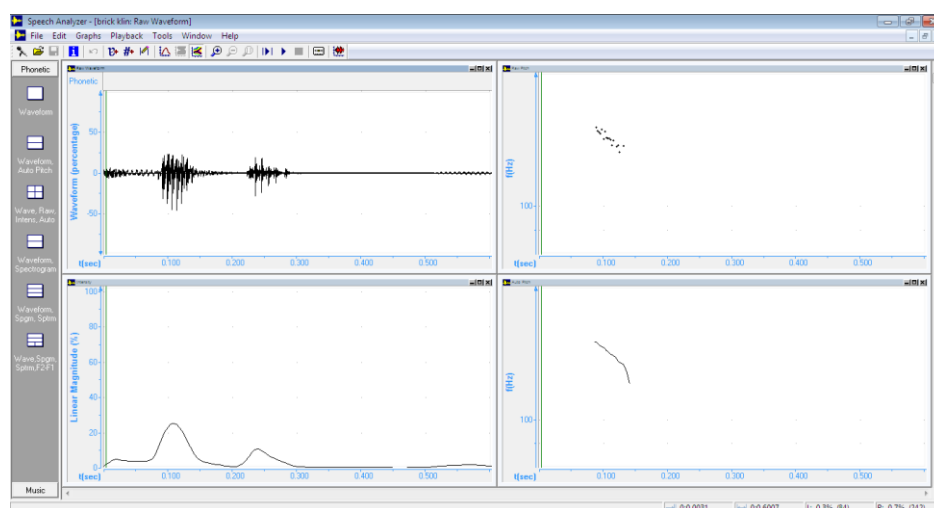
(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)

The above images have been taken using speech analyzer software. Here we can clearly see the difference in emphasis laid on syllables in the pronunciation of the words ending with vowels and consonants. Images 1&2 are the representation of the pronunciation of word ta:vu's by two different speakers while as images 3 &4 represent the pronunciation of word ta:vu'sa by two different speakers

Conclusion

Pashtu has eight phonemic vowels: i, e, a, o, u, i̇, ə and ɔ. Each vowel except ə, ɔ has a long counterpart and all short and long vowels also occur in nasalized form except i̇ and ə vowels. However nasalization is not phonemic in Pashtu. The oral vowels occur in word initial, medial and final positions while as some nasalized vowels do not occur in all positions. It was also observed from the the analysis of data that Pashtu has twenty four consonant phonemes which are: p, b, t, d, t̚, d̚, k, g, m, n, ts, tʃ, dʒ, s, ʃ, z, ʒ, q, x, h, ɣ, v, r, j. Pashtu allows at most three consonant clusters in the onset and at most two in the coda. ‘ə’ has a special nature of existing without onset and coda consonant. Words having three consonants in onset normally have no or at most one coda. besides that within polysyllabic words one of the syllables bears heavy stress. This stressed syllable is pronounced with more emphasis and slightly higher pitch in comparison to the other syllables of the word. The stress is generally on the last syllable if the syllable ends in a consonant, and on next to last syllable if the last syllable ends in a vowel.

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