

Brief Phonological Description of Kohistani¹

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Abstract

This paper gives a brief phonological description of Kohistani. Kohistani of swat has been already described by Grierson (1919) and Hallberg (1992) to a large extent but the Kohistani spoken in the valley of Kashmir is yet to be taken into consideration. The Kohistani spoken in the valley in different areas of Kangan like Waniyarm Wangath, Mirpati mamar and Ganivan of District Ganderbal (Jammu & Kashmir). This paper is an attempt to provide the phonological description of Kohistani and gives a brief description of a few phonological processes of the said language spoken in Jammu and Kashmir.

Key Words: Phonology, Constants, Normal Vowels, Phonemic Contrast

1. Introduction

Kohistani is classified as one of the Dardic language (Grierson 1919) spoken in northern Pakistan's Gilgit Baltistan, Azad Kashmir and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, northern areas of Jammu and Kashmir state, and eastern Afghanistan. Kohistani is spoken by the people living in the upper parts of the Swat and Panjkora valleys (Swat Kohistan and Dir Kohistan), in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province and in some parts of Jammu and Kashmir State. The Kohistani spoken in Kashmir Valley has about 6000 speakers settled down in different areas of Kashmir Valley that include Jugtiyal Hyhama, Kundnar, Kanibahak and Balhama of district Kupwara . Kohistani is also spoken in different areas of Kangan like Waniyarm Wangath, Mirpati Mamar and Ganivan of district Ganderbal. This

¹ The present paper is the part of the UGC funded Major Research Project: Linguistic Description and Documentation of Kohistani.

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region was once used to be the gateway to Central Asia during ancient period. Ganderbal district is surrounded by district Baramulla in the west, district Srinagar in the south, district Bandipora in the northwest, Arohma forest in the north and district Kargil in the east. The Sind river, a major tributary to the Jehlum River flows through this area. Famous health resorts, Sonmarg, Naranag, and Manasbal Lake add beauty to it. There are three hydroelectric power stations, Lower Sindh Hydroelectric power project Ganderbal, Upper Sindh hydroelectric power project 1st Kangan and upper Sindh Hydroelectric power project 2nd Sumbal generating electricity on the Sind river. The district is constituted into four blocks: Ganderbal, Wakoora, Lar and Kangan. Kangan is a city in Kangan tehsil in Ganderbal district of Jammu and Kashmir State. It is located 16 km towards east from the district headquarters Ganderbal. It is surrounded by Ganderbal tehsil towards west, Sumbal tehsil towards east, Gurez Tehsil towards North, Lar Tehsil towards west.

Speakers are mostly bilinguals as Kohistani is used during in-group communication but Urdu is the lingua franca of the community while their conversation with non Kohistani speakers like Kashmiri, Poshtu, Pahari and Gojuri. English comprise the part of linguistic repertoire of educated population of Kohistani speech community. Kohistani language has adopted Persio-Arabic script to preserve literary tradition of the language. Although the speakers of the language have spread into a vast geographical terrain in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Kashmir Valley and has split into various dialects but the language has been explored marginally on linguistic tools. The morphology of Indus Kohistani has been described by Grierson (1919) and Hallberg (1992). More recently, a sociolinguistic survey of Kalam and surrounding areas has been carried out by Rensch and co-workers (Stahl 1998, Rensch 1992). The sound system and tonal system of Kalam Kohistani have been described in Baart (1997). An account of tone change processes in Kalam Kohistani was given in Baart (1999). A sketch of Kalam Kohistani Grammar is a tentative overview of Kalami morphology and syntax in Baart (2011). Parvaiz Ahmad Gania (2012) has conducted research studies on Word class Comparison between Kashmiri and Kohistani.

2. Segmental Phonemes of Kohistani

2.1 Vowels

Kohistani has seven phonemic vowels: i, e, a, o, u, ɪ and ə. Each vowel has a long counterpart and all short and long vowels occur in nasalized form except for i and ə vowel. Vowel length and nasalization are phonemic in Kohistani. The oral vowels occur in word initial, medial and final positions while as some nasalized vowels do not occur in all positions.

	Front	Central	Back
High	i i:	i	uu:
Mid	e e:	ə	oo:
Low		aa:	

2.1.1 Phonemic Description of Vowels

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

/i/	(high front unrounded short vowel) It ‘brick’, pitʃa: ‘father’s brother’ tarwali ‘sword’
/i:/	(high front unrounded long vowel) i: ‘sheep(f)’, gi:l ‘song’, vi: ‘water’
/e/	(mid front unrounded short vowel) ek ‘alone’, gerɪu: ‘wife’
/e:/	(mid front unrounded long vowel) e:g ‘sheep(m)’, pe:ri: ‘shirt’
/ɪ/	(high central unrounded short vowel) kali ‘to count’ lumbiɖ ‘fox’
/ə/	(mid central unrounded short vowel) həli:ʒ ‘yellow’
/a/	(low central unrounded short vowel) arza:n ‘cheap’ tamaj ‘darkness’ aŋa ‘egg’
/a:/	(low central unrounded long vowel) a:ri: ‘saw’ ba:t ‘rice’ zɑ: ‘brother’
/u/	(high back rounded short vowel) uŋgu:l ‘ring’ duɖ ‘dust’ buɖu ‘all’
/u:/	(high back rounded long vowel) u:ʃ ‘air’ pu:tʃ ‘son’ tu: ‘cold’

/o/ (mid back rounded short vowel)
roŋ 'color'

/o:/ (mid back rounded long vowel)
ʒo:k 'what' lo: 'early morning'

2.1.2 Phonemic contrast of vowels

The following minimal pairs illustrate the contrast in length of these vowels:

/a/ vs. /a:/	/tʰal/	to deceive	/tʰa:l/	goats kid
	/ʃal/	hundred	/ʃa:l/	shivering
/e/ vs. /e:/	/ek/	alone	/e:k/	one
/i/ vs. /i:/	/mi/	my	/mi:/	fat
/o/ vs. /o:/	/mos/	I	/mo:s/	meat
/u/ vs. /u:/	/kuʈu/	knee	/ku:ʈu/	deaf

The following minimal pairs illustrate contrast between oral and nasalized vowels

/a/ vs. /ã/	/traj/	window	/trãj/	musical sound
/e/ vs. /ẽ/	/bej/	sit(imp.)	/bẽj/	saplings
/i/ vs. /ĩ/	/si/	to sew	/sĩ/	to recognize
/i:/ vs. /ĩ:/	/di:/	daughter	/dĩ:/	leopard
/o:/ vs. /õ:/	/mo:s/	meat	/mõ:s/	month
/u/ vs. /ũ/	/mutu/	next	/mũtu/	brain
/u:/ vs. /ũ:/	/ju:/	snow	/jũ:/	moon

2.1.3 Nasal Vowels

All the vowels discussed above have nasal counterparts. Nasalization is phonemic in Kohistani.

/ĩ/	/sĩ/	to recognize
/i:/	/dĩ:/	leopard
/ẽ/	/bẽj/	saplings
/ẽ:/	/kukẽ:/	hens
/ã/	/trãj/	musical sound
/ã:/	/tʃẽjã:/	sparrow
/ũ/	/mũtu/	brain
/ũ:/	/jũ:/	moon
/õ/	/darõja:/	windows
/õ:/	/mõ:s/	month

2.2 Consonants

The present paper reveals Kohistani has thirty four consonant phonemes. Based on the analysis of the data the consonant inventory of Kohistani is as follows:

		<u>Bilabial</u>	<u>Alveolar-Dental</u>	<u>Retroflex</u>	<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>	<u>Glottal</u>
<u>Plosives</u>	<u>Voiceless</u>	p	t	ʈ		k	
	<u>Aspirated</u>	p^h	t^h	ʈ^h		k^h	
	<u>Voiced</u>	b	d	ɖ		g	
<u>Affricate</u>	<u>Voiceless</u>		ts	tʃ	tʃ		
	<u>Aspirated</u>		ts^h	tʃ^h	tʃ^h		
	<u>Voiced</u>						
<u>Fricative</u>	<u>Voiceless</u>		s	ʂ	ʃ		h
	<u>Voiced</u>		z	ʐ	ʒ		
<u>Nasal</u>		m	n	ɳ		ŋ	
<u>Lateral</u>			l				
<u>Flap</u>			r	ɽ			
<u>Glide</u>		v			j		

2.2.2 Phonemic Description of Consonants

Consonants are classified into different groups on the basis of place and manner of articulation.

Stops

/p/ (voiceless unaspirated bilabial stop)

paṭa ‘cave’, ṭapo:s ‘eagle’

/p^h/ (voiceless aspirated bilabial stop)

p^haj ‘father’s sister’ map^hi: ‘mother’s sister’

/b/ (voiced unaspirated bilabial stop)

bō: ‘forest’ habaj po:tʃ ‘step son’ ja:b ‘stream’

/t/	(voiceless unaspirated dental stop) tu: ‘cold’ p ^h uti: ‘mosquito’ du:t ‘lips’
/t ^h /	(voiceless aspirated dental stop) t ^h uk ⁱ ‘spit’ nat ^h o:r ‘nose’ hat ^h ‘hand’
/d/	(voiced unaspirated dental stop) darãj ‘window’ tsandru: ‘blanket’
/t/	(voiceless unaspirated retroflex stop) tuk ‘cut’ maɬu: ‘boy’ kimaɬ ‘earthworm’
/t ^h /	(voiceless aspirated retroflex stop) t ^h e:par ‘turnip’ ka:t ^h u ‘log of wood’ paɬ ^h ‘feather’
/d/	(voiced unaspirated retroflex stop) dɔr ‘deaf’ tʃakɖa: ‘mud’ tʃo:d ‘sweeper’
/k/	(voiceless unaspirated velar stop) kanvaɬ ‘bat’ tʃakɖa: ‘mud’ tsuk ‘sour’
/k ^h /	(voiceless aspirated velar stop) k ^h aɬu ‘lid’ paɖk ^h uza:n ‘bright’ tʃaɖak ^h ‘thunder’
/g/	(voiced unaspirated velar stop) guj ‘mare’ ʃegaj ‘bedbug’ e:g ‘sheep(m)’

Affricates

/ts/	(voiceless unaspirated dental affricate) tsiɬ ‘flour’ patse:l ‘ripe’
/tsh/	(voiceless aspirated dental affricate) tshaj ‘she goat’ atshak ‘bad’
/tʃ/	(voiceless unaspirated palato-alveolar stop) tʃo:l ‘light’ pitʃa: ‘father’s brother’ pu:tʃ ‘son’
/tʃ ^h /	(voiceless aspirated palato-alveolar affricate) tʃ ^h im ‘fish’ ma:tʃ ^h u:r ‘fly’ kuɬ ^h ‘godown’
/tʃ/	(Voiceless retroflex affricate) tʃãw ‘barking’
/tʃ ^h /	(Voiceless aspirated retroflex affricate) tʃ ^h ap ‘throw’
/ʒ/	(Voiced post alveolar affricate) ʒala: ‘spider’ na:ʒo:d ‘disease’ hali:ʒ ‘turmeric’

Fricatives

/s/	(voiceless alveolar fricative) sazu: ‘sister’s son’ kasar ‘bald’ palas ‘dew’
/z/	(voiced alveolar fricative)

/ʃ/	zo:r ‘fever’ ro:zi: ‘eyebrow’ (Voiceless retroflex fricative)
/z/	mu:ʃ ‘mouse’ (Voiced retroflex fricative)
/f/	zɑ: ‘brother’ muzɑ: ‘urine’ az ‘rain’ (voiceless palato-alveolar fricative)
/h/	fegaj ‘bedbug’ piʃu: ‘cat’ u:ʃ ‘air’ (voiceless glottal fricative) habaj po:tʃ ‘step son’ huhu: ‘owl’
Nasals	
/m/	(voiced bilabial nasal)
/n/	muzɑ: ‘urine’ tama:k ‘tobacco’ guʈum ‘deep’ (voiced alveolar nasal)
/ŋ/	naj ‘new’ pandar ‘white’ arza:n ‘cheap’ (Voiced retroflex nasal)
/ŋ/	aŋɑ:r ‘fire’ siŋ ‘horn’ (Voiced velar nasal)
	reŋ ‘widow’ aŋɑ ‘egg’ mo:ŋ ‘deer’
Trill	
/r/	(voiced alveolar trill)
/r/	ru: ‘spirit’ keriv ‘tiger’ kasar ‘bald’ (Voiced retroflex flap)
	lo:r ‘morning’
Lateral	
/l/	(voiced alveolar lateral) lũ: ‘salt’ hali:ʒ ‘turmeric’ uŋgu:l ‘ring’
Semi-vowels	
/v/	(voiced bilabial semi-vowel) vi: ‘water’ tsivar ‘iron’ keriv ‘tiger’
/j/	(voiced palatal semi-vowel) jũ: ‘moon’ p ^h ja: ‘shoulder’ zãj ‘yawn’

2.2.3 Phonemic contrast of consonants

The consonant phonemes of Kohistani shown above have been established on the basis of the minimal pairs. Following minimal pairs illustrate the contrast between different consonant phonemes.

			Kohistani	Gloss	Kohistani	Gloss
/p/	vs.	/b/	palo:	apple	balo:	boys
/t/	vs.	/d/	tu:	cold	du:	dual
/t̪/	vs.	/ɾ̪/	lo:t̪	rupee note	lo:ɾ̪	morning
/k/	vs.	/g/	ka:	crow	ga:	grass
/t/	vs.	/tʰ/	tap	warm	tʰap	darkness
/t̪/	vs.	/t̪ʰ/	t̪uki	cloth	t̪ʰuki	bead
/k/	vs.	/kʰ/	me:k	hail	me:kʰ	nail
/tʃ/	vs.	/ʒ/	tʃom	skin	ʒom	ourselves
/tʃʰ/	vs.	/ʒ/	tʃʰaʈ	remaining stuff	ʒaʈ	animal hair
/ʃ/	vs.	/ʒ/	ʃũ:	dog (m)	ʒũ:	leaches
/ʂ/	vs.	/ʐ/	ʂuktʰi	sip	ʐuktʰi	to dip
/s/	vs.	/z/	sure:n	she is weeping	zure:n	he is scolding
/tʃ/	vs.	/z/	tʃas	pricking	zas	grapes
/ts/	vs.	/tsʰ/	tsar	to cut	tsʰar	milking
/s/	vs.	/tsʰ/	sar	pond	tsʰar	milking
/ʂ/	vs.	/tʃʰ/	ʂakaj	wearing cloth	tʃʰakaj	see
/ʃ/	vs.	/tʃʰ/	ʃu	ok	tʃʰu	used with cattle's
/tʃ/	vs.	/tʃ/	tʃas	to cut sm thing	tʃas	pricking
/s/	vs.	/ʃ/	ba:s	stop	ba:ʃ	lung

/z/	vs.	/ẓ/	az	today	aẓ	cloud/rain
/ʒ/	vs.	/ẓ/	ʒuk	to dip	ẓuk	kidney
/m/	vs.	/n/	maj	mine	naj	new
/m/	vs.	/ŋ/	rom	to say	roŋ	color
/n/	vs.	/ŋ/	ron	shall I wept	roŋ	cooking
/ŋ/	vs.	/ŋ/	roŋ	cooking	roŋ	color
/n/	vs.	/ŋ/	ron	shall I wept	roŋ	color
/r/	vs.	/l/	re:l	desk for Quran	le:l	blood
/n/	vs.	/l/	ban	joint	bal	hang something
/v/	vs.	/j/	vazo:n	to come down	jazo:n	to walk
/v/	vs.	/b/	va:r	stop (imp)	ba:r	responsibility
/j/	vs.	/l/	kaj̣i	to learn	kali	to count
/j/	vs.	/ʃ/	buj	wages for grinding	buʃ	I don't know.

2.2.4 Palatalization

Palatalization is seen in the Kohistani spoken in the valley but it is not as distinct as in Kashmiri. In Kashmiri palatalization is phonemic but in Kohistani hardly some examples of palatalization is found. The examples of palatalization in Kohistani are as below:

ger ^h u:	Wife
t ^h uk ^h	Spit
z ^h a:l	Marriage
h ^h el	Chest

2.2.5 Consonant cluster

In Kohistani the consonant clusters occur at word final position only. Some examples of the consonant clusters are given below.

Final cluster of two consonants (—CC)

/nd/	du:nd	fog
	talu:nd	rice
/ndʒ/	dəndʒ	leg
	konɖ	ear

2.3 Syllable

A word is made up of one or more units of sound called syllable. A consonant-vowel (CV) sequence is a pattern which seems to be found in all languages: because the syllable is not closed by another consonant, this type of syllable is often called as open syllable type. A CV and CVC pattern is also very common in Kohistani. The following types of syllables found in Kohistani are given as follows:

VC	u:ʃ	Air
	aẓ	Rain
	e:g	Sheep (m)
CV	vi:	water
	di:	daughter
CVC	duɖ	Dust
	do:l	Earth
	reŋ	widow
VCV	aŋa	Egg
CVCV	lavã:	Fox
CVCVC	moŋar	he goat
VCC	anʃ	eight

Conclusion

The present paper reveals the presence of seven phonemic vowels. Each vowel have a long counterpart and all short and long vowels occur in nasalized form. Vowel length and nasalization are phonemic in Kohistani. There are thirty four consonants in Kohistani. In Kohistani hardly some examples of palatalization are found. In Kohistani, double consonant cluster i.e. CC is found only in word-final position. Syllable types found in Kohistani are CV, CVC, CVCV, CVCVC, VCV, VC, VCC etc.

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