

Description and classification of balti consonants

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Dedicated

To

Babul-Ilmi

Imam Ali-Ibn-Abu-Talib (a.s)

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Abstract

The present study attempts to describe and classify consonants of Balti language which is spoken in Baltistan region of Gilgit-Baltistan of Pakistan. The study selects Balti language because it is one of the lesser known languages in Pakistan and no significant work on the sounds and sound system of Balti language has ever been conducted. In order to describe and classify Balti consonants, 120 different words were selected from different Balti books. These words are arranged in the form of pairs to determine phonemic or allophonic contrast between different consonant sounds of Balti. In order to provide further empirical support to the description of sounds, the study also employed acoustic analysis of Balti consonants to show their physical features by using the software PRAAT. To record the samples of different Balti consonant sounds, the researcher selected 20 native Balti speakers between the age group of 16 to 35 studying in the Govt College (boys) Model Town and University of Management and Technology, Lahore Pakistan. The physical features of the sound samples of Balti native speakers were shown in the form of spectrograms for each and every individual sound. Articulatory and acoustic analyses of Balti consonant sounds demonstrate that there are a total of 40 consonant sounds in Balti language. Out of these 40 sounds, there are 15 stops, i.e, 3 bilabial sounds /p/, p^h/ voiceless and /b/ voiced, 3 dento-alveolar stops /t/ voiceless unaspirated /t^h/ voiceless aspirated and /d/ voiced, 3 alveolar stops /t/, /t^h/ voiceless and /d/ voiced, 5 velar stops /k/, /k^h/, /k^r/ voiceless and two voiced velar stops /g/ and /g^r/ and 1 uvular stop /q/, 5 nasal sounds /m/ voiced bilabial nasal /n/ voiced dento alveolar nasal /ŋ/, /ɲ/ and /ŋ/ velar nasal, 10 fricatives out of which 5 are alveolar fricatives /s/, /h^l/, /h^r/ voiceless and /z/ and /r/ voiced fricatives, 2 voiced velar fricatives /x/, /ɣ/ and 1 voiceless glottal fricative /h/, 5 affricates out of which 2 voiceless dento alveolar affricates /ts/, /t^hs/ , 2 voiceless palate alveolar affricates /tʃ/, /t^hʃ/ and 1 voiced affricates /dʒ/, 1 trill sound, 1 flap, 1 lateral and 2 glide sounds were found. All the sound samples of native Balti speakers were

analyzed using PRAAT. Since different sound samples did not show any significant variation, only one of 20 sound samples recorded was presented in the form of spectrograms. Thus, the study successfully described and classified consonants of Balti language in both articulatory and acoustic terms.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter overview

This chapter gives us a picture of this study. First section unfolds with an introduction of the language. Then the purpose of the study and its objectives are discussed in this section. The second section presents the underlying research questions. The last section summarizes the whole chapter.

1.2 Introduction

Balti is a Tibetan language spoken in Baltistan region of the Northern Areas of Pakistan shown in figure 1.1, about 822 km from its capital Islamabad. This language is also spoken in China, Bhutan, Nepal and Kargil, Ladakh of India (Yousf, 2009). Almost 400000 native speakers of Balti language are there in the four districts of Baltistan (Skardu, Ghanche, Kharhong and Shigar). In addition to this, total number of Balti speakers is estimated to be 7.1 million across the world (Hussain, 2014). Balti speakers refer to both themselves and to their language as Balti. The origin of this name is unknown, but Greeks derived Byaltae from Balti, which in Tibetan means water gorge (Afridi, 1988).