Aspects of Sindhi Grammar: Explorations in the Morpho-phonemic Nature of Sindhi Language

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Abstract: *Sindhi language is among the ancient Indo-Aryan languages of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent. Many features of this language make it a unique language among its group. One of these features is its phonological, morphological and syntactic aspect. The phoneme changes the morpheme and hence changes the overall syntactic properties. In this paper we examined this property and feature of Sindhi language with particular evidence from its grammar. We presented a brief overview of the phonology of Sindhi language, and then described its grammar. We presented the features of Sindhi noun with its case, number, and gender. It is concluded that the morphophonemic feature makes Sindhi language a unique in the family of languages.*

Key Words: *Sindhi, Indo-Aryan, Morpheme, Phoneme, Syntax*

Introduction

Sindhi is a major Indo-Aryan language which is being spoken in Pakistan, India, and many other regions of the world (Cole, 2005). Sindhi language is unique for its grammar, blend of Persio-Arabic and Hindi-Sanskrit grammar, morphology and phonology. Sindhi language has in its phonetic inventory five implosive sounds making it the member of unique languages sharing this feature. This language also has another important feature i.e. its phonemic aspect affects it morphology and syntax. The morpheme and syntactic features change when a phoneme changes in a Sindhi word. In the present study, we examined some unique aspects of Sindhi language with respect to its morpho phonemic nature which we explored with respect to its grammar.

Sindhi Language

Sindhi belongs to the Indo-Aryan language family. The other main languages in this family are Panjabi, Saraiki, Kashmiri, Hindi, Gujrati, etc. Linguists are divided on the origin of this language. Up to date, we have five to six major theories regarding its origin being driven from Sanskrit (Stack, 1853; Trump, 1872; Bherumanl, 1966), driven from a Sami character language (Baloch, 1980), and being the native and indigenous language of the Indus valley civilization (Jatoi, 1968; Allana, 2002). Sindhi language evolved in its rich vocabulary and literature in different periods of its history. The early period of Sindhi language dates centuries back to Mohen-Jo-Daro period. The Sindhi language exits now in full bloom in the province of Sindh,

Pakistan with more than 20 daily newspapers, five television channels, and thousands of books published every year.

Sindhi Phonology

Sindhi language has a number of special phonemes in its sound inventory which it shares with only a few other world languages. These are four implosive sounds [◻, ◻, ◻, ◻]. All the phonemes of Sindhi language are given in the table no.1 below:

Table: 1   *Consonants in the Sound inventory of Sindhi* (Nihalani, 1999, pp.95-96)

	Bilabial	**Labio-dental**	**Dental**	**Alveolar**	**Post-alveolar**	**Palatal**	**Velar**	**Glotal**
Plosive	p b p◻ b◻		t d t◻ d◻		◻ ◻ ◻◻ ◻◻		k ◻ k◻ ◻◻	
Implosive	◻			◻		◻	◻	
Affricate					◻ ◻◻ ◻ ◻◻			
Nasal	m m◻			n n◻	◻ ◻◻	◻	ŋ	
Fricative		f		s z	◻		x ◻	h
Tap				r	◻ ◻◻			
Approximant		◻				j		
Lateral-approximant			l l◻					

Sindhi language has 10 vowels in its sound inventory. These are as under:

Table: 2 *Vowels in Sindhi* (Nihalani, 1999, p.96)

Vowel in Sindhi	Vowel sound in IPA	Example in Sindhi	Transcription in IPA
اَ	▯	بَ	b▯
آ	α	با	bα
اِ	▯	بِ	b▯
اِي	iː	بِي	biː
اُ	▯	بُ	b▯
اُو	uː	بُو	buː
اي	e▯	بي	be▯
اَي	▯	بَي	b▯
او	o▯	بو	bo▯
اَو	▯▯	بَو	b▯▯

The grammar of the Sindhi language

Sindhi language has word classes and it is mostly known for its *morpho syntactic* features (Khubchandani, 1968). Here, our purpose is not to describe the complete grammar of Sindhi language but to give a brief account of the way it works. There are eight word classes in Sindhi i.e. Noun, Pronoun, Verb, Adjective, Adverb, Post-Position, the Conjunction, and the Interjection. Few important aspects of Sindhi grammar are discussed here.

Noun in Sindhi

Every noun in Sindhi whether singular or plural always end in one of the following endings (vowel sounds or their nasal forms):

a)	◌َ ‎———	/◌/	كَتْ
b)	آ	/aː/	هوا
c)	◌ِ	/ɪ/	اك
d)	اِي	/iː/	پِكي
e)	◌ُ	/ʊ/	پُٽُ
f)	اون	/ũː/	ماٺُهو
g)	او	/oʊ/	چوڪرو

The vowel (whether short or long) at the end of a noun in Sindhi may help to determine the number and gender of the noun.

Number in Sindhi

We may consider the case of '*noun*' in Sindhi with its aspect of number. Sindhi 'nouns' change from singular into plural in the following manner:

(a) Masculine singular noun ending in /ʊ/ changes its final /ʊ/ into /ə/ to change into plural:

Singular			Plural		
اُٺُ	ʊtʰʊ	camel	اُٺَ	ʊtʰə	camels
ڳُلُ	gʊlʊ	flower	ڳُلَ	gʊlə	flowers
نَڪُ	nəkʊ	nose	نَڪَّ	nəkə	noses
انبُ	əmbʊ	mango	انبَّ	əmbə	mangoes

(b) The masculine singular noun ending in diphthong /əʊ/ change in the long vowel /ɑ/ to change into plural:

Singular			Plural		
ٻلو	ɓɪ ləʊ	cat	ٻلا	ɓɪ lɑ	cats

گھوڑو	g□□□□□	horse	گھوڑا	g□□□aː	horses
دروازو	d□rwaːzəʊ	door	دروازا	dərwaːzaː	doors
چوکرو	□□□kr□	boy	چوکرا	ʧʰɶkraː	boys
کیلو	kel□	banana	کیلا	kelaː	bananas

(c)   Feminine noun ending in short vowel /□/ in singular will be changed into plural by changing the last vowel from /□/ to /juː̃/:

Singular			**Plural**		
اکِ	□k□□	eye	اکیون	□k□juː̃	eyes
پتِ	b□□t□	wall	پتیون	b□□tjuː̃	walls
مکِ	m□k□□	fly	مکیون	m□k□□juː̃	flies
را□	raːt□	night	راتیون	raːt□ juː̃	nights

(d)   Feminine nouns ending in short vowel /□/ in singular change the final short vowel /□/ into /ũː/ to make its plural.

Singular			**Plural**		
گّٹ	k□□t□	cot	گّٹون	k□□tũː	cots
ٹّنگّ	t□ŋg□	leg	ٹّنگّون	t□ŋgũ̃ː	legs
زالّ	zaːlə	wife	زالون	zaːlũ̃ː	wives
میزّ	me□z□	table	میزون	me□zũ̃ː	tables

(e)   Some of the feminine nouns in Sindhi ending in long vowel /aː/ in singular change the last vowel /aː/ into /ũː/ to make its plural:

Singular			Plural		
هوا	hǝwaː	air	هوائون	hǝwaːũ̃	airs
فضا	fǝʑaː	atmosphere	فضائون	fǝʑaːũ̃	atmospheres
سزا	sǝʑaː	punishment	سزائون	sǝʑaːũ̃	punishments
دعا	dʊaː	prayer	دعائون	dʊaːũ̃	prayers

(f)   Feminine nouns ending in long vowel /iː/ in singular form change into plural by replacing long vowel /iː/ into /jũː/.

Singular			Plural		
دري	dǝriː	window	دريون	dǝrjũ̃	windows
گهوڙي	gʰoʊɽiː	mare	گهوڙيون	gʰoʊɽjũ̃	mares
گاڏي	gaːɖiː	carriage	گاڏيون	gaːɖjũ̃	carriages
ڪرسي	kʊrsiː	chair	ڪرسيون	kʊrsjũ̃	chairs

(g)   A small number of masculine nouns ending in long vowels /iː/ and /uː/ can be both singular and plural and do not change their forms in plural. They remain in the same form in both numbers:

Singular			Plural		
ساٿي	saːtʰiː	companion	ساٿي	saːtʰiː	companions
پکي	pⷧkʰiː	bird	پکي	pⷧkʰiː	birds
ماٹهو	maːɳhũː	man	ماٹهو	maːɳhũː	men
ڳئون	ⷧũː	cow	ڳئون	ⷧũː	cows

Gender in Sindhi

The rules for the change of gender from masculine to feminine in Sindhi are explained below in detail:

(1) Masculine nouns ending in short vowel /ⷧ/ can be changed into their feminine forms :

    a. By changing /ⷧ/ into /ⷧ/:

       ڪڪڙُ /kⷧkⷧⷧ/   [cock]   ڪڪڙ /kⷧkⷧⷧ   [hen]

    b. By changing /ⷧ/ into /iː/:

       بَڪَرُ /ɓəkərʊ/   [a goat]   بَڪري /ɓəkəriː/   [she goat]

    c. By changing /ʊ/ into /ɳ̩/:

       صرافُ /səraːfʊ/   [goldsmith] صرافڻ /səraːfɳ̩/   [she-goldsmith]

    d. By changing /ʊ/ into /jaːɳiː/:

       فقيرُ /fəkiːrʊ/   [beggar] فقيرياڻي /fəkiːrjaːɳiː/ [woman beggar]

(2) Masculine nouns ending in او /oʊ/ form their feminine

    a. By changing او /oʊ/ into اي /iː/:

       ٻلو /ɓɪloʊ/   [a cat]   ٻلي /ɓɪliː/   [she-cat]

       ڪُتو /kʊtoʊ/   [a dog]   ڪُتي /kʊtiː/   [a bitch]

    b. By changing او /oʊ/ into ياڻي /jaːɳiː/:

       مُلو /mʊloʊ/ [a Muslim priest] مُلياڻي /mʊljaːɳiː/ [Muslim priest's wife]

(3) Masculine nouns ending in ي form their famines,

    a. Generally by adding اڻي :

        كٽي   /k☐tiː/   [a washer man] كٽياڻي /kʰətjaːɳiː/   [a washer woman]

    b. Sometimes by changing ي /iː/ into ڻ /ɳ/:

        ڌوبي   /dʰoʊɓiː/   [a washer man]   ڌوبڻ   /dʰoʊɓɪɳ/   [washer woman]

Case in Sindhi

As with all other variation of class, gender, and number Sindhi case also is remarkably shown by the final phoneme, vowel in this case to show the variation of case. The following declensions of masculine and feminine nouns adopted from Jennifer (2006) illustrate the example of 'case' in Sindhi.

Table: 3 *Nominal declensions for masculine and feminine nouns in Sindhi* (adopted from Cole, 2006; p. 963)

		Nominative	**Oblique**	**Ablative**	**Vocative**
'boy'	Singular	ʧʰoʊkɪroʊ	ʧʰoʊkɪreɪ	ʧʰoʊkɪrãː	ʧʰoʊkɪrãː
	Plural	ʧoʊkɪraː	ʧʰoʊkɪrʌn	ʧʰoʊkɪrʌnãː	ʧʰoʊkɪraː
'table'	Singular	mezə	mezə	mezãː	mezə
	Plural	mezũː	mezʊnɪ	mezɪnãː	mezũː

Conclusion

The above discussion was a brief overview of the morphophonemic structure of the Sindhi language. Sindhi evolves from the ancient Indo-Aryan language of Sindh and traveled a long way of evolution through centuries. During these periods, Sindhi came under the influences of many languages like Sanskrit, Pali, Arabic, Persian and English.

 The addition of different letters from Arabic and Persian, word stock from many indigenous and foreign languages and literary works from different languages enriched Sindhi. The role of government support and many individual scholars is crucial in the progress and development of this Pakistani language.

Sindhi has its particular grammatical and phonological structures resembling with some of the Indo-Aryan languages. Its subject object verb (SOV) sentence structure and five implosive sounds make it language of unique characteristics.

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