

LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Volume 12 : 7 July 2012

ISSN 1930-2940

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Outlining Saraiki Phonetics: A Comparative Study of Saraiki and English Sound System

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Abstract

Saraiki, a language widely used in South Punjab, some parts of Sindh, Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtoon Khwa in Pakistan, is gaining critical attention because of the ethno-linguistic politics in contemporary Pakistan which is culturally and linguistically diverse. Saraiki is believed to have six varieties. English, on the other hand, is considered to be the *lingua franca* of the world with many varieties. In the present study, focusing the *Multani* variety of Saraiki and the Standard British English, we endeavor to give a comparison of the phonetics of the two languages in terms of difference in their number of phonemes, places of articulation, and manner of

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articulation. In order to provide an account of Saraiki consonants, monophthongs and diphthongs, Saraiki syllables/words used as examples are transcribed and their meanings are provided in English. Diagrams, where necessary, are made to show the difference of place and manner of articulation of consonants of both the languages. Saraiki consonant clusters, Saraiki syllable structure, and stress patterns have also been discussed. The study is an attempt to further the research about the Saraiki phonetics. The study also illustrates that most of earlier researches about this widely used language in Pakistan were not carried out by the native speakers of Saraiki and therefore many gaps and problems have been found in them by the researchers of this article.

Keywords: Phonetics, Saraiki, English, Sound System, Stress, Syllable, Clusters

1. Introduction

This section is mainly devoted to Saraiki language supposing that the language in its comparison i.e. English has been widely researched and a large bulk of scholarly work is available on it. Hence, it requires no introductory writing here.

Saraiki¹ is spoken in the central areas of Pakistan. The population census in 1981 treated Saraiki as a distinct language. According to that census, it is the language spoken by about 9.83 % of the total population of Pakistan (Rahman, 1996, p. 1). But, Wagha (1990, p. 2) opines that due to some political, economic and social factors this figure is underestimated. According to Paul (2009) the total number of people who speak Saraiki in Pakistan is 13,843,106 and in India 20,000. Haq (1967, p. 108) claims that the area in which Saraiki is spoken is 48093 sq miles. On either side of the river Indus is located the Saraiki speaking area, in central Pakistan. Haq (1985, p. 17) considers it the first language (mother tongue) of the people of central parts of Pakistan whereas the second language of almost all the rest of Pakistanis. He asserts that no other Pakistani language is spoken as second language as

¹ The word is spelt differently (e.g. as Siraiki, Seraiki and Saraiki, etc) by different scholars and organizations. In the present study, we have spelt it as Saraiki adopting it from the Department of Saraiki, Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan, as given on <http://www.bzu.edu.pk/departmentindex.php?id=33>

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frequently as Saraiki is. Rasoolpuri (1976, p. 18) reinforces it by asserting that Saraiki is the only Pakistani language which is comprehended and spoken in all the provinces of Pakistan.

Shackle (1976) classifies Saraiki into the following six varieties:

- (1) Central variety
- (2) Southern variety
- (3) Sindhi variety
- (4) Northern variety
- (5) Jhangi
- (6) Shahpuri

These varieties are also divided on the basis of the regions they belong to like Multani, Riasti (Bahawalpuri), Dera Wali, Jhangi, etc. However, all these varieties were given a collective and agreed upon name i.e. Saraiki – a name previously given to this language only in Sindh – in 1962 in a meeting held under the banner of *Bazm-e-Saqafat* (Cultural Society), Multan (Khan, 1995, p. 105). There is a controversy regarding the history of Saraiki. Mughal (2007) has, however, proved that this language is the oldest of almost all the languages of the Sub-continent including Sanskrit, Hindi, Sindhi, Punjabi and Urdu. Kalanchvi has also declared it to be the oldest of all the languages of Indus Valley (1987, p. 9).

Saraiki has attracted the attention of many indigenous and foreign researchers including orientalist like George Grierson, E. O. Brian, Christopher Shackle, Trump, Wilson and Jukes. Kalanchvi (2008) has given a detailed review of their ideas. But almost all the linguistic voyage in Saraiki remained concerned with the historical debate of the language with some occasional comments on its sounds and grammatical patterns. To our knowledge, no in-depth study is available on the phonetic and phonological patterns of Saraiki. The concern of the present paper is, hence, to define the sound system, syllable structure, and stress patterns of Saraiki focusing the first of the above given varieties i.e. Central Variety. This variety is spoken in the northern parts of D.G. Khan and Bahawalpur, and also in the districts of Multan and Muzaffargarh. Due to the historical significance of the district of Language in India www.languageinindia.com

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Multan, this variety is sometimes known as *Multani*. Rasoolpuri (1980, p. 86) calls this variety the “pure” form of Saraiki.

English, on the other hand is considered as the *lingua franca* of the world today (see Mauranen & Ranta, 2009; Dewey, 2007; Deterding & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Jenkins, 2000 & 2007; Seidlhofer, 2004, etc for detail). Apart from having two canonical varieties i.e. British and American, it is now having as many varieties as many peoples. Hence there are many Englishes in the world today. Our focus, however, will be the phonetics of British English.

As the focus of the present study is the comparison of Saraiki and English phonetics, the components and attributes of the written part of these languages will not be discussed here. “Spoken language consists of successions of sounds emitted by the organs of speech, together with certain ‘attributes’ (Jones, 1979, p. 1). Every speech-sound belongs to one or other of the two main classes known as Vowels and Consonants” (Jones, 1979, p. 23). It was discovered, however, that there are different sounds which are neither vowels nor consonants and, thus, may be termed as “semi-vowels and laterals /w, r, l, j/ which are in a sense intermediate between vowels and stops” (Haggard, 1969, p. 144). The so-far discovered sounds of Saraiki are given below, followed by their tabular description as well as that of English, and their comparative analysis.

2. Consonants

Peter Roach gives a very comprehensive definition of various types of consonants as follows:

There are many types of consonant, but what all have in common is that they obstruct the flow of air through the vocal tract. Some do this a lot, some not very much: those which make the maximum obstruction (i.e. plosives, which form a complete stoppage of the airstream) are the most consonantal. Nasal consonants result in complete stoppage of the oral cavity but are less obstructive than plosives since air is allowed to escape through the nose. Fricatives make a considerable obstruction to the flow of air, but not a total closure. Laterals obstruct the flow of air only in the centre of the mouth, not at the sides, so obstruction is slight. Other sounds classed as approximants make so little obstruction to the flow of air that they could almost be thought to be vowels if they were in a different context (e.g. English w or r). (Roach, 2009)

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In the light of the above definition and the above cited works on Saraiki language, we have attempted to work out Saraiki consonants which are as follows:

2.1 Saraiki Consonants

Consonants (Phonetic)	Examples	Meanings
[p]	[pakhi]	[Bird]
[b]	[ba:ɖ]	[After]
[p ^h]	[p ^h ur]	[Swish of wings]
[b ^h]	[b ^h ul]	[Forget]
[β]	[βΛl]	[the fuel]
[t̪]	[t̪Λp]	[Heat; fever]
[ɖ]	[ɖa:l]	[Lentils]
[t̪ ^h]	[t̪ ^h a:ɳ]	[Pile of Cloth]
[ɖ ^h]	[ɖ ^h up]	[Sunshine]
[t]	[tΛl]	[Be off]
[t ^h]	[t ^h Λp]	[Finish]
[ɖ]	[ɖaɖa]	[Grandfather]
[ɖ]	[ɖa:k]	[Post]
[ɖ ^h]	[ɖ ^h Λk]	[To cover]
[k]	[kΛɳ]	[Ear]
[g]	[gum]	[lost]
[k ^h]	[k ^h Λp]	[Get tired / Waste time]

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[g ^h]	[g ^h Λr]	[Home]
[t]	[t]Λn̄]	[Moon/Beloved]
[t ^h]	[t ^h Λl]	[Flood]
[dʒ]	[dʒΛdʒ]	[Judge]
[dʒ ^h]	[dʒ ^h Λl]	[Endure]
[g]	[gã]	[Cow]
[m]	[mΛl]	[Rub]
[n̄]	[n̄Λlkɑ]	[Tap]
[ŋ]	[maŋ]	[Demand]
[ŋ]	[hoŋ]	[Now]
[f]	[fa:l]	[Omen]
[v]	[vΛɽ]	[Get in]
[s]	[suŋ]	[Numb]
[ʃ]	[ʃΛl]	[Tired]
[x]	[xΛm]	[Curve]
[ɣ]	[ɣΛm]	[Sorrow]
[h]	[hΛl]	[Move]
[l]	[lΛɽ]	[Leg]
[r]	[rΛɽ]	[Blood]
[ɽ]	[gʊɽ]	[A kind of brown sugar in lumps]

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[j]	[ja:ɖ]	[Memory]
[z]	[za:l]	[Wife]
[ʃ]	[ʃʌlm]	[Leech]

2.2 Description of Saraiki Consonants in terms of place and manner of articulation

Place → Manner ↓	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post Alveolar	Palato Alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	P b P ^h b ^h		t̪ d̪ t̪ ^h d̪ ^h				t ɖ t ^h ɖ ^h		k g k ^h g ^h	
Affricate						tʃ dʒ tʃ ^h dʒ ^h				
Nasal	m		ɳ				ɳ		ŋ	
Fricative		f v	s z					ʃ	x y	h
Lateral				l						
Tap/Flap				r			ɽ			
Approximant								j		
Implosive	ɓ		ɗ			ɟ			ɠ	

As the English sounds are common and can be easily found in various sources, we directly move to their description.

2.3 Description of English Consonants in terms of place and manner of articulation²

² For a detailed study into English sounds, see
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/pron/sounds/chart.shtml> ,
<http://www.yorku.ca/earmstro/ipa/consonants.html>, http://www.stuff.co.uk/calcul_nd.htm, etc

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Place → Manner ↓	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Alveopalatal	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosives	P b			t d			k g	
Affricates					tʃ dʒ			
Nasal	M			n			ŋ	
Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ			h
Lateral				l				
Approximant	W			r		j		

2.4 Differences between Saraiki and English consonants

It seems Saraiki has 40 consonants. English, in contrast, has 24 consonants. Comparison of the description of consonants of both the languages shown above reveals that English has six plosives, while Saraiki has sixteen in number. /p^h/ /b^h/ /t^h/ /d^h/ /tʰ/ /dʰ/ /k^h/ /g^h/ /t/ /d/ are separate phonemes in Saraiki, not the allophones as some of them i.e. /t^h/, /k^h/ are in English because unlike English they create different words with distinguished meanings in Saraiki. /t̤/ /d̤/ /t̤^h/ /d̤^h/ /ɳ/ /s/ /z/ are dental sounds in Saraiki, while /t/ /d/ /s/ /z/ /n/ are alveolar in English. English has only two affricates i.e. /tʃ/ /dʒ/, and Saraiki has four i.e. /tʃ/ /dʒ/ /tʃ^h/ /dʒ^h/. Saraiki has six retroflex sounds i.e. /t̤/ /d̤/ /t̤^h/ /d̤^h/ /ɳ/ /ɳ/. British English does not have any. It seems that the /ʒ/ sound is not there in Saraiki. Similarly /X/ and /ɣ/ sounds are absent in English. Saraiki has one approximant i.e. /j/, while English has three i.e. /w/ /r/ /j/. Saraiki has no /θ/ /ð/ dental sounds. Saraiki has four implosive sounds i.e. /b/ /d/ /ʃ/ /g/, while English does not have any.

2.5 Similarities between Saraiki and English consonants

/l/ is alveolar in both languages. /r / in English is approximant and alveolar, while it is flap and alveolar /r/ in Saraiki. /m/ is bilabial in both languages. Both English and Saraiki have one lateral sound i.e. /l/. Both languages have glottal /h/ and velar nasal /ŋ/ in common.

3. Vowels

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Peter Roach defines vowels as: “The most common view is that vowels are sounds in which there is no obstruction to the flow of air as it passes from the larynx to the lips” (1997: 10). The following are the monophthongs and diphthongs of Saraiki and English and their comparison.

3.1 Saraiki Monophthongs

<u>Vowels</u>	<u>Examples</u>	<u>Meanings</u>
[i]	[nika]	[Male Child]
[i:]	[mi:l]	[Mile]
[a]	[maŋ]	[Come around]
[a:]	[la:f]	[Corpse]
[o:]	[ko:l]	[Near]
[e]	[meɟ]	[Erase]
[ɛ]	[bɛh]	[Sit]
[e:]	[me:l]	[Wedding Night]
[æ]	[mæɭ]	[Dirt]
[ʌ]	[mʌtʰa]	[Sluggish; slow]
[u]	[puli]	[Bridge]
[u:]	[ku:li]	[Soft]
[ũ]	[mũŋɟ]	[Jute]
[ũ:]	[mũ:ndʒʰ]	[Missing somebody]
[ĩ:]	[mĩ:h]	[Rain]
[ã]	[mãŋg]	[Fiancé]
[õ]	[mõndʰ]	[Roots]
[õ:]	[mõ:ndʰe]	[Shoulders]
[ẽ]	[gẽɟ]	[Count it]
[ẽ:]	[gẽ:ɟ]	[A sort of illness]

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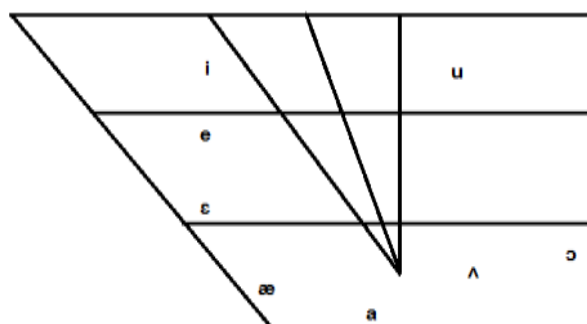
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[ã]	[mã]	[I]
[Ā]	[bĀr]	[Become / be]
[ɔ]	[ḍɔr]	[Era]

3.2 Differences between Saraiki and English monophthongs

It seems from the above given sounds and example that Saraiki has 23 monophthongs. But English has only 12 in number which are: [i:], [i], [e], [æ], [u], [u:], [o:], [o], [a:], [a], [e:], [ə]. English does not have nasal monophthongs. Saraiki monophthongs are long or short, nasal or oral. The location of Saraiki short monophthongs is shown below:

Figure 1: Location of Saraiki Short Vowels:



Saraiki has following short vowels: /I/ /a/ /e/ /ɛ/ /æ/ /ʌ/ /u/ /ɔ/. It has five long vowels: /i:/ /a:/ /o:/ /e:/ /u:/, six short nasal vowels i.e. /ũ/ /ã/ /õ/ /ẽ/ /æ̃/ /Ā/. and four long nasal vowels: /ĩ:/ /ō:/ /ē:/.

3.3 Saraiki Diphthongs

Diphthongs	Examples	Meanings
[ʌi]	[kʌi]	[Several]

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[ɔi]	[kɔina]	[No]
[ui]	[k ^h ui]	[A well]
[ei]	[lei]	[glue]
[ae]	[bɫɾae]	[Made]
[ʌe]	[ɟʌe]	[Went]
[ie]	[mʌɾsie]	[Songs of lamentation]
[oe]	[oe]	[You Mr.!]
[ue]	[dʒue]	[In gambling]
[ao]	[k ^h ao]	[Eat]
[ʌo]	[nʌokʌɾ]	[Attendant]
[eo]	[dɛo]	[Give]
[io]	[pio]	[Drink]
[aɛ]	[bɫɾaɛm]	[I made (it)]
[au]	[mʌɾvau]	[About to be killed]
[iu]	[piu]	[Father]
[ea]	[sumea]	[(Is) sleeping]
[ua]	[dua]	[Prayer]
[iʌ]	[nʌsiʌt]	[A piece of advice]
[ʌĩ]	[i ^h ʌĩ]	[At this place]
[aĩ]	[ɟaĩ]	[Cows]
[uĩ]	[buĩ]	[Father's sisters]
[uẽ]	[buẽ]	[Of father's sisters]
[ið]	[ɟið]	[If you went]
[aũ]	[k ^h aũ]	[Should we eat?]

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[iũ]	[hʌtiũ]	[(Buy) from the shop]
[eũ]	[sʌfeũ]	[From right hand side]
[ʌũ]	[itʰʌũ]	[From this place]
[uã]	[dʒuã]	[Lice]
[eã]	[bukʰeã]	[Hungry men]
[iã]	[bukʰiã]	[Hungry women]

3.4 English Diphthongs

Diphthongs	Transcription	Word
[ei]	[dei]	[Day]
[əʊ]	[nəʊ]	[No]
[ai]	[skai]	[Sky]
[ɔi]	[tɔi]	[Toy]
[aʊ]	[haʊ]	[How]
[iə]	[piə]	[Pier]
[eə]	[peə]	[Pair]
[ʊə]	[tʊə]	[Tour]

While English has only 8 diphthongs, Saraiki has as many as 31. Both the languages have /ei/ and /ɔi/ in common. Saraiki does not have /əʊ/ and /ai/. No diphthong in Saraiki ends at /ə/. English does not have nasal diphthongs.

The above given information also shows that the total number of Saraiki phonemes is 94 and not 48, 56 or 58 as Shackle (as cited in Rasoolpuri, 1980, p. 76), Rasoolpuri (1980, p. 75) and Haq (1984, p. 18) believe. The problem with their description and understanding is that they ignore the fact that Saraiki monophthongs and diphthongs are separate sounds.

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4. Saraiki Consonant Clusters

Unlike many of the Pakistani languages which are in direct contact with it, Saraiki has consonant clusters as well. These consonant clusters have two categories:

- a) Initial clusters
- b) Final clusters

a) Initial Clusters

Initial cluster of Saraiki generally consists of dental plosive plus /r/, e.g.

[tr]	[træ]	[Three]
[dr]	[dreh]	[Too much]
[dʰr]	[dʰrak]	[To jump]

b) Final Clusters

(i) Dental Plosives plus /r/

[ʈr]	[atr]	[Perfume]
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(ii) Voiceless fricative plus voiceless plosive

[χʈ]	[kraχʈ]	[Rigid]
------	---------	---------

(iii) Plosive cluster

[kʰʈ]	[vakʰʈ]	[Time]
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5. Saraiki Syllable Structure

Saraiki has following syllable structure:

V:	[e:]	[This]
CV	[mæ̃]	[I]
CV:	[ha:]	[Ok, yes]

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CCV	[træ]	[Three]
VC	[ak ^h]	[Eye]
V:C	[a:k ^h]	[Ask]
VCC	[aʈr]	[Perfume]
CVC	[ba:l]	[Child]
CCVC	[d ^h rak]	[Jump]
CVCC	[saxt]	[Hard]

Saraiki syllable structure formula can be:

Co-2 V Co-2

English Syllable structure formula is:

Co-3 V Co-4

6. Stress

Principal suprasegmental features are stress, tone and intonation (Ladefoged 1982). Languages differ in sound segments i.e. phonemes, in the formation of these sound combination i.e. phonotactic rules, and in the degree of force i.e. stress given to syllables and words.

All syllables in Saraiki occur at regular interval of time. So, it is syllable timed language. As a result of syllable timing, vowels in Saraiki are clear cut. There is no vowel reduction in connected speech in Saraiki. English is stress timed language: degree of force given to syllables in words differs.

Conclusion

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The above study demonstrates that English and Saraiki are different regarding the number and kind of sounds, place and manner of articulation. English has 24 consonants while Saraiki has 40. English monophthongs are 12 while those of Saraiki are 23. English Diphthongs are 8 and Saraiki Diphthongs are 31. In this regard, the researchers of present study (who are, incidentally, all Saraiki-speaking) have also demonstrated that earlier studies carried in this field by Shackle, Haq and others have discovered less number of sounds perhaps because they were not native speakers of this language and for this reason they failed to perceive the subtle differences in various sounds of Saraiki. Further differences of phonemes of both the languages are also discussed above. Like English, Saraiki has consonant clusters. Both languages differ in their syllable structure formula. English is stress timed language, while Saraiki is syllable timed.

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