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Kurukh Phonology: A Descriptive Study

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Abstract

The present study provides a description of Kurukh phonology, the language spoken by the Oraon community in and around Ranchi. It briefly deals with the description of phonemes of Kurukh. The study describes vowel and consonant sounds of Kurukh; consonant clusters; syllable structures; and suprasegmental features such as nasalization, length, stress, and intonation.

Key Words: vowel, consonant, consonant cluster, syllable, suprasegmental features.

The Language and the Community

Kurukh is predominantly the language of the Oraon tribe of the Chota Nagpur Plateau of East Central India and spoken by approximately 2 million people. The language is the member of the North Dravidian sub family of the Dravidian Languages. The culture and the language is close to their neighbouring Austric family languages, the Santals and the Mundas which concludes that the Kurukh Language is surrounded by the speakers of the Munda language family and is considerably influenced by Hindi, Bengali, Munda and many other languages in contact. (Mishra, 2008).

The language is old and oral and there was no written tradition to this language. The community used the Devanagiri script for the preservation of the language but in 1989 Dr. Narayan Oraon decided to create a new script for this language. The script *Tolong Siki* was first published on 15th May 1999 and some years later was introduced in some schools. It was originally founded by the government in 2007 and since then it has been taught in many schools and colleges. (Tirkey, 2013).

The linguistic study of this language has been first made by The Revd. Ferd. Hahn in his book *Kurukh Grammar* in the year 1911 and in these 100 years no other study has been made of this language. So the present research is the descriptive study of the Kurukh Language of present time.

DESCRIPTION OF KURUKH PHONOLOGY

This study presents the sound system and major phonological alterations of Kurukh language spoken by Kurukh speakers of Ranchi and the surrounded area.

The phonological system of Kurukh language is characterized by a large phoneme inventory with 32 consonants, 11 vowels and 10 diphthongs.

Consonants

Voiceless Stops

1. /p/ Voiceless Bilabial Plosive

As in,

/pɛ̃t̃ra/

/pə̃rri/

/ə̃pʌn/

/t̃p̃t̃a/

During the articulation of this sound the soft palate is raised and thus it completely closes the nasal passage. The two lips are in firm contact with each other and also block the air passage. The vocal cords are held apart from each other and it does not vibrate during the production of this sound. The two lips are suddenly separated to make the sound, the air escapes with a slight explosion. Thus, the sound /p/ is voiceless bilabial plosive.

Occurrence: /p/ occur word initially, medially and finally.

2. /p^h/ Aspirated Voiceless Bilabial Plosive

As in,
 /pʰɪr/
 /lʌpʰ/

This sound is articulated exactly the same as /p/ sound, the only difference is that during its articulation, the sound gets heavily aspirated because during its release it is accompanied by the strong puff of breath.

Occurrence: this sound occurs in all the three states.

3. /t̪/ Voiceless Denti-alveolar Plosive

/bəhʉt̪/
 /t̪ɔden/
 /hʌndt̪ɑ/
 /t̪əm̪həɪ/
 /t̪ɪɾt̪ɑ/
 /ɪst̪ɑm/
 /nʌnt̪ɑ/

During the articulation of this sound the tip of the tongue touches the teeth ridge. The soft palate is raised and closes the nasal passage. The vocal cords are held wide apart from each other and hence there is no vibration in the production of the sound.

Occurrence: This sound occurs in word initially, medially and finally.

4. /t̪ʰ/ Aspirated Voiceless Denti-alveolar Plosive

/t̪ʰeɪlɑ/
 /kʌt̪ʰən/

During the articulation of this sound the soft palate is raised closing the nasal cavity and allowing the air to pass through the mouth. The tip and blade of the tongue touches the back of

the teeth ridge obstructing the air and then the sudden release. The vocal cords do not vibrate during the production.

Occurrence: This sound occurs in word initially, medially and finally.

5. /t/ Voiceless Retroflex Plosive

/gɔtɑ:/

/tɔtɑ/

/tʌtʃɑ:/

/pet/

During the articulation of this sound the soft palate is raised shutting the nasal passage, the vocal cords are held apart from each other. The tongue rolls up towards the soft palate resulting in the sudden release of the air.

Occurrence: This sound occurs in word initially, medially and finally. When this sound is preceded by a weak vowel it too becomes weak and when it is followed on preceded by any long vowel or rounded vowel this sound is stressed.

6. /tʰ/ Aspirated Voiceless Retroflex Plosive

/pudʒɑ pɑ:tʰ/

/gʌtʰdɑ/

/tʰuddɪ/

The soft palate is raised completely shutting the nasal passage. The vocal cords are held apart from each other and they do not vibrate. The tongue is curved backward towards the soft palate, releasing the closure with the strong puff of air.

Occurrence: This sound occurs in all the three state, word initially, medially and finally.

7. /k/ Voiceless Velar Plosive

/kʌttʰən/

/eksən/

/i:knum/

/rɑ:tʃək/

The soft palate is raised, so the nasal passage is closed completely. The back of the tongue is brought near to the soft palate, hence in the firm contact with each other holding the air so the oral passage is also closed completely. The vocal cords are held apart from each other and do not vibrate during the articulation. Now the back of the tongue is removed from the soft palate and the compressed air rushes out of the mouth with an explosion. The tongue is the active articulator and the roof of the mouth is the passive articulator.

Occurrence: This sound occur word initially, medially and finally.

8. /k^h/ Aspirated Velar Plosive

/nek^həɪ/

/tʁkk^hɑ:/

The sound is articulated same as /k/ but this is sound is accompanied by a strong breath.

Occurrence: This sound occurs in word initially, medially and finally.

9. /tʃ/ voiceless Palatal Stop

/tʃɪglɑ:/

/tʃʌləkərə/

/tʃɪdʒɑ/

/tʃɑ:lɑ:/

/xɛ tʃər/

/bɑ:tʃɑ:/

/tʃɪ tʃ/

In the production of this sound the soft palate is raised allowing the air to pass through the mouth. The middle and back of the tongue is raised to the hard palate. The vocal cords do not vibrate.

Occurrence: This sound occurs in word initially medially and finally.

10. /tʃʰ/ aspirated voiceless palatal stop

/ge tʃʰʌm/

/ge tʃʰɑ:/

The sound is articulated in the same way as /c/ is produced but /cʰ/ is heavily aspirated when it is articulated.

Voiced Stops

11. /b/ Voiced Bilabial Plosive

/bare/

/be:l/

/bəhʉʈ/

/bədʃijən/

/nabɑ:r/

/hebednər/

/uru:b/

During the articulation of this sound there is an obstruction of airflow in the vocal tract. The sound is oral, with no nasal release; the air flow is blocked as both the lips are in firm contact with each other. The air is released with the explosion. The vocal cords are brought near to each other causing vibration. The lower lip is the active articulator and the upper lip is the passive articulator.

Occurrence: This sound occurs in word initially, medially and finally.

12. /b^h/ Aspirated Voiced Bilabial Plosive/b^hɛtɑ:ŋgɒ//b^husdʒi://b^hʌdɑ:/

The sound is heavily aspirated, during the articulation of this sound the soft palate is raised and hence it completely closes the nasal passage allowing the air to pass through the oral passage accompanied by the strong puff of breath. The vocal cords vibrate.

Occurrence: this sound occur word initially and medially.

13. /ɖ/ Voiced Retroflex Plosive

/beɖɑ/

/bɒɖe/

/xɑ:ɖ/

/ɖɑ:ɖɑ:/

The soft palate is raised allowing the air pass through the mouth. The tip of the tongue curled up towards the soft palate with the sudden release of the air. The vocal cords are brought close to each other and they are loosely held together which results in the vibration. The tongue is the active articulator and the roof of the mouth is the passive articulator.

Occurrence: This sound occurs in word initially medially and finally.

14. /ɖ̪/ Voiced Denti-Alveolar Plosive

/bɒlɖ̪/

/hʌɖ̪ige/

/xʌɖ̪/

/ɖ̪ɒnɑ/

/tʃi:nɖ̪/

During the articulation of the sound the soft palate is raised blocking the nasal passage completely and allowing the air to pass through the mouth. The tip and front the tongue touches the back of the teeth and the teeth ridge. The vocal cords are loosely held together and hence vibrate. The tip and front of the tongue are the active articulators, the teeth and teeth ridge are the passive articulators.

Occurrence: This sound occurs in word initially medially and finally.

15. /ɖʱi/ breathy voiced denti-alveolar plosive

/mʊɳɖʱiʋa:re/

Soft palate is raised during the articulation of this sound with complete closure of the nasal passage. The tip and front of the tongue touches the back of the teeth and the alveolar ridge obstructing the air and released suddenly with a strong puff of air. The vocal cords are brought together and are loosely held, which allows them to vibrate. This sound is produced but it is aspirated. The stricture and active and passive articulators are exactly the same.

16. /ɖʱi/ breathy voiced alveolar plosive

/ɖʱiɾa:/

17. /g/ Voiced Velar Plosive

/lʌgga/

/gu tʃɛɾ/

/ga:/

/na:sgʋ/

The sound is articulated exactly the same as /k/. The soft palate is raised shutting the nasal passage completely. The back of the tongue is raised high and is in firm contact with the soft palate obstructing and holding the air to pass through the oral passage, then suddenly the back of the tongue is removed from the soft palate and the obstructed air is released from the oral passage. But during the articulation of this sound the vocal cords are drawn near and it vibrates.

18. /g^h/ aspirated voiced velar stop/g^hɑ:t//g^he tʃɑ:/

The sound is released and articulated same as the previous one. The soft palate is raised and the nasal passage is completely closed. The air rushes out through the oral passage after the blockage of the air due to the contact between back of the tongue and the soft palate is removed, the sound which is released is articulated and is aspirated. The vocal cords vibrate.

19. /dʒ/ voiced palatal plosive

/dʒəvʌnxəḍ/

/nʌdʒkɑ:/

The manner of the articulation of this sound is occlusive, that is, it is produced by the obstruction of the air from the nasal passage by raising the soft palate. The middle and back of the tongue is raised to the hard palate releasing the air suddenly. The middle and back of the tongue are the active articulators and the roof of the mouth is the passive articulator. The vocal cords are loosely held together which allows the vocal cords to vibrate.

20. /dʒ^h/ breathy voiced palatal plosive/pʌdʒ^hɑ://mudʒ^hura://dʒ^hɑ:di/

This sound is articulated as /dʒ/, but this sound is aspirated.

NASALS

21. /m/ voiced bilabial plosive

/hɔrmɔr/

/nʌlnum/

/tɔknɪm/

/mudɪma:/

/sʌŋgem/

/ʌxəɪm/

/məuxɪɛ/

/məuhɑ/

During the articulation of this sound the two lips are in firm contact with each other, the soft palate is lowered and the air passes through nostrils. The vocal cords vibrate producing the sound.

Occurrence: This sound occurs in all the three positions, word initially, medially and finally.

22. /n/ voiced alveolar nasal

/unɪɑ/

/ɪŋgen/

/dɔb^han/

/ɑɪn/

/kənɪn/

/nɪn/

/nɪnɪŋgen/

During the articulation the oral closure is affected by the tip and blade of the tongue making a firm contact with the teeth ridge. The soft palate is lowered and allows the air to pass through the nose. The vocal cords vibrate.

Occurrence: This occurs in word initially, medially and finally.

23. /ŋ/ voiced velar nasal

/niŋg^hai/

/təŋ-ɑ:/

/b^heta:ŋgɔ/

During the articulation of this sound, the oral closure is affected by the back of the tongue making a firm contact with the soft palate. The soft palate is lowered. Therefore, the air from the lungs escapes freely through the nasal passage. The vocal cords vibrate during the production of the sound.

Occurrence: This sound occur word medially and finally.

24. /ŋ/ voiced retroflex nasal

/mʌŋɖɪ/

During the articulation of this sound the tip of the tongue is curled (post alveolar without being palatalized), the air is obstructed in the vocal tract, and release of the air through the nose.

25. /v/ Voiced labio dental fricative

/ləvɑ:/

/ẽvɖɑ/

/t̪əvən/

/ɖəv/

/tʃʌvɖɑ:/

During the articulation of the sound the soft palate is raised, closing the nasal passage of the air. The lower lip is brought little closure to the upper teeth creating a narrow gap between them. The air escapes through the narrow gap with an audible friction. The vocal cords are held apart from each other and hence they do not vibrate.

Occurrence: this occur word initially, medially and finally.

26. /s/ voiceless alveolar fricative

/sərhul/

/ɪsʌn/

/əsən/

/xēs/

/bus-u:n/

During the articulation the soft palate is raised to close the nasal passage and allowing the air to pass through the mouth. The blade of the tongue is brought so close to the teeth ridge that there is a very narrow gap between them. The air escapes through the narrow gap with audible friction. The vocal cords do not vibrate.

Occurrence: the sound occurs in all the three positions, initial, medial and final.

27. /h/ voiceless glottal fricative

/gehɪ/

/hɑ:rgehe/

/hʌɖɪge/

/hɒnɪɟər/

/dəhu/

During the articulation the soft palate is raised and so the nasal passage is closed. The vocal cords are brought close to each other and they vibrate. The air from the lungs escapes through the narrow glottis with audible friction.

Occurrence: this sound occur only word initially and medially.

28. /l/ voiced alveolar lateral

/ləv-ɑ:/

/təlɪ/

/bɑ:ɖəl/

/ləgɪ/

/kɪlkɪɭɑ/

/pəplɑ:/

/tɪŋlɪ/

/kəɪl/

During the articulation the soft palate is raised and the nasal passage of the air is closed. The tip or blade of the tongue makes a firm contact with the teeth ridge. Therefore the stricture blocks the oral passage of the air in the center of the vocal tract. The sides of the tongue is lowered and allows the air to pass along the sides of the tongue without any friction. The vocal cords vibrate.

Occurrence: this sound occur word initially, medially and finally.

APPROXIMANT

29. /r/ frictionless continuant

/həɾɪjəɾ/

/bəɾ-ɑ:/

/rəh tʃɑ:/

/sɔm-mɑ:r/

During the articulation the soft palate is raised, completely shutting the nasal passage of air. The tip of the tongue is brought near to the rear part of the teeth ridge in such a way that there is sufficient gap between the two for the air of the lung to escape freely, without any friction. The vocal cords vibrate during the articulation.

Occurrence: This approximant occurs in all the three positions, initial, medial and final.

30. /j/ voiced palatal approximant

/teijəɾ/

/əɟigjəm/

/jɔjna/

During the articulation the front of the tongue takes up the position necessary for the articulation. The velum is raised so as to close the nasal passage. The vocal cords vibrate, producing the sound. The air freely escapes through the gap between the front of the tongue and the hard palate.

31. /x/ voiceless velar fricative

/tʌtʰxɑ:/

/xɪɖɖi:/

/xēs/

/xɑ:n/

During the articulation of this sound, the back of the tongue is raised to the soft palate, the airflow is constricted through a narrow channel causing turbulence at the place of articulation. The vocal cords do not vibrate, so it is voiceless.

32. /ʔ/ Glottal Stop

/tʔʌtʔxɑ:/

/tʃʌdʔrɑ/

/eɖʔpa:/

During the articulation of this sound the vocal cords do not vibrate, hence it is voiceless. The produced air is obstructed in the vocal tract and it released through the mouth, completely shutting the nasal passage.

(Balasubramanian, 2013)

MANNER OF ARTIC- ULATION	PLACE OF ARTICULATION									
	Bil- abial	Lab- io Den- tal	De- ntal	Alveolar	Post Alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Stop	p, b		ʈ, ɖ	tʰ, dʰ	ɖʱ, tʃʱ	ʈ, ɖ	tʃ, dʒ	k, g		ʔ
Aspirated	pʰ, bʰ						tʃʰ, dʒʰ	kʰ, gʰ		
Nasal	m			n		ɳ		ŋ		
Fricative		v		s				x		h
Affricate										
Lateral Approximant				l						
Approximant				r			ɻ			

Table 1. Consonants in Kurukh language

VOWELS

The vowels of Kurukh language can further be sub divided as long vowels and short vowels. There are 7 short vowels and 4 long vowels in Kurukh language.

Short Vowels

1. /i/

Centralised Front Unrounded Vowel

/pʰiɾ/

/ərki/

/i/

/gɔti/

/isʌn/

During the articulation of this vowel the front of the tongue is raised towards the hard palate wide enough gap for the air to pass freely, without any friction. The centre part of the tongue is raised between the close and half close. The lips are spread and unrounded.

Occurrence: It occurs word initially, medially and finally.

2. /e/

Front Unrounded Vowel

/beɖɑː/

/heke/

/tʃʌɖɖe/

/eɖpa/

/dʒʰɑːrkʰend/

During the articulation of this sound the front of the tongue is raised to the half close and half open. The lips are spread and unrounded.

Occurrence: It occurs word initially, medially and finally.

3. /ɑ/

Low central or front open unrounded vowel

/ɪstɑm/

/ka/

/pura/

/mɖra/

/ɑge/

4. /ɔ/

Back rounded vowel (just above the open position or back open rounded vowel)

/ɔɾ/

/dʒɑbɔ/

/ɒŋɔ̃ɔ̃rɒa:/

Occurrence: It occurs word initially, medially and finally.

5. /u/

Back Rounded Vowel (between close and half close or Back rounded vowel just above half –close).

/nu/

/ʈumba/

/puɔ̃a:/

/uxɔ̃i/

Occurrence: It occurs word initially, medially and finally.

6. /ʌ/

Central Unrounded Vowel (just above Open)

/xʌl/

/ʈʌb/

/nʌndʒər/

/mʌn/

7. /ə/

Central Unrounded Vowel between Half- Close and Half- Open (in non- final position)

Central Unrounded Vowel just below Half-Open (in final position)

/əŋgɪka:r/

/nəndʒər/

/bacaə/

Occurrence: It occurs word initially, medially and finally.

Long Vowels

8. /i:/

Front close unrounded vowel

/i:/

/uxɖi:/

/əɖhi:/

/urmi:n/

/mʌɖi:/

/i:ɖim/

Occurrence: It occurs word initially and finally.

9. /ɑ:/

Back Open Unrounded vowel

/eŋɑ:/

/nɑ:bɑ:r/

/tɑ:m/

/ɒŋɖɔrɑ:r/

/ɑ:dʒgɔ/

Occurrence: It occurs word initially, medially and finally.

10. /u:/

Back Close Rounded Vowel

/nu:/

/hu:ɖ/

Occurrence: It occurs word initially, medially and finally.

11. /e:/

Long lax unrounded vowel between half -close and half -open

/erce:r/

/əxtɛ:/

/tʃʌd̪de:/

Occurrence: It occurs word initially, medially and finally.

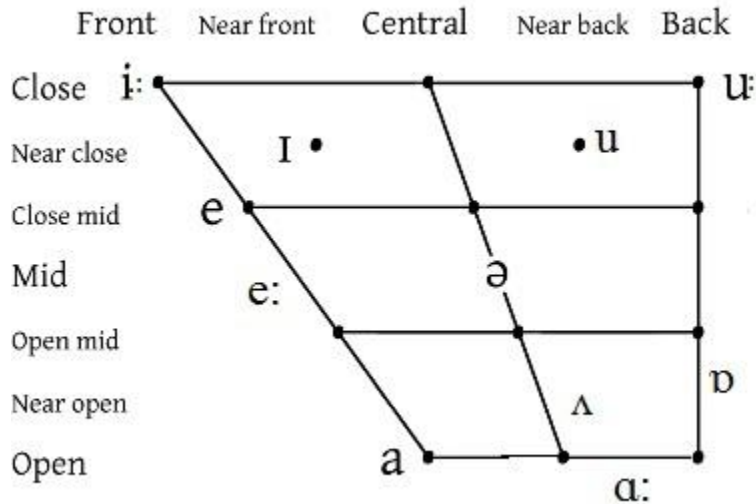


Fig. 1. Vowels in Kurukh language

Diphthongs

Impure vowels or gliding vowels are observed in Kurukh language. Sometimes in pronouncing a word, we realize a glide of vowels, this is the combination of two vowels articulated together where the articulation starts from one vowel and glides to the other. In Kurukh we can find 10 diphthongs.

1. /ei/

A glide from a front unrounded vowel between half open and half close to a front unrounded vowel between close and half close.

/t̪eijɑ:r/

/peint/

/meiɖ/

/əxt̪arei/

2. /aɪ/

A glide from a front open unrounded vowel to a vowel between close and half close.

/nimhaɪ/

/akɪɪ/

/ɪŋg^haɪ/

3. /ɔɪ/

A glide from a back rounded vowel between half close and half open to a front unrounded vowel between close and half close.

/menɔɪ/

/beɟɔɪ/

/bɔɪ-lɔɪ/

4. /əɪ/

A glide from Central unrounded vowel between half close and half open to a front unrounded vowel between close and half close.

/gʊtʃəɪ/

/b^həɪ/

/nəxəɪ/

5. /aʊ/

A glide from a front open unrounded vowel to a back rounded vowel between close and half close.

/aur/

6. /əʊ/

A glide from a central unrounded vowel between half close and half open to a back rounded vowel between close and half close.

/məʊhə/

/tʃəʊ/

/kaɪəʊ/

7. /ɔu/

A glide from a back rounded vowel between half close and half open to a back rounded between close and half close.

/mɔuxnu/

8. /ɔe/

A glide from a back rounded vowel between half close and half open to a front unrounded vowel between half open and half close.

/hɔenɔr/

/hɔer/

/mɔetʃɔr/

/mɔe/

9. /ie/

A glide from a front unrounded vowel between close and half close to a front unrounded vowel between half open and half close.

/əlegie/

10. /ue/

A glide from a back rounded vowel between close and half close to a front half open unrounded vowel.

/hue/

(Balasubramanian, 2013)

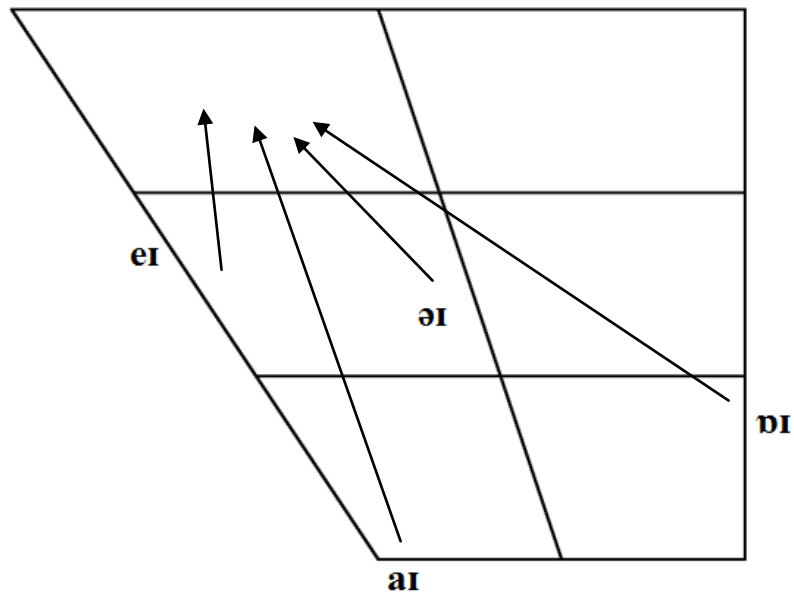


Fig 2. The closing Diphthong

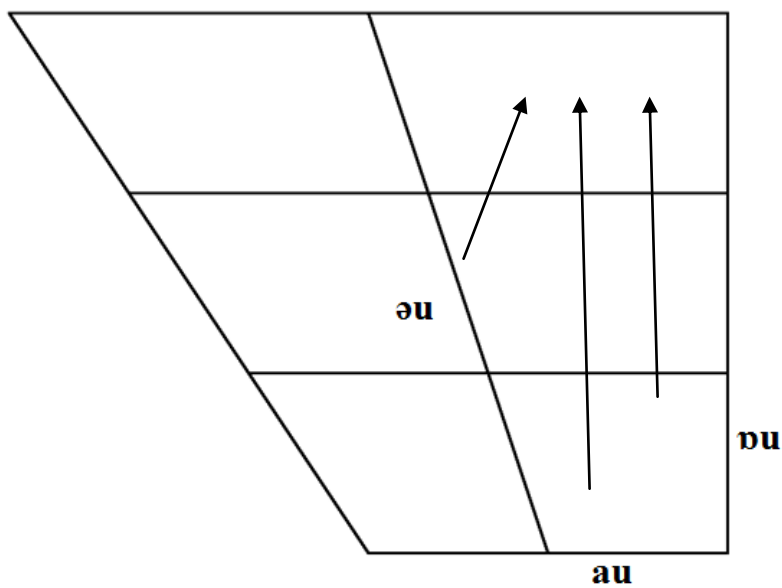


Fig 2. The closing diphthong

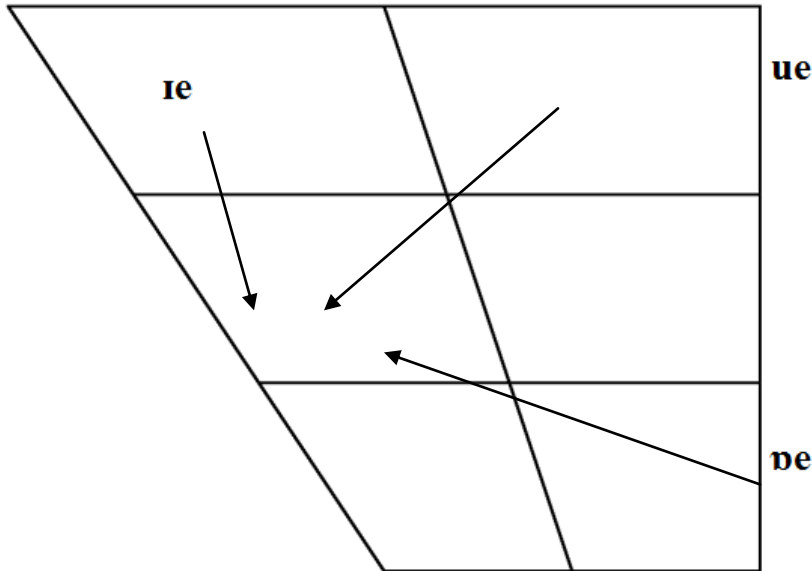


Fig. 3. The centering diphthong

Nasal Vowels in Kurukh

Kurukh language has one distinctive feature of nasal vowels which is found in Indo-Aryan languages and in some other language families but in Dravidian language this feature is only found in Tamil (specially modern Tamil) and Kurukh. Kurukh being the language of the Dravidian family testifies the evidences of the depiction of nasal vowels.

For example:

/ĩ/ and /ẽ/ as in	/pĩhẽ/
	/ẽvɾa:/
	/gĩhɖi/
/ũ/ as in	/hũɾɱɱ/ /ũgɱɖ/ /hũ/
/ĩ/	/tʃĩxɱɱ/ /tʃĩxɱ:/
/ã:	/tʃã:ɖe/ /ɾã:tʃi:/
/õ/	/õvxɱɱ/ /õvxɱ/
/õ/	/xõ-xõ/ /ʃõ/
/ũ:/	/pũ:p/
/ã/	/g ^h ãsɱ/ /pəɱã/
/əĩ/	/gəĩɱɱ/

SYLLABLE STRUCTURE

Syllable is the utterance of the part of word or word in one utterance and this unit of utterance has a vowel with or without a consonant.

Monosyllabic words

<u>Words</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Structure</u>
nm	you	CVC
na:m	we all	CVC
is	this (to male)	VC
a:s	that (to male)	VC
xɑdd	baby (girl)	CVC
xəi	wife	CVV
i:	V	

Disyllabic words

<u>Words</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Structure</u>
en-ɖe:r		VC-CVC
ku-kɔi	girl	CV-CV
ɖura:	door	CV-CV
gãh-ɖa:	eclipse	CVC-CV
tʃɔl-kur	sand	CVC-CVC
nudʒ-a:	pain	CVC-V
tʃuʃ-tʰi	hair	CVC-CV
ə-gm		V-CVC

Trisyllabic words

<u>Word</u>	<u>Structure</u>
ɔn-ɖɔr-na:r	VC-CVC-CVC

mʌn-rəh-dʒɑ	CVC-CVC-CV
xed-ɖɑ:-rɒ	CVC-CV-CV
mɒu-xɑ:-ge	CVV-CV-CV
ɑ:-har-gã	V-CVC-CV
hɑ:r-ge-he	CVC-CV-CV

Tertrasyllabic words

<u>Word</u>	<u>Structure</u>
m-ɖe:r-nə-ke	VC-CVC-CV-CV
m-ne-nɑ:-nɑ:	VC-CV-CV-CV
həx-rɑ:-ke-rɑ:	CVC-CV-CV-CV
mən-ɑ:-hɪl-rər	CVC-V-CVC-CVC
hɒ-nɑ:-lɪ-jər	CV-CV-CV-CVC

In Kurukh syllable, every syllable consists of a vowel with or without any consonant. In words like /əliɖrə/ and /əɖɪm/, one is disyllabic and another one is monosyllabic, there are syllables without any consonant. Each syllable is made up of some speech sounds and these speech sounds can be categorized as vowels and consonants. Therefore, a syllable consists of a nucleus, releasing consonant and arresting consonant. It is not always necessary that a syllable consists of a consonant but it is always necessary that it should contain the nucleus.

Structure of the syllable	Examples
V (Nucleus without any onset or coda)	/i:/
VC (Nucleus followed by coda, no onset)	/ɪs/
CVC (onset, nucleus and coda)	/nim/
CVCC (onset, nucleus and two coda)	/peɪnt/

CVV (onset with two vowels)	/ku- kɔɪ/
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In Kurukh language, the syllable structure is simple. The words are mostly monosyllabic, disyllabic and trisyllabic, there are limited occurrence of polysyllabic words.

Hence, in the representation of the consonant clusters, V represents nucleus, C is the consonant. The nucleus of the syllable can occur alone but the consonants cannot, it requires a vowel. There are examples where there is one onset, a nucleus and a coda (CVC); a nucleus and a coda (VC); an onset and a nucleus (CV); an onset with a nucleus and two codas (CVCC); an onset and two nucleus (CVV) it is taken as CV.

From the above representation, it can be concluded that there can be only one onset and can be only two codas in a syllable. In Kurukh, syllables, there is only one releasing consonant (before the nucleus), a nucleus and two arresting consonants (after the nucleus). So the structure will be CVCC.

STRESS AND INTONATION

Vowels and consonants are the segments of the speech which together form a syllable and it helps in utterance. Certain specific features that are superimposed on the utterances of the speech are classified as supra segmental features.

Supra segmental features Kurukh deal with the characteristic features of the speech sounds of the language like length, intonation, tone and stress, where the length refers to the duration of a speech sound. Some sounds are comparatively longer than the other and sometimes the same word is uttered in different ways where the length varies between them.

Kurukh has both long and short vowels, long vowels are prolonged in their utterances whereas short vowels are comparatively shorter in their length. Kurukh's long vowels like /i:/, a:/, u:/, e:/ are fully long when they occur finally in the words like /mɒŋɔi:/, /eŋgɑ:/ and /nu:/.

Sometimes they are also fully long when they occur word initially and medially followed by a voiced consonant, for example; /ni:n/, /enɖe:r/, /ɑ:d/.

The accented and unaccented syllables, their prominence are marked by the environment and conditions in which they occur.

- In disyllabic words below, the accent falls on the second syllable.

gɔt-t'ɑ:

tʌt-x'ɑ:

en-d'e:r

kʌt- 'tʰən

əI- 'jɑ:

em- 'bʌs

- In disyllabic words like,

m'e:-nəI

'ũ:-gud

'hũ-rəm

'tʃɑ:-dɛ

x'ʌd-dər

The first syllable is more prominent than the second syllable.

- In trisyllabic words such as,

tʃɪ tʃ- 'jɑ:r-ɑ:

er- 'tʃe:r-num

pɔ- 'xɑ:-ri:

bɪd-puʈ- 'tʃɑ:

lel- 'le:-xɛd

nɪŋ- 'gi:-jɔ

'ɪk-lə-əm

bər- 'ɔ:-sɪm

' tʃʌnd̪-kɪ-jɑ:

In the above trisyllabic words, the stress have fallen in first, second and third syllables. Sometimes the first syllable is accented than the other two syllables and sometimes the other two syllables are more accented. But this can be observed in most of words the stress has fallen on the second syllable.

In Connected Speech

In words there are accented and unaccented syllables likewise in sentences there are high pitch and low pitch, rising and falling pitches. The pitch is the highness and lowness in the speech. The meaning of the sentences can be entirely depended upon the sentence's intonation contour. With respect to the syllables in the word, the can make the differences in the sentence's meaning.

1.

a. 'nɪn- kɪrki

She left.

This sentence is a statement where a girl has left for someplace or somewhere.

b. nɪn-'kɪrki

She left?

In this sentence, there's an interrogation about a girl, confirming that she has left.

Here the sentence construction is same for both the sentences (a) and (b) but the pitch difference changed the entire context and meaning of the two sentences from each other.

2.

a. 'xɛ̃:-ɖəna mʌŋja: kera:

Shopping is over.

b. xɛ̃:-ɖəna mʌŋja: 'kera:

Shopping is over?

Conclusion

Kurukh language has a very large phonemic inventory of thirty two (32) consonants , seven (7) short vowels, four (4) long vowels and ten (10) diphthongs. The consonants are explained on the basis of place of articulation, manner of articulation and voicing, the vowels and diphthongs are explained on the basis of height of the tongue, its backness and lip rounding. The sounds of Kurukh language has been illustrated through table and figures. The language has the distinctive feature of vowel nasalization which is also found in modern Tamil. The study also provides with the brief introduction of the syllable structure, the stress and intonation pattern of the language.

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