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## A Brief Introduction of Hindko Language

**Nasim Akhtar Raja, Haroon-ur-Rashid & Ayesha Sohail**

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### Abstract

The main focus of this paper is to introduce briefly an Indo-Aryan language called Hindko, specifically, sketching out its grammar essential for understanding its salient structural characters. Structurally, this language resembles its sister languages like Hindi Urdu, Punjabi etc. Though, Hindko is spoken in different parts of Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and Kashmir yet its linguistic documentation is not done so far. This preliminary type of work will not only bring it to the notice of the linguistic community but also attract the attention of researchers.

### Introduction

The term ‘Hindko’ is used to mean different things. For one thing, Hindko refers to a language. It also refers to the river Indus. Yet another use of this term is found in Greek references where it refers to the mountainous region in eastern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan ‘Hindkush’. Shackle (1980) stated that the term Hindko refers to “the Indian language” and claimed that it was a generic term applied to Indo-Aryan dialect continuum in the northwest frontier and adjacent district of Attock in the Punjab province of Pakistan to differentiate it from Pashto language. Grierson (1916) used it to refer to “the language of Hindus”.

The term ‘Hindki’ is mostly used to refer to a speaker of Hindko language (Shackle, 1980). Rensch (1992) claimed that in popular usage Hindko may refer to language as it was frequently used in old literature. The Imperial Gazetteer of India (1905) for North West Frontier Province (NWFP) (now called ‘Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province’ (KPP)) refers to the language as ‘Hindki’. Briefly speaking, the term ‘Hindko’ refers to language. This is also supplemented by the linguistic classifications and surveys conducted in regard with language issues such as Linguistic Survey of India (LSI) by Grierson (1916) and Socio-linguistic Survey of Northern Pakistan by Rensch (1992).

### **The Language Family**

Generally, linguists find Hindko related to Lahnda sub group of Indo- Aryan languages that branch off Indo-Iranian languages. Under this view, Hindko belongs to Indic sub group of Indo European languages. Grierson (1916) as quoted in Rensch (1992) treated Hindko as a dialect of ‘Lahnda’, a term he used to refer to a sub group of languages spoken in Western Punjab and adjoining territories. According to his classification Lahnda group of languages is further divided into three sub-groups which are Southern, North-Western and North-Eastern. Hindko belongs to North-Western Lahnda group along with Dhani and Sawain. There are certain claims in regard with the origin of Hindko and its affinity with other languages that support the classification of Hindko as a language related to Lahnda sub group of Indo-Aryan languages. For instance, many historians claim that during the pre-Islamic era, the language of masses was refined by the ancient grammarian Panini, who documented the rules of an ancient language Sanskrit which was used principally for Hindu scriptures. Meanwhile, the vernacular languages of the masses called Prakrits developed into many languages and dialects which spread over the northern parts of South Asia. Hindko is believed to be akin to Prakarits. It shows close affinity to Lahnda sub group of Indo-Aryan tongues.

Ahmed (2008) argued that Hindko is one of the oldest languages of the Subcontinent as its earliest appearances are found in 1500 BC which are the Hindko words found in Vedic language. He maintained that there is an enormous affinity of Hindko with Siraiki, Gojri and Kohistani as these languages are structurally alike. The languages like Siraiki, Gojri and Kohistani are Indo-Aryan Languages. However, some linguists like Verma (1936) expressed concerns over the term ‘Lahnda’ considering it only a relative term that signifies a direction from the standpoint of Punjabi speakers.

Shackle (1980), on the other hand, disagrees with the classification of languages put under Lahnda. He, ignoring the Hindko of Hazzara division, for unknown reasons, proposed a classification which includes six varieties under the label ‘Common Punjabi’ which is on the basis of commonness of the languages. Under this classification, the dialects of Hindko are placed in different categories. For instance, the variety A is labeled as Hindko proper which includes Avankari, Ghebi, Attock-Haripur Hindko and Kohat Hindko while variety B is Peshawar Hindko. He himself admitted that the various forms called Hindko have been

difficult to classify due to a wide geographic range, linguistic divergence and some convergence with Punjabi which is classified in central group (1979, 1980).

Rensch (1992) also attributes dialectal variation among the varieties of speech called Hindko to their geographic location. He tested the mutual intelligibility (Applying different tests of lexical similarity and reported that “the dialects of rural Peshawar and Talagang are the most widely understood of the dialects tested; Balakot is the least widely understood”. Shackle’s classification is problematic in different senses. Firstly, he himself is confused in placing different dialects under any one category. Secondly, he assigns different categories to different dialects of Hindko where as it is quite uncommon as dialectal variations are natural to languages. Thirdly, he ignores a significant part of Hazara division which is the main Hindko speaking belt in KPP. Finally, his classification is not supported by any other corner as Grierson’s.

Addleton (1986) states that a number of Punjabi dialects developed with the passage of time and attained the status of languages such as Siraiki and Hindko were recognized as separate languages in the 1981 census. Briefly speaking, Hindko is generally regarded as related to Lahnda sub group of Indo- Aryan languages that branch off Indo-Iranian languages.

### **Hindko Speakers**

The native speakers of Hindko are found in various parts of Pakistan, Afghanistan and India. The majority of the speakers live in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province (KPP) of Pakistan. Addleton (1986), on the basis of 1981 census, states that “Hindko is the most significant linguistic minority in the NWFP represented in nearly one fifth (18.7%) of the province’s total household”. He reported that 92.3% of the population in Abbottabad district, 46.8% in Mansehra, 6.9% in Peshwar and 10.4% people in Kohat speak Hindko as their native language. In addition, there is a considerable number of Hindko speakers living in the adjacent areas of the Punjab province like Attock, Murree, etc. He further reported that 2.4% of the total population of Pakistan speaks Hindko as their native language.

The dominant majority of Hindko speakers live in rural areas. Some Hindko speakers are also found in Northern India, as at the time of partition, many Hindu Hindko speakers migrated to India. They are preserving their language and passing it on to their children as reported in “Daily Times-Hindu-Hindkowans at partition of India” (nd).

Hindko speakers, mostly Hindus, are also found in Afghanistan, where they are known as Hindkis.

As far as the Kashmir region in Pakistan is concerned, the Hindko speakers are found in Muzaffarabad district which is adjacent to Hazara division. There is a great number of Hindko speakers in this area along with speakers of Kashmiri and Gojri. Surprisingly, the surveys conducted in connection with Hindko language, so far, did not include this area

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even though a majority of Hindko speakers live here. However, this area is acknowledged as a Hindko speaking area by different websites and the public.

The Hindko speakers belong to a diverse ethnic background. Rensch (1992) asserts that “a large number of Hindko speakers in Hazara division are Pashtoons”. Some of them speak it as their mother tongue and others as a second language. Among the native speakers are Tahir Kheli, Yousafzai, Jaduns and Tarins which are Pashtoon tribes. There are non-Pashtoons tribes too, who speak Hindko as their mother tongue, including Saiyids, Mughals, Turks, Quershies and Avans. Even in ‘Jammun a significant number of Gojars have adopted Hindko as their first language’ (Sociolinguistic Survey of Northern Pakistan: Vol. 3; P:11). All these non-Pashtoon tribes come from different ethnic backgrounds. Similar situation exists in Muzaffarabad, where the native Hindko speakers belong to different ethnic groups such as Saiyids, Mughals, Rajas, Avans, and some Kashmiris.

## **Research Work**

So far, Hindko has not received any significant linguistic attention. Grierson's survey provides some information from its location and language family perspective. Awan (1994) also acknowledges that Hindko dialect got a brief mention in this survey. Addleton's (1986) work focuses on its classification, speaking area and number of speakers. The survey by Rensch (1992) is different from its predecessors in that it focuses on Hindko dialects from the point of view of their lexical similarities/differences and mutual intelligibility. Ahmed (2008) regrets Hindko's absence as part of any linguistic or non-linguistic corner. However, recently, some attention has been paid since the establishment of Gandara Hindko Board which was established in 1993 for the promotion and preservation of Hindko language. So far, the focus of this organization is on literature. The scant linguistic contribution is in the form a dictionary and Awan's work “The Phonology of the Verbal Phrase in Hindko”, which primarily is his Ph. D. thesis in book form.

## **The Structure of Hindko**

The linguistic structure of Hindko resembles the several other Indo Aryan languages like Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Pashto, etc. This subsection presents a brief description of Hindko word order, agreement, case marking, morphology and sound system that compose its structure. However, the discussion is limited to some salient features of each of these as the purpose is to provide an overview of Hindko language.

### **Word Order**

The word order of Hindko is quite flexible due to its elaborate case system. However, the canonical word order in Hindko, like Urdu and Punjabi, is SOV. This is illustrated in (1).

Following Bhatia (1993) and Akhtar (2000), the orthographic transcription used in this study represents gemination by two consonants, long vowels, which have their counterpart

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short vowels (a, u and i), by two vowels and the nasal vowels either by a single vowel along with the nasal consonant ‘n’ or a single vowel with the symbol of nasalization over it, when used as a morpheme. In order to differentiate some phonemes from each other, consonantal pairs of capital and small letters are used as /d̪/, /t̪/ and /r̪/ are represented with capitals in contrast with /d/, /t/ and /r/ with small letters.

(1)	a. <i>nasim-ne</i> Nasim-ERG S (Nasim read a book)	<i>KaTaab</i> book.3.s.F.NOM Ob	<i>paRii.</i> read -PST Vr
	b. <i>kaTaab</i> book.3.s.F.NOM Ob (Nasim read a book)	<i>nasim-ne</i> Nasim-ERG S	<i>paRii</i> read -PST Vr
	c. <i>paRii</i> read -PST Vr (Nasim read a book)	<i>nasim-ne</i> Nasim-ERG S	<i>kaTaab</i> book.3.s.F.NOM Ob
	d. <i>nasim-ne</i> Nasim-ERG S (Nasim read a book)	<i>paRii</i> read –past Vr	<i>kaTaab</i> book.3.s.F.NOM Ob

Though a constituent can occupy different positions in a structure, the canonical and unmarked word order is represented by (1) a. Other possibilities with non-canonical marked word order, given in (1) b-d have discourse effects. Basically, case markers with arguments help to identify function of the constituent in the sentence as the marker ‘ne’ does in the above given illustrations. Another ergative marker in Hindko is ‘sun’ which can replace ‘ne’.

In a dative construction, the dative argument usually precedes the direct object, though other possibilities exist in regard with its position as shown in (2):

2.	a. <i>nasim-sun</i> nasim-ERG (Nasim gave Nadeem a ball.)	<i>nadeem-nu</i> □ nadeem-DAT <i>diTii</i>	<i>golii</i> ball-3.s.F.NOM <i>golii</i>	<i>diTii</i> give-PST
	b. <i>nadeem-nu</i> □ nadeem-DAT (Nasim gave Nadeem a ball.)	<i>nasim-sun</i> nasim-ERG	<i>ball-3.s.F.NOM</i>	give-PST
	c. <i>nasim-sun</i> nasim-ERG (Nasim gave Nadeem a ball.)	<i>golii</i> ball-3.s.F.NOM	<i>nadeem-nu</i> □ nadeem-DAT	<i>diTii</i> give-PST

d. nasim-sun	diTii	golii	nadeem-nu□
nasim-ERG	give-PST	ball-3.s.F.NOM	nadeem-DAT
(Nasim gave Nadeem a ball.)			

All the illustrations in (1) b-d and (2) b-d demonstrate that the word order of Hindko is quite flexible due to its comprehensive case system. To some extent, the above given illustrations also hint out the exhaustiveness of the case system used in Hindko.

### Case Markers

As mentioned above, Hindko, like Punjabi, employs a detailed case system. Mostly, Nominal and noun phrases are overtly case- marked for the syntactic or semantic functions they perform. The markers, mostly used, that indicate the grammatical or semantic function of the nominal or the noun phrase are listed below (The list is not an exhaustive one as it includes only the frequently/commonly used markers.)

:

Case Marker	Case	Function
a. -ne/sun	ergative	subject
b. -∅	nominative	subject/object
c. -nu□	accusative	object
d. -nu□	dative	subject/object
e. -kolo□/thi□	instrumental	subject/oblique
f. -te/uutaa	locative	subject/oblique
g. -daa/de/dii/dia□	genitive	subject/object

### Agreement

The agreement pattern in Hindko, like Urdu and Punjabi, is quiet complex. The main verb agrees with one of its argument in gender and number. The main verb agrees with the subject and number, if the latter is nominative as illustrated in (3) to (4):

(3)	a. nandaa	nazam	likhDaa	hai.
	boy.M-NOM	poem.3.s. M-NOM	write-PRES. M	be-PRES
(The boy writes a poem.)				
	b. kuuRii	nazam	likhDii	hai.
	girl.F-NOM	poem.3.s. F-NOM	write-PRES. F	be-PRES
(The girl writes a poem.)				

(4)	a.. nande	nazam	likhDe	hain
	boys.PL-NOM	poem.3.s. M-NOM	write-PRES. M-PL	be-PRES.M-PL
(The boys write a poem.)				

b.	kuuria□	nazam	likhDia□	hain.
	girl.PL-NOM	poem.3.s. F-NOM	write-PRES. F.PL	be-PRES.F.PL.
(The girls write a poem.)				

If the subject is ‘non-nominative’, e.g. ergative, then the verb agrees with whatever nominal is in NOM case. This pattern is illustrated in (5) to (6):

- |     |                         |                  |               |
|-----|-------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| (5) | a. <i>nasim- ne</i>     | <i>bakraa</i>    | <i>anDiaa</i> |
|     | Nasim. M-ERG            | goat.3.s.M-NOM   | bring-Past.M. |
|     | (Nasim brought a goat.) |                  |               |
|     | b. <i>nasim- ne</i>     | <i>bakrii</i>    | <i>anDii</i>  |
|     | Nasim. M-ERG            | bakrii.3.s.F-NOM | bring-Past.F. |
|     | (Nasim brought a goat.) |                  |               |
- 
- |     |                         |                 |                  |
|-----|-------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| (6) | a. <i>nasim- ne</i>     | <i>kaTaab</i>   | <i>anDii</i>     |
|     | Nasim-ERG               | book.3.s.F-NOM  | bring-PRES.F.s.  |
|     | (Nasim brought a book.) |                 |                  |
|     | b. <i>nasim- ne</i>     | <i>kaTaaba□</i> | <i>anDia□</i>    |
|     | Nasim.-ERG              | book.3.PL.F-NOM | bring-PRES.PL.F. |
|     | (Nasim brought books.)  |                 |                  |

## Morphology

The morphology of Hindko is a concatenative one as inflectional as well as derivational morphemes are strung together in a linear way as given in (7-9):

(7)	<b>Singular</b>	<b>plural</b>
a.	<i>Chowk</i> (crossroad)	<i>Chowkan</i>
b.	<i>Zat</i> (caste)	<i>Zatan</i>
c.	<i>Gal</i> (talk)	<i>Gallan</i>

The illustrations in (7) a-c demonstrate that the plural morpheme (There are various rules involved in the pluralization of nouns. This rule is one of them. The discussion of all the rules will shift the focus of the study and take us far away, that's why, the discussion is limited. The morpheme ‘a□’ is also attached with the base forms of verbs to have the interrogative form.) ‘a□’ is strung with the roots to form the plural of the nouns. All these singular nouns are pluralized by the addition of the plural morpheme (a□). The suffixing of morphemes with the base form of the verb to inflect for different grammatical functions is also found in Hindko. The pattern is shown in (8) below:

(8) Base	Progressive/ Present	Past	Future	Interrogative
----------	-------------------------	------	--------	---------------

a. <i>PaR</i> (study)	<i>paRdaa</i>	<i>paRyaa</i>	<i>paRsii</i>	<i>paRRa□</i>
b. <i>SaR</i> (be jealous)	<i>saRDaa</i>	<i>saRyaa</i>	<i>saRsii</i>	<i>saRRa□</i>
c. <i>Tur</i> (move)	<i>turDaa</i>	<i>turyaa</i>	<i>tursii</i>	<i>tura□</i>
d. <i>Lang</i> (pass)	<i>langDaa</i>	<i>langyaa</i>	<i>langsii</i>	<i>langa□</i>
e. <i>Das</i> (tell)	<i>dasDaa</i>	<i>dasyaa</i>	<i>dassii</i>	<i>dasa□</i>

This data in (8) a-e indicate the use of different morphemes suffixed with the base form to inflect for various verb forms in order to perform different grammatical functions. The morpheme ‘daa’ is used to denote present tense and progressive aspect, the morpheme ‘yaa’, to form past tense, the morpheme ‘sii’ to express future and the morpheme ‘a□’ to ask a question. The base forms are used as imperative forms. This means that Hindko language resembles with Urdu and Punjabi in its morphological system as these languages also concatenate different morphemes to perform different grammatical functions as mentioned above.

The concatenation of morphemes in Hindko, like Urdu and Punjabi, is not restricted to inflectional morphology only as derivational morphemes are also affixed to derive new words as shown in (9):

(9) a. <b>Noun + Suffix</b>	=	<b>Adjective</b>
<i>kittaab</i> (book) - <i>ee</i>	=	<i>kittaabee</i> (bookish)
<i>khut</i> (trouble) - <i>ee</i>	=	<i>khuttee</i> (troubling)
<i>hassaab</i> (calculation) - <i>ee</i>	=	<i>hassaabee</i> (calculated)
 b. <b>Prefix + Adjective</b>	=	<b>Adjective</b>
<i>ghar</i> - <i>zarori</i> (necessary)	=	<i>gharzarori</i> (unnecessary)
<i>ghar</i> - <i>haazer</i> (present)	=	<i>gharhaazer</i> (abscent)
<i>ghar</i> - <i>mufeed</i> (useful)	=	<i>gharmufeed</i> (useless)

The illustrations in (9) a indicate the use of the class changing morpheme’-ee’ which is suffixed to derive adjectives from nouns while (9) b demonstrate the use of the class maintaining morpheme ‘ghar-’ which is prefixed to derive adjectives from adjective.

## Sound System

The sound system of Hindko, like other languages, comprises of vowels and consonants as given below:

### a. Vowels

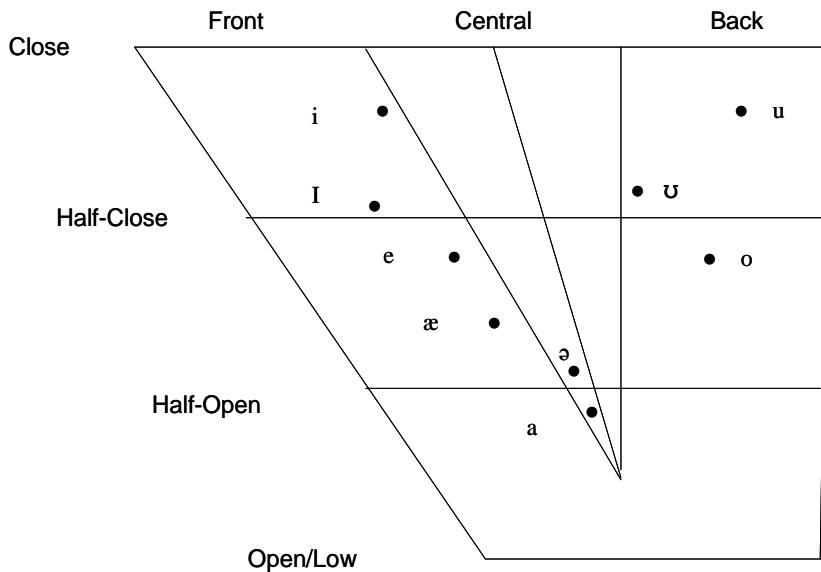
The vowel system of Hindko spoken in Muzaffrabad, consists of nine pure vowels, five nasal vowels and three diphthongs (Haroon, 2011). The pure vowels are shown below in the quadrilateral:

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In the light of this quadrilateral, the features of these vowels are as given under:

/i/	Front	Close	Spread	Long
/ɪ/	Front	Close	Spread	Short
/e/	Front	Half-Close	Spread	Long
/æ/	Front	Half-Open	Spread	Long
/ə/	Central	Half-Open	Neutral	Short
/ɑ/	Central	Open	Neutral	Long
/o/	Back	Half-close	Rounded	Long
/ʊ/	Back	Close	Rounded	Short
/u/	Back	Close	Rounded	Long

All the long vowels except /æ/ have nasal counter parts. Thus the nasal vowels are /ɪ̄/ ē/ ā/ ō/ and ū/. As far as diphthongs are concerned, these are not very productive. The closing diphthongs are /ɔɪ/ and /aɪ/ while centring diphthongs is /ʊa/.

## b. Consonants

Awan (2004) describes Hindko consonants using International Phonetics Association (IPA) symbols that are also found in Hindko spoken in Muzaffarabad (Haroon, 2011). These are given with the values stated against each as below:

Phoneme	Example	Distinctive Features
/P/	pee (drink)	voiceless bilabial stop

/P <sup>h</sup> /	<i>phuk</i> (take)	voiceless bilabial stop aspirated
/b/	<i>bol</i> (speak)	voiced bilabial stop
/t/	<i>tang</i> (hang)	voiceless alveolar stop
/t <sup>h</sup> /	<i>thag</i> (befool)	voiceless alveolar stop aspirated
/d/	<i>dad</i> (frog)	voiced alveolar stop
/t̪/	<i>Tol</i> (weigh)	voiceless dental stop
/t̪ <sup>h</sup> /	<i>thalii</i> (big plate)	voiceless dental stop aspirated
/d̪/	<i>daa</i> (trick)	voiced dental stop
/k/	<i>ke</i> (what)	voiceless velar stop
/k <sup>h</sup> /	<i>khun</i> (dig)	voiceless velar stop aspirated
/g/	<i>gaar</i> (mud)	voiced velar stop
/m/	<i>mak</i> (maiz)	voiced bilabial nasal stop
/n/	<i>nikkaa</i> (young)	voiced alveolar nasal stop
/ŋ/	<i>sing</i> (horn)	voiced velar nasal stop
/f/	<i>foTgii</i> (death)	voiceless labio-dental fricative
/v/	<i>vaarii</i> (turn)	voiced labio-dental fricative
/s/	<i>sukkaa</i> (dry)	voiceless alveolar fricative
/z/	<i>zaat</i> (caste)	voiced alveolar fricative
/θ/	<i>thaal</i> (big plate)	voiceless dental fricative
/ʃ/	<i>scharoi</i> (awkward)	voiceless palatal fricative
/χ/	<i>khat</i> (letter)	voiceless velar fricative
ɣ	<i>ghalat</i> (wrong)	voiced velar fricative
h	<i>haq</i> (right)	voiceless glottal fricative
/l/	<i>luk</i> (waist)	voiced alveolar lateral
/r/	<i>rakkaR</i> (barren)	voiced alveolar trill
/ʈ/	<i>RoR</i> (push down)	voiced retroflex flap
/tʃ/	<i>chaa</i> (pick up)	voiceless palatal affricate
/dʒ/	<i>jat</i> (hair)	voiced palatal affricate
/j/	<i>yaa</i> (or)	voiced palatal approximant

## Conclusion

This paper establishes that Hindko is an Indo-Aryan language that branches off the Indo-Iranian family and native speakers are found in different scattered parts of the Sub-continent. Structurally, it resembles Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi as the flexible word order, elaborated case system, concatenative nature of morphology and phoneme patterns are greatly like them.

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