

ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE IPA

Munji

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Munji (aka Munjani or Munjiwar; ISO 639-3: [mnj]) is spoken in the Kuran wa Munjan district of Badakhshan province in Afghanistan. Munji is classified as an Indo-European, Indo-Iranian, Iranian, Eastern, Southeastern, Pamir language (Lewis 2009). There are about 5,300 Munji speakers (Beyer & Beck 2011). There are two main dialects, which divide into the northern and southern halves of the valley (see Figure 1).¹ These dialects exhibit some regular sound changes and a small percentage of lexical differences. Munji speakers are aware of the differences, but there is no trouble in mutual understanding.

Previous studies of the language are by Morgenstierne (1938), Grjunberg (1972), and Beyer & Beck (2011). Since 2010, this author has had the opportunity to work with the Munji community in cooperation with the Afghan government to develop an orthography and literacy materials. The goal and contribution of this phonetic illustration is to share some new language data and to encourage further research in the Munji language.

There are four government schools in the Munji language area. Dari is the language of instruction. As of 2015, there was no cell phone reception in the Munji valley and no internet access. Many villages have some sort of small-scale hydro-electric power. This gives them some limited access to television. Only recently have young people from the Munji community begun studying in the national universities, but their number is increasing year by year.

The recordings and transcriptions given in this phonetic illustration are from a 20-year-old man, Abdul Jabar, who is a native speaker of Munji from the village of Shahran. He is representative of the northern dialect. Recordings from the southern dialect were given by Nek Mohammad, age 21 years, from the village of Tili. In order to receive better education, both Abdul Jabar and Nek Mohammad have spent part of each year outside of the Munji valley from the time they were about 13 years old. They have studied in both Ishkashem and Faizabad. They often travel back to the Munji valley, and have lived with other Munji students when away from their home area. The conclusions and observation in this Illustration are also based on numerous interactions with Munji speakers both in the Munji Valley and in Faizabad from September 2010 to November 2015.

¹ The geographic split between the northern and southern dialects is between the villages of Shah-e-Pari and Sar Jangal. The northern area is in the lower part of the valley and the southern area is in the upper part of the valley. The villages using the northern dialect include Magh Nawul, Wulf, Tagaw, Ghomand, Shahran, Dasht, Dehambe, Welo, Ghaz, and Shah-i-Pari. The villages using the southern dialect include Sar Jangal, Miandeh, Yeghdak, Panam, Qala-i-Shah, Tili, and Naw. This dialect distribution is also attested by Beyer & Beck (2011).

Consonants

	Labial	Labial-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Glottal
Plosive	p b		t d				c ɟ	k g	(q)	
Affricate				ʈʂ (ɖʐ)	ʈʃ ɖʒ	(ʂ) (ʐ)				
Nasal	m			n						
Flap				ɾ						
Fricative		f v		s z	ʃ ʒ	(ʂ) (ʐ)	ç	x ɣ		(h)
Approximant	w						j			
Lateral approximant				l						

Note: Rare or marginal phonemes are in parentheses.

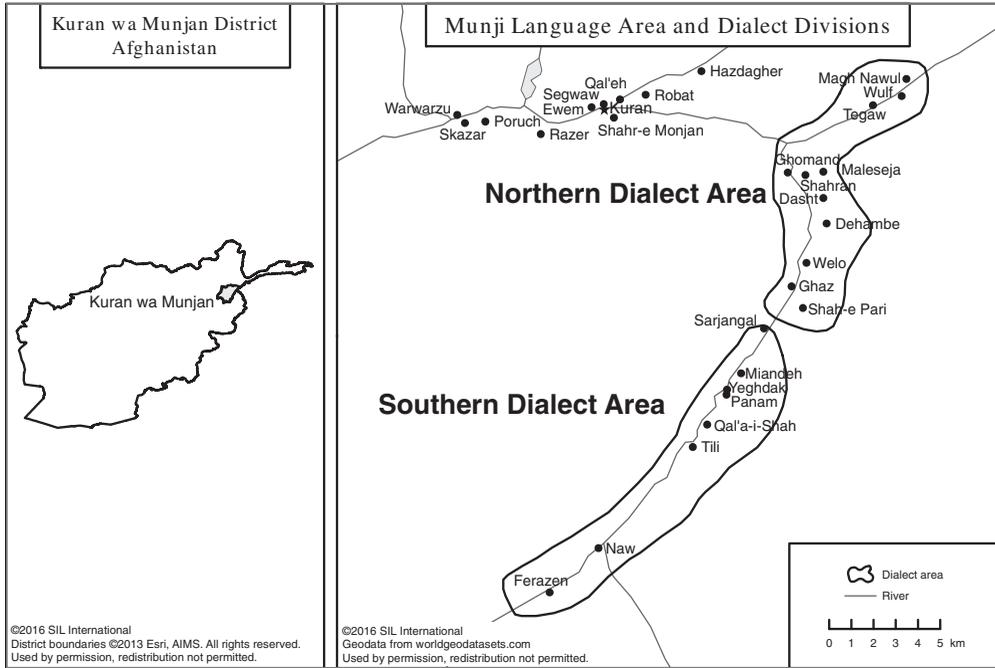


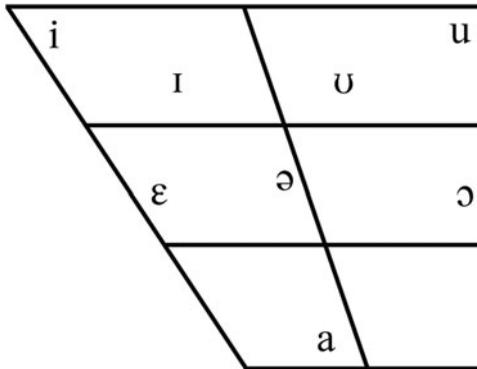
Figure 1 Map of the Munji language area.

PHONETIC	GLOSS	ORTHOGRAPHIC
b	'bravikə	sparrow بر هغیکه
p	pi'zaçi	sheep (m) پیز هینی
t	'tələ	pot تالا
d̪	d̪ɔɪŋ'gəl	forest جنگل
d̪z̪	rəd̪z̪	difficult رج
tʃ	tʃəm	eye چام
tʃ	pʃə	lukewarm پچه
h	həl'qa	ring حلقه
x	'xərə	donkey خره
d̪z̪	'əd̪ziə	waterproof skin container ادزیه
ts	'tsərəçə	type of bird خارگه
ʃ	'zʊŋɪk	boy زونبرگ
c	caj	house چهی
d	'damburə	string instrument دمبوره
r	'rəwsə	fox ر هوسه
z	'zʊŋɪk	boy زونبرگ
ʒ	'ʒɪŋkə	woman ژنکه
z̪	'zəçɪ	clothes ژغی
s	'sastə	mountain سهسته
ʃ	ʃu'le	rice pudding شوله
ʃ	'ʃixərə	donkey (f) بسیخره
ç	çu'li	Tili (village name) بنولی
ɣ	ɣəlf	dog غالف
f	'fiə	shovel فیا

v	vɪz'ni	pillow	قزنی
q	qul	puddle	قول
k	'kəwɪə	dove	کویا
g	gu'fɛ	corner	گوشه
l	lə'vər	door	لڤر
m	maj'mun	monkey	مهيمون
n	nax'tʃɪr	ibex	نهچير
w	'wari	lamb	وهری
j	jur	fire	يور

The phoneme /q/ is only found in borrowed words from Dari and Arabic, but these are commonly used in natural Munji speech. The /h/ also occurs in borrowed words, and is sometimes realized as [ʔ]. Word-initial vowels are preceded by [h] and [ʔ] in free variation. The phonemes /d̪z/, /t̪s/, and /d̪z/ are quite rare. Morgenstierne (1938) and Grjuenberg (1972) document a phonemic contrast between both the retroflex sibilants /ʂ/ and /ʐ/ post-alveolar sibilants /ʃ/ and /ʒ/, but this contrast has largely been lost – mostly likely because of the influence of Dari. The palatal stops /c/ and /ɟ/ and the voiceless palatal fricative /ç/ stand out as prominent and characteristic phonetic features of Munji.

Vowels



	PHONETIC	GLOSS	ORTHOGRAPHIC
i	zit	yellow	زیت
ɪ	'rɪfə	broom	رفه
u	ju	one	یو
ʊ	xu'sʊr	father-in-law	خسر
ə	'pəmə	avalanche	پمه
ε	'nɛnə	mother	نپنه
ɔ	pɔp	grandfather	پاپ
a	'sastə	mountain	سهسته

There are five long vowels, /i u ε ɔ a/, and three short vowels, /ɪ ʊ ə/. Both long and short vowels may be stressed. In unstressed syllables, there is a tendency toward neutralization of short vowels.

Stress

Stress is usually on the first syllable of nouns, but there are a number of exceptions where the stress placement is part of the underlying form of word and is not predictable. Words are

stressed on their stems and not on their suffixes. However, the negative verbal prefix, [t̪ʊ-], is always stressed. Otherwise, two-syllable verb stems are stressed on the second syllable. For a number of verbs, the present tense stem contains one syllable and the past tense stem contains two syllables, so the stress placement corresponds to a difference in the past and non-past stems (/wɪʃc-əm/ 'stand up.prs.1sg' /wɪʃcəj-əm/ 'stand up.pst.1sg').

Conventions

Voiceless stops /p, t, k/ are aspirated in all environments, and strongly aspirated in word-initial position. Voiced plosives and fricatives sometimes devoice word-finally (/pərg/ [pərk] 'mouse'). Nasals directly followed by a stop or affricate assimilate to the same place of articulation (/ʌmɪŋjə/ [ʌmɪŋjə] 'apple'). /c/ and /ʒ/ are sometimes realized as [cç] and [ʒj] (e.g. /zɔn'ɪk/ [zɔn'ɪk] 'boy'). The phoneme /r/ is pronounced as [r̥] when it occurs directly before a /t/ or /d/ (/lurd/ [lur̥t] 'run away.pst.3sg'). In word-initial position, the phoneme /j/ is often pronounced [ʔ] when the following vowel is [i] (/jɪst/ [ʔɪst] 'come.prs.3sg'). The phonemes /ts/ and /dz/ occur in only a handful of words, and some speakers pronounce these sounds as [tʃ] and [dʒ] (e.g. /ʌdʒiə/ [ʌdʒiə] 'waterproof skin container'). In the northern dialect, word-medial and word-final /g/ becomes [ɣ] (e.g. /jɔwɣa/ [jɔwɣa] 'water'), but both dialects maintain the distinction between /g/ and /ɣ/ in word-initial position. In the southern dialect, the sequence /nd/ becomes [d] (e.g. /ʎɔndəm/ [ʎɔdəm] 'wheat'). Many words show an alternation between [i] in the northern dialect and [u] in the southern dialect (e.g. [tʃfɪr], [tʃfur] 'four'). The word-final vowel /ɔ/ in the northern dialect becomes [a] in the southern dialect (e.g. /fiɔ/ [fia] 'shovel'). The voiced palatal fricative /ʒ/ in the northern dialect is pronounced as the palatal approximant [j] southern dialect when it occurs after /l/ (e.g. /pəlʒə/ [pəljə] 'kick').

Transcribed passage

'The North Wind and the Sun'

The North Wind and the Sun were disputing which was the stronger, when a traveler came along wrapped in a warm cloak. They agreed that the one who first succeeded in making the traveler take his cloak off should be considered stronger than the other. Then the North Wind blew as hard as he could, but the more he blew the more closely did the traveler fold his cloak around him; and at last the North Wind gave up the attempt. Then the Sun shone out warmly, and immediately the traveler took off his cloak. And so the North Wind was obliged to confess that the Sun was the stronger of the two.

Phonetic transcription

'məsɔbɪqə zə 'mɪrɔcən wə 'wɪjən zə 'saran
 ju 'wəxtə wi zə 'saran 'vɪjə wə 'mɪrɔ 'vɪjəj. jaf mə'bajən 'xəsəran məsɔbɪ'qə
 'kərat kə wi'zaram 'kiəm zur ʔast. bad ju musə'fər 'zʊŋɪɣə ʔə'ɣaj. ju 'vərəɣə
 ʔə'ɣʊst. 'wɪən zə 'saran wə 'mɪrɔcən fɛxatɪət kə məsɔbɪ'qə 'kənət 'kiəm zur ast
 kə və 'vərəɣə zə 'zʊŋɪɣən xɪʃc. bad 'zɔwən 'artʃi kə wə 'wɪən pəf kər pəf kər
 zʊŋɪɣɔcən və 'vərəɣəʃ qə'ɛmɛ ɣrɪvd wə və 'vərəɣə vɪ'dɪrə 'kərə ʃɪkəkəkər. bad
 'zɔwən nə'wət nə 'mɪrɔcən rə'si. 'wəxtə kə 'mɪrɔcən ɡar'mi kər wə musə'fər
 zʊŋɪɣɔcən və 'vərəɣə 'wədəm lɪ'ɣændə vɪ'dɪr. 'zɪmən mə'lum ʃi kə 'mɪrɔ
 nəz'bət nə 'wɪən zə 'saran 'qawi ʔast.

Orthographic transcription²

مسابقه ژه میراکهن و ویهن ژه سهرهن

یو وخت وی ژه سهرهن ښه و میرا ښه. بهف مابین خسرهن مسابقه کرهت که وژرهم کیبم زور هست. بهد یو مسافر زونبرگ آغه. یو فرگه آغست. ویهن ژه سهرهن و میراکهن فختهتبهت که مسابقه کنهت کیبم زور هست که ښه فرگه ژه زونبرگ خیشچ. بهد ژاوهن هر چی که ویهن پف کر پف کر زونبرگاکهن ښه فرگه قایمه غرقد و ښه فرگه ښیره چکرکر. بهد ژاوهن نوت نه میراکهن رسی. وخت که میراکهن گرمی کر وه مسافر زونبرگاکهن ښه فرگه ودم لغبنده ښیر. ژه مهن معلوم شی که میرا نسبت نه ویهن ژه سهرهن قوی هست.

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² This represents the working orthography that Munji people are using in their vernacular literacy courses. The initial orthography was developed in 2011 and slightly modified in 2014 on the basis of input from the linguistics department of the Academy of Science of Afghanistan.