**COMPARISON OF TWO DIALECTS OF PASHTO, SPOKEN IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN: KANDAHARI DIALECT AND YUSUFZAI DIALECT[[1]](#footnote-1)Ψ**

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**Abstract**

*Pashto language, spoken in two countries Afghanistan and Pakistan, has numerous dialects. Existing studies show maximum five groups of the varieties of Pashto. Geographical and political factors followed by the absence of a comprehensive study of the Pashto dialects caused divided orthography and lack of unified literary and standard dialect in Pashto. This article mainly focuses on the classification, differences and literary and social status of the two mentioned dialects. Kandahari and Yusufzai dialects have been analyzed and compared mainly on phonological bases.*

**Keywords:** Pashto Dialects, Yusufzai Dialect, Kandahari Dialect, Pashto Varieties, Pashto Standard Dialect.

**Introduction**

Pashto is a prolific language with respect to dialects. There are many dialects in Pashto. No proper study of all of the Pashto dialects has been conducted. Ghilzai and the people of Peshawar and Swat have least dialectal variations but the central part of Pashtun belt has great varieties of dialects. The study of various dialects is very important for formation of national and literary language. The study of the Pashto dialects is so poor that still the exact number of the Pashto dialects is not known. N.A. Dvgryankov has mentioned forty dialects in the main Pashto speaking districts of Afghanistan.[[3]](#footnote-3) That is why the process of the formation of one national and literary language is quite complicated. We have literary standard, regional standard, and prestige dialect in Pashto. Pashto dialects should be studied on geographical as well as on tribal basis. The study on tribal basis is important because many tribes have shifted from one geographical location to another and thus they have influenced the dialect of the geographical area to which they have moved. Slight differences are found from tribe to tribe in grammar and pronunciation.[[4]](#footnote-4) Different scholars have classified the dialects of Pashto in various groups. This classification ranges from two to five groups. It is obvious that this classification does not cover all of the varieties of Pashto language spoken in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Among these dialects two dialects have been declared as prestigious dialects by the scholars. They are the dialect of Kandahar and the dialect of Peshawar or Yusufzai dialect. There is no standard literary dialect decided by the writers of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Although in this regard they have been trying for almost the last seventy years, but still the Pashto writers of Afghanistan and Pakistan have not agreed upon a mutually accepted literary and standard dialect of Pashto.

**Dialect**

The debate on the difference between language and dialect is very old. It is necessary to introduce dialect and differentiate it from language. Dialect has its etymology in Classical Greek language where it referred to conversation, way of speaking and discourse. Later on it was identified as a regional variety.[[5]](#footnote-5) A manner of speech which is affiliated to some country, region and people and have differences of this manner from the people of other parts. Despite these differences in the manner of speech they have one radical language the substance of which they use.[[6]](#footnote-6) If people of the one language speak in a different way but they are able to understand each other, it means that they are speaking dialects of the same language. On the other hand if they are not in a position to know each other language, they speak different languages. In the classification of the varieties of a language non-linguistic factors like culture, history, and politics also play important role. Besides these non-linguistic factors, the linguistic criteria is mutual intelligibility.[[7]](#footnote-7) It is also important that this linguistic feature i.e. intelligibility is also influenced by some other non-linguistic factors like population size, exposure, and education etc. there are some linguistic factors also exist that influence mutual intelligibility such as vocabulary replacement and sound change.[[8]](#footnote-8) One must start from regional variation for proper exploration of the meaning of the dialect. But to know about regional variation it is important to understand social variation. Social differences followed by linguistic variation is reflected in speech communities. There is diversity in the manners of speech among speech communities like differences in the manners of eating, having fun and ways of dressing. These social difference are being influenced by ethnic identity, wealth, education, power, social identity and many other factors. Varieties of speech among social groups is called sociolects. It is a subject dealt in sociolinguistics. But these social varieties are also important in the studies of dialects.[[9]](#footnote-9)

**Dialect and accent**

There are many aspects of differentiating dialects such as phonological, phonetic, syntactic, lexical, morphological, semantic and so on. There is another term, accent, which has often a complementary relation with the term dialect. Differences of dialects are in lexicon and grammar while accent has phonological and especially phonetic differences.[[10]](#footnote-10)

**Accent**

Accent is not only associated with pronunciation. It also has psychological and social meaning. Accent has dialectal features like syntactic, morphological and lexical variations, interfaced with the phonological and phonetic features. Features of dialects also involve age, gender, social class, and geographical factors.[[11]](#footnote-11)

**Causes of Linguistic Varieties**

Expansion of speech communities and language change are main causes of dialect differences. [[12]](#footnote-12) Language change is universal. All languages change all the time. [[13]](#footnote-13) Mountains, rivers, distances, social, economic and cultural divisions are main factors of dialect differences and linguistic varieties.[[14]](#footnote-14) At this process of dialectal and linguistic varieties a point of divergence comes where there is no mutual intelligibility and thus comes into being separate languages. [[15]](#footnote-15) There are also examples that for centuries we see in a persistent and stable way dialect differences. In this case there is no disappearance, decline and language divergence.[[16]](#footnote-16)

**Pashto Language**

In the classification of languages Pashto has been placed to the North-Eastern group within the Iranian branch of Indo-European languages.[[17]](#footnote-17)Pashto is a language spoken in two neighbouring countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan. It enjoys the status of the official language in Afghanistan where it was promoted to the status of an official language in 1936 by a royal decree.[[18]](#footnote-18) In Pakistan it is mainly spoken in tribal areas near Pak-Afghan border and in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan. Pashto has also enjoyed the status of the official language in the then Swat State (1915-1969), now a district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. It was declared as official language in Swat State in 1937 by the then ruler of Swat State Miangul Abdul Wadud.[[19]](#footnote-19)

**Division of Pashto Dialects**

While studying varieties of Pashto language, one should be clear about the varieties of Pashto spoken in both the countries i.e. Pakistan and Afghanistan. Till date there is no thorough study of the dialects of Pashto. However some linguists and experts have formed different groups of the dialects of Pashto. They have divided the Pashto dialects into two, three, four and five groups. Among them some have studied the dialects of Pashto language in Pakistan (Hallberg:1992) and some have studied the varieties in Afghanistan (Dvgryankov) and some have studied the dialects of Pashto language of both of the countries. Most of the authors have established their division of Pashto dialects primarily on phonological basis because the morphological variations among the various dialects, especially among dialects of the most extreme of north-eastern and the dialects of south-western are relatively of no importance. While differentiating these varieties not only common words, their meaning, phonetics and lexical features analyzed but syntactical and morphological forms and structures have also been discussed.[[20]](#footnote-20)

As described earlier that no thorough study of Pashto dialects exists but the available studies have discussed mainly the following varieties of Pashto: Afridi,Bangash, Banuchi, Dawarwola, Durrani, Ghilzai, Kakar, Kandahar, Khattak, Khogyani, Khosti, Marwat-Betani, Masidwola, , Sherani, Taniwola, Wardak, Wazirwola, Yusufzai, Zadran.

**Main differences among the Dialects of Pashto**

There are phonological, lexical and slight morphological differences among the different varieties of Pashto. Most of the experts have focused on phonetical differences. If we focus on phonological differences, we can see the following main differences among various Pashto dialects.

1. Difference exists between the southern, western and north-eastern dialects. In these dialects the first two have preserved the *ṣ̣̣̌* and *ẓ̌* phonemes and the last one has developed these phonemes into x and g.
2. In the dialects of the east-central we see vowel shift.
3. In the north-eastern dialect we see an assimilation of the dental affricates *c,j* into *s, z*
4. Assimilation, dissimilation and metathesis are also found as differences among various Pashto dialects.
5. Palatalization has also influenced the different varieties of Pashto.

An overview of different groups of dialects are given below.

**Two Parts Division**

First of all Major Raverty (1859) has referred to two dialects of Pashto that are eastern and western Pashto.[[21]](#footnote-21) Grierson has also divided the dialects of Pashto into two main groups .Accordingly they divided Pashto into two regional based varieties which are North-east and of South-west groups. They divided these two dialects on the basis of the pronunciation of certain letters. The Pashtuns of the North-east pronounce ښ as *ḳḥ* and ږ as *g̣*, while the people of the South-west pronounce them *ṣḥ* and *ẓḥ,* respectively.[[22]](#footnote-22) N. A. Dvgryankov has also mentioned two existing groups of Pashto dialects that are Western (Kandahar) “Pashto” and Eastern (Peshavar) “Pakhto”.[[23]](#footnote-23) Shafeev has also described the two main dialects of Pashto. Among them one is eastern dialect which is centred in Peshawar and the other is the western dialect that is centred in Kandahar. [[24]](#footnote-24) The scholars who have divided Pashto dialects into two main groups, primarily they are focusing on the differences of the pronunciation of the letters ښ and ږ . According to Anne David Boyle the eastern generally refers to both Northwest and Northeast, and western means southwest and southeast.

The two parts division is also based on hard and soft dialects. A number of authors have pointed out the distinction between the two dialects as hard and soft. Although these distinctions are helpful but these are not adequate to show all of the important differences among these varieties. Hard and soft dialects division is mainly based on the second consonant phoneme of the name of the language. Areas where it is pronounced as *Kh* is considered of hard dialect and where it is pronounced as *sh* is called soft dialect. While considering two parts division in the Pashto speaking area of Pakistan, there are two main dialects namely the Yusufzai dialect and Khattak dialect. Among these dialects the former is called hard and the latter is called soft dialect. In 2019 De Chiara and Septfonds published *Le verbe Pashto.* It alsoproviding a quick review of the main differences among Pashto dialects. Particularly its third chapter “Les sources de variation dialectale” Is relevant to the division of Pashto dialects.[[25]](#footnote-25)

**Three Parts Division**

N.A. Dvgrynakov has divided the Pashto dialects of Afghanistan into three groups. He has also suggested that these groups should be named after big provinces , where the majority of the people speak these dialects. Thus he has formed three groups of the dialects of Pashto spoken in Afghanistan. These groups are: Kandaharian (Western), Nangraharian (Eastern) and Paktian (Southern). [[26]](#footnote-26) Habibullah Tegey has also described three dialects of Pashto. They have named them the western dialect or the dialect of Kandahar, the central dialect or the dialect of Kabul, and the eastern dialect or dialect of Nangrahar.[[27]](#footnote-27)

**Four Parts Division**

Henderson in one of his articles *Four Varieties of Pashto*, has classified the dialects of Pashto spoken in Afghanistan and Pakistan, into four groups. According to his classification these dialects are spoken in Kandahar, Quetta, Northest part, Peshawar. This classification of Henderson is on the basis of the second consonant in the name of the language i.e پښتو andپشتو . these four varieties are Pǝṣto (Kandahar), Pǝšto (Quetta), Pǝc̣to (northeast part of the Pashto area) and Paxto (Peshawar).[[28]](#footnote-28) Mackenzie has described four varieties of Pashto that are South-west (Kandahar), South-east (Quetta), North-west (Central Ghilzai) and North-east (Yusufzai) dialect. **[[29]](#footnote-29)** Hallberg has identified four groups of dialects of Pashto spoken only in Pashtun areas of Pakistan. Among these groups, three are clearly identifiable and he has termed the fourth one as “less distinct group”.[[30]](#footnote-30) The four groups of Pashto dialects identified by by Hallberg are: 1.Northern Group[[31]](#footnote-31) 2. Southern Group/Baluchistan Group[[32]](#footnote-32) 3. Central Group[[33]](#footnote-33)/ Waziristan and Southern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly known as N.W.F.P) 4. Middle Settled Area/Middle Tribal Group[[34]](#footnote-34).

There are unique qualities found in other dialects of Pashto for example qualities of Waziri dialect are not covered in this four part division. Therefore Four parts division of Pashto dialects is unable to cover and show all qualities of Pashto dialect so it is not sufficient to exhibit the qualities of all of the varieties of the Pashto dialects.

**Five Parts Division**

The latest classification of Pashto dialects is five parts division. This classification has been made by Anne Boyle David in his *Descriptive Grammar of Pashto and its Grammar.* A set of five dialects described in this grammar are: Southwest, Southeast, Northwest, Northeast, and Middle dialect. The southwest dialect is spoken in Kandahar, Farah and Heart. The tribe which speak this dialect is called South Ghilzai. Southeast dialect is spoken in southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan including Quetta. This dialect is spoken by the Sherani, Bannuchi, Wazir, Kakar, Achakzi, Tarin, and other tribes. Northwest dialect of Pashto language is spoken by central Ghilzai and Afridi tribes living in east and northeast Afghanistan and Jalalabad. Northeast dialect is spoken in Peshawar, part of Nangrahar province (Afghanistan) and northern parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by Shinwari, Yusufzai, Mohmand, northeast Ghilzai, Hazara, Bangash, Orakzai and some Afridi tribes.[[35]](#footnote-35) In the above mentioned five dialects, the first four are called dialects of general Pashto. There is a correspondence between /i/ and /e/ in closed-class words between the dialect of Southwest i.e. Kandahar, Farah and Heart and Northwest and Northeast dialects. Examples of correspondence between /i/ and /e/ in closed-class words, have been taken from Anne David Boyle’s grammar, are given below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Southwest** | **Northwest, Northeast** |
| پوري pori ‘to’ | پورې pore ‘to’ |
| باندي bāndi ‘on’ | باندې bānde ‘on’ |
| کي ki ‘in’ | کې ke ‘in’ |
| لاندي lāndi ‘under’ | لاندې lānde ‘under’ |
| مي mi ‘I, me’ | مې me ‘I,me’ |
| دي di ‘you’ | دې de ‘you’ |
| تاسي tāsi ‘you’ | تاسې tāse ‘you’ |

**Dialect Reduction and Emergence of New Dialects**

We see that dialects are being reduced as well as new dialects are being emerged. That is why traditional dialectologists collect samples and preserve them to preserve them from being lost.[[36]](#footnote-36) Main factors of the reduction of dialects are industrial development, fast communication, mass education and personal mobility. Many non-standard urban and rural dialects are now disappearing and declining that cause a gradual contraction of dialects. But many older linguistic varieties are sustained. The main cause of this sustainability is force of local identity.[[37]](#footnote-37) New dialects are also constantly emerged.[[38]](#footnote-38)

**Comparison of Kandahari And Yusufzai Dialect**

Henderson has written that only in the *ṣ* area there is an eight-member contrastive set /š ž ṣ ẓ k g x γ /, corresponding to the orthography. In rest of the regions, *g* corresponds to Kandahar *ẓ*, and various other sound types correspond to Kandahar *ṣ*, as shown below.

Kandahar Pǝṣto ṣ ẓ š ž k g x γ

Quetta Pǝšto š ž š ž k g x γ

NE Pǝc̣to c̣ g š ž k g x γ

Peshawar Paxto x g š ž k g x γ[[39]](#footnote-39)

Mackenzie has compared the dialect of Kandahar with other dialects in the following table. **[[40]](#footnote-40)**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Sw**  **(Kandahar)** | **SE**  **(Quetta)** | **NW**  **(Central Ghilzai)** | **NE**  **(Yusufzai)** |
| 1 | c [ts] | C | (s) | (s) |
| 2 | J [dz] | J | (z) | (z) |
| 3 | ž [ᴣ] | ž | ž | (ǰ) 1 |
| 4 | ẓ [ᶼ] | (ž) 2 | γ̌ 3 [j] | (g) |
| 5 | Ṣ [ᶳ] | (š) 2 | x̌ 4 [c̣] | (x) |

From this table it is obvious that when we go from south-western to the north-eastern, we see ‘a steady depletion’ in consonant phonemes.**[[41]](#footnote-41)** In the above table the graphemes used for these phonemes from 1 to 5 are written respectively as ښ ږ ژ ځ څ . Main difference in Kandahari and Yusufzai dialect is in the following consonant phonemes.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Kandahari Dialect** | **Yusufzai Dialect** |
| s͎ ښ | خ |
| z͎ ږ | ګ |
| Ts څ | څ/س |
| Dz ځ | ز |

z̄ ژ ج

Phonemes of Kandahari dialect are related to the existing writing system is that of the dialect of Kandahar. There are special graphemes in Pashto for the clusters of *ts* and *dz*. These graphemes are respectively څ and ځ . Herbert Penzl has declared the dialect of Kandahar as prestigious dialect. In this regard he has written that the dialect of Kandahar has the retroflexed voiceless and voiced sibilants ss and zz, which are written with the modified symbols s, sh, and z, zh respectively. This patterning of ss, s, sh, and of zz, z, zh is found only in the Kandahar dialect. There is a close correlation between the graphic pattern and phonemic pattern of the dialect of Kandahar. Therefore, it is assumed that these graphemes have been created in Kandahar. That is why Kandahar is considered as a cradle for Pashto alphabets.[[42]](#footnote-42)

Henderson also says that Pǝṣto (dialect of Kandahar) is the most conservative dialect among Pashto dialects. According to Henderson, it is an isolated dialect and that is why it has not been influenced by other dialects. Hence we can call it a conservative dialect. The cause of remaining an isolated dialect is that this area has not been a trade route. [[43]](#footnote-43) While in a broader sense classifying Pashto dialects in Afghanistan, there are three major divisions of Pashto dialects. They are western dialect or Kandahari dialect, central dialect, and eastern dialect or Ningrahar dialect. The Kandahari dialect is spoken in south west Afghanistan and in a few parts of Baluchistan. The Khattak tribe living in Kohat district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, also speaks Kandahari dialect. In the Waziri dialect there are some features of the Kandahari dialect, especially the same set of retroflex consonants.[[44]](#footnote-44) Each Pashtun feel pride in his own dialect. However the dialect of Kandahar is generally considered a prestigious dialect.[[45]](#footnote-45)

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# Yusufzai Dialect

Yusufzai live to the north-east of Peshawar. It has been recorded by many linguists and grammarians that *ts* and *dz* are pronounced s and z, respectively.but it is not the fact. In many areas of the Yusufzai dialect *ts* is pronounced as *ts* and not the *s*. when I collected data from Swat district and analyzed it, I found this phoneme as *ts* but *s* is also used instead of *ts*. The phoneme ږ is articulated like ګ . In glottal stops phonemes the *q* is pronounced in many areas of the Yusufzai dialect like Swat and Dir etc. However in some areas it is pronounced as *k*. In some areas of the Yusufzai dialect like Mardan and Swabi districts the velar spirant *kh* is exchanged with glottal *h*. the labial stop phoneme *p* and the labial spirant phoneme *f* is also differentiated in some areas of the Yusufzai dialect like Swabi and Mardan. There are more sub-dialects in the main Yusufzai dialects. Among them some have been pointed out by the researchers. They are the dialects of Swat,[[46]](#footnote-46) Bune[[47]](#footnote-47) and Khalil.[[48]](#footnote-48)

D.N. Mackenzie does not agree with the statement of Penzl and termed the dialect of Kandahar an ‘aberrant dialect’.[[49]](#footnote-49) Morgenstierne is also of the opinion that the prestigious and conservative dialect is that of the Yusufzais. In this regard he has written that it has great possibility that the Yusufzais and Mohmands have tendency towards velarization. This tendency has spread from these tribes towards other neighbouring tribes. When, in sixteenth century, the orthography of Pashto was fixed, the distinction between *ṣ̣̣̌*, *ẓ̌* and *x*, *g* has preserved among the north-eastern tribes, who were probably the creators of Pashto literature. It may be noticed that a similar velarization of *ṣ̣̣̌*, *ẓ̌* is found in some neighboring Dardic dialects.[[50]](#footnote-50)

But later on in an article, Mackenzie comes to a conclusion about the conservative and prestigious dialect among the dialects of Pashto. He has stated that although all the consonant phonemes expressed in the standard alphabet have been preserved by the dialect of Kandahar and the north-east dialect has abandoned a number of consonant phonemes but has preserved the vowels in its morphological positions. Thus he has inferred that in an older stage of Pashto, there was a combination of ‘south-western’ consonant system with a ‘north-eastern’ vowel phoneme system.[[51]](#footnote-51)

**Advantages of standard variety speakers**

Although all of the sociolinguists are of the opinion that the notion of inferior and superior dialects has no linguistic fact but based on social prejudice. There are unfair advantages to the speakers of standard variety. That is the reason that some people are “improving” their speech for measurable benefits. Teaching of standard dialects also increase job opportunities for students that is why it is being taught in schools.[[52]](#footnote-52)

**Conclusion**

Pashto is prolific in dialects. According to the available studies, Pashto dialects have been classified into five groups. Further investigation and modern tools of dialectology are needed to employ for a comprehensive study of all of the dialects of Pashto. It is necessary to initiate a scientific study of all of the Pashto dialects in Afghanistan as well as in Pakistan. The study of the different dialects of Pashto will enrich the vocabulary of Pashto language. One should bring closer all the dialects to each other and their encouragement in the literature for bringing forward the diversity of different tribal cultures. Thus the penetration of the various dialects will be promoted in the literary Pashto.

Kandahari and Yusufzai dialects have their own peculiar features. After investigating all of the Pashto dialects a standard and literary dialect is needed to be used for literary works according to standard and unified orthography. There are many problems in the formation of standard and literary dialect of Pashto. While increasing the literacy rate the Pashto speakers have a natural inclination towards a phonetic spellings instead of standard and mutually agreed upon ones. Lack of Language policy is also a hurdle in the formation of a standard dialect. The Durand line (border between Pakistan and Afghanistan) is also an effective factor in the formation of a standard dialect and use of a unified orthography.

From the comparison of the two dialect I came to the conclusion that there are some phonemes articulated by the Yusufzais in the northeast areas of Swat and Dir etc. but these phonemes have not been identified by the researchers because no proper dialectal study has been conducted. So it is obvious that there are relic areas in the Yusufzai belt that have nearly all the phonemes of Pashto. As pointed out by the researchers that the Kandahar dialect has preserved the consonants phonemes and the Yusufzai dialect has maintained majority of the vowels. As told earlier that dental affricate *ts* is present in Swat and Dir but it has been lost in lower districts of the Yusufzai dialect. From the history of literary tradition, maintaining of vowel sounds, and having nearly all consonant phonemes in undiscovered relic areas, one can conclude that Yusufzai dialect or the dialect of Peshawar can be a standard and literary dialect for Pashto language.

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