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SEGMENTAL PHONOLOGY OF MAITHILI URDU (ALESSER KNOWN LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN THE NORTHERN DISTRICTS OF BIHAR)

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Abstract: This paper on the Mithilanchal Urdu, a dialect of the Indo-Aryan language family, would be an interesting study in the time of the Corona Pandemic, as it may be considered a minority language or dialect and such languages and dialects have been found to be especially vulnerable in the times of calamities like the present COVID-19 pandemic. However, this paper would basically provide a baseline upon which post-pandemic studies can be based for exploring the effect of the pandemic. The present study reflects the segmental phonology of Maithili Urdu, a dialect of the Indo-Aryan language family, spoken mainly in the Mithilanchal region of the state of Bihar in India. Maithili Urdu does not have its own script or literature, yet it has maintained an oral history over many centuries. It has contributed in enriching the Maithili, Hindi and Urdu language and literature very profoundly. There are ten vowels in Maithili Urdu. It would be very interesting to know that out of these, there are four front vowels, four back vowels, and two central vowels. Lip rounding is not distinctive, but only the back vowels are rounded. Out of these ten vowels, three are short and seven are long. Length, thus, is a distinctive feature in Maithili Urdu, where short and long vowels show full phonological opposition in all positions. These are all pure vowels, non-nasalized. All vowels in Maithili Urdu can be nasalized. Consonantal phonemes in Maithili Urdu show four-way contrast between voiceless and voiced and unaspirated and aspirated at bilabial, dental, retroflex, palatal, velar, and glottal places of articulation. Phonetically, affricates also behave like stops. Similarly, the taps, laterals, and nasals also show a two-way contrast between unaspirated and aspirated. Aspiration, thus, is an overriding characteristic of the Maithili Urdu sound system. This study has greatly benefited from the similar work done by Dixit, 1963; Halle & Mohannan 1985; Masud Husain Khan, 1986; Hyman, 2003. In this paper, a brief overview of segmental phonology of Maithili Urdu will be presented wherein vowels and consonants and their phonotactic behavior will be described in detail.

Keywords: Biolinguistic diversity, Language Acquisition, Language Transmission, Linguistics Domains.

I. INTRODUCTION

The present work is a grammatical description of Mithilanchal Urdu, a dialect of the Indo-Aryan language family, spoken by around twenty percent speakers mainly in the Mithilanchal region of the state of Bihar in India. Besides, it is also spoken by a majority of the Mithilanchal diaspora community. Very rich in literary style, Mithilanchal Urdu has maintained

a literary history over many decades. It has contributed in enriching the Hindi and Urdu language and literature very profoundly.

II. Geography

Mithilanchal is the historic name for the large area of Bihar that includes roughly present day Rajsamand, Bhilwara, Udaipur, and Chittaurgarh districts of Rajasthan state of India. Mithilanchal region lies across the Aravalli mountain range to the northwest; Ajmer lies to the north; Wagar region of Rajasthan and Gujarat lies to the south; Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh state lies to the southeast; and the Harauti region of Rajasthan lies to the east. The northern part of Mithilanchal is a gently sloping plain, drained by the Banas river and its tributaries, which empty northwest into the Chambal river, a tributary of the Yamuna river. The southern part of the region is hilly and marks the divide between the Banas and its tributaries and the headwaters of the Sabarmati and Mahi rivers and their tributaries, which drain south into the Gulf of Cambay through Gujarat state.

Mithilanchal has a tropical climate. Rainfall averages 660 millimeter per annum and is generally higher in the southwest and lower in the northeast of the region. Over ninety percent of the rain typically falls between June to September every year, during the southwest monsoon. The region is part of the Kathiawar-Gir dry deciduous forests' eco-region. Protected areas include the Jaisamand Wildlife Sanctuary, the Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, the Bassi Wildlife Sanctuary and the Sitamata Game Sanctuary.

III. Sociolinguistic data

The term "Mithilanchal Urdu" literally refers to someone who hails from or is an inhabitant of the Mithilanchal region in Rajasthan. Mithilanchal Urdu people prefer to speak Mithilanchal Urdu dialect of Rajasthani, but nowadays Hindi is gradually replacing Rajasthani as it is the medium of instruction at all levels. Moreover, one will find English speakers in all the major cities and in remote villages too.

Hinduism is the main religion of Mithilanchal region and other significant religious groups in this area are the Jains and the Muslims. There are many local folk heroes and local deities.

IV. Existing research

Though Mithilanchal Urdu had contributed profoundly to Rajasthani literature in medieval periods, however extensive linguistic research work has not been conducted on it. Some native scholars have done research on its word lists and there is scanty work on phonology. However, the work done by Yadav 2011; Ohala Manjari, 1991; Chomsky and Halle, 1968 are

of great importance. In addition, sketches of its morphology and syntax are found in some texts and monographs.

V. Vowels

There are ten vowels in Mithilanchal Urdu. Out of these, there are four front vowels, four back vowels, and two central vowels (see Table 1). Lip rounding is not distinctive, but only the back vowels are rounded. Out of these ten vowels, three are short and seven are long. Length, thus, is a distinctive feature in Mithilanchal Urdu, where short and long vowels show full phonological opposition in all positions.

These are all pure vowels, non-nasalized. All vowels in Mithilanchal Urdu can be nasalized. To each vowel, there corresponds a nasalized counterpart (see 1.1.9).

Table 1:
Vowels in Mithilanchal Urdu
Table 1: Vowels in Mithilanchal Urdu

Vowels	Front	Central	Back
High	i		u
Low-High	I		ʊ
Mid	e	ə	o
Low	æ	a	ɔ

1. Front vowels

The phonological contrast between the front vowels /i, #, e, æ/ is shown below at all levels:

Table 2:
Front vowels Initial Medial Final

Table 2: Front vowels					
Initial		Medial		Final	
iman	'faith'	ṭ ^h ik	'correct'	sərkari	'official'
islam	'Islam'	bəhm	'sister'	ruči	'interest'
ek	'one'	gen	'ball'	ke	'who'
æb	'defect'	pær	'foot'	hæ	'is'

2. Central vowels

The central vowels /ə, a/ show full phonological contrast at all levels:

Initial		Medial		Final	
əb	‘now’	əmən	‘peace’	mənə	‘mind’
alu	‘potato’	kıtab	‘book’	dana	‘grain’
ək ^h bar	‘newspaper’	kəm	‘less’	rəhəmə	‘mercy’
ap	‘you’	məkan	‘building’	məhma	‘month’

3. Back vowels

The back vowels /u, ʊ, o, ɒ/ are rounded and show phonological opposition in all positions:

Initial		Medial		Final	
un	'wool'	kəsɪr	'fault'	ʃ ^h aru	'broom'
ustad	'teacher'	kʊs	'grass'	sʊrʊ	'beginning'
okra	'his/her'	ʃor	'force'	koro	'bamboo'
ɔs	'dew'	Foʃ	'army'	so	'hundred'

4. High vowels

The high vowels /i, u/ contrast in all positions:

Initial		Medial		Final	
inam	‘reward’	ṭ ^h ik	‘correct’	moči	‘cobbler’
upər	‘above’	k ^h un	‘blood’	babu	‘clerk’
id	‘Eid’	məhin	‘fine’	bijli	‘electricity’
ud ^h ar	‘loan’	nak ^h un	‘nail’	ləhu	‘blood’

5. Low-high vowels

The low-high vowels /ɪ, #/ contrast at all positions, but occur rarely at word-final position:

Initial		Medial		Final	
ɪ	‘this’	kɪ	‘what’	ručɪ	‘interest’
ɪslam	‘Islam’	mɪstri	‘mechanic’	risɪ	‘hermit’
ud ^h ər	‘that side’	bəhʊt	‘much’	surʊ	‘beginning’
ʊllu	‘owl’	rupya	‘rupee’	pəsʊ	‘animal’

6. Mid vowels

The mid vowels /e, ə, o/ show phonological contrast in all positions:

Initial		Medial		Final	
ek	‘one’	Mej	‘table’	kəmre	‘rooms’
əb	‘now’	kəm	‘less’	mənə	‘mind’
okra	‘his/her’	mor	‘peacock’	do	‘two’

7. Low vowels

The low vowels /æ, a, #/ show phonological contrasts at all positions:

Initial		Medial		Final	
æb	'defect'	kæsa	'how'	hæ	'is'
as	'hope'	b ^h ai	'brother'	əbba	'father'
or	'and'	kən	'who'	sə	'hundred'

B. Vowel length

There are three pairs of short and long vowels in Mithilanchal Urdu: / #/ and /i/; /#/ and /u/; and /ə/ and /a/. They show full phonological contrast at all—initial, medial, and final— positions, but short vowels generally occur at less frequently at final position. The following words illustrate the length contrast between short and long vowels at initial and medial positions

1. Initial

Short vowel		Long vowel	
i	'this'	iman	'faith'
u	'owl'	un	'wool'
əb	'now'	alu	'potato'

2. Medial

Short vowel		Long vowel	
ǰahīl	'ignorant'	ǰəmir	'self-respect'
bəhūt	'much'	mənǰur	'agree'
wəhəm	'doubt'	asman	'sky'

3. Final

Short vowel		Long vowel	
Bəstī	'locality'	Sərđi	'winter'
guru	'teacher'	abəru	'dignity'
mənə	'mind'	məhīna	'month'

C. Nasalized vowels

Vowel nasality is distinctive in Mithilanchal Urdu. The contrast between oral and nasalized vowels at initial, medial, and final position is shown below:

1. Initial

Oral		Nasalized	
id ^h ər	‘this way’	iṭ	‘brick’
ismət	‘dignity’	ič	‘inch’
ek	‘one’	ēṭ ^h ən	‘twisting’
æb	‘defect’	ānək	‘eye glasses’
əb	‘now’	āgur	‘grape’
aṭa	‘flour’	ākh	‘eye’
uṭ ^h	‘get up’ (imp)	ūṭ	‘camel’
umər	‘age’	ūh	‘sarcasm’
Okəra	‘his/her’	ōs	‘ounce’
orət	‘woman’	ōd ^h a	‘upside down’

2. Medial

Oral		Nasalized	
čita	'tiger'	čiṭi	'ant'
čishti	'sage'	čigari	'spark'
peṭ	'stomach'	pēṭr	'painter'
Pæsa	'money'	pæḍa	'bottom'
bəs	'bus'	bəḍ	'closed'
čadər	'shawl'	čād	'moon'
dur	'far'	pəhūčna	'to reach'
khus	'happy'	khōkhar	'blood thirsty'
mor	'peacock'	ghōču	'stupid'
mosəm	'weather'	bhōh	'eyebrow'

3. Final

Oral		Nasalized	
dəhi	'yogurt'	nəhī	'not'
ruči	'interest'	ṛamī	'land'
kəmrə	'rooms'	kṛtabē	'books'
mæ	'alcohol'	mā	'I'
bədə	'bad'	bədā	'body'
kəha	'said'	kəhā	'where'
ləhu	'blood'	gehū	'wheat'
bəhṽ	'wife'	kḥō	'blood'
do	'two'	donō	'both'
lɔ	'flame'	bḥō	'eyebrow'

VI. Consonants

There are three notions that help distinguish one sound from another in describing the consonant sounds of Mithilanchal Urdu. They are:

- (i) place of articulation
- (ii) manner of articulation, and
- (iii) voicing.

Mithilanchal Urdu consonantal phonemes are described in terms of the following articulatory features: (i) Labial position (ii) Dental position (iii) Palatal position (iv) Velar position (v) Glottal position (vi) Closure (vii) Trill (viii) Frictionless aperture (ix) Lateral opening (x) Retroflexion (xi) Nasality (xii) Voicing, and (xiii) Aspiration. The consonantal phonemes are seen in Table 2.

Table 2
Front vowels Initial Medial Final

	Bilabial	Dental	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops						
<i>Voiceless unaspirated</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>ʈ</i>	<i>ɕ</i>	<i>k</i>	
<i>Voiceless aspirated</i>	<i>p^h</i>	<i>t^h</i>	<i>T^h</i>	<i>c^h</i>	<i>k^h</i>	
<i>Voiced unaspirated</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>ɖ</i>	<i>ʃ</i>	<i>g</i>	
<i>Voiced aspirated</i>	<i>b^h</i>	<i>d^h</i>	<i>ɖ^h</i>	<i>ʃ^h</i>	<i>g^h</i>	
Nasals	<i>m</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>[ɳ]</i>	<i>[ɲ]</i>	<i>[ŋ]</i>	
Fricatives						
<i>Voiceless</i>		<i>s</i>				
<i>Voiced</i>						<i>h</i>
Laterals		<i>l</i>				
Trill		<i>r</i>				
Frictionless continuants	<i>w</i>			<i>y</i>		

A. Description of individual consonantal phonemes with allophonic variations.

There are 28 consonantal phonemes in Mithilanchal Urdu that show four-way contrast between voiceless vs. voiced and unaspirated vs. aspirated at bilabial, dental, retroflex, palatal, velar, and glottal places of articulation. Aspiration is an overriding characteristic of the Mithilanchal Urdu sound system. Description of each consonant phoneme is given below:

1. Stops

1. Stops

/p/ voiceless unaspirated bilabial stop are not fully released in the final position:

Initial		Medial		Final	
pəhla	‘first’	upər	‘above’	sāp	‘snake’
pas	‘near’	məkan	‘building’	pap	‘sin’

/p^h/ voiceless aspirated bilabial stop are not fully released in the final position:

Initial		Medial	
p ^h əkīr	‘beggar’	līp ^h ap ^h a	‘paper bag’
p ^h altu	‘useless’	sīp ^h ər	‘zero’

/b/ voiced unaspirated bilabial stop are fully released in all positions:

Initial		Medial	
bīstər	‘bedding’	nəbəj	‘vein’
bīna	‘without’	həbət	‘anxiety’

/b^h/ voiced aspirated bilabial stop does not occur fully aspirated in the final position:

Initial		Medial	
b ^h ai	‘brother’	g ^h əb ^h rah t	‘concern’
b ^h er	‘sheep’	ləgb ^h əg	‘approximately’

/t/ voiceless unaspirated dental stop:

Initial		Medial	
tanga	‘cart’	k ^h ətəm	‘finish’
tərkari	‘vegetable’	pəta	‘address’

/t^h/ voiceless aspirated dental stop occurs less aspirated in the final position:

Initial		Medial	
t ^h ali	‘plate’	pətt ^h ər	‘stone’
t ^h əppər	‘slap’	nətt ^h uni	‘nose ring’

/d/ voiced unaspirated stop:

Initial		Medial		Final
dm	'day'	kudrət	'nature'	m
do	'two'	bədən	'body'	m

/dh/ voiced aspirated dental stop is less aspirated in the final position:

Initial		Medial		Final	
d ^h ərna	‘picketing’	čədd ^h ri	‘headman’	bud ^h	‘Wednesday’
Final					
d ^h ok ^h a	‘betrayal’	ənd ^h cra	‘darkness’	əwəd ^h	‘an area’
sap ^h	‘clean’				
bərp ^h	‘ice’				

/t/ voiceless unaspirated retroflex stop:

Initial		Medial		Final	
tokri	‘basket’	Məṭər	‘peas’	baṭ	‘weight’
təṭṭu	‘pony’	təmaṭər	‘tomato’	k ^h oṭ	‘defect’
Final					
hisab	‘calculation’				

/tʰ/ voiceless unaspirated retroflex stop:

Initial		Medial		Final	
tʰik	‘right’	ənguṭʰa	‘thumb’	aṭʰ	‘eight’
tʰos	‘solid’	Kəṭʰmai	‘difficulty’	saṭʰ	‘sixty’
Final					

/d/ voiced unaspirated retroflex stop:

Initial	Medial	Final
ḍera ‘house’	laḍla ‘adorable’	laḍ ‘affection’
ḍəṇḍa ‘stick’	liḍər ‘leader’	kaḍ ‘card’
Final		

/dʰ/ voiced aspirated retroflex stop occurs less aspirated in final position: ‘seven’

Initial		Medial		Final	
dʰila	‘loose’	pəḍʰai	‘study’	baḍʰ	‘flood’
dʰəkkən	‘lid’	baḍʰəi	‘carpenter’	Gəḍʰ	‘fort’
Final					
hatʰ	‘hand’				
satʰ	‘together’				

/č/ voiceless unaspirated palatal stop:

Initial		Medial		Final	
čar	‘four’	pəčas	‘fifty’	kanč	‘glass’
čawel	‘rice’	ləčək	‘flexibility’	səč	‘true’

/č^h/ voiceless aspirated palatal stop:

Initial		Medial		Final	
č ^h ata	‘umbrella’	məč ^h əli	‘fish’	gač ^h	‘tree’
č ^h ati	‘chest’	kəč ^h ova	‘tortoise’	Kuč ^h	‘some’

/j/ voiced unaspirated palatal stop:

Initial		Medial		Final	
jal	‘net’	gajər	‘carrot’	raj	‘regime’
jadu	‘magic’	k ^h ujli	‘itching’	aĵ	‘today’

/ʃ^h/ voiced aspirated palatal stop occurs less aspirated in middle and final position:

Initial		Medial		Final	
j ^h ola	‘bag’	manj ^h i	‘boatman’	səməj ^h	‘understanding’
j ^h aru	‘broom’	səməj ^h dar	‘wise’	boj ^h	‘load’

/k/ voiceless unaspirated velar stop:

Initial		Medial	
kəb	‘when’	nəkər	‘servant’
kam	‘work’	ʈokri	‘basket’

/k^h/ voiceless aspirated velar stop:

Initial		Medial		Final	
k ^h ərab	‘bad’	lik ^h na	‘to write’	āk ^h	‘eye’
k ^h ana	‘food’	rək ^h əwali	‘vigil’	rak ^h	‘ash’

/g/ voiced unaspirated velar stop:

Initial		Medial		Final	
gaʃər	‘carrot’	məgər	‘if’	ag	‘fire’
gərib	‘poor’	lɪʃgan	‘tax’	rog	‘disease’

/g^h/ voiced aspirated velar stop occurs less aspirated in middle and final positions:

Initial		Medial		Final	
g ^h ər	‘house’	bəg ^h arna	‘seasoning’	bag ^h	‘tiger’
g ^h əng ^h or	‘overwhelming’	beg ^h ər	‘homeless’	sīg ^h	‘lion’

B. Nasals

/m/ voiced bilabial nasal:

Initial		Medial		Final	
məgər	'but'	bimari	'disease'	dam	'price'
mela	'fair'	kəmra	'room'	kam	'work'

/n/ voiced nasal. It has four allophones: [ŋ], [ɲ], [ɳ], and [n]

[ŋ] velar nasal occurs only before velar stops:

kələŋk	'blemish'	rəŋg	'colour'
rəŋk	'poor'	q̄həŋg	'manner'
ən̩k ^h	'eye'	kəŋg ^h a	'comb'
pəŋk ^h	'feather'	jaŋg ^h	'thigh'
nəmək	'salt'		

[ɲ] palatal nasal occurs only before palatal stops:

paɲc	'five'	gəɲja	'bald'
kaɲc	'glass'	pəɲja	'claw'
riɲc ^h	'bear'	maɲj ^h i	'boatman'
muɲc ^h	'moustache'	baɲj ^h	'barren'

[ɳ] retroflex nasal occurs only before retroflex stops:

inɳ	'brick'	əɳɳa	'egg'
b ^h enɳ	'meeting'	t ^h əɳɳa	'cold'
gaɳt ^h	'knot'	menɳt ^h ək	'frog'
kəɳt ^h	'throat'	muɳɳt ^h	'root'

[n] dental nasal occurs in all other environments:

Initial		Medial		Final	
nak	'nose'	pənir	'cheese'	d ^h an	'grain'
nəmək	'salt'	kɪnara	'edge'	kan	'ear'

C. Fricatives

/s/ a voiceless dental fricative occurs in all environments:

Initial	Medial	Final
səlam 'greetings'	kisan 'farmer'	malis 'massage'
sat 'seven'	məsala 'spice'	dəs 'ten'

/h/ voiceless glottal fricative occurs in all environments. Though, it is always released initially, but medially and finally it is not fully released:

Initial	Medial	Final
həm 'we'	bahər 'out'	ruh 'soul'
hajri 'attendance'	məhəl 'palace'	bāh 'arm'

D. Laterals

/l/ voiced dental lateral occurs in all positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
Log 'people'	palək 'spinach'	gal
lal 'red'	halet 'condition'	čul

E. Trill

/r/ voiced dental alveolar trill occurs in all positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
rəs 'juice'	sərdi 'cold'	dər 'fear'
raja 'king'	nərəm 'soft'	g ^h ər 'house'

F. Frictionless continuants

/w/ voiced labial frictionless continuant occurs in all positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
waste 'for'	səwəl	'question' naw
wətən 'country'	čawəl	'rice' g ^h aw 'wound'

/j/ voiced palatal frictionless continuant occurs in all positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
yəd 'memcry'	nəya	'new' gay 'cow'
yar 'buddy'	təyar	'ready' hay 'oh'

VII. Distribution and contrast

All consonants, except /ŋ, n#, #/, occur at initial, medial and final positions.

VIII. Contrast of articulation

The examples of contrast of voiceless versus voiced and aspiration versus un-aspirated are given below and these illustrate phonemic contrasts:

IX. Stops

1. Voiceless vs. Voiced

/p : b/					
Initial		Medial		Final	
pis	'grind' (imp)	upor	'above' 'yawn'	ɟip	'je
bis	'twenty'	ubasi		ɟib	'to
/p ^h : b ^h /					
Initial		Medial		Final	
'cheek'					
'hair'					
p ^h ul	'flower'	səp ^h ai	'cleanliness'	sap ^h	'clean'
b ^h ul	'mistake'	Kəb ^h i	'sometimes'	əb ^h i	'now'
/t : d/					
Initial		Medial		Final	
ten	'body'	data	'benefactor'	bat	'matter'
des	'ten'	dada	'grandfather'	bad	'after'

/t^h : d^h/

Initial		Medial		Final	
t ^h ən	'udder'	pət ^h ər	'stone'	sət ^h	'together'
d ^h ən		məjd ^h ər	'whirlpool'	sad ^h na	'to fulfill'
,	'wealth'				

/t̥ : d̥/

Initial		Medial		Final	
t̥a t̥	'rug'	Mət̥ər	'pea'	bə t̥	'weight'
d̥ali		Gəd̥ərɣa	'shepherd'	lad̥	'affection'
h'	'branch'				

/t^h : d^h/

	Initial	Medial		Final	
t ^h ik	'corret'	bət ^h ək	'meeting'	sət ^h	'sixty'
d ^h ila	'loose'	med ^h ək	'frog'	baq ^h	'flood'

/č : ĵ/

Initial		Medial		Final	
čor	'thief'	bəčəpən	'childhood'	moč	'sprain'
ĵor	'force'	gaĵər	'carrot'	a ĵ	'today'

/č^h : ĵ^h/

Initial		Medial		Final	
č ^h ata		Məč ^h əli	'fish'	gač ^h	'tree'
la'	'umbrel				
ĵ ^h aru		məĵ ^h əli	'middle'	kuč ^h	'some'
,	'broom				

/k : g/

Initial		Medial		Final	
kəm	'less'	bəkəri	'goat'	ek	'one'
gəli	'alley'	pəgəri	'turban'	ag	'fire'

/k^h : g^h/

Initial		Medial		Final	
k ^h ərgos		Bək ^h ən	'describe'	rək ^h	'ash'
t'	'rabbi				
g ^h ər		Beg ^h ər	'homeless'	mag ^h	'month'
e'	'hous				

2. Unaspirated vs. aspirated

/p :p^h/

Initial		Medial		Final	
pəlp	'mome	sɪpəhɪsɪ	'consta	kəpsa	'cup'
həl	nt'	p ^h ər	ble'	p ^h	'clea
	'fruit'		'zero'		n'

/b :b^h/

Initial		Medial		Final	
bat	'matter'	k ^h əbər	'news'	Kəb	'when'
b ^h at	'rice'	Gəmb ^h ɪr	'serious'	lob ^h	'greed'

/t :t^h/

Initial		Medial		Final	
tən	'body'	pətla	'thin'	sat	'seven'
t ^h ən	'udder'	pət ^h ər	'stone'	sat ^h	'together'

/d :d^h/

Initial		Medial		Final	
Do	'two'	adət	'habit'	mərd	'man'
d ^h ona	'to wash'	Kɪd ^h ər	'where'	sɪnd ^h	'Sindh'

/t :tʰ/

Initial		Medial		Final	
təʈ	‘rug’	məʈər	‘pea’	peʈ	‘stomach’
tʰəʈ	‘pomp’	Kəʈʰm	‘difficult’	ətʰ	‘eight’

/d :dʰ/

Initial		Medial		Final	
dər	‘fear’	liḍər	‘leader’	laḍ	‘affection’
dʰila	‘loose’	baḍʰai	‘carpenter’	baḍʰ	‘flood’

/k :kʰ/

Initial		Medial		Final	
kana	‘one-eyed’	Məkan	‘house’	nak	‘nose’
kʰana	‘food’	Məkʰən	‘butter’	rakʰ	‘ash’

/g :gʰ/

Initial		Medial		Final	
gər	‘if’	pagəl	‘crazy’	rog	‘disease’
gʰFr	‘house’	begʰər	‘homeless’	bagʰ	‘tiger’

/č :čʰ/

Initial		Medial		Final	
čača	‘uncle’	Bəčəpən	‘childhood’	kāč	‘glass’
čhata	‘umbrella’	məčʰli	‘fish’	gačʰ	‘tree’

/ʃ :ʃʰ/

Initial		Medial		Final	
ʃal	‘net’	gaʃər	‘carrot’	aʃ	‘today’
ʃʰal	‘burning’	Məʃʰəla	‘middle’	boʃʰ	‘burden’

Nasals

Nasals /m, n/ show phonological contrast at all positions:

Initial		Medial		Final	
mala	‘garland’	ʃamana	‘time’	kam	‘work’
nala	‘brook’	ʃanana	‘woman’	kan	‘ear’

X. Fricatives

Fricatives /s, h/ show phonological contrast at all positions:

Initial		Medial		Final	
sər	‘head’	bəsta	‘bag’	as	‘hope’
hər	‘each’	bəhta	‘flowing’	ah	‘sigh’

XI. Frictionless continuants

Frictionless continuants /w, y/ show phonological contrast at all positions:

Initial		Medial		Final	
war	'day'	səwar	'rider'	naw	'boat'
yar	'friend'	Sɪyar	'jakal'	hay	'oh'

XII. Contrast of manner

A. Stop vs. frictionless continuant: /b : w/

Initial		Medial		Final	
bis	'twenty'	k ^h əbər	'news'	kFb	'when'
wejəh	'reason'	awaz	'voice'	daw	'betting'

B. Trill vs. lateral: /r : l/ show phonological contrast at all positions:

Initial		Medial		Final	
raǰ	'secret'	mFrɖ	'man'	Məǰbur	'helpless'
la ǰ	'shyness'	maɭk	'honor'	bal	'hair'

XIII. Consonantal length

There are two degrees of phonetic length in consonants in Mithilanchal Urdu: (i) simple, and

(ii) geminates. Simple consonants occur in all the positions whereas geminated occur only in the intervocalic position. All the consonants, except /r, y, h/, can occur geminated which occur only after short vowels. Geminates behave like consonant clusters in the syllabic structure of the language; the first half goes with the preceding vowel and the latter half with the following one. The following examples illustrate the contrast between simple and geminate consonants:

/k : kk/			
<i>pəka</i>	‘cook’ (imp)	<i>pəkka</i>	‘concrete’
/g : gg/			
<i>pəka</i>	‘cook’ (imp)	<i>Pəkka</i>	‘concrete’
/č : č č /			
<i>bəča</i>	‘remained’	<i>Bəčča</i>	‘child’
/j : j̃j/			
<i>Səja</i>	‘punishment’	<i>Səj̃ja</i>	‘decoration’
/ʈ : ʈʈ /			
<i>Pəʈa</i>	‘allure’ (imp)	<i>Pəʈʈa</i>	‘lease’
/d : dd/			
<i>čəḍ</i>	‘climb’ (imp)	<i>čəcḍḍi</i>	‘underwear’
/t : tt/			
<i>pəta</i>	‘address’	<i>pətta</i>	‘leaf’
<i>č^hət</i>	‘roof’	<i>č^hətta</i>	‘bee-hive’
/d : dd/			
<i>Kəḍ</i>	‘height’	<i>Kəḍḍu</i>	‘pumpkin’
/n : nn/			
<i>sunī</i>	‘heard’	<i>sunni</i>	‘An Islamic sect’
<i>suna</i>	‘deserted’	<i>Sunnah</i>	‘Islamic ritual’

XIV. Diphthongs

There are two diphthongs in Mithilanchal Urdu: /əi/ and /əu/. /əi/ is generally pronounced loosely as ə-i, and, /əu/ as ə-u. Mithilanchal

Urdu, however, is somewhat tighter in its pronunciation so it depends more or less on the option of the speaker, if s/he contracts /əi/ or /əu/ into a real diphthong or pronounce them separately as two distinct vowels. The process of diphthongization in Mithilanchal Urdu is closely related to vowel clustering. Diphthongs in Mithilanchal Urdu are rising diphthongs, i.e. they end in high vowels /i/ and /u/:

Initial		Medial		Final	
<i>ainək</i>	'glasses'	<i>kəisa</i>	'what kind of'	<i>məkəi</i>	'maze'
<i>əisa</i>	'like this'	<i>pəisa</i>	'coin'	<i>Wəkəi</i>	'really'
<i>aurət</i>	'woman'	<i>pəuna</i>	'quarter'	<i>Lək'nəu</i>	'Lucknow city'
<i>əujər</i>	'tools'	<i>səur</i>	'manner'	<i>dəbau</i>	'pressure'

XV. Suprasegmentals

A. Stress

The stress is not an important feature in Mithilanchal Urdu, yet it seems that its existence and phonemic status cannot be ruled out. Stress is utilized in disyllabic syllables to distinguish between grammatical categories. In nouns, stress accent falls on the initial syllable and in the verb category it falls on the final syllable. The stressed syllable is marked by the symbol ['].

Noun		Verb	
<i>'bəla</i>	'evil spirit'	<i>bə'la</i>	'call'
<i>'dhila</i>	'loose'	<i>hə'la</i>	'shake'
<i>'sila</i>	'complaint'	<i>sə'la</i>	'stitch'

Phonetically, stress is employed to express emphasis. The phonetic correlate is the combination of length and pitch. Emphasized syllables contain a greater amount of energy.

B. Juncture

Juncture is also phonemic in Mithilanchal Urdu. This is not audible as a distinct sound but is realized as a gap in speech in a normal or slow speech. The following contrasts establish the juncture phoneme in Mithilanchal Urdu:

- i. /mənanə/ 'to convince' /mən+a+nə/ 'to be agree + come'
- ii. /pərdəsi/ 'stranger' /pər+de+si/ 'curtains + sew (imp.)'

C. Intonation

Accent and stress are not distinctive features in Mithilanchal Urdu. Stress in Mithilanchal Urdu is mainly used for emphasis. However, some minor variations in intonation are observed which are shown below: For example, /həm gao3j#ai-be/ 'I will go to the village' This is a simple statement of fact. The intonation changes, if this sentence is interrogative. In this sentence any item may be stressed according to the context and emphasis, which results in change of intonation.

- a) Həm gao3j#ai-be?
- b) Həm3gao32j#ai-be1
- c) Həm1gao33j#ai-be2
- d) Həm2gao31j#ai-be3

Of the above examples, sentence (a) is a question; whereas in sentences (b, c, d) there are emphases on /həm/ /gao3/ and /jai- be/ respectively.

XVI. Concluding remarks

In this study, a brief sketch of segmental phonology of Mithilanchal Urdu has been presented where in vowels and consonants and their phonotactic behavior is described in detail. A brief discussion on suprasegmental features such as, stress, juncture and intonation has been presented as unique features of Mithilanchal Urdu.

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