Retroflex Fricatives

The use of retroflex (or apical post-alveolar) fricative consonants contrasting with dental/alveolar fricatives, on the one hand, and with laminal post-alveolar/palatal fricatives, on the other, was investigated. In many of the languages that have retroflex fricatives, they tend to form a subset together with retroflex affricates with whom they often stand in an allophonic relationship. In Indo-Aryan Bateri, dental fricatives contrast with retroflex fricatives and with laminal post-alveolar fricatives, as shown in (1).

1. Bateri [btv] (Indo-Aryan)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| a. | /syr/ | ‘sun’ (BTV-40listMB:033) |
| b. | /ɕoːr/ | ‘father-in-law’ (BTV-KinMB:050) |
| c. | /ʂu/ | ‘six’ (BTV-NumMB:006) |

The presence of retroflex fricatives is a majority feature in the area, found in a little over half of the sample languages. The presence of this feature is particularly prominent at the geographical core of the Hindu Kush, shared by Indo-Aryan, Nuristani, Iranian and Burushaski alike.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Feature value | # of varieties displaying it | % |
| Present | 34 | 58 |
| Absent | 25 | 42 |
| Indeterminate | 0 | 0 |