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

Retroflex fricatives is a majority feature in the area, present in 33 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 | 33 | 56 |
| Absent | 25 | 42 |
| Indeterminate | 1 | 2 |