Voiceless Aspiration

The use of aspiration to contrast voiceless sounds was investigated. In languages that display this feature there is a subset of aspirated sounds that contrasts at several places of articulation with the corresponding unaspirated sounds. The inventory (see table below) of Shina of Gilgit exemplifies such a system in which voiceless plosives and affricates display aspiration contrasts. Some examples of aspirated plosives and affricates are given in (1).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Gilgiti Shina [scl(p)]** | **Bilabial** | **Dental** | **Retroflex** | **Post-alveolar** | **Velar** |
| Unaspirated voiceless plosives | p | t | ʈ |  | k |
| Aspirated voiceless plosives | pʰ | tʰ | ʈʰ |  | kʰ |
| Voiced plosives | b | d | ɖ |  | ɡ |
| Unaspirated voiceless affricates |  | ts | ʈʂ | tɕ |  |
| Aspirated voiceless affricates |  | tsʰ | ʈʂʰ | tɕʰ |  |
| Voiced affricates |  |  |  | dʑ |  |

1. Gilgiti Shina [scl(p)] (Indo-Aryan)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| a. | /pʰiːpi / | ‘paternal aunt’ (SCLp-Kin-SL:024) |
| b. | /tɕʰumu/ | ‘fish’ (SCLp-40list-SL:011) |
| c. | /aʈʂʰiː/ | ‘eye’ (SCLp-40list-SL:009) |
| d. | /dʑaʈʰoː/ | ‘brother-in-law’ (SCLp-Kin-SL:054) |

Voiceless aspiration contrast is present in approximately half of the regional sample. It is a partly sub-areal feature, primarily associated with the Eastern part of the region; partly a phylogenetic feature, present primarily (but not uniformly so) in Indo-Aryan, Sino-Tibetan and Burushaski, largely absent in Iranian, and completely absent in Nuristani and Turkic.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Feature value | # of varieties displaying it | % |
| Present | 30 | 51 |
| Absent | 29 | 49 |
| Indeterminate | 0 | 0 |