Uvulars

The presence of consonants with a uvular place of articulation was investigated. The uvulars that are found in the sample are almost without exception either plosives or fricatives. Only uvular consonants that are used in basic vocabulary have been taken into account, thus excluding such sounds occurring in vocabulary that can be considered relatively recent loans. In some cases, it has been difficult to determine with certainty whether the pronunciation is uvular rather than velar. A generous interpretation has been applied. A language that has a uvular voiceless plosive /q/ as well as a voiced /ʁ/ and a voiceless fricative /χ/ is Darwazi, as exemplified in (1).

1. Darwazi [prs(d)] (Iranian)

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| a. | /astaʁu/ | ‘bone’ (PRSd-40list-ML:002) |
| b. | /ʃoːχ/ | ‘horn’ (PRSd-40list-ML:015) |
| c. | /ləq/ | ‘full’ (PRSd-40list-ML:012) |

Uvular consonants are present in a little more than half of the sample languages. All six phylogenetic groups are represented. A slight north/south divide can be traced, with what seems like a preference for uvulars in the north as compared to the south.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Feature value | # of varieties displaying it | % |
| Present | 33 | 56 |
| Absent | 25 | 42 |
| Indeterminate | 1 | 1 |