

ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this study is to provide a reference grammar of the Hunza-Nager dialect of Burushaski (which I refer to as Eastern Burushaski), an isolated language spoken in northern Pakistan, and to reexamine several points which previous studies have tended to merely reiterate. My approach in this study is based on an analysis of my own database—developed through field research—and of previous research.

This dissertation consists of an introductory chapter; chapters 1 to 8, which deal with grammar; chapters 9 to 11, which deal with theoretical issues; chapter 12, which provides the conclusions; and, lastly, appendices of four texts and a vocabulary section with approximately 3,000 items for future reference. The contents of chapters 1 to 11 are as follows:

Part I – Grammar

Chapter 1 – The Sound System This chapter provides phonological information. Eastern Burushaski has 36 consonants and 10 vowel sounds. Briefly, the syllable structure of Eastern Burushaski is CCVCC. This language has a pitch accent system.

Chapter 2 – Descriptive Preliminaries Here, I introduced the terminology for the descriptive unit used in the dissertation. Then, I defined the eight word classes I used to examine the language: noun, pronoun, adjective, numeral, verb, copula, conjunctive, and interjection. This language has five nominal classes—HM, HF, X, Y, and Z—and each noun belongs to some class.

Chapter 3 – Nouns Nouns in Eastern Burushaski can decline for number and case and sometimes for person. There is a large variety of plural suffixes for nouns, despite the fact that no strict rule to combine a suffix with a nominal base exists. Note, however, that only certain of the plural suffixes are used in a double plural expression. Some nouns require the personal prefix to regularly index the possessor, and the possession expressed with the personal prefixes is always inalienable. Case suffixes serve to perform the function of case marking; more than a dozen cases can be detected in Eastern Burushaski. I employ \emptyset for the absolutive case, despite the fact that previous research has not used zero morphemes for morphological description.

Chapter 4 – Demonstratives, Personal Pronouns, and Interrogatives

Demonstratives alter their form according to the noun class of the referent. Morphologically and semantically, demonstratives are divided into two groups—proximal and distal—while interrogatives constitute the third group paralleling demonstratives. Personal pronouns are used for only the first and second person.

Chapter 5 – Adjectives and Numerals

Some attributive adjectives that modify plural entities take a plural suffix, and some emotional adjectives require the personal prefix to designate the experiencer of the emotion. Additionally, numerals are a special kind of adjective and behave in a somewhat different manner from normal adjectives.

Chapter 6 – Verbals

Verbs show a complicated derivational process, with five choices—telicity, person, causative, plurality, and aspect—for stem formation. These choices—with the exception of aspect—tend to have fixed combinations with each other and with verbal roots. Verbals can denote the subject participant, polarity, and mood as well as, in some cases, the undergoer participant. There are five moods in Eastern Burushaski: present indicative, non-present indicative, imperative, optative, and conditional. I have coined the expression ‘(non-)present mood’ to represent a notion, that previous studies on Eastern Burushaski did not examine. The non-present suffix *-m* is employed in temporal references to the past or future. Contrary to this, the present suffix *-∅* is used in situations where an event or the effect of an event is evidently considered to be still present by the speaker.

Chapter 7 – Other Morphological Processes

I devoted this chapter to the examination of four types of word formation not related to affixation. Presently, compounding in Eastern Burushaski does not appear to be productive. Additionally, while simple reduplication is seldom used in Eastern Burushaski, but echo-formation is relatively prevalent in daily conversation. This type of formation reduplicates a base form by overwriting a segment with another segment, rendering the reduplicant part meaningless and attaching it to the base part. In Eastern Burushaski, the primary and secondary fixed segments for echo-formation are /m/ and /š/ respectively. Speakers often use onomatopoeia and modify a sound to express different images on the basis of their sound symbolism. For example, /a/ can be connected to a louder or more vivid image than /u/ and /i/.

Chapter 8 – Syntax Here, after examining the basic constituent order in phrases and clauses, I discussed grammatical relations and agreement systems. In sum, Eastern Burushaski verbs govern the cases of core arguments in an ergative alignment, while some verbs show agreement of a personal suffix according to the subject argument, not the absolutive one. Moreover, the personal prefix on verbs agrees with the argument in the undergoer role. Eastern Burushaski has several converbal forms that are used to combine clauses as well as conjunctives. These forms may be in the process of changing their functions from same-subject conjunctions to free-subject ones, or of getting looser functions with regard to switch-reference.

Part II – Theoretical Issues

Chapter 9 – Transitivity and Its Surroundings I discussed mainly intransitive stem pairs and transitive stem pairs; each type of pairs shows a gap in the personal prefix slot. Significantly, previous studies did not examine why transitive stem pairs are differentiated from each other. Therefore, I examined the issue myself and concluded that the employment of the prefix slot on a transitive stem is motivated by the likelihood of the presence of an object argument. This likelihood is relative to nominal properties such as nominal class and definiteness.

Chapter 10 – *d-* Derivation I examined the system of verb stem derivations with the *d-* prefix. *d-* remains a controversial prefix. I discussed the meaning and functions of the prefix in this chapter and listed five functions—venitive, fientive, stative, resultative, and anticausative—with a directional suggestion of grammaticalization. These functions are realised according to the meaning of verbal bases. All these functions involve a goal point of action and therefore share telic characteristics.

Chapter 11 – Definiteness and Specificity In this chapter, I researched the indefinite markers *-an* and *-ik* and surveyed the morphosyntactic and pragmatic relationship among nominal characteristics on the basis of the database of a text. These indefinite markers are often used in non-specifically interpreted situations and in negative clauses. Speakers choose grammatical roles for referents in utterances on the basis of definiteness and specificity, and it can be said that these properties affect syntactic expressions.