Sindhi

Jennifer Cole
University of Illinois

Sindhi is a language originating in the Lower Indus Valley region of the Indian subcontinent, spoken by over 40 million people in present day Pakistan and India and by a large diaspora community around the world. Sindhi belongs to the Indo-Aryan language family within Indo-European, and is classed with Kashmiri in the Northwestern subgroup. Sindhi is the primary language of the province of Sindh in Pakistan, and is spoken along the Indus River Valley stretching into the Thar Desert to the east, and bounded by the Sukkur Dam to the north, the Kirthar Mountain Range to the west, and the Arabian Sea to the southwest. To the south, the Sindhi region extends into the Rann of Kacch in India. While Sindhi is used exclusively or as the primary language in most rural areas within this region, it exists alongside Urdu and English in the urban centers of Sindh Province, including Karachi and Hyderabad, and alongside Hindi, Gujarati and other regional languages in India. Sindhi is closely related to Siraiki, spoken in the north of Sindh Province, and to Kachhi, spoken to the south in the Kacch region of Gujarat in India.

Background

Sindhi shares many features in common with related Indo-Aryan languages. The sound inventory includes the distinctive voiced and voiceless aspirated obstruents at five places of articulation (labial, dental-alveolar, post-alveolar, palato-alveolar and velar), and a full set of paired long and short vowels, all of which can occur with nasalization. Common features in the morphology include number, gender and case marking for nouns, a rich system of verb inflection and a productive process of compound verb formation. The basic syntactic structures of Sindhi are also common to Indo-Aryan, including a canonical SOV word order that is subject to permutation (i.e., so-called free word order), question formation with no preposing of question words (i.e., question words *in situ*), and dependent clauses involving the parallel relative-corelative construction.

Sindhi also has several features which differentiate it from other Indo-Aryan languages. Its consonant inventory includes four implosive stops, unique to Sindhi (and its close relatives such as Kacchi and Siraiki) among all Indo-European languages. Sindhi has retained from Sanskrit the full set of five phonemic nasal stops, but reduces all historical geminate consonants – *CC-* in word medial position to a singleton consonant *–C-*. Although the vowel inventory in Sindhi is common to Indo-Aryan, the status of the word-final short vowels is remarkable. Final short /i,u,a/ express grammatical information such as number, gender and case on nouns, and yet they are produced with extremely short phonetic duration. These final vowels are typically not recognized by non-native speakers, despite their important morpho-syntactic function, and are not retained in Sindhi words (e.g., proper names) that are adopted into Urdu, Hindi or English. Although syllable structure in Sindhi is similar to other Indo-Aryan languages, Sindhi does not allow word-final consonants. Indeed, many Sindhi words that end in a final super-short vowel have cognate forms in related languages that end in a consonant. With respect to morphology, Sindhi differs from most Indo-Aryan languages in its use of pronominal clitics that attach to nouns, postpositions and verbs. These clitics take the place of full noun phrases to express, e.g., the possessor of a noun (*hatʰa-mi* 'my hands'), the complement of a postposition (*vəʈi-mi* 'belonging to me'), and with different clitic sets, the subject, object or other complement of a verb (*ɓudʰaːỹãː-va* 'I shall tell you').

Linguistic studies of Sindhi are few in number, but include instrumental phonetic studies (Nihalani 1986, 1995), sociolinguistic and dialect studies (Rohra 1971, Bhugio 2001), and

contemporary grammatical analysis (Khubchandani 1961). Published Sindhi grammars include Trumpp (1872), Grierson (1919) and Yegorova (1971).

Key structural features
Sound inventory. The Sindhi sound inventory is shown below, and is notable for its inclusion of four implosive stops, which derive from Middle Indo-Aryan geminate voiced stops in medial position, and from singleton voiced stops in initial position. Phonetic studies show that these sounds are genuine glottalic ingressives (Nihalani 1986). The post-alveolar consonants are apical and the palato-alveolar consonants are laminal; these are termed retroflex and palatal in traditional nomenclature. Sounds that are shown in parentheses in the chart below are either restricted to borrowings (/z, ʃ, x, ɣ/) or occur only as allophonic variants. For instance, the post-alveolar rhotic tap [ɽ] is in complementary distribution with the homorganic stop [ɖ]. The aspirated sonorants /mʰ, nʰ, ɳʰ, lʰ ɽʰ,ʋʰ/ occur only in intervocalic position and are never distinguished from a sequence of sonorant + /h/, although speakers will describe them as single sounds, even though they are written as sequences in the Arabic orthography. The vowel inventory consists of the standard symmetrical Indo-Aryan system, comprising five pairs of long and short vowels. Phonetic values shown below are as identified by Nihalani (1995). In addition, all the vowels can occur with nasalization; the long nasal vowels have phonemic status, but nasalization on short vowels can be ascribed to the context of a following tautosyllabic nasal stop.

Sindhi consonant inventory

	Labial	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palato-alveolar	Velar	Glottal
Stop	p b	t d		ʈ ɖ		k g	
	pʰ bʰ	tʰ dʰ		ʈʰ ɖʰ		kʰ gʰ	
Implosive	ɓ		ɗ		ʄ	ɠ	
Affricate					tʃ tʃʰ		
					dʒ dʒʰ		
Nasal	m		n	ɳ	ɲ	ŋ	
	(mʰ)		(nʰ)	(ɳʰ)			
Fricative	f		s (z)		(ʃ)	(x ɣ)	h
Rhotic			r	(ɽ)			
				ɽʰ			
Lateral		l					
		(lʰ)					
Glide	ʋ				y		
	(ʋʰ)						

Sindhi vowel inventory

iː	[i]	eː	[e]	aː	[ɑ]	oː	[o]	uː	[u]
i	[ɪ]	e	[ɛ]	a	[ə]	o	[ɔ]	u	[ʊ]

Morphophonology. Sindhi has a complex system of morhophonological vowel alternations that affect stem-final vowels in certain morphological constructions. These changes are highly idiosyncratic to the specific construction. For example, nouns are marked for plural number by

modification of the stem-final thematic vowel alone or in combination with a plural suffix, resulting in plural endings marked variously by

/-a, -aː, -ũː, -iũː/, or unmarked, depending on the gender class of the noun and on its lexically determined stem-final thematic vowel: *gʰar-a* 'houses', *pʰiːt-aː* 'wheels', *kʰaṭ-ũː* 'cots', *ɓili-ũː* 'cats', *raːti* 'nights'. There are also very many verb stems that undergo irregular allomorphy in the formation of the Unspecified Perfective (i.e., simple past) tense. Comprehensive discussion of these alternations is provided in Trumpp (1872) and Grierson (1919).

Morphology.

Nouns, adjectives and pronouns. Nouns are classed by grammatical gender, and this classification determines the declension pattern for the marking of number and case, expressed primarily through stem vowel alternations. The noun stem ends in a thematic vowel, which for most nouns serves to mark the gender class, though there are numerous exceptional stems whose gender is not predictable on the basis of the final vowel. All nouns are marked for number and case through noun stem modification, involving a change in the thematic vowel, sometimes accompanied by suffixation. Patterns of noun stem modification that mark the plural and the nominative, oblique, ablative and vocative cases are illustrated in the example noun paradigms below for distinct thematic vowels, grouped by gender class.

Masculine:	- u *'flower'*	- oː *'boy'*	- uː *'resident'*
Nom.sg.	gulu	tʃʰokiroː	rahaːkuː
Nom.pl	gula	tʃʰokiraː	rahaːkuː
Obl.sg.	gula	tʃʰokireː	rahakuːa, rahaːkui
Obl.pl.	gulani	tʃʰokirani	raha:kuani, rahakuni
Abl.sg.	gulã:	tʃʰokirã:	raha:kuã:
Abl.pl.	gulaniã:	tʃʰokiraniã:	raha:kuaniã:
Voc.sg.	gula	tʃʰokiraː	raha:kuː
Voc.pl.	gula:	tʃʰokiraː	raha:kua:

Feminine:	- a *'table'*	- i *'eye'*	- aː *'world'*	- iː *'notebook'*
Nom.sg.	meza	akʰi	duniyaː	kaːpiː
Nom.pl	mezũː	akʰi	duniyaːũː	kaːpiũː
Obl.sg.	meza	akʰiũː	duniyaː	kaːpiːa, kaːpia
Obl.pl.	mezuni	akʰiuni	duniyaːuni	kaːpiuni
Abl.sg.	mezã:	akʰiã:	duniyã:	kaːpiã:
Abl.pl.	mezuniã:	akʰiuniã:	duniyaːuniã:	kaːpiuniã:
Voc.sg.	meza	akʰi	duniyaː	kaːpi
Voc.pl.	mezũː	akʰiũː	duniyaːũː	kaːpiũː

The dative, ablative, comitative and locative cases are marked through the use of a postposition following the noun in the oblique sg. form. The genitive postposition has eight variants (of which only two are shown below); it is declined like an adjective and agrees in number and gender with the possessed noun, but bears the case specification of the possessor. There is no accusative postposition, and instead the nominative or dative form is used (depending on the animacy of subject and object). Also, the oblique case forms are also used to mark ergative subjects (see Syntax section below).

Case/number marking with postpositions in example phrases with *gʰar-* 'house'

Dative	gʰara kʰeː	*'the house (direct object)'*
Ablative	gʰara kʰã̄	*'from (the direction of) the house'*
	gʰara mã̄	*'from in the house'*
	gʰara tã̄	*'from on the house'*
Comitative	gʰara sã̄	*'with the house'*
Locative	gʰara mẽː	*'in the house'*
	gʰara teː	*'at/on the house'*
	gʰara mąɳdʒʰi	*'within the house'*
Genitive		
(masc.)	gʰara joː (daru)	*'(door) of the house'*
	house-masc.,sg.,Obl.|Gen-masc.,sg.,Nom.|door-masc.,sg.,Nom.	
(fem.)	gʰara jiː (dariː)	*'(window) of the house'*
	house-masc.,sg.,Obl.|Gen-fem.,sg.,Nom.|window-fem.,sg.,Nom.	

Adjectives agree with the noun they modify in gender, number and case, marked through the same kind of alternation of the thematic (final) vowel: *nanɖʰoː gʰaru* 'small house, Nom.' *nanɖʰa: gʰara* 'small houses, Nom.', *nandʰiː meza* 'small table, Nom.', *nandʰiyũ̄ mezũ̄* 'small tables, Nom.'. Pronouns are marked for number, but case is marked only for nominative and oblique (no ablative or vocative pronoun forms). Gender is distinguished only in the nominative, third person singular forms. The third person pronouns are also used for demonstratives, for which there are distinct proximal and distal forms: *hiːu* 'this, masc.', *hu* 'that, masc.', *hiːa* 'this, fem.', *hua* 'that, fem.' The personal pronouns are shown below, including dialectal variants, and similar patterns of declension occur with the distinct relative and correlative pronouns (*joː* relative 'who/that-masc.,sg.,Nom.'; *soː* co-relative 'who/that-masc.,sg.,Nom.'), and the indefinite pronouns (*koː* indefinite 'anyone/someone-masc.,sg.,Nom.'. Of the interrogative pronouns, only 'who' is marked for number and case (e.g., *keru* 'masc.,sg.,Nom.', *kã̄hĩ* 'masc./fem.,sg.Obl.')

Personal pronouns

		First person	Second person	Third person (proximal)
Singular	Nom.	aːũ̄, ã̄ ; mã̄ː, mũ̄	tũ̄	hiː, hiːu (masc.); hiː, hiːa (fem.)
	Obl.	ã̄, mũ̄ː, mũ̄ ; mã̄	toː	hina
	Gen.	ã̄-joː, mũ̄hũ̄-joː, mũ̄-joː	tũ̄hũ̄-joː, tũ̄hĩ-joː	hina-joː
Plural	Nom.	asĩ	tavahĩː, tavĩː, tahĩː ; avahĩ	hiː, heː
	Obl.	asã̄ː, asã̄ːhĩ, asã̄ːhũ̄	tavahã̄ː, tahã̄ː ; avahã̄ː, ahã̄ː	hinani
	Gen.	asã̄ː-jo, asã̄ːhĩ-jo	tavhã̄ː- jo ; avhã̄ː-jo	hinani-joː

Verbs. The verb complex in Sindhi consists of a primary verb, alone or followed by an auxiliary verb. An operator or modal verb element may also occur, placed in between the primary verb (in participle form) and the auxiliary verb. These parts combine in various ways to produce 17 distinct finite verb forms that encode aspect (perfective, imperfective, unspecified), tense (past, present, future), mood (subjunctive, imperative, presumptive, counterfactual), and concordance (gender and number). Aspect is expressed in the choice of the primary verb form, and marked by

suffixation to the verb stem. In most finite verb forms, tense, mood and concordance features are expressed on the auxiliary verb, through suffixation or auxiliary verb stem allomorphy. There are also six nonfinite verb forms that function as nominal, adjectival and adverbial participles. Example finite and non-finite verb forms are shown below. Each finite and non-finite verb form can undergo further modification, not shown here, to express voice (active/passive) and valence (transitive/causative) distinctions through the use of suffixes that attach directly to the verb stem.

Examples of finite verb forms with the verb stem *hal-* 'to go'

Contingent Future	haleː	'if he goes'
Present Unspecified	haleː tʰoː	'he goes'
Contrafactual Unspecified	haleː haː	'had he gone'
Definite Future	halandoː	'he will go'
Present Habitual	halandoː aːheː	'he goes'
Past Habitual	halandoː huyoː	'he used to go'
Presumptive Imperfective	halandoː hundoː	'he is probably going'
Subjunctive Imperfective	halandoː hujeː	' (perhaps) he goes'
Present Continuous	haliː rahyoː aːheː	'he is going'
Past Continuous	haliː rahyoː huyoː	'he was going'
Unspecified Perfective	halyoː	'he went'
Present Perfective	halyoː aːheː	'he has gone'
Past Perfective	halyoː huyoː	'he had gone'
Presumptive Perfective	halyoː hundoː	'he must have gone'
Subjunctive Perfective	halyoː hujeː	'he may have gone'
Past Iterative	halyoː theː	'he would go', `he often went', 'he used to go'
Imperative	halu haloː, halijeː	'Go!' (rude) 'Go!' (polite)

Examples of non-finite verb forms with various stems

Infinitive	halaɳu ɠaːiɳu	'to go' 'to sing'
Adjectival Unspecified (masc.,sg.)	maːriɳoː watʰiɳoː	'about to be struck' 'about to be taken'
Adjectival Imperfective (masc.,sg.)	halandoː maːriːndoː	'going' 'striking'
Adjectival Perfective (masc.,sg.)	halyalu, halyoː maːryalu, maːryo	'went' 'struck'
Adverbial Imperfective	halandeː maːriːndeː	'(as he was) going' '(as he was) striking'
Adverbial Perfective	haliː, haliː kareː maːreː, maːreː kareː	'(as he) went' '(as he) struck'

Syntax. The neutral word order in Sindhi is Subject-Object-Verb, although these elements can be permuted in any order, in which case the first element is typically the Topic. Within phrases word order is fixed, with the head element always at the end. Thus, the determiner and adjective precede the head noun in a noun phrase: *hiːa suhiɳiː tʃoːkiriː* this|beautiful|girl 'this beautiful girl',

asã:ja: ɓa ɓakra: our|two|goats 'our two goats'. Similarly, the verb appears at the end of the verb phrase, following any (non-sentential) arguments: *ama:-kʰe tʃiʈʰi: likʰi:* mother-to|letter|wrote 'wrote a letter to mother'.

The subject of the sentence appears in the nominative case with two exceptions: "experiencer" subjects of verbs expressing physical sensation, psychological state or kinship are in the dative case, and the ergative subject of a transitive verb in the perfective aspect is in the oblique case. The verb agrees with the subject if it is nominative, and otherwise agrees with a nominative (inanimate) object if present. If there is no nominative subject or object, the verb takes as default the third person, masculine, singular agreement. An indirect object appears with the dative postposition. There is no distinct accusative case; a direct object appears with the dative postposition for animate objects, and is in the nominative case for inanimate objects.

Examples of verb agreement with nominative case subjects
hu:a hale: tʰi:
they,**fem.**,Nom.| go| Aux.,3pl.**fem.**
'They (fem.) go.'

hu: tʃiʈʰi: paɽʰanda:
they**,masc**.,Nom.| letter,fem.,sg.,.Nom.| will read,3pl.**masc.**
'They (masc.) will read the letter.'

Examples of verb agreement in sentences with oblique case ergative and experiencer subjects
hunani tʃiʈʰi: paɽʰi: a:he:
they,masc.,Obl.| letter,**fem**.**sg.**,Nom.| read,perf.,**3sg.,fem**.| Aux,**3sg**.
'They (masc.) have read the letter (fem.).'

tavahã: kʰe: hunani sã: ʋaɳaŋo pavando
you,pl.masc.,Obl.| Dat.| them,pl.,Obl.| with| go,Inf.,Obl.| must,**3sg,masc**.
'You (pl.) must go with them.'

Historical development and socio-political factors. Sindh is home to the ancient Indus Valley civilization of Mohen-jo-daro, but a historical link between Sindhi and the language of Mohen-jo-daro has not yet been firmly established. Sindh has been subject to foreign rule at many times in its history, and there is evidence of language contact in numerous borrowings from Persian, Arabic and English. The formation of Pakistan in 1947 had a tremendous impact on Sindhi, as millions of mostly Urdu speaking immigrants came to Sindh from India. The immigrants were under no pressure to learn Sindhi, and enjoyed the advantage of speaking Urdu, the language chosen as the national language of Pakistan. On the other hand, Sindhi speakers, especially those in urban areas, were compelled to learn Urdu, and in recent years, English. Bughio's (2001) sociolinguistic study reports census data that paints a bleak picture of the diminishing status of Sindhi. Census data from 1941 show 82% of the Sindh population claim Sindhi as their mother tongue, while in 1981 that number falls to 52%. Sindh has a large rural population, with 57% of the total population, and in rural areas Sindhi is the mother tongue for 78% of the population, compared to only 18% in urban areas. The rural and urban populations of Sindh differ also in literacy, with 51% literacy rates in urban areas compared to only 16% in rural areas, of which female literacy constitutes only 5%. The decline in Sindhi literacy has implications for the survival of the rich body of Sindhi literature, dating from the 16th century (Ajwani 1970).

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