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## Extended Abstract

### Phonological study of Birjandi dialect

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#### Introduction

The purpose of writing this article is to study the Birjandi dialect from a phonological point of view. The city of Birjand, or Qohestan, is the capital of South Khorasan Province. The Birjandi dialect is a sub-branch of the dialects of the Khorasan region and is considered part of the southwestern branch of the new Iranian language. Linguistic research usually begins with the study of the sounds of the language. Examining Iranian dialects is a way to enrich the studies of the Persian language, to introduce these varieties to the next generations and other researchers, to help describe and interpret literary texts, to assist Persian language teachers, to prevent the entrance of foreign words, to recognize the oral literature of each province, and to gain knowledge of the identity, nationality, customs, and ethnic history of each region. In fact, Iranian dialects are the continuation of the same language that was used in the ancient Persian texts of Dari. In this research, some examples of the phonological processes of the Birjand dialect are introduced.

#### Materials & Methods

The purpose of writing this research is to analyze the phonological system of the Birjand Dialect. Most of the research data have been collected from two sources *Dictionary of Birjand dialect* (Rezaei, 1994) and *Birjand dialect survey* (Rezaei, 1998) and categorized according to the type of process. Transcriptions are written using international IPA symbols. Theoretical foundations such as “phonological alternations, two levels of representation, sonority sequencing principle, syllable contact law” have been considered in the data analysis. To ensure the correct process of analysis, the form of some words has been compared with the surviving works from the ancient and middle periods of Persian. The findings show that in data analysis, influential factors such as a. The position of a phoneme in the construction of a syllable, b. The type and position of the syllable in the word, c. The effect of adjacent phonetic units on each other have resulted in the production of a number

of allophones, which will be explained in detail in the text of the article. For example, in the one-syllable word “wind” which has the vowel “back and low” in its core, by adding a suffix and increasing it to two syllables in the form of “windy”, the “low back” vowel changes to “low front long” vowel; so that these two vowels are always in complementary distribution with each other.

The most famous and best works written about the Birjand dialect belong to Rezaei (1994 and 1998). His first work, *Dictionary of Birjand dialect*, contains 15,000 transcribed words from the Birjand dialect, which provides complete and comprehensive information about its phonetic structure to the reader. His second work entitled *Study of Birjand dialect*, in addition to mentioning the phonetic issues, has detailed the morphology and syntax of this dialect.

## Results and Discussion

### 1. Investigating the context of two low vowels [A, a:] in the Birjandi dialect

Two low vowels [A, a:] are used alternately in the Birjandi dialect, one with low back features and the other with low front long features. By examining the varieties of the data, it was necessary to pay attention to the notion of syllables. In this way, the words of one to four syllables in which these two vowels were seen were categorized and presented in tables one to three of each sample. In Table 1, a number of one-syllable words with the “low back vowel A” in the nucleus of CV or CVC syllables have been selected. Words like “right”, which have CVCC syllables in Standard Farsi, are used as CVC in the Birjandi dialect, and their final consonant is removed in the singular form of the word. When the second morpheme or suffix is added to one-syllable words, and they increase from one-syllable to two-syllable, the low back vowel of the first syllable changes to low front and keeps its original length.

### 2. Compensatory lengthening

In most Iranian dialects, glottal consonants [h,ʔ], in the final position of the word, the syllable and the environment after the vowel are removed, and in some words the vowel before it is lengthened. The double dot symbol [:] is related to vowel length after removing each of the glottal consonants. Compensatory lengthening always occurs in syllables that are heavy in terms of weight. Persian Language is a family of Indo-European Languages. In these languages, the weight is quite quantitative, and for this reason, compensatory lengthening is observed in them.

### 3. Vowel raising before nasals

In the Birjandi dialect, the low and back vowel /A/ in the environment before nasal consonants turns into a middle and long vowel [o:] and is raised one degree. Table 7 shows examples of the vowel raising process. It is necessary to explain that the consonant /n/ is removed after the vowel raising process at the end of the word, and if a suffix is added to the word, it will be revealed again. Bilabial nasals /m/ is not deleted at the end of the words.

#### 4. Removing the final consonant

In Iranian dialects, the use of the medium CVC syllable is much more common than the heavy CVCC syllable (Kambuziya, 2006: 267). To convert a CVCC syllable into a CVC one; in other words, to shorten a heavy syllable, the process of removing the final consonant from the cluster of two consonants is used. Whenever there is a kind of coexistence between segments in phonology that is against the phonological system of that language, a segment is removed from the speech chain. In Table 8, words that end in consonants such as /n, t, m, h, d/ in the singular form of the word, the final consonant is removed and revealed again when adding the suffix.

#### 5. Weakening process

Postvocalic context is the most typical environment for the change from stop or fricative to approximant in this Dialect. In the first process in this dialect, as shown in Table 9, the three consonants [b, v, f] in the context after the vowel and at the end of the syllable or the end of the word turn into a velar glide [w]. In the second process, the low vowels /A/ and /a/ in the environment before the velar glide [w] turn into the middle vowel [o].

#### Conclusion

- a. Examination and analysis of tables 1, 2 and 3 show that the two low vowels [A] and [a:] are in the complementary distribution with each other and both are considered phonemes of the back low vowel /A/.
- b. Analysis of Tables 4, 5, and 6 shows that the glottal consonants /h/ and /ʔ/ are deleted at the end of the word and after the vowel. After removing the glottal consonants, the short vowels [a, e, o] are lengthened; in such a way that it causes the compensatory lengthening of the short vowel in the form of [a:, e:, o:].
- c. The low back vowel /A/ before nasal consonants [m, n] turns into a mid and long vowel [o:] and is raised one degree. Therefore, one of the allophones of the low back vowel /A/ is considered [o:].
- d. The consonants /n, m, h, d, t, dZ/ are deleted at the end of the word after another consonant in the CVCC syllable, and they appear again when a suffix is added to the word. Studies of syllable structure in this dialect and other Iranian dialects show that CV and CVC syllables are used much more than CVCC syllables. One of the most common methods of converting CVCC syllables to CVC ones is the deletion process.
- e. The labial consonants [b, v, f] in the environment after the low vowels /A/ and /a/, at the end of the word or at the end of the syllable, turn into the velar glide [w] under the influence of the weakening process. This process feeds the emergence of another process; so that the low vowels /A/ and /a/ are raised one degree and become [o] under the influence of the features of glide [w].

**Keywords:** Birjandi Dialect; Syllable; Vowel Raising; Weakening; deletion; Compensatory Lengthening

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