

1. A description of Konkani

Demographics

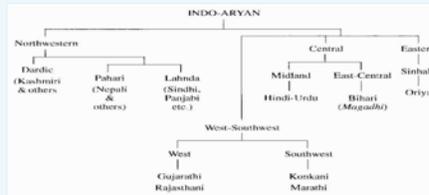
According to the Indian national census of 1991, there are 1,760,607 Konkani speakers in all of India, of which 602,626 are in Goa; 706,397 in Karnataka; 312,618 in Maharashtra and 64,008 in Kerala.



Figure 1. Map of India showing regions where Konkani is spoken. Data collection took place in Goa, the region coloured red.

Konkani comes from the Indo-Aryan branch of the Indo-European set of languages. It was first spoken by the Aryan settlers in the Konkani coast of India. The Konkani region comprises the coastal regions of modern Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka and Kerala.

Figure 2: Indo-Aryan language tree according to R Kellkar. Reproduced from Sardesai 2004.



Dialects/Scripts

Konkani dialects are grouped:

- Regional dialects
- Social dialects. The two main dialect groupings are based on:
 - caste
 - religion (Hindu, Christian and Muslim)
 [Some believe that religion is a more important differentiator than region; this may be true for Konkani spoken in Goa only.]

Five written scripts – Roman, Kannada, Malayalam, Perso-Arabic and Devanagari. Devanagari is now the official script. But there is no set written format and standardization is a process in motion.

3. Empirical observations

Most linguistic description of Konkani has been restricted to syntax and morphology. There has been no detailed work on its prosodic structure before now.

Simple Wh Questions and Declarative Statements

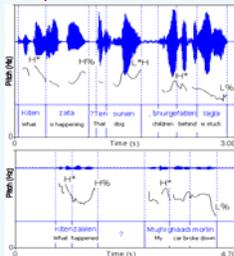


Figure 3. Intonation contours of simple Wh questions and answers.

A simple question

- Rising intonation.
- Pitch peak on strong syllable of question word (e.g.)/kiten/

Declarative statements

- Falling intonation contour
- Peak on the first strong syllable
- Downstep seen in statements of multiple phrases (e.g.)/ bhurge/- top frame.

Yes-No questions

Simple Yes-No questions

- Rising intonation.
- Pitch peak on strong syllable if present.

Simple Yes-No question with selection

- Falling intonation of IP
- Rising intonation in PP

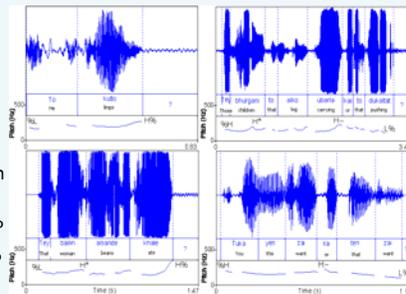


Figure 4. Intonation contour of Yes-No questions with and without selection.

A language in turmoil

With the colonization of Goa by the Portuguese Konkani underwent periods of extinction and revival.

- In the early 16th and 17th century the Portuguese stamped out the use of Konkani and burnt all records of literary works.
- Aggressive conversions to Christianity caused the exodus of Goans to Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala, leading to the blending of these state languages in Konkani, and the use of different scripts in Konkani.

Other reasons why Konkani lost its status.

- The Muslim ruler Tipu Sultan attacked Western Goa and took many Goan Christians as prisoners, forcefully converting them to Islam. Their Konkani has influences of Urdu in it.
- The British occupation of Goa in 1797-1813: Goans migrated to Bombay for jobs and English became the *pottaachi bhas* "language of the stomach".
- Hindus who escaped to Maharashtra adopted Marathi as their formal language and created literary works in Marathi.

Following liberation:

- English became the language of work and the official language.
- Familial languages were Portuguese & Marathi.
- Konkani relegated to the poor and low classes of people.
- It was only in 1987 that Konkani was recognized as a national language and a movement for reinstating the lost prestige of Konkani has been initiated.

2. Information structure

Konkani is a language rich in morphology and syntax. The language cannot be described as a stress language nor as a tone language. Like Indo-Aryan languages it has both long and short vowels and syllables with long vowels may appear to be stressed.

- Word order SOV in general, but very flexible
- Morphological means: person, number, gender, case markers, focus
- Stress is non-phonemic and is marked with small rise in pitch and duration. Strong syllables bear the word stress. The final syllable bears the stress in words of equal syllable strength.
- Intonation conveys syntactic meaning.

Dialectal difference due to Religion

Single Intonation Phrase

Hindu: Rising contour

Christian: Falling contour

Intonation Phrase (IP) with one Phonological Phrase (PP)

Hindu: Rising contour IP

Christian: Falling contour IP

No difference in PP contour

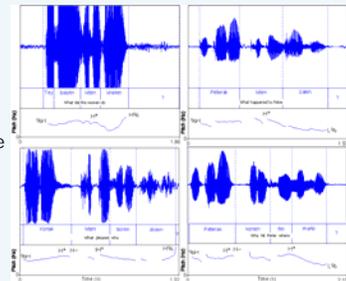


Figure 5. Differences in question intonation due to religion. Hindu - left, Christian - right.

4. Summary/Future Work

This report is probably the first empirical report on the intonation pattern of Konkani. Much more research is needed to completely understand all aspects of its tonal prosody. Appropriate data for the study of contrastive focus needs to be collected.

Furthermore, prosodic analysis that includes the study of stress and rhythm is needed.

5. References

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