

Aspects of Konso phonology: typological considerations

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Konso is a language of the Lowland East Cushitic group spoken in southwestern Ethiopia some 600 kilometers from Addis, the Capital. This study tries to describe the phonology of Konso in some detail and outline the unique phonological features the language exhibits, as compared to other languages of the same genetic unit, and look at the issues from historical and typological perspectives.

Unlike many Cushitic languages, Konso exhibits unique features in its phonology such as having a full series of implosives. This occurrence doesn't fully respect the implicational universals proposed by Greenberg (1970), Sherman (1975) and Maddieson (1984). On the other hand, the voiced stop series are missing altogether. Furthermore, in contrast to Greenberg's generalizations, clustering of implosives with other consonants is common, and hence clusters involve both egressive and ingressive air stream mechanisms. This may add to the list of exceptions to Greenberg's generalization on the occurrence restrictions of implosives. Yet another striking feature of Konso phonology is the productive occurrence of gemination of implosives, unlike many languages in the area. All these facts lead to a historical comparative issue: are implosives in Konso archaic features or recent innovations in the history of the language?