Kumzari is an endangered language spoken by about 4000 people in Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Iran. Speakers of the main dialect are found on the Musandam Peninsula of Oman and in small groups in cities along the Gulf coast of the United Arab Emirates. Laraki, a closely related dialect of the language, is spoken across the Strait of Hormuz by a single community on Larak Island in Iran (Lewis 2011, Anonby & Yousefian in press).

The Kumzari language was identified by Jayakar (1902), and a brief sketch of its grammar and lexicon appeared in Thomas (1930). Although it is often referred to as a mixed language, its core vocabulary and verbal morphology support Skjærvø’s (1989) classification of Kumzari within the Southwestern group of Iranian languages. Still, many of its basic structures, including elements of the phonological system, may be traced to influence from Arabic, including the neighbouring Shihhi dialect of Arabic (see Bayshak 2002).

The description in this Illustration is based on an analysis of 4500 lexical items and a number of longer texts collected from various Kumzari speakers (al-Kumzari 2009, Anonby & van der Wal Anonby 2011). Sound recordings have been provided by Noufal Mohammad Ahmed al-Kumzari and Malallah Sulaiman Muhammad al-Kumzari, both residents of Khasab, Oman.

**Consonants**

Characteristic phonetic realizations of all contrastive consonants are shown in the consonant table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bilabial</th>
<th>Labiodental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Velarized alveolar</th>
<th>Retracted</th>
<th>Palatalized alveolar</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
<th>Labial-velar</th>
<th>Uvular</th>
<th>Pharyngeal</th>
<th>Glottal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plosive</td>
<td>p b</td>
<td>t d</td>
<td>t' d'</td>
<td>k g</td>
<td>q</td>
<td>y</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affricate</td>
<td></td>
<td>tf d3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nasal</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fricative</td>
<td>f s</td>
<td>s' z'</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>χ w</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>h</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximant</td>
<td></td>
<td>l</td>
<td>j</td>
<td></td>
<td>w</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lateral approximate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One salient element of the Kumzari consonant inventory is a series of velarized (or possibly veloro-pharyngealized) alveolar obstruents. The secondary articulation in these consonants is simultaneous, not limited to the consonants’ release. This series corresponds to the ‘emphatic’ consonants of neighbouring Arabic dialects, but is not limited to the vocabulary that Kumzari has adopted from these varieties.

Contrast

All consonants are found in initial position.1

/p/  paːk  ‘clean thing’
/b/  baːl  ‘strength’
/t/  tɛk  ‘date syrup basket’
/d/  daːl  ‘stick’
/tˤ/  tˤaːf  ‘gale’
/dˤ/  dˤɛʃf  ‘guest’
/k/  kaːl  ‘work’
/q/  qaːl  ‘bull’
/r/  rˤaːt  ‘beetle species’
/s/  saːl  ‘stone mill’
/sˤ/  sˤaːm  ‘handle’
/zˤ/  zˤaːm  ‘time, occasion, turn’
/j/  jaːm  ‘supper’
/x/  xaːl  ‘bone’
/xˤ/  xaːzl  ‘money’
/h/  haːl  ‘situation’
/e/  xeːl  ‘yes’
/q/  qaːʃ  ‘vomiting’
/w/  waːl  ‘slitting (a shark)’
/l/  leːl  ‘fishing net’

The glottal stop appears predictably before otherwise word-initial vowels (as in /ʔaːʃ/ ‘stone mill’ above) and, in careful speech, between vowels at morpheme boundaries.

1 The orthographic representation shown in the third column employs the Kumzari writing system, which is based on Arabic script (al-Kumzari 2009, Anonby 2010).
The glottal stop’s contrastive nature is, however, evident from its distribution in a wide variety of other positions, as the following words show:

| 'mæd'zmæ | مجمه | ‘word’ |
| mæd'zmæ:o: | مجملو | ‘the word’ (normal or fast speech) |
| mæd'zmæ:i:o: | مجملتو | ‘the word’ (careful speech) |

Realizations of /l/.

Although the phonetic realization of most consonants is stable, /l/ exhibits several realizations, depending on its environment. In most positions, it is realized as a retroflex approximant [ɬ]. However, when it is found in an onset cluster after an alveolar consonant or before a semivowel, it is realized as an alveolar flap [ɾ]; when it is found in an onset cluster after a non-coronal consonant, it is realized as a retroflex flap [ɾ]; and when it is geminated, it is realized as an alveolar trill [ɾ]. Table 1 illustrates these possibilities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Realization</th>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Orthography</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word-initial before a vowel/word-final after a vowel</td>
<td>ɬ</td>
<td>زور</td>
<td>'child'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervocalic</td>
<td>ɬ</td>
<td>تيره</td>
<td>'way'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word-internal, syllable-final</td>
<td>ɬ</td>
<td>برنس</td>
<td>'blanket'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In an onset cluster after a postalveolar consonant</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>شرا</td>
<td>'traditional lamp'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In an onset cluster after an alveolar consonant</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>دراط</td>
<td>'length'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In an onset cluster before a semivowel</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>رياضت</td>
<td>'physical exercise'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In an onset cluster after a non-coronal consonant</td>
<td>ɾ</td>
<td>برنظ</td>
<td>'rice'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geminate</td>
<td>ɾ</td>
<td>قروص</td>
<td>'mosquito'</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Vowels

Kumzari has an inventory of eight contrastive vowels. Five of these are long, and three are short.

![Vowel Chart]

Long vowels are shown in the following words:

- /iː/ ːiː biːs بِيس ‘twenty’
- /eː/ ːeː beːl بَل ‘grind!’
- /aː/ ːaː baːm بَام ‘giant sea turtle’
- /oː/ ːoː boːɡ بُوْج ‘wallet’
- /uː/ ːuː buːt بُوت ‘small fish species’

Contrast between the three short vowels, and between short and long vowels, may be observed in the following words:

- /ɪ/ ɪ ɡɪl جِل ‘dirt, mud’
- /ɛ/ ɛ ɡɛp جِپ ‘large’
- /ʊ/ ʊ ɡʊt جُوت ‘take!’

Stress

On morphologically simple words of more than one syllable, stress falls predictably on the penultimate syllable.

- ‘qeːtʃढब ُ قِطِب ‘walking stick’
- ‘qɪʃtʃड ‘thread’

However, stress placement is contrastive for morphologically complex words. Some suffixes, such as the indefinite marker /-eː/, have no effect on the location of their host stem’s stress:

- ‘qeːtʃढब ُ قِطِب ‘a walking stick’
- ‘qɪʃtʃड ‘a thread’

Other segmentally analogous suffixes, such as the definite marker /-oː/, cause stress to shift to the penultimate syllable of the complex word. Frequently, depending on the structure of the stem, this shift is accompanied by vowel lengthening and, in some cases, also by harmonization (Anonby 2008):

- qeːtʃढब ُ قِطِب ‘the walking stick’
- qɪʃtʃड ‘the thread’

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0025100311000314 Published online by Cambridge University Press
Transcription
This section presents a transcription of the fable of 'The North Wind and the Sun', as recounted in Kumzari by Malallah Sulaiman Muhammad al-Kumzari.

Orthographic version

Acknowledgments
I would like to thank the many people who have made this research possible. I would first of all like to thank Christina van der Wal Anony and Tamara Janahi for encouragement and support during the writing of this article. In Oman, I have appreciated the supervision and input of Dr. Nafla al-Kharousi and Dr. Amel Salmon at Sultan Qaboos University. Two referees have also strengthened this article significantly with their suggestions. Finally, I am grateful to all those among the Kumzari who have shown us kindness, in particular the local authorities and several people who shared many insights about their own language. For Muhammad al-Kumzari and Ali Hassan Ali al-Kumzari have been particularly valuable: local authorities and several people who shared many insights about their own language. For grateful to all those among the Kumzari who have shown us kindness, in particular the referees have also strengthened this article significantly with their suggestions. Finally, I am and support during the writing of this article. In Oman, I have appreciated the supervision and input of Dr. Nafla al-Kharousi and Dr. Amel Salmon at Sultan Qaboos University. Two referees have also strengthened this article significantly with their suggestions. Finally, I am grateful to all those among the Kumzari who have shown us kindness, in particular the local authorities and several people who shared many insights about their own language. For.

https://doi.org/10.1017/50025100311000314 Published online by Cambridge University Press
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