

Rohingya language

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Rohingya is a language spoken by the Rohingya Muslim people of Arakan (Rakhine), Burma (Myanmar). It is linguistically similar to the Chittagonian dialect spoken in neighboring south-eastern Chittagong region of Bangladesh ^[1] (http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=cit). It also has a large number of Urdu, Persian, Hindi, Bengali, Arabic, Burmese and English words.

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Script

History

Rohingyalish is the modern writing system of Rohingya people. The word *Rohingyalish* is derived from the two words **Rohingya** and **English** due to the fact that it uses mainly Roman script which is completely different from that of the previously used scripts such as Arabic, Urdu, Hanifi-Script and Burmese.

Written in Arabic script, the first Rohingya language texts are more than 300 years old. While Arakan was under British rule (1826–1948), Rohingya people used mainly English and Urdu languages as basic means of written

Rohingya

Spoken in:	Burma, Bangladesh
Region:	Arakan region of Burma, south-eastern Chittagong region of Bangladesh
Total speakers:	
Language family:	Indo-European <ul style="list-style-type: none">Indo-Iranian<ul style="list-style-type: none">Indo-Aryan<ul style="list-style-type: none">Eastern Zone<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bengali-Assamese<ul style="list-style-type: none">Rohingya
	Language codes
ISO 639-1:	<i>none</i>
ISO 639-2:	inc
ISO 639-3:	rhg (http://www.sil.org/iso639-3/documentation.asp?id=rhg)

communication. Since the independence in 1948, the national language Burmese has been used in all official communications. Since early 1960s, Rohingya scholars have started to realize the need for a writing system for their own dialect which is different from that of Arabic, Urdu, Persian and Burmese.

In 1975 *Master Sultan* and his colleagues had developed a writing system using Arabic script. Due to major shortcomings in Arabic script to represent the dialect, some other scholars have soon adopted Urdu script to narrow the gap. Since Rohingya dialect is one of the most difficult Asian languages, the Arabic and Urdu scripts cannot produce all needed sounds. Therefore, most of the Rohingyas still find it quite difficult to read either Arabic or Urdu script versions of the language.

In other hand, *Molana Hanif* and his colleagues, have developed a new set of right-to-left oriented characters that are mainly based on Arabic script except a few from Latin and Burmese. This approach solved the reading problem in certain degrees and received appreciation from Rohingya Islamic scholars for whom media of study is purely in Arabic and Urdu. However, the new script got criticism for being very clumsy and the characters very similar to each other, requiring longer memorization time and careful writing to avoid confusion. More importantly, the major drawback is that it would require enormous work to standardize the new characters in today's computers and Internet media and the hassle to write in right-to-left direction.

Soon afterwards, *E.M. Siddique* has taken a complete radical approach to develop the Rohingya language using Latin letters only so as to eliminate all possible difficulties to write in today's electronic media such as Computers, Internet and mobile phones. The result is a quick to learn excellent writing system known as **Rohingyalish** that comprises 26 English letters, five accented vowels, and two other Latin characters carefully selected to represent the two distinguished Asian sounds known as the tongue rolling and the nasal sounds.

Alphabet

A a	B b	C c	Ç ç	D d	E e	F f
G g	H h	I i	J j	K k	L l	M m
N n	Ñ ñ	O o	P p	Q q	R r	S s
T t	U u	V v	W w	X x	Y y	Z z

Fig-1. *Rohingya Character Set Table*

The character set table of the Rohingya language writing system uses Latin letters A to Z along with the two other characters Ç and Ñ shown above in green background. In addition to five normal English vowels (aeiou), the language also uses five accented vowels (áéíóú). Rohingya is one of the most difficult Asian languages, therefore it was a very challenging job to write it using only Latin letters. However, the designer's intuitive concepts have made the writing not only perfect, but also, remarkably simple and easy to learn in minutes.

Usage of c, ç and ñ

C sounds neither **k** nor **s** in Rohingya. It sounds equal to **sh** only. Therefore, Rohingya word **shamish** should be written as **camic** (=spoon).

Ç closely sounds like **rd**, that is, a retroflex **r**. So **sha-Rda** should be written as **caça** (=mat).

Ñ closely sounds like **an'h**, that is the nasal sound which is widely used in Asia. So **fan'h-s**, should be written as **fañs** (=five).

Keyboard

To type Rohingya in computers with Microsoft Windows, add **US International** keyboard from control panel and then remove previous "US" keyboard. To type one of these characters (*áéíóúç*), first type the single quote(') followed by the corresponding character in (*aeiouc*). To type (*ñ*) first type (*~*) followed by (*n*). With **US International** keyboard setting, the characters (' , " , ~ and ^) work as trigger characters only (*do not display until you type another character*), so to get them alone type spacebar after each one.

Vowels

A Rohingya word may give you two different meanings based on whether it is pronounced in normal (soft) mode or in stressed (hard) mode. For example if the word *Ful* is pronounced in normal mode, its meaning is *Bridge/hole*, but in stressed mode its meaning is *Flower*. To overcome this problem, two types of vowels are used namely *normal vowels* and *stressed vowels*.

Normal vowels

a, e, i, o, u are normal (unstressed) vowels that give soft sounds as in the word **Ful** which means bridge or hole.

Stressed vowels

á, é, í, ó, ú are stressed (accented) vowels that give stressed sounds as in the word **Fúl** which means flower.

Examples	
Normal vowel usage	Stressed vowel usage
Sal = roof,	Sál = tree bark
Fan = betel leaf,	Fán = trap
Bet = cane (n.),	Bét = intention
Tel = oil,	Thél= push
Tir = arrow,	Tír = up-right position
Fir = person achieved religious light,	Fír =turn
Gor = do,	Gór = home
Zor = fever,	Zór = rain
Ful = bridge or hole,	Fúl = flower
Sul = hair,	Súl = skin (v.)

Phonemic vowels

1	2	3	4	5
<u>L</u> ast	F <u>a</u> ll	<u>A</u> s	-	-
<u>M</u> en	<u>M</u> e	<u>E</u> ye	-	-
<u>H</u> it	<u>F</u> irst	<u>I</u> ce	<u>C</u> ris <u>i</u> s	-
<u>F</u> or	<u>S</u> on	<u>O</u> ld	<u>W</u> omen	<u>D</u> o
<u>P</u> ut	<u>B</u> ut	<u>U</u> se	-	-

Unlike English language, Rohingya language has fixed the sound of each vowel to a particular sound only, and thus each vowel maintains the same sound in all Rohingya words. In the *Phonemic vowels* example shown above in tabular form, only words -**Last**, **Men**, **Hit**, **For** and **Put**- in the first column show the correct vowel sounds that Rohingya chooses to use, and all the other vowel sounds in other columns are not used at all.

But, one disadvantage in doing so is that it lacks one important sound that is the sound of true (o) as used in English word **old** in the *Phonemic vowels* example above. Solution to this problem seems to create a new vowel character, but instead, joint-vowels (**ou**) is used for representing the true (o) sound, as the sound lies in the middle of the two Rohingya sounds (o) and (u).

Rohingya vowel set

In all, Rohingya has a total of six vowels in each vowel category (normal and stressed) as below.

Normal vowel set..:	a	e	i	o	u	ou
Stressed vowel set:	á	é	í	ó	ú	óu

"**América on full tour**" is an easy to remember English phrase that shows the sound of each Rohingyalish vowel. Similarly, "**Alemi modú houli**" is an easy to remember Rohingya language phrase which means *International Honey Center*.

Examples

Fata	(Fa-tha)	= leaves (n.)
Melé	(MayLáy)	= can be opened
Cíçí	(Shí-Rdí)	= ladder (note: "ç" represents a retroflex "r" sound)
Foró	(fawráu)	= read
Futú	(Fu-thú)	= baby
Gouru	(Go-Ru)	= cow
Ciñçí	(Shiñ-Rdí)	= letter (note: "ñ" represents a nasal sound)

Straight and Circular sounds

In Rohingya language, there are mainly two types of sound formations, the straight sound formations and the circular sound formations.

Straight sounds

Straight sounds are those that are formed by using a single vowel such as **a, e, i, o, u** and **ou**. **Ou** is treated in Rohingyalish as if it is a single character. As discussed earlier, Rohingyalish assigns mono-sound (a fixed sound) to each of these vowels.

Circular sounds

Circular sounds are those that are formed by using two vowels, the 2nd one being always (**i**) such as **ai, ei, oi** and **ui**. The sound of each vowel pair is explained below.

Ai: pronounced as *āy, i, or i?e*.

For the sake of simplicity Rohingyalish considers the letter **y** as a consonant only. As a result **My, By** and etc. are not valid words any more, because **y** is used here as a vowel. To tackle this problem **ai** is used in place of **y** such as **Mai** and **Bai**. Similarly the English words **Hi** and **Fi** are phonetically equal to **Hai** and **Fai** in Rohingyalish. Likewise English words **Mile, Fine, Rise** can be phonetically expressed, in Rohingyalish, as **Máil, Fáin, Ráis**. These rules greatly reduce the ambiguity in vowel usages and make the language much easier.

Ei: pronounced as *æi, aeí, or a?e*.

Rohingyalish **ei** is almost equal to English **ai**. For example, English words **main, fail, tailor, mail, nail, rail, sail, tail** are phonetically equal to **méin, féil, téilar, méil, néil, réil, séil, théil** in Rohingyalish. Similarly the words **cane, sale, same, ate, plane** can be phonetically written as **kéin, séil, séim, éit, pléin** in Rohingyalish.

Oi: pronounced as *oui or oei* (not *wy, wai, oy, or y*).

This is one of the most frequently used circular sound in Rohingya Language. Unfortunately, the sound of **oi** here is different from that of English one. English **oi** sounds like **wy** or **oy** such as in English words **soil, coin, noice, rollroyce**. But Rohingyalish **oi** sounds like **oui** or **oei** such as in Rohingya words **Loi** (=take), **Boi** (=sit), **Ói** (=yes), **Goijjé** (=done), **Soil** (=rice), **Thoin** (=tin), **Moinna** (=sharp) and so on. It is really hard to find an English word that can represent the Rohingya **oi** sound.

Ui: pronounced as *wui*.

This sound is the same as it is used in English words such as **Quik**, **Quit**, **Buik**. Some examples of Rohingya words are **Kuissa** (=worm), **Tui** (=you), **Muillo** (=value), **Gúijja** (=covered).

Examples

(1) Straight-Sound Words:	Fatol (Fa-thol) = thin
	Meçi (May-Rdi) = soil
	Bála (Bha-la) = good
	Salu (Sa-lu) = fast
	Bouli (Bo-li) = fatty
(2) Circular-Sound Words:	Gail (Gy-il) = scolding
	Beil (Bay-il) = sun
	Soil (Sou-il) = rice
	Tui (Thui) = you, you are
(3) Circular and Straight Sound together Words:	Failla (Fy-illa) = dish
	Mouloi (Mo-loui) = teacher
	Balúic (Ba-lúish) = pillow
(4) A Rohingya sentence that gives all circular sounds.	Hailla Meillós Tui Óineh?
	(Hylla May-il-loss thui óui-nayy?) = Yesterday opened, you, yes?

Long sounds and variants

Long sounds

In Rohingya language, the meaning of a word can change if you extend the sound of a vowel in a word. So to extend the sound *Rohingylish* uses *double vowels* as illustrated below.

<u>Normal Sound(single vowel)</u>	<u>Extended Sound(double vowels)</u>
do (Dau) = give,	doo (Daw) = knife
no (Nau) = nine(9)	noo (Naw) = small boat
zo (Zau) = go	zoo (Zaw) = lucky period
dhor (Dhau-r) = afraid	dhoor (Dhaw-r) = heavy rain
mana (Ma-na) = make agree	maana (Ma-a-na) = free
nek (nay-k) = husband	neel (nay-el) = leave
nil (nil) = bamboo-skin	biili (be-e-li) = birth given lady
mur (Mu-r) = deep	muu (mu-wu) = face

In the examples above, single **o**, **a**, **e**, **i** or **u** are used in the words (left side) for short sounds, while double **oo**, **aa**, **ee**, **ii** or **uu** are used in the words (right side) for long sounds.

Variants

Rohingya language is very sensitive in extending the sound, as there are four ways of extending the sound. The first one, which is the simplest, uses double vowels as mentioned above such as aa, ee, ii, oo, uu. The other three variants differed on how double vowels are replaced with accented vowels. You can replace the first vowel, the second vowel, or both vowels with accented one such as (áa), (aá), or (áá).

Four variants of long vowels	Pronunciation	Meaning
gaa	(Ga-a)	body
gáa	(Gha-a)	infection
gaá	(Ga-ah)	sing
gáá	(Gha-ah)	expressing animal or natural sound

Example:

Gaat **gáa** óiye-dé manúic-cwá gana **gaár**.
 The man with **infection** in the **body** is **singing**.

In the example above, the 1st word has double normal vowels **aa** that gives normal steady extension of sound. The 2nd word is started with normal sound (normal a) and ended with raised sound (accented á). The 3rd word is started with raised sound(á) but ended with normal(a) sound. The 4th word is both started and ended with raised sounds (áá) which is not actually used in normal Rohingya talks but rather embedded in the talks to simulate the animal or natural sounds such as **Dúúm** the falling sound.

Examples

foól (Fawl) = mad, foól (Fau-auhl) = fault
 hoor (Hawr) = cloth, hoór (Hau-auhr) = curse
 muu (Mu-u) = face, muúntu (Mu-uhn-tu) = in front of
 neel (Ne-el) = out, meél (Me-ehl) = factory
 boól (Bo-ohl) = ball, sóol (sauh-aul) = sheep

Dual Characters

There are some Rohingya sounds for which no direct character exists, and usually, the solution to that problem is to use two (or more) joint-characters as shown below. For the natural easiness of Rohingya language, Rohingyalish has in some cases, interchanged the sound of the original character with the sound of the joint-characters such as **D** with **Dh**, and **T** with **Th**. Therefore 'D' is pronounced as English 'The' and, 'Dh' is pronounced as English 'Di' (not Dy). Likewise, 'Ta' is pronounced as English 'Tha' and, 'Tha' is pronounced as English 'Ta' as seen below.

Rohingya character	English equivalent	Examples of Rohingya words	Examples of English words
D	the	<u>D</u> ut (=milk), <u>D</u> ak (=mark)	fa <u>th</u> er, ga <u>th</u> er
Dh	d	<u>Dh</u> añço (=thick), <u>Dh</u> ak (=call)	<u>d</u> ome, <u>d</u> og
H'	h	<u>H'</u> áva (=air), <u>H'</u> át (=hand)	<u>h</u> ello
H	kh	<u>H</u> áiyi (=eaten), <u>H</u> óro (=soar)	<u>Kh</u> aled (name)
Kh	kh	<u>Kh</u> áled (name), <u>Kh</u> átu (name)	<u>Kh</u> aled (name), <u>Kh</u> atu (name)
N	n	<u>N</u> orom (=soft), <u>N</u> un (=salt)	<u>n</u> orth, <u>n</u> oon
Ng	ng	<u>Ng</u> apúra (village name)	<u>Ng</u> apura (village name)
Ny	ny	<u>Ny</u> ong-Cóng (village name)	<u>Ny</u> aung Chaung (village name)
T	th	<u>T</u> ua (=search)	tea <u>th</u> , <u>t</u> hin
Th	t	<u>Th</u> ambu (=tent)	<u>t</u> ent, <u>t</u> in
Ts	ts	<u>Ts</u> áni (=next in Arabic)	<u>t</u> sunami

Rohingya Grammar

Definite Articles

1. If a noun ends with a vowel then the article is either **án** or **wá** if singular, or **ún** if plural or uncountable. Usually **wá** is used for round-fatty objects, and **án** for flat-thin objects.

(singular)		(plural)	
Kéti	án (the farm)	Kéti	ún (the farms)
Fothú	án (the picture)	Fothú	ún (the pictures)
Fata	wá (the leave)	Fata	ún (the leaves)
boro	wá (the large)	boro	ún (the large)
		Lou	ún (the blood)

2. If a noun ends with a consonant then the article is the end-consonant plus **án** or **wá** for singular or **ún** for plural.

Debal	lán (the wall)	Debal	lún (the walls)
Mes	sán (the table)	Mes	sún (the tables)
Kitap	pwá (the book)	Kitap	pún (the books)
Manúic	cwá (the man)	Manúic	cún (the men)

3. If a noun ends with **r**, then the article is **g** plus **án** or **wá** for singular or **ún** for plural.

Tar	gán (the wire)	Tar	gún (the wires)
Duar	gán (the door)	Duar	gún (the doors)
Kuñir	gwá (the dog)	Kuñir	gún (the dogs)
Faár	gwá (the mountain)	Faár	gún (the mountains)

Indefinite Articles

Indefinite articles can be used either before or after the noun. **Uggwá** usually is used for roll/round/fatty shaped objects and **ekká**n is for thin/flat shaped objects.

(singular)		(plural)	
Uggwá	fata (a leave)	Hodún	fata (some leaves)
Ekkán	fothú (a picture)	Hodún	fothú (some pictures)
	-or-		-or-
Fata	uggwá (a leave)	Fata	hodún (some leaves)
Fothú	ekkán (a picture)	Fothú	hodún (some pictures)

Sentence Syntax

Unlike English, Rohingya word order is Subject + Object + Verb.

Subject	Object	Verb
Añní(I)	bát(rice)	háí(eat).
Ite(He)	TV(TV)	saá(watches).
Ibá(She)	sairkél(bicycle)	soré(rides).
ítara(They)	hamot(to work)	za(go).

Tenses

Rohingya Language can identify all 12 different forms of tenses as shown in the examples below. In these tenses, the helping verb **félai** shows perfect action like English "has/have" and **félaat** shows perfect continuous action like English "has/have been". The helping verb **táki** and **táikki** refer similar to that of English "be" and "been".

Verb-form-suffix (basic and/or helping verb) changes in two ways; by degree of person as well as by tense. The suffix **~ir**, **~yi**, **~lám**, **~youm** are used for the first person, the suffix **~or**, **~yó**, **~lá**, **~bá** for the 2nd person, and the suffix **~ar**, **~ye**, **~l**, **~bou** for the 3rd person. Similarly the suffix **~ir**, **~or**, **~ar** refer present continuous tense, the suffix **~yi**, **~yó**, **~ye**, refer to present perfect tense, the suffix **~lám**, **~lá**, **~l** refer to past and the suffix **~youm**, **~bá**, **~bou** refers to the future tense.

Singular	1st	m/f (I)	aññí	añáre	añár	aññínize	añár
	2nd	m/f (you)	tuñí tui oñne	tuáñre toré oñnoré	tuáñr tor oñnor	tuñínize tuinize oñnenize	tuáñr tor oñnor
	3rd	m (he)	ite * te * uite ** íte **	itaré taré uitaré ítare	itar tar uitar ítar	itenize tenize uitenize ítenize	ítar tar uitar ítar
		m/f (he/she)	ibá * uibá ** íba **	ibáre uibáre íbaré	ibár uibár íbar	ibánize uibánize íbanize	ibár uibár íbar
		n ₁ (it) n ₂ (it)	yián ibá	yiánóre ibáre	yiánór ibár	yiánnize ibánize	yiánór ibár
	Plural	1st	m/f (we)	añára	añáráre	añárár	añáranize
2nd		m/f (you)	tuáñrá	tuáñráre	tuáñrár	tuáñránize	tuáñrár
3rd		m/f (they)	ítará * tará * uitará ** ítara **	itaráre taráre uitaráre ítararé	ítarár tarár uitarár ítarar	ítaránize taránize uitaránize ítaranize	ítarár tarár uitarár ítarar
		n ₁ (they) n ₂ (they)	íín * uíín **	íínóre uíínóre	íínór uíínór	íínnize uíínnize	íínór uíínór

Gender: m=male, f=female, n=neuter., *=the person or object is near., **=the person or object is far.

See also

- Chittagonian
- Bengali language
- Chittagong
- Rohingya people
- Rakhine State

External links

For further information on Rohingya Language please refer the following links.

- Rohingya Language Website (<http://www.rohingyalanguage.com/>) or Rohingyalish (<http://www.rohingyalish.com/>)
- Rohingya Language Video Training (<http://www.youtube.com/sidqm>)

Other related links

- Free Rohingya Campaign (<http://www.freerohingyacampaign.org/>)
- Rohingya Website (<http://www.rohingya.org/>)
- Arakan Rohingya co-operation Council in europe (<http://www.arcc-online.eu/>)