

Tibetan is a Sino-Tibetan language spoken by about 4 million people in Asia. The dialects of Tibetan are divided into three groups based upon their phonological structure and how it relates to written Tibetan: 1) Lhasa, Shigatse, Mngari, and Sharpa, 2) Chamda, Sdedge, and Mbathang, 3) Blabrang, Cone, and Apa. Of these dialects, group 3 is the most conservative and Lhasa, and Shigatse are the most innovative. The most prestigious variant is Lhasa.

Historically, Tibetan had voicing contrasts among the consonants however, it was replaced by aspiration and tone contrasts; syllables with a low tone originally had a voiced initial consonant and those with a high tone had originally voiceless initial consonants.

The speaker in this recording is a male in his 30's that speaks a central dialect.

Tibetan (Lhasa) Consonant Phonemes:

Stops:	p	t	ʈ	k	q
	p ^h	t ^h	ʈ ^h	k ^h	q ^h
Affricates:		ts	tʃ		
		ts ^h	tʃ ^h		
Fricatives:		s	ʃ		h
Nasals:	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	
	m ^h		ɲ ^h	ŋ ^h	
Liquids:		l	ɭ		
		l ^h	ɭ ^h		
Glides:			j	w	

The aspirated sonorants occur only with a high tone.

Tibetan (Lhasa) Vowel Phonemes: Vowels Exhibited:

i	y	u
ɪ		ʊ
e	ø	ʌ
ɛ		ɔ
	a	

All vowels occur long, nasalized, glottalized or any combination thereof.

Tibetan Tones:

Tibetan contrasts two tone levels: high and low. There is also a neutral, null tone that is the unstressed, unmarked case. The high/low contrast neutralizes in polysyllabic words that begin with a high tone or a null tone. Allophonically, a falling tone also occurs depending on the consonant following a high tone.

I. Spontaneous Speech

II. Word Lists

Consonants:

- | | |
|-----|---------------------|
| 1. | 'hundred' |
| 2. | 'saddle' |
| 3. | 'to swim' |
| 4. | 'to be cold' |
| 5. | 'mouth' |
| 6. | 'a load' |
| 7. | 'a difference' |
| 8. | 'a rainbow' |
| 9. | 'ten' |
| 10. | 'tea' |
| 11. | 'water' |
| 12. | 'top' |
| 13. | 'special occasion' |
| 14. | 'life' |
| 15. | 'vegetable' |
| 16. | 'time' |
| 17. | 'horse' |
| 18. | 'incarnate llama' |
| 19. | 'hair' |
| 20. | 'a seed' |
| 21. | 'edge' |
| 22. | 'a gem' |
| 23. | 'wheat' |
| 24. | 'a list' |
| 25. | 'kitchen equipment' |
| 26. | 'costumes' |
| 27. | 'inside' |
| 28. | 'a fish' |
| 29. | 'to sleep' |
| 30. | 'eye' |
| 31. | 'a small present' |
| 32. | 'sky' |
| 33. | 'dignity' |
| 34. | 'to fry' |
| 35. | 'to be fried' |
| 36. | 'a worm' |
| 37. | 'an incense stick' |
| 38. | 'a boy' |
| 39. | 'Tibet' |
| 40. | 'Saturday' |
| 41. | 'to come' |
| 42. | 'don't look' |
| 43. | 'don't drink' |

44.	'don't regret it'
45.	'cough'
46.	'every year'
47.	'south'
48.	'together'
49.	'Lhasa'
50.	'school'
51.	'to tear'
52.	'cloth'

Tones:

1.	'ten thousand'
2.	'a knife'
3.	'a horse'
4.	'an arrow'
5.	'tiger'
6.	'food'
7.	'a stone'
8.	'a deer'
9.	'a dwelling place'
10.	'oily film on liquid'
11.	'an incense stick'
12.	'Tibet'
13.	'downhill'
14.	'mind'
15.	'poison'
16.	'dung of animals'
17.	'fleas'
18.	'a hammer'
19.	'a roof'
20.	'barley beer'
21.	'north'
22.	'nose'
23.	'copper'
24.	'depth'
25.	'spider'
26.	'to lead'
27.	'of the female yak'
28.	'by whom'
29.	'to say'
30.	'of her'
31.	'by her'
32.	'ugly'
33.	'happy'

Vowels:

1. 'meat'
2. 'to split'
3. 'nose'
4. 'school'
5. 'now'
6. 'he'
7. 'they'
8. 'a year'
9. 'grandmother'
10. 'movies'
11. 'a mirror'
12. 'otherwise'
13. 'Saturday'
14. 'and so forth'
15. 'following'
16. 'to see'
17. 'to show'
18. 'since there isn't any'
19. 'know'
20. 'a cup'
21. 'to arrive'
22. 'certainly'
23. 'the day before yesterday'
24. 'dog'
25. 'to carry'
26. 'a pair'
27. 'a part'
28. 'the price paid'
29. 'second'
30. 'to fry'
31. 'conversation'
32. 'his'
33. 'to wear'
34. 'Tibetan beer'
35. 'meaning'
36. 'to churn'
37. 'seventh'
38. 'next year'
39. 'how long'
40. 'front'
41. 'third'
42. 'tent'
43. 'paper'
44. 'size'
45. 'to teach'
46. 'mold'
47. 'thirty-three'

- 48. 'a soldier'
- 49. 'shoes'
- 50. 'a beating'
- 51. 'fleas'
- 52. 'outside'

References:

- Bright, William (ed.) 1992. International Encyclopedia of Linguistics. New York: Oxford University Press. 4:156
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