

Vowel Phonemes of Turung and Aiton language: A Contrastive Study

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Abstract

Assam is a multilinguistic state where various tribes speaking different languages to different languages families reside. The language of the Shymise-Chinese branch from Sino_ Tibetan group of language are known in Assam as the TAI language. The TURUNG and AITON living in Assam are Mongoloid and they belong to the TAI language family. The speakers of both TURUNG and AITON language are residing in many areas of Assam. The study of TURUNG and AITON language is very important because it is found only in spoken form. The new generation is not at all serious about their language. Moreover, though the Turung and Aiton belong to the same language family , there are many similarities and dissimilarities among them. So, this is an attempt to protect, to preserve and develop the TURUNG and AITON language and to highlight the similarities and dissimilarities.

KEYWORDS: Turung, Aiton, Phoneme, Contrast, Preserve.

INTRODUCTION :

North-East India is comprised of eight states and they are Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Sikkim and Tripura. Among all eight states Assam is the biggest state by its area. North east is surrounded by China in the north, Bhutan in the west, Bangladesh in the east and Burma in the South. Assam is a multilingual and multi religious state where we found many languages and dialects to different language families. Assam can be considered as the paradise of languages and a meeting place of different ethnic groups. Specially there are four language families in Assam. They are Indo- European, Sino- Tibetan, Austic and Dravidian. The Sino- Tibetan group are one of the major language family with two main branches i.e. Tibeto-Burman and Shymise- Chinese. The language of Shymese – Chinese branch are known in Assam as the TAI language. The TAI family consists of- Ahom, Khamti, Phake, Turung, Aiton and Khamyang.

People speaking the Turung and Aiton language reside predominantly in certain pockets of Assam. The places where the Turung and Aiton speakers mainly live have been given below-

Language	Districts/ State/ Country	Name of the village
Turung	Jorhat, Assam, India	Pathar Shyam
		Tipomia
		Pohukotia
	Golaghat, Assam, India	Raja Pukhuri
	Karbi Anglong, Assam, India	Basapathar(Avongpothar)
Balipathar		

Aiton	Golaghat, Assam, India	Borhola
		Tengani
		Duboroni
		Borgaon
	Karbi Anglong, Assam, India	Sokihula
		Bhitor Kalioni
		Balipothar
		Ahomoni
		Silonijan

Racially, the Turung and Aiton living in Assam are Mongoloid. Linguistically though they belong to the same language family, a few differences in the culture and social life since they migrated to Assam at various periods of times. On the other hand, differences relating to language are also noticed among these tribes. The Turung while migrating to Assam had to come through Singpho dominated areas and they got engaged in strife with them. The Singphos made the Turungs hostages for sometime and thus their language was influenced by the Singpho. It is due to this fact that the differences exist between the Aiton and the Turung language even though both originate from the same language family.

Objectives:

It has been becoming clear that now a days, the various speech communities have been influenced by others due to globalization. The respective TURUNG and AITON community is also influenced by neighbouring languages. The people belonging to Turung and Aiton community is Bilingual. They generally use various types of Turung and Aiton language in their domestic life and in public life, they prefer Assamese Language, the Mother-Tongue of Assam. So, the influence of Assamese language is quite evident in Turung and Aiton language, primarily in phonology and lexical level. The use of Turung and Aiton language is slowly declining among the new generation. In such (..) situation, the Turung and Aiton language is facing the threat of endangerment. So, to protect, to preserve and to develop the Turung and Aiton language ,the study is highly needed. This paper attempts to fulfil the following points-

- To establish the vowel phonemes of Turung and Aiton Language
- To describe the vowel phonemes of Turung and Aiton language
- To show the distribution of the vowel phonemes of Turung and Aiton language
- To show the vowel cluster in monosyllabic words of Turung and Aiton language
- A number of dissimilarities are noticed between the Turung and Aiton language even though they belong to the same language family. It is because of the fact that in the Turung language there is influence of the Singpho language. This study propose to analyse the differences in their forms through the contrastive study of vowel phonemes of these languages.

- This study will help towards the Turung and the Aiton language acquiring a written form and their preservation as these languages now only exist in colloquial form.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

It is generally observed that there have been only descriptive studies of the languages currently used in Assam. There has not been much study from the contrastive point of view. The study may be pioneering in the contrastive study of languages in Assam.

- The Turung and Aiton languages are currently spoken only by a limited number of speakers. This contrastive study may help speakers of other languages to acquire knowledge on these languages.

METHODOLOGY

This study is an attempt to find out the basic phonological features of the Turung and Aiton language and also to trace out the phonemic value. The collection procedure for this study is divided into two division- primary and secondary. The primary data are collected from the Turung and Aiton speakers in different localities of Jorhat, Golaghat and Karbi Anglong district in three forms: supplied vocabulary, Guided sentences and informal conversation. Moreover, a digital recorder was used to record the data when informal conversation was going on. Then, the phonological data was analyzed by the CSL 4500 (KEY – PENTEX) in the language laboratory of Assamese department, Dibrugarh University and was annotated using IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet)

Secondary datas have been collected from other research scholars, critics and writes as documented in reference books, etc.

RESEARCH PROBLEM

The Turung and Aiton language are one of the most significant language among the Tai community of Assam. Problems found for this study are as follows:

- Turung and Aiton language is still remain in spoken form.
- Though the Turung and Aiton language has script, still there have not found any written literature.
- The new generation is not at all serious for their language
- Still there have not found any grammar and dictionary in Turung and Aiton language. A project on AITON MPRPHOLOGY under AXOM PRAKASHAN PORISHAD ,Assam government is going on by me. A dictionary on AITON LANGUAGE is also in process of publish by this respective writer.

THE VOWEL PHONEMES OF TURUNG AND AITON LANGUAGE

There are seven (7) vowel phonemes in Turung and Aiton language. They are - / i, u, e, o, ə , ɔ , a /. According to the shape of lip and part of tongue, these vowel phonemes are shown in tabular form below :

According to the Shape of lip →	Unrounded		Rounded
According to the part of tongue →	Front	Middle	Back
high	/ i /		/ U /

high-Mid	/ e /		/ o /
low-Mid		/ ə /	/ ɔ /
low		/ a /	

Table No – 1 (Vowel phonemes of Turung and Aiton language)

USES OF VOWEL PHONEMES OF TURUNG AND AITON LANGUAGE

Some similarities are found in Turung and Aiton language In **Turunga and Aiton** language, / ə / is not found in initial position. The distribution of other vowel phonemes of Turung and Aiton language in initial position are given below :

TURUNG:

/ ɔ /	ɔi	‘Hello’
/ a /	ai	‘one’
/ i /	infilak	‘nail’
/ u /	ut	‘camel’
/ e /	ep	a small pot with a cover
/ o /	omba	‘cloth’

AITON:

/ ɔ /	ɔi	‘Hello’
/ a /	ai	‘one’
/ i /	infilak	‘nail’
/ u /	ut	‘camel’
/ e /	ep	a small pot with a cover
/ o /	omba	‘cloth’

HIGH FORM OF TURUNG AND AITON LANGUAGE

Some dissimilarities are found in Turung and Aiton high form. In Turung language, there are only three vowel phonemes found with clear high form. They are / i, u, a /. Example –

	Low		High
/ i /	kisi	‘Small’	kisi: ‘Aunty’
/ U /	su	‘frog’	su: ‘Brest’
/ a /	na	‘ear’	na: ‘No’

.But in Aiton language, six (6) vowel phonemes are found with clear high form. They are -

/ ɔ : / , / a : / , / i : / , / u : / , / e : / , / ə : / . Example-

/ ɔ : /	k ^h ɔ	‘ a hoe’	tɔ	‘play’
/ a : /	kaopɔŋ	‘the calf of the leg’	pa:tɔŋ	‘ a fetus’
/ i : /	ti	‘ place’	vi:	‘ fan’
/ u /	k ^h ulai	‘ a ladder’	su:lai	‘ a species of large tiger’
/ ə /	p ^h amə	‘palm’	tamə:	‘wrist’
/ e /	tek	‘box’	me:kɔ :	‘mother’s friend’

DIFFERENT VALUES OF TURUNG AND AITON LANGUAGE

After analyzing these vowel phonemes in language laboratory, **different values** are found of these vowel phonemes of Turung and Aiton language. These values are as follows. :

Vowel Phonemes	F1	F2	F3
/ i /	233.730	2114.916	3024.673
/ e /	501.166	2056.855	2627.790
/ a /	864.623	1211.445	2768.930
/ ə /	412.9464	1453.3195	2473.5106
/ ɔ /	704.529	783.6745	2628.383
/ u /	344.3995	1003.1792	2508.0572
/ o /	467.1488	996.4739	2551.6391

Table No – 2 (Value of Turung Vowel Phoneme)

Vowel Phonemes	F1	F2	F3
/ i /	292.9361	2126.585	3046.749
/ e /	421.0020	2120.6436	2879.2703
/ a /	764.5923	1485.2437	2723.5215
/ ə /	418.9972	1722.3536	1722.3536
/ ɔ /	778.6950	1103.3879	2407.5074
/ u /	485.279	1660.887	3037717
/ o /	572.932	1527.4805	2277.833

Table No – 3 (Value of Aiton vowel phonemes)

In these tables (Table No-2 and 3), F1, F2, and F3 is used to identify the height of tongue, the part of tongue and shape of lip.

VOWEL CLUSTER OF TURUNG AND AITON LANGUAGE

Vowel cluster consist of two or three vowel phonemes pronounced together are found in Turung language. On the otherhand, vowel cluster of two vowel phonemes are found in Aiton language. Example.

TURUNG

1st Vowel	2nd Vowel	3rd Vowel	Examples
a	i		adai ‘Uncle’
a	o		anao ‘Elder sister’
a	i	i	invtaiimmai ‘Continuously’

AITON

1st Vowel	2nd Vowel	Examples
a	i	uhai ‘ fever’
u	i	Patuviŋ ‘ gate’

CONTRAST OF VOWEL PHONEMES OF TURUNG AND AITON LANGUAGE

Some dissimilarities found in contrast of vowel phonemes of Turung and Aiton language, The contrast of vowel phonemes in Turung language are found in two environments, i.e. Identical and Analogous. But only analogue environment is found in the contrast of Aiton phoneme. Example –

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Name of the informants

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3. Subhodra Shyam , Ahomoni , Karbi Anglong district
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