

Phonological Features in Diyuwa: A Dimasa Dialect

Pronomita Rajioug

Research Scholar

Department of Linguistics

Assam University, Silchar

rpronomita87@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper discusses the phonological features in Diyuwa dialect of Dimasa spoken in Karbi Anglong district of Assam and Dimapur district of Nagaland. It belongs to Bodo-Garo group of Tibeto-Burman language family. It introduces the segmental and supra-segmental which includes vowel phonemes, distribution of vowel phonemes, diphthongs, distribution of diphthongs, consonant phonemes, distribution of consonant phonemes, consonant cluster and syllable structure.

Keywords: Diyuwa, Dimasa, Assam, Dimapur, Nagaland.

1. Introduction

Dimasa is one of the multi-cultured people of North-East India. They have well-preserved rituals and rich history. They are racially Indo-Mongoloids origin (Barpujari 2007) and linguistically they belong to Bodo-Garo group of the Tibeto-Burman language family (Lewis, Simons and Fenning 2013). The term 'Dimasa means 'sons of the great river where 'di' means water, 'ma' means big and 'sa' means sons (Singha 2007). Literally, they are called 'son of the mighty Brahmaputra river' According to 2001 census, the population of Dimasa in Assam is recorded 110,976 speakers. Dimasas are mainly live in Assam and bordering states of North-East India. Based on geographical distribution, Dimasa has four main dialects: Hasao, Hawar, Dembra and Diyuwa. Hasao is standard dialect spoken in Dima Hasao district of Assam. Hawar is spoken in Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi district of Assam and bordering village of Mizoram and Manipur. Dembra is spoken in Hojai and Nagaon district of Assam. Diyuwa is spoken is spoken in Karbi Anglong district of Assam and Dimapur district of Nagaland.

This is the first attempt to analyse the phonological features of Diyuwa dialect of Dimasa. In this paper, we will discuss their segmental and supra-segmental features of the dialect.

2. Segmental Inventories

This section presents the vowel, consonant, diphthongs, consonant clusters and syllable structures.

2.1. Vowel

Dijuwa has five short vowels as shown in table 1.

	Front	Central	Back
High	i		u
Mid	e		o
Low		a	

Table 1: Vowel Phonemes

Minimal pairs of vowel phonemes in Dijuwa as shown in table 2.

<i>i vs e</i>	/ani/ (my) /ane/ (me)
<i>e vs a</i>	/sem/ (salt) /sam/ (grass)
<i>u vs o</i>	/suni/ (lime) /soni/ (day after tomorrow)

Table 2: Minimal pair of Dijuwa

In Dijuwa, vowel phonemes /e, a, o, u/ occurs in all the three word positions and the vowel phoneme /i/ occurs in the word medial and final positions. Following table 3 shows the distribution of vowel phonemes in Dijuwa.

Vowels	Initial	Medial	Final
<i>i</i>	-	/gisim/ 'black'	/p ^h ei/ 'shield for war'
<i>e</i>	/eraha/ 'here'	/t ^h ei/ 'blood'	/t ^h ap ^h le/ 'yam'
<i>a</i>	/alu/ 'cat'	/k ^h ai/ 'run'	/kra/ 'cry'
<i>o</i>	/oima/ 'caterpillar'	/bok ^h olai/ 'cheek'	/pak ^h apaol/ 'chest'
<i>u</i>	/ut/ 'camel'	/k ^h ut ^h im/ 'corf'	/t ^h ailu/ 'banana'

Table 3: Distribution of Vowel Phonemes in Dijuwa

2.2. Diphthongs

Dijuwa has five diphthongs: /ei, ai, ao, ou, oi/. The most common diphthongs of Dijuwa are /ei/ and /ai/. It does not have triphthongs. Following table 4 shows the diphthongs in Dijuwa.

Diphthongs	Initial	Medial	Final
<i>ei</i>	-	<i>seisa</i> ‘dog’	<i>t^hei</i> ‘blood’
<i>ai</i>	-	<i>k^haisima</i> ‘ant’	<i>hotmai</i> ‘navel’
<i>ao</i>	-	<i>jaop^hle</i> ‘wrist’	<i>pak^hapao</i> ‘chest’
<i>ou</i>	-	<i>busout^hai</i> ‘grandson/daughter’	<i>hadzou</i> ‘hill’
<i>oi</i>	<i>oima</i> ‘caterpillar’	-	-

Table 4: Diphthongs in Dijuwa

2.3. Consonants

Dijuwa has 19 phonemic consonants. It does not have allophones. Following table 5 presents a phonetic chart of Dijuwa phonemic consonant.

Manner of Articulation		Place of Articulation					
		Bilabial	Alveolar	Palatal	Post-Alveolar	Velar	Glottal
Stop	V-unaspirated	p	t			k	
	V-aspirated	p ^h	t ^h			k ^h	
	V+	b	d			g	
Affricate	V-						
	V+				ɟʒ		
Fricative	V-		s				h
	V+						
Nasal	V-						
	V+	m	n			ŋ	
Lateral	V-		l				
	V+						
Trill	V-						
	V+		r				
Semi-Vowel	V-						
	V+	w		j			

Table 5: Phonemic Consonant in Dijuwa

In Dijuwa, the phonemic consonants cannot occur in all the three word positions. Following table 6 presents the distribution of consonant phonemes.

Consonants	Initial	Medial	Finally
<i>p</i>	<i>/pislim/</i> ‘brain’	<i>/sapama/</i> ‘bed bug’	<i>/mantap/</i> ‘squirrel’

<i>p^h</i>	/p ^h anj ^h or/ ‘armpit’	/p ^h up ^h ru/ ‘slient’	-
<i>b</i>	/but ^h a/ ‘blunt’	/daobuma/ ‘crane’	/dub/ ‘cannon’
<i>t</i>	/ten/ ‘keep’	/pokto/ ‘neck’	-
<i>t^h</i>	/t ^h ei/ ‘blood’	/lan ^h o/ ‘bald’	-
<i>d</i>	/dihu/ ‘water pot’	/k ^h andema/ ‘cicada’	-
<i>k</i>	/kere/ ‘crocodile’	/mukukre/ ‘fern’	-
<i>k^h</i>	/k ^h uska/ ‘chin’	/pak ^h a/ ‘heart’	-
<i>g</i>	/gun/ ‘to bend’	/mugru/ ‘eyeball’	-
<i>m</i>	/mukdu/ ‘pitcher (for metal)’	/homda/ ‘tadpol’	/kisim/ ‘black’
<i>n</i>	/nale/ ‘daily’	/kant ^h ao/ ‘stick’	/pahain/ ‘flesh’
<i>ŋ</i>	-	/t ^h aimuŋkol/ ‘papaya’	/k ^h ru/ ‘fencing’
<i>l</i>	/laibi/ ‘easy’	/t ^h ailu/ ‘banana’	/tal/ ‘echo’
<i>r</i>	/rai/ ‘cane’	/beren/ ‘goat’	/gedger/ ‘middle’
<i>s</i>	/suluy/ ‘learn’	/busou/ ‘daughter’	/pus/ ‘december’
<i>dʒ</i>	/dʒetama/ ‘spider’	/hadʒu/ ‘front tooth’	-
<i>h</i>	/hap ^h ai/ ‘area’	/bahaint ^h o/ ‘muscle’	-
<i>w</i>	/wakelei/ ‘bamboo shoot’	/konowa/ ‘heron’	-
<i>j</i>	/jao/ ‘hand’	/mijun/ ‘elephant’	-

Table 6: Consonant Phonemes in Dijuwa

In Dijuwa, the consonant phonemes /*p*, *b*, *m*, *n*, *l*, *r*, *s*/ occurs in all the three positions. The phonemic consonant /*p^h*, *t^h*, *d*, *k*, *k^h*, *g*, *dʒ*, *h*, *w*, *j*/ occurs in the word initial and middle position and the consonant phoneme /*ŋ*/ occurs in the word medial and final positions.

Minimal pair of consonant phonemes in Dijuwa is shown in the following table 7.

<i>p</i> vs <i>p^h</i>	<i>plai</i> ‘leaf’	<i>p^hlai</i> ‘flat’
<i>p^h</i> vs <i>b</i>	<i>p^hai</i> ‘come’	<i>bai</i> ‘dance’
<i>t</i> vs <i>d</i>	<i>tak^hana</i> ‘tomorrow’	<i>dak^hana</i> ‘don’t hear’
<i>t</i> vs <i>t^h</i>	<i>tan</i> ‘work’	<i>t^han</i> ‘go’
<i>t^h</i> vs <i>d</i>	<i>t^hei</i> ‘blood’	<i>dei</i> ‘water’
<i>k</i> vs <i>k^h</i>	<i>kao</i> ‘shoot’	<i>k^hao</i> ‘pluck’
<i>k^h</i> vs <i>g</i>	<i>k^harao</i> ‘elder person’	<i>garao</i> ‘word’
<i>m</i> vs <i>n</i>	<i>mija</i> ‘yesterday’	<i>nija</i> ‘not’
<i>l</i> vs <i>r</i>	<i>lan</i> ‘take away’	<i>ran</i> ‘money’
<i>s</i> vs <i>h</i>	<i>sai</i> ‘select’	<i>hai</i> ‘smell’
<i>w</i> vs <i>j</i>	<i>wat^ho</i> ‘piece of bamboo’	<i>jat^ho</i> ‘ankle cap’

Table 7: Minimal pairs in Dijuwa

2.4. Consonant Cluster

Consonant cluster is highly productive in Dijuwa. It occurs in the word initially. In Dijuwa consonant cluster are formed from stop, nasal, fricative and lateral as present in table 8.

Stop + Lateral	<i>p^hlai</i>	‘leaf’
Stop + Trill	<i>grimba</i>	‘thunder’
Fricative + Stop	<i>stap</i>	‘sticky’
Fricative + Lateral	<i>slai</i>	‘change’
Fricative + Trill	<i>srao</i>	‘july’
Fricative + Nasal	<i>dʒna</i>	‘bright’
Nasal + Lateral	<i>mlao</i>	‘play’

Table 8: Consonant Cluster in Dijuwa

In Dijuwa, the formation of consonant cluster with stop and fricative are highly productive. Triple consonant cluster does not occur in Dijuwa.

2.5. Syllable Structure

Syllable structure in Dijuwa are monosyllabic, disyllabic, trisyllabic and quadrisyllabic. Following table 9 and table 10 presents the syllable structure in Dijuwa.

Open Syllable	Words	Gloss
CV	<i>ku</i>	‘grasshopper’
CV.CV	<i>kere</i>	‘crocodile’
CVC.CV.CV	<i>t^hamsuma</i>	‘house fly’
CVC.CCV.CV.CVV	<i>jembruwalai</i>	‘flying frog’

Table 9: Open Syllable structure in Dijuwa

Closed Syllable	Words	Gloss
CVC	<i>Haŋ</i>	‘breathe’
CV.CVC	<i>kat^haŋ</i>	‘unripe’
CVV.CVC.CVC	<i>t^haimuŋkol</i>	‘papaya’
CVC.CCVV.CV.CVC	<i>jaŋklaipot^hor</i>	‘rainbow’

Table 10: Closed Syllable in Dijuwa

In Dijuwa, polysyllables are derived words which are mainly found in numerals words. Open syllables and closed syllables are also seen in Dijuwa dialect.

3. Tone

Dijuwa has a simple tone which has three way of contrast: high (ˊ), mid (ˋ) and low (ˋ). Dijuwa has only lexical tone which is shown in the table 11.

High	Mid	Low
/sùŋ/ ‘cook’	/sūŋ/ ‘stand’	/s̀ŋ/ ‘ask’
/saín/ ‘sun’	/saīn/ ‘count’	/saìn/ ‘pull’
/tʰú/ ‘spit’	/tʰū/ ‘sleep’	/tʰ̀/ ‘wearing cloths’
/d͡ʒoú/ ‘ricebeer’	/d͡ʒoū/ ‘tall’	/d͡ʒò/ ‘kick’
/d͡ʒaó/ ‘lend money’	/d͡ʒaō/ ‘winnowing rice’	/d͡ʒà/ ‘prieicing’

Table 11: Tone in Dijuwa

4. Conclusion

From the above phonological features, we can conclude that Dijuwa is a dialect of Dimasa which belongs to Tibeto-Burman language family. Dijuwa has five short vowels, five diphthongs, nineteen consonant phonemes and three tones. Vowel phonemes /e, a, o, u/ occurs in all the three word positions and the vowel phoneme /i/ occurs in the medial and final positions in Dijuwa. The diphthongs /ei, ai, ao, ou/ occurs in the word medial and final positions and the diphthongs /oi/ occurs only in the word initially. It does not have triphthongs. In Dijuwa, consonant cluster is highly productive and occurs in the word initially. Triple consonant cluster does not occur in Dijuwa. Syllable structure in Dijuwa varies from monosyllabic to quadrisyllabic. In Dijuwa, polysyllables are mainly occurs in numeral words. A deeper study on tone is to be carried out for further research.

=====

References

- Barpujari, S.K. (2007). *History of the Dimasa (From the earliest times to 1096 A.D.)*. Haflong: N.C.Hills Autonomous Council.
- Burling, R. (2007). *Dimasa Tones*. University of Michigan. Unpublished manuscript.
- Burling, R. (2013). “The Sixth Vowel in Bodo-Garo Languages”. In G. Hyslop, S. Morey and M. W. Post (eds.) *North East Indian Linguistics*. Volume 5, p-271-279. New Delhi, Cambridge Press.
- Jacquesson, F. (2008). *A Dimasa Grammar*. Download from http://brahmaputra.vjf.cnrs.fr/bdd/Dimasa_English-2.pdf.

Lewis, M.P., Simons, G.F. and Fennig, C.D. (eds.). (2013). *Ethnologue: Languages of the World, Seventeenth edition*. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Retrieved August 20, 2013 from <http://www.ethnologue.com/>

Marlett, Stephen. (2001). *An Introduction to Phonological Analysis*. Summer Institute of Linguistics and University of North Dakota.

Sarmah, P. (2009). *Tone Systems of Dimasa and Rabha: A Phonetic and Phonological Study*. PhD Dissertation. University of Florida, USA.

Singha, D. Kh. (2007). *Introduction to Dimasa Phonology*. Guwahati:DVS Publishers.