# Irregular Vowel Correspondence between Kakching Dialect and Standard Meiteilon

**Naorem Brindebala Devi, Ph.D. Research Scholar**
**Prof. Ch. Yashawanta Singh**

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**Abstract**

Kakching dialect, a dialect of Meiteilon (Manipuri), is used for communication among the people of Kakching town. This dialect has some irregular phonological correspondence with the Standard Meiteilon. This correspondence is irregular or may be the case of sporadic sound change. It happens mostly in single items, sometimes two to three items. This study aims to present a clear description of irregular vowel correspondence between the Kakching dialect and standard Meiteilon, shown at syllable level.

**Key words**: Meiteilon, Kakching dialect, irregular correspondence (Bhat 1972)

## 1.    Introduction

Kakching dialect (henceforth K.D.) is a variety of Meiteilon (also known as Manipuri), spoken in Kakching, which is situated in the south-eastern part of Manipur valley at a distance of about 45km. from Imphal. It has a population of about 33170 according to All India Census Report 2011. The people of Kakching use this dialect (variety) inside the town for informal as well as day to day use among themselves and they use standard dialect or Standard Meiteilon (henceforth Std.Meiteilon) while communicating with outsiders (Manipuri). Standard Meiteilon here, is the variety of Meiteilon used in Imphal area as well as in Educational institutions, public meetings, announcements, newspapers, magazines, books, articles, dictionaries, theatres, radio, television, administration, government dealings, law courts etc. in short, in education, administration and mass media. This variety (K.D.) has some difference from the Standard Meiteilon which makes this dialect variable from the latter.

The people of Kakching use Standard Meiteilon for formal use (in cases of public meeting, announcements, teaching etc.) as well as with outsiders for communication. But

**Language in India** www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 15:6 June 2015**
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there are some people (a few) who use standard dialect in day to day life/circumstances. Since, this dialect is considered to be a substandard one by many, Standard Meiteilon is used for written purposes. This dialect is regional, that is, a geographical one.

Correspondence is the consistent correlation between two entities. Irregular correspondence in vowel phoneme is found between these two varieties. Variation in phonological level is found to be correspondent irregularly as geographical factor, affected by certain sporadic sound changes (Bhat, 1972). This variation in vowel phoneme is found also in Tulu, a Dravidian language, where

| | Southern form (Tulu) | Northern form (Tulu) | Gloss |
|---|---|---|---|
| i~iː | idegɨ | iːdegɨ | 'belch' |
| ɛ~i | keː rɛ | keːri | 'water snake' |

Further this is also found in Cochin dialect of Malayalam. The Trichur dialect and Ernakulam dialect of Cochin is taken up,   (Somashekharan Nair, 1979)

| | **Trichu**r (dialect) | **Ernakulam** (dialect) | **Meaning/Gloss** |
|---|---|---|---|
| e~a | iskeyilu | iskayilu | 'scale' |
| u~i | eru | eri | 'pungency' |
| a~u | aRakkuka | aRukkuka | 'to cut' |
| u~i | orupoole | orippoole | 'similarly' |

## 2.   Vowel Phoneme Irregular Correspondence

The correspondence between these two varieties is irregular or they may be the result of sporadic sound changes. The sporadic changes affect mostly single items, sometimes two to three items. "…the sporadic ones affect only single items (two or three items in some cases) and they could not be referred to except by listing the items concerned." (Bhat, 1972). There is not so much irregular vowel phoneme correspondence between Kakching dialect and Standard Meiteilon which are given by listing the items only, in this study. This study is discussed in the syllable level under three headings:

(i) Correspondence in the first syllable

(ii) Correspondence in the second syllable

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(iii)  Correspondence in both the syllables.

## 2.1. Correspondence in the First Syllable

**2.1.1 /u/~/e/**

The high back rounded vowel /u/ in the first syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the mid front unrounded vowel /e/ in the same environment in Std. Meiteilon in the following lexical item.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| yumpak | yempak | 'parasol' |

**2.1.2 /u/ ~ /o/**

The high back rounded vowel /u/ in the first syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the mid back rounded vowel /o/ in the same environment in Std. Meiteilon. For this type of correspondence, we have taken up these given in the following lexical items.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| murok | morok | 'chilly' |
| muhor | mohor | 'measuring unit of gold' |
| pudon | podon | 'lamp' |

There are some other items of the same environment which shows no difference at all. For instance,

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| coron (loan word) | coron (loan word) | 'feet' |
| soyon (loan word) | soyon (loan word) | 'a kind of song' |
| koloy | koloy | 'name (archaic)' |
| poloy | poloy | 'ending' |

**2.1.3.  /o/~/ə/**

The mid back rounded vowel /o/ in the first syllable in Kakchingdialect corresponds to the mid central vowel /ə/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon. This can be found in case of in the following lexical item,

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| koroŋcak yuŋbə | kəroŋcak yuŋbə | 'to be somersault' |

**2.1.4.  /o/~ /e/**

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The mid back rounded vowel /o/ in the first syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the mid front unrounded vowel /e/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| yottum | yettum | 'needle' |

The above case can be analysed in semantic domain, the lexicalised term *yottum* 'needle 'in Kakching dialect has two roots that is, *yot* means 'iron' and *tum-* means 'pointed'(which is more appropriate to the meaning). This type of correspondence in this environment is not found in cases of other items relating *yot* 'iron' . For instance, *yotpak* 'spade' is common to both the dialects. This may be traced back to the etymology of the items which need to be further studied.

**2.1.5.** /o/~/u/

The mid back rounded vowel /o/ in the first syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the high back rounded vowel /u/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon. This type of irregular correspondence is found in the following lexical items.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| nora | nura | 'bodily grim' |
| nora | nura | 'cloth to wipe the floor' |
| modrubi | mukt$^h$rubi | 'a culinary shrub' |

**2.1.6.** /u/~/o/

The reverse of the above is found in this case where the high back rounded vowel /u/ in the first syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the mid back rounded vowel /o/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon in the following lexical item.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| uja | oja | 'teacher' |

**2.1.7.** /i/~/ə/

The high front unrounded vowel /i/ in the first syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the mid central unrounded vowel /ə/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon in the following lexical item

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| k$^h$ijik | k$^h$əjik | 'some' |

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**2.1.8** /ə/~/a/

The mid central unrounded vowel /ə/ in the first syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the low central rounded vowel /a/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon in the given lexical items.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| təjəu | tacəu | 'elder brother' |
| nəhoŋ | nahoŋ | 'cloth to piggyback a child' |
| kəŋnəu | kaŋŋəu | 'vegetable fry' |

In the case of Kakching dialect *kəŋ u and* Std. Meiteilon *kaŋŋəu* 'vegetable fry', Kakching dialect *kəŋŋəu* seems to be nearer to the meaning that is, *kəŋŋəu* is a lexicalised item derived from *kəŋ* 'dry' and *ŋəu-* 'to fry' which form this particular item. Whereas in the case of *kəŋŋok* 'dry laugh (ironical laugh)', there is no such change at all.

Here is one item of this type of correspondence in the given noun incorporation form.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| mai cəmbə | mai cambə | 'scrabrous face' |

**2.1.9.** /ə/~/a

In case of the following items, the mid central unrounded vowel /ə/ in first syllable in Kakching Dialect corresponds to the low central unrounded vowel /a/ in Std. dialect in the given lexical items where /a/ is added in the Kakching dialect.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| həra | har | 'fertilizer' |
| cəra | car | 'small plant' |

**2.1.10.** /a/~/ə/

The reverse of the above case is found in the following items where the low central unrounded vowel /a/ in the first syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the mid central unrounded vowel /ə/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon in the following lexical item

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| pʰarək | pʰərək | 'odd' |
| tʰadətpə | tʰədətpə | 'to pluck' |

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This type of correspondence has these following items in phrasal forms

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| ŋa lakpə | ŋa ləkpə | 'to catch fish in the net' |
| hakcik laŋbə | həkcik laŋbə | 'to take rest in the open air' |

In the above phrasal form *ŋa lakpə* in Kakching dialect and ŋa *ləkpə* in Std. Meiteilon 'to catch fish in the net', the forms *lakpə and ləkpə* do not give the intended meaning without the noun *ŋa* 'fish'. Like this, in the form *hakcik laŋbə* in Kakching dialect and *həkcik laŋbə* in Std. Meiteilon 'to take rest in the open air', *hakcik* and *həkcik* is not meaningful without *laŋbə*. They are noun incorporation.

**2.1.11.** /ə/~/e/

The mid central unrounded vowel /ə/ in the first syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the mid front unrounded vowel /e/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| səga | sega | 'side of the body below the armpit' |
| səga | segrak | 'armpit' |

**2.1.12. /**i/~/e/

The high front unrounded vowel /i/ in the second syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the mid front unrounded vowel /e/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon in the following lexical items.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| metʰi | mitʰi | 'last' |
| tʰegaŋ | tʰigaŋ | 'waistline, loin' |

**2.1.13** /əi/~ /i/

The dipthong /əi/ of the first syllable in the second item in Kakching dialect corresponds to the high front unrounded vowel /i/ in the same syllable of the same environment in Std. Meiteilon in the following lexical item.

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| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| tʰiŋao ləiŋao | tʰiŋao liŋao | 'naughty' |

**2.1.14.** /e/~/əi/

The mid front unrounded vowel /e/ of the first syllable in the second item in Kakching dialect corresponds to the dipthong /əi/ in the same syllable of the same environment in Std. Meiteilon. It is found in this kinship term.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| item | itəimə | 'sister in law (male ego)' |

here, /ə/ in the end of Std. Meiteilon, is deleted in Kakching dialect.

## 2.2.    Correspondence in Second Syllable

**2.2.1.** /i/~ /a/

The high front unrounded vowel /i/ in the second syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the low central unrounded vowel /a/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon in this noun incorporation form.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| nali | nala | drain |

**2.2.2.**   /i/~ /ə/

The high front unrounded vowel /i/ in the second syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the mid central unrounded vowel /ə/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| pisik pikpə | pisək pickpə | 'tiny' |

**2.2.3.**   /ə/~ /u/

The mid central unrounded vowel /ə/ in the second syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the high back rounded vowel /u/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon in the given lecial item.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| cakʰəm | cakʰum | 'kitchen' |

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**2.2.4.** /u/~/ə/

       The high back rounded vowel /u/ in the second syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the mid central unrounded vowel /ə/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteiloŋ in the following lexical item.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| yotsubi | yotsəbi | 'gridiron' |

This type of correspondence is found in the kinship term also.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| inum | inəmmə | 'sister in law' |

Here *mə* in Std. Meiteiloŋ is deleted in Kakching dialect.

**2.2.5.** /o/~/u/

       The mid back rounded vowel /o/ in the second syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the high back rounded vowel /u/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon in the following given lexical item.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| əmok | əmuk | 'once' |

**2.2.6**. /u/~/o/

       The reverse of the above case is found in the following item where the high back rounded vowel /u/ in the second syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the  mid back rounded vowel /o/ in the same environment in Std. Meiteilon in this lexical item.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| tʰummuk | tʰummok | 'basket' |

**2.2.7.** /a/~/ə/

       The low central unrounded vowel /a/ in the second syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the mid central unrounded vowel /ə/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon in the following phrase.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| pairakki ləusiŋ | pairəkki ləusiŋ | 'presence of mind' |

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**2.2.8.** /e/~/ə/

The mid front unrounded vowel /e/ in the second syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the mid central unrounded vowel /ə/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon in this lexical item.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| belendri | beləndri | 'lady's finger' |

**2.2.9**. /ə/~/i/

The mid central unrounded vowel /ə/ in the second syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the high front unrounded vowel /i/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon in this given lexical item.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| kacən | kacin | 'corner' |

**2.2.10.** /i/~/e/

The high front unrounded vowel /i/ in the second syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the mid front unrounded vowel /e/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon in this given phrasal form.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| hobi hobi təubə | hobe hobe təubə | 'to be quick' |

**2.2.11.** /u/~/i/

The high back rounded vowel /u/ in the second syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the high front unrounded vowel /i/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| həirubop | həiribop | 'hatkora' |

It is found in this phrasal expression also,

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| laimuŋ ləubə | laimiŋ ləubə | 'to access to a ritual practice of one's life' |

Here, the item in std. dialect seems to be more appropriate to the meaning since *lai* is 'God' and *miŋ* is 'name' that may be 'in the name of God'. The phrasal expression *laimiŋ ləubə* represents 'to access to a ritual practice of one's life' in the name of God.

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### 2.3.    Correspondence in Both the Syllables

This type of correspondence is hardly found between these two dialects. Here, only four items are found for the present study.

**2.3.1.**   /e/~/o/; /o/~/e/

The mid front unrounded vowel /e/ in the first syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the mid back rounded vowel /o/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon in this given lexical item. The reverse of this is found in the second syllable of the same item where the mid back rounded vowel /o/ corresponds to the mid front unrounded vowel /e/.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| keŋgroŋ | koŋgreŋ | oyster |

**2.3.2.**   /a/~/ə/ ; /ə/~/a/

The low central unrounded vowel /a/ in the first syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the mid central unrounded vowel /ə/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon in this given lexical item. The reverse of this is found in the second syllable of the same item where the mid central unrounded vowel /ə/ corresponds to low central unrounded vowel /a/.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| hagəm | həkam | 'yawn' |
| nahən | nəhan | 'the day before yesterday' |

**2.3.3.**   /ə/~/a/ ; /a/ ~/ə/

The mid central unrounded vowel /ə/ in the first syllable in Kakching dialect corresponds to the low central unrounded vowel /a/ in the same syllable in Std. Meiteilon in this given lexical item. The reverse of this is found in the second syllable of the same item where the low central unrounded vowel /a/ corresponds to the mid central unrounded vowel /ə/.

| Kakching dialect | Std. Meiteilon | 'Gloss' |
|---|---|---|
| həraw | harəw | 'cricket' |

The phonological correspondence in vowel phoneme is also found in the dialects of Kashmiri found using in various regions of Jammu and Kashmir state like, Srinagar, Anantnag, Pulwama, Brang-Kokernag, Srigufwara, Mattan, Baramulla, Sangrama, Ajas, Kulgam etc. However, the type of correspondence discussed by Sachdeva, Dhar, and Koul in the book *A Linguistic Survey of Kashmiri*

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*Dialects* (2010) has some hypothetical rules where some of the dialectal differences are shown as per structural dialectological schema. For instance,

Pul-Ang // i, ɨ⚕ Pul ___u___ ≈ u //

       Ang   i ~ ɨ

The above schema shows that Pulwama and Anantnag varieties have the vowels [i] and [ɨ] in common but the words that have [u] in Pulwama variety have [i] and [ɨ] in Anantnag variety. For example;

       šutɨlʲ    /       šɨtɨlʲ          measles

       duh    /     dɨh          smoke

But this type of hypothetical rule cannot be made up and applied to the correspondence between Kakching dialect and Std. Meiteilon. Let us discuss 2.2.9. Here, Kakching dialect /ə / in kacən corresponds to Std. Meiteilon /i/ in kacin 'corner'. But this is an exception to items as *ləycən* 'various kinds of flower' and *ləycin* 'cloud' (Singh 1990). In this environment their occurrence gives different meaning. They represent different lexical items common in both the dialects.

## 3.     Conclusion

This irregular vowel correspondence between these two dialects makes the two dialects variable from each other. This correspondence is shown in the syllable level. For better understanding, some of the studies are given based on semantic domain. The given study shows light on the study of irregular correspondence.

The correspondence is irregular or may be the result of sporadic sound change. They are given by listing the items concerned. In regular sound change, the change affects the whole paradigms. But regarding this irregular correspondence, no satisfactory explanation cannot be offered (Bhat 1972).

In Meiteilon, the irregular phonological correspondence in vowel phoneme is found affecting mostly single items. And it is also found to be affecting in two to three items. This is also found also in loan words.

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Naorem Brindebala Devi
Research Scholar
Department of Linguistics
Manipur University
Imphal
Manipur
India
brindebalanaorem@gmail.com

Prof. Ch. Yashawanta Singh
Department of Linguistics
Manipur University
Imphal
Manipur
India
chungkhamyash@gmail.com

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