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Mishing-Assamese Dialect: A socio-linguistic study

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ABSTRACT

From the pre-historic time, Northeast India has been a rich land of tribes and cultures. Languages and sublanguages of different language families have been co-existing in the same space. Hence, Northeast India has witnessed the development of localized Aryan language, with a mixture of the assortment of other non-Aryan regional languages. The Mishing community has a remarkable contribution to it as well. This study provides a discussion on the socio-linguistic study of the Mishing-Assamese dialect.

1. Introduction:

North-east, as well as Assam, is a land of many languages. Mishing is one of the primary tribes of Assam. Many upper Assam districts and some places at Arunachal Pradesh are the primary domiciles of this tribe. "Clans of Mishing i.e. Chamguria, Taamaarganjya (Tamar). Bankowaal, Bebejia, Bihiya etc. have already forgotten their dialect and started using Assamese as their mother tongue" (Kaagmung, Bhrigumani, Mishing Sankaskritir Aalekhya, p. 455). Despite adopting the Assamese language as their mother tongue, these clans have not forgotten the culture of their tribe.

Many of the Mishing clans have established matrimonial or political linkage with other tribes such as Chutiya (Barahee), Ahom (Tai), submerging with the Hindu Brahmanical or Mahapurushia mainstream in the process. In this study, how the Assamese language has taken shape in the habitat of such clans has been discussed.

The objectives of the study:

- A. To find the relationship between social-linguistic and language society.
- B. Characteristics of phonetics in Mishing-Assamese dialect
- C. Characteristics of aesthetics in Mishimese dialect

Significance of the study:

Assam is a land of many languages, which is why having a common language to communicate among all the tribes is very important. Currently, the Assamese language in a mixture of tribal dialects such as Deori, Rabha, Tiwa, Moran, Khamti is extensively in use. Mishimese or Mishing-Assamese dialect is one of the major dialects in the present time. Hence, studying this dialect from a socio-linguistic aspect has utter importance.

Methodology:

This discussion comes under the umbrella of socio-linguistic study. The phonetics, aesthetics and vocabulary have been examined by the researcher. For this, books, journals etc. have been studied. The discussion adopts an analytical technique to observe and present the data.

2. What is Socio-linguistic study:

A language emerges and develops in society. Socio-linguistic has obtained great attention in the linguistic study in recent decades. Whether linguistic explores the grammar of a language, socio-linguistic offers to study the connection of the languages with the society as well. Only from the 20th century onwards, socio-linguistic aspects gained prominence. Language and society are supplementary to each other. In socio-linguistic analysis, languages and society are studied.

2.1. Introduction to the Assamese language:

One of the major languages from North-east India is the Assamese language and it shares a long history. In the early 7th century AD, Chinese pilgrim-scholar traveller Hiuen Tsang visited Assam and accounted “their language is different from central India” (Kakati, B.K: Assamese, Its Formation and Development, 1941, p.5. qv). During that time Magari Prakrit and Apabrahmsha were widely functional, and with the influence from Austronesian and Kiraat or Tibetan people, from the central Indian languages, it started getting different phonetically. From Hiuen Tsang’s account, we can infer that from 6th-7th century AD, Magari Prakrit shared shaping at Kamrup and later, during the 10-11th century, the Assamese languages started developing. Parallel to the development of the Assamese language, the Bangla, Odia languages also witnessed independent progress with localized characteristics. With time, Assamese language emerged with individual characteristics, different from the central Indian languages, and established itself as a major language of North-east India (Thakur, Nagen: Asomiya Bhashar Gathanat Assam Tholua Bhashasamuhor Upadaan, Asomiya bhasha Sahitya aaru Sanskriti, Essay Book, (Ed) Shailen Bharali, 1989, p. 218).

2.2. Introduction of Mishing language

Mishing language comes under the North-Assam branch of Tibetan language family. Observing the types of phonetics, aesthetic and vocabulary, the sub-languages of Mishing language can be divided into four categories

- a. 1st Category- Aayaan, Paagr, Doulu, Daambug, Taamun-Taaye, Yaraanganja,
- b. 2nd Category- Changyaang (and Paangdaam)
- c. 3rd Category- MangyiNg and Chamuwaang
- d. 4th Category- Chaamuguriya, Temaar, Bankowaal, Bebejia, Bihiya

3. Phonemes in Mishing-Assamese dialect

Mishing language shares most of the vowel and consonant sounds of the Assamese language. Whether Assamese language has eight vowels, Mishing-Assamese (Mishingmese) language includes five i.e. o, aa, i, u, ae.

These vowels make changes in pronunciation in many Assamese words in the Mishingmese dialect. They are placed in the beginning, middle or at the end.

Some of the similar words but pronounced differently in Mishing-Assamese (Mishingmese) and Assamese are—

Beginning	Mishingmese	Assamese
O	Okti (O k t i)	Sakti
Aa	Aao (Aa o)	Aalu
E	Epale (E p a l e)	Ephale
U	Uta (U t a)	Utha
Ae	Aeidina (Ae I d I n a)	Seidina

Middle	Mishingmese	Assamese
O	Maaot (M aa o t)	Maahot
Aa	Okaam (O k aa m)	Sakaam
I	Poila (P o I l a)	Pohila
U	Mitur (M I t u r)	Mitir
Ae	Kebaeta (K e b ae t a)	Keibata

End	Mishingmese	Assamese
O	Tobo (T o b o)	Thobo
Aa	Doaa (D o aa)	Doha
I	Oraai (O r aa i)	Sorai
U	Gaboru (G aa b o r u)	Gaabhoru
Ae	Omajae	Somaj

On the other hand, there are 13 consonant sounds in Mishingmese. These are—Ko, Go, Uno, So, Jo, To, Do, No, Po, Bo, Mo, Ro, Lo.

‘Yo’ and ‘Wo’ are also used.

The Mishingmese consonants can be categorised as following based on their places and ways of articulation:

Baed on the places of articulation:

Lips: Po, Bo, Mo

Teeth: To, Do, No, So, Jo, Ro, Lo

Velar: Ko, Go, Ng

Based on the ways of articulation:

Plosive: Po, Bo, To, Do, Jo, Go

Nasal: Mo, No, Uno

Sibilant: So, Jo

Kampit: Ro

Parswhik: Lo

Based on the qualities of the articulation:

Unaspirated: Po, Bo, To, Do, K, Go

Soghosh: Bo, Do, Go, Mo, No, Uno, Jo, Ro, Lo

Oghosh: Po, To, Ko, So

4. Aesthetics of the Mishing-Assamese languages:

Assamese language has been developed with the usage of words, terms, genders, speeches, Bibhakti, Karak, Pratyay and different grammatical rules.

Many Assamese words are changed in the Mishingmese when suffixes and prefixed are used (Krit Pratyays and Taddhit Pratyays are used with the words or Dhatu and Pratipadik).

In Assamese, there are two 'Pratyays' for the formation of new words—Purba Pratyay and Para Pratyay.

In the language of the Mishings, Purba Pratyays are used. Here are some examples:

	Assamese	Mishingmese
O	Osukh	Okuk
Ona	Onahak	Onaok
Ae	Aebhag	Aebag
Ni	Nilaj	Nilas

Para Pratyay: Para Pratyays can be classified into Krit, Taddhit, local, foreign Pratyas etc. Such Pratyays are used in the Mishingmese also.

	Assamese	Mishingmese
On	Khaon	Kaon
Ona	Pihona	Piona
Aalu	Kripalu	Kipalu
I, ie	Madoli	Maholi
Uli	Majuli	Majuli
Uaal	Bhitoruaal	Bitouaal

5. Conclusion

Mishing is one of the key tribes of Assam. Even though, mainstream Assamese culture has largely influenced the Mishing community, they have kept many of their cultural practices and rituals intact. Clans such as Chamuguriya, Tamaarganjya (Temeraa), Bebejiya, and Bangkuwal have already immersed with mainstream Assamese culture. Through this paper, the researcher has provided a discussion on the blending of two languages i.e. Mishing and Assamese, and formation and development of a new dialect—Mishing-Assamese, taking elements from each of the languages.

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