

“Kinship Terms Of Hajong And Assamese: A Sociolinguistic Study”

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ABSTRACT

Hajong and Assamese are two Indo-Aryan languages both spoken in Assam and other North-Eastern states of India. Basically, Hajong is the mother tongue of people belonging to the Hajong tribe who live in India as well as Bangladesh while Assamese is the mother tongue of Assamese people living in Assam and other states of India. As per study, it has been found that both the languages have features with similarities as well differences. The influence of Assamese is abundant in Hajong. Modern day Hajong might be thought of as a fusion of Assamese and Bengali (involving different dialects of these languages). Observers have noted that the Hajong people of Assam combine elements of the Kamrupi and Goalparia varieties of the Assamese language in their everyday speech (R.K. Ray Hajong, 2003). Dr. D. N. Mazumdar (1984) refers to this variety of Assamese as the Jharua dialect. The modern Hajong language is considered by Matilal Barman (1987) to be a dialect of the Kamrupi language (colloquial Assamese spoken in lower Assam). Ratan Kumar Ray Hajong (1982), however, argues that the Hajongs formerly spoke their own language, which they eventually lost. The exact reasons for this are unknown. The above discussion throws light on the influence of Assamese on Hajong. The paper will try to analyze the kinship terms of both Hajong and Assamese, and will reveal the features of similarities, differences, and others as evident in the languages. Here, the kinship words will be examined category wise, and put the findings with detailed data as gathered from field study. The study will include a comparative analysis of the kinship terms of both the languages.

Keywords: Kinship terms, Hajong, Assamese, comparative study.

1. Introduction

Hajong and Assamese are two Indo-Aryan languages both spoken in Assam and other North-Eastern states of India. Basically, Hajong is the mother tongue of people belonging to the Hajong tribe who live in India as well as Bangladesh while Assamese is the mother tongue of Assamese people living in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Meghalaya in India. Although Assamese and Hajong are two different languages, some similarities as well as differences have been observed in terms of vocabularies. Hajong may have absorbed Assamese and Bengali (involving different dialects of these languages). The Hajong of Assam tend to mix Kamrupi and Goalparia into their daily speech (R.K. Ray Hajong, 2003). Dr. D. N. Mazumdar (1984) calls this Assamese dialect Jharua. Matilal Barman (1987) considers contemporary Hajong a Kamrupi dialect (colloquial Assamese spoken in lower Assam). Ratan Kumar Ray Hajong (1982) claims that the Hajong possessed a language, but the specific reasons for its disappearance are unclear.

The paper tries to discuss various categories of kinship terms of Assamese and Hajong as the following: the terms for- (a) Immediate Family, (b) Children and Grandchildren, (c) Grandparents, (d) Paternal relations, (e) Maternal relations, (f) the nephews and nieces, (g) Relations-in-law, and (h) Ancestry.

2. Objectives

In this paper, the main objectives are:

- To analyze the kinship terms of both the Assamese and Hajong language.
- To enlist the available terms for a descriptive purpose.
- To observe the similarities, differences, and other features in them.
- To mobilize the study of the languages, particularly Hajong that is a non-scheduled language with comparatively lesser speakers.

3. Methodology

For the study, kinship terms are collected from speakers of the concerned communities. Primary data for Assamese were provided by Sri Bhaben Koch of Bakulia in Karbi Anglong district of Assam and

“Kinship Terms Of Hajong And Assamese: A Sociolinguistic Study”

Juri Saikia of Tihu, Nalbari (Assam), and both are native speakers. The kinship terms of Hajong are analyzed on the basis of primary data supplied by the native speakers- Motindra Hajong and Rajib Hajong of Hojai (Assam) and Sadananda Hajong of Dhemaji (Assam). Extensive visits to different places dwelt by Assamese and Hajong people, and consultation with native speakers of those places were done to confirm the data. Besides, the terms available in the dictionaries of concerned languages are also consulted with those of the terms elicited from the local speakers.

4. Limitations

The study is not free from certain limitations. First, many native speakers do not know the varieties of a term in use; Second, a single term is used for various relations; for example, terms for *cousin* in Assamese are same with the terms used for *brother*. Third, the available dictionaries usually do not include the terms used in varieties and also do not contain considerable details; Fourth, the common informants do not have much depth to provide the details, and, therefore, they have to be interviewed thoroughly to make understand the detailed nature and purpose of the data to be elicited.

5. Sources of kinship terms of Assamese and Hajong

Like other languages, the source of formation of Assamese and Hajong kinship terms lies with the three kinds of relations i.e. by birth, marriage and friendship. Since both follows a patrimonial society the kinship words of the two languages include terms to indicate relations amongst members of family which are mostly identical. It has already been mentioned in Section 1 that Hajong is considered by many scholars to have originated from Assamese and Bengali, based on its affinity in terms of vocabulary the reflection of which is witnessed in the kinship terms, too. In this article, it is being tried to present the kinship terms relating to birth and family in the following tables. Before that some abbreviations are being mentioned in Table-1 for ready reference of the different terms.

6. Abbreviations

Table 1: Abbreviations of Kinship Terms

Kin code	Kin category	Kin code	Kin category	Kin code	Kin category
P	parent	B	brother	MM/FM	grandmother
F	father	S	son	sM	step-mother
M	mother	D	daughter	cW	co-wife
C	child	Z	sister	A	ancestor
H	husband	PP	parents' parent	AA	descendent
W	wife	FF, MF	grandfather		

7. Analysis of the Kinship Terms

7.1.1.1. Immediate Family

Table 2: Immediate Family

Sl. No.	Kin category	Kin code	Languages	
			*Assamese	**Hajong
1	father	F	/deuta/, /pita/, /baba/, /pitai/, /pitri/	/baba// bap/
2	mother	M	/aai/, /maa/, /matri/, / bouti	/âyâ/, /maa/, / mâyâ/, /mau/
3	step- mother	sM	/mahi: ma:/, /mahi: aai/	/hwhhw mau/
4	parents	P	/ma-deuta/, /pitri-matri/	/baba-maa/, /bap-âyâ/

“Kinship Terms Of Hajong And Assamese: A Sociolinguistic Study”

5	elder brother	eB	/dada/, /kəkaideu/, /kəkai/, /kəkaiti/	/dada/
6	younger brother	yB	/bhai/, /bhaiti/	/bhây/, /nunu/
7	elder sister	eZ	/baideu/, /bai/,	/bây/
8	younger sister	yZ	/bhənti/, / bhəni/,	/buini/
9	husband	H	/pəti/, /swami/, /giriək/	/bhatar/
10	wife	W	/pətni//tiri/, /ghoini/, /xtri/, /bhairja/	/magu/
11	co-wife	cW	/xotini/	/hutni/

7.2. Children and Grandchildren

Table 2: Children and Grandchildren

Sl. No.	Kin category	Kin code	Languages	
			*Assamese	**Hajong
1	child	C	/xəti-xəntəti/, /xəntan/	/ sawa/, /sota/
2	son	S	/putrə/, /lora/, /po/	/put/, /pola/
3	daughter	D	/putri/, /sowali/, /zi:/	/jhiu/
4	daughter-in-law	SW	/bowaari/, /po- bowari/	/bâw/
5	son-in-law	DH	/ji-jowai/	/ jangoy/
6	adopted son	AS	/tuloniya lora/	
7	adopted daughter	AD	/tuloniya swali/, /tuloniya zi:/	/puᅇa timid sawa/
8	grandson	SS, DS	/nati/	/nati/
9	Grand daughter	SD, DD	/natini/	/natni/
10	Great Grandson	SSS/DSS/ SDS/DDS	aju-naati	/pânâti/
11	Great Granddaughter	SSD/SDD/ DSD/DDD	aju-natini	/pânâti/

7.3. Grandparents

Table 3: Grandparents

Sl. No.	Kin category	Kin code	Languages	
			*Assamese	**Hajong
1	grandparents	PP (parents' parent)	/koka-aita/	/ ajo-abu/
2	grandfather	MF /FF	/koka/	/abu/
4	grandmother	MM / FM	/aita/, /ajo/	/ajo/
6	great grandfather	MMF/MFF/ FMF /FFF	/ajo-koka/, /ajo- aata/	/detho/
7	great grandmother	MMM/MFM/ FMM /FFM	/ajo-aaita/, /Aajo- enaideu/, /aaju- abu/	/didi/

7.4. Paternal relations

“Kinship Terms Of Hajong And Assamese: A Sociolinguistic Study”

Table 4: Paternal relations

Sl. No.	Kin category	Kin code	Languages	
			*Assamese	**Hajong
1	uncle	FyB	/khura/	/kaka/
2	uncle	FeB	/bordeuta/	/dethɔ/, /dedɔ/
3	uncle	FeZH	/jethpeha/, /jetho/	/mama/
4	uncle	FyZH	/peha/	/kaka/
5	aunt	FeZ	/jethai/	/pupu/
6	aunt	FyZ	/pehi/	/pipi/
7	aunt	FeBW	/borma:/	/dithây/
8	aunt	FyBW	/khuri/	/kaki/

7.5. Maternal relations

Table 5: Maternal relations

Sl. No.	Kin category	Kin code	Languages	
			*Assamese	**Hajong
1	uncle	MeB	/nisadeu/, /nisa/, /mama/	/mama/
2	uncle	MyB	/mumaaideu/, /mama/	/mama/
3	uncle	MeZH	/nisadeu/, /nisa/, /jethu/	/mama/
4	uncle	MyZH	/mohadeu/, /moha/	/mama/
5	aunt	MeZ	/apadeu/, /apa/, /jethai/	/dithây/
6	aunt	MyZ	/mahideu/, /mahi:/	/mahi/
7	aunt	MeBW	/apadeu/, /apa/, /mami:/	/mami/
8	aunt	MyBW	/mamideu/, /mami:/	/mami/

7.6. Nephews and Nieces

Table 6: Nephews and Nieces

Sl. No.	Kin category	Kin code	Languages	
			*Assamese	**Hajong
1	nephew	BS	/bhotija/	/bhâstâ/
2	nephew	ZS	/bhagin/	/bhâgnâ/
3	niece	BD	/bhotiji:/	/bhasti/
4	niece	ZD	/bhagini/	/bhâgni/

7.7. Relations-in-law

Table 7: Relations-in-law

Sl. No.	Kin category	Kin code	Languages	
			*Assamese	**Hajong
1	mother-in-law	HM/WM	/xahu/, /xahu-a:i/	/susri/
2	father-in-law	HF/WF	/xohur/, /xohur-deuta/	/susur/, /uhur/
		BWF/ZHF	/tawɔy/	/tâwây/

“Kinship Terms Of Hajong And Assamese: A Sociolinguistic Study”

3	brother-in-law	eZH	/ bhinideu/, /bhini/	/bhinci/
4		yZH	/boiniyai/, /bhoni-juwaai/	/buini janoy/
5		HeB	/borjona/, /jethal/,	/bahur/
6		HyB	/dewor/	/hala/
7		WeB	/jetheri/, /borgiri/	/borgiri/
8		WyB	/khulkhali/, /sa:la/	/hala/
9		WZH	/xaalpoti/	
10	sister-in-law	eBW	/nobou/, /bou/	/bhuj/
11		yBW	/ bhai buwari/, /buwari/	/bahur-ani/
12		HBW	/ja:/	/jau/
13		HeZ/ WeZ	/je-xahu/, /ba:isao/	/jilâni/
14		HyZ	/nonond/, /nonod/, /nondek/	/nonod/
15		WyZ	/khulkhali/, /sa:li/	/hali/
16	Child's Father-in-law	CWF/CHF	/biyoi/	/biyoi/
17	Child's mother-in-law	CWM/CHM	/biyoini/	/biyoini/

7.8. Ancestry

Table 8: Ancestry

Sl. No.	Kin category	Kin code	Languages	
			*Assamese	**Hajong
1	Ancestor	A	/purbo-purux/	/bap-jada/
	Descendant		/bonxodhor/	/bonso/

8. Discussion

It has been observed from the above lists of kinship terms that in respect of synonyms Assamese has more numbers than Hajong. Many words of the languages have some sort of affinity concerning pronunciation and meaning although many others have differences, too. For example, the words /baba/, /maa/, /mama/, /mahi/, /moha/, etc. are same in meaning and pronunciation. Second, there are some Hajong words which are similar in meaning with a slight difference in pronunciation. For example, /bhai/~bhw/ (brother); /bai/~bwi/ (elder sister), etc. Here, the difference is in pronunciation of /w/ in Hajong in place of /a/ in Assamese. Next, in socio-linguistic context, like any other language, the same kinship terms of both Hajong and are found used differently as category term as well as address term. Some category words are uttered differently while addressing-i.e., Ass. /po-bowari/ (sW) addressed to the person as /bowari/ that is similar to /bowari/~bhai bowari/ (yBW); Haj. /bap/ (F) addressed to mean father of others while addressing own father the word /baba/ is used. Again, the /w/ sound used in Hajong is a Tibeto-Burman feature that might have retained from their original language that is extinct today. Last, while comparing the terms it has come to light that some Hajong kinship terms are similar with Assamese with a deviation in the initial sound- as for example, Ass. /sala/~Haj. /hala/(WyB); Ass./xohur/~ Haj. /susur/ or /uhur/(WF/HF).

9. Conclusion

The paper has basically enlisted the available kinship terms of Assamese and Hajong which will contribute to further study on the terms. It will provide a scope for researchers to further conduct study on the linguistic aspects of the language with a broad perspective since the speakers live not only in

“Kinship Terms Of Hajong And Assamese: A Sociolinguistic Study”

association with the Assamese speakers but also with speakers of other languages like Bengali. Besides, the geographical regions the Hajong live in include different culture, ethnicity, and language that might have influenced the growth of their language which may be an interesting topic of socio-linguistic research.

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