

## A Brief Phonological Description of Boro Language

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### Introduction:

The Boros or the Boro-Kacharies of Assam is a branch of the great Bodo group of Indo-Mongoloid family falling within the Assam Burmese linguistic section. Different names are used to design the Boros. In Bengal and in the lower ranges of the Himalayas coming within the territory of Nepal they are known as Mech Kacharies. In upper Assam they are identified as Sonowal Kachari and Thengal Kachari. In the western Assam they are more popularly known as Boro or Boro Kachari. In the southern district of North Cachar and Cachar they are designated as Dimasa Kachari.

The Boros of the Mongolian people first they inhabited at the North of the Himalayas and West of China. This land is known as Bod. The word Bod is supposed to mean as Homeland. The inhabitants of Bod country are known as the Bodo Ficha or Bodocha or Bodosa (Bodo means land and Ficha or cha means children, hence children of the Bod country). In course of time they come to know as simply Boddo- Bodo-Boro. S.K. Chettarjee identified them as the Kiratas or Indo-Mongoloids.

Linguistically the Bodos include a large group of people who are the speakers of the Tibeto-Burman speeches of the North and East Bengal, Assam and Burma. They are the Boros, Rabhas, Garos, Dimasas, Tipras or Kok-Borok, Lalungs, Sonowals, Hajong etc. The Boros or the Boro Kacharies have their own identity, culture and linguistic traits. P.Ch. Bhattacharya mention that Boro Kacharies have four different types of dialect they used. These are

i) North-west Boro dialect. Which are used in Goalpara and Northern part of Kamrup district.

ii) South West Boro dialect. Especially used in South Goalpara, Garo Hills and the southern part of Kamrup district.

iii) North mid Assam Boro dialect. Especially used in Darrang, Lakhimpur and the people of Arunachal Pradesh.

iv) Southern Assam Boro dialect. Used in Nogaon, Dima Hasao, Mikir Hills and the nearest area of Cachar district.

Boros have their own language but they had no scrip to write. They used Roman scrip to write their language when the Christian Missionary came to Assam. After that they are used Bengali, Assamese and finally from 1975 they used Debonagiri scrip till date.

### Description:

Let's come to know the phonological aspect of the Boro language. In the phonological aspect I am going to explain the vowel and consonant phonemes of Boro language.

#### a. Vowel Phonemes of Boro language:

There are six vowel phonemes in Boro language which are used in original Bodo vocabulary. These are *i, e, a, o, w, u*. The mention phonemes are shown with a table below-

**Length of the tongue**

	Front	Mid	Back	
			Rounded	Unrounded
High of the tongue	<b>High</b> i (इ)		u (उ)	w (ओ)
	<b>Mid</b> e (ए)		o (ऒ)	
	<b>Low</b>	a (अ)		

**/i (इ)/**: This vowel phoneme occurs on the top and very front of the tongue. So this vowel phoneme is called high front unrounded vowel phoneme. This phoneme is used in every position of Bodo basic vocabulary that is initially, medially and finally. Example-

Inghri (curry),	Bijab (Book)	Gisi (wet)
Injur (House wall)	Ringsar (phone)	Mansi (man)

**/e (ए)/**: This vowel phoneme occurs on very front and mid position of the tongue. So it is called front mid unrounded vowel phoneme. In Boro basic vocabulary it is used in every position that is initial, medial and final places. Example-

Enjor (mouse)	Bekheo (to open)	Nable (flat nose)
Emao (rice bear medicine)	Gebeng (true)	baiple (break)

**/w (ओ)/**: This phoneme occurs on the top and the back place of tongue. The two lips are become open when this phoneme is pronouns. So it is called high back unrounded vowel phoneme. It can also be used in every places of Bodo basic vocabularies. Example-

Wngkham (rice)	Gwswm (black)	Mwisw (buffalo)
Wnchwl (region)	Gwjwo (high)	Gwhw (power)

**/u (उ)/**: This vowel phoneme occurs on the top and back place of the tongue. The two lips that is upper and lower become rounded when this phoneme get articulated. So this vowel phoneme is called high back rounded vowel phoneme. It is also used in every position of Bodo origin vocabularies. Example-

Un (back)	Subung (human)	Gusu (cold)
Uthri (success)	Bungthi (speak)	Gandu (cushion)

**/o (ऒ)/**: This phoneme occurs on the mid and back place of the tongue. Both the lips are become rounded when the phoneme is articulated. So this phoneme is also called mid back rounded vowel phoneme. It can also be place every position of Boro basic vocabularies. Example-

Or (fire)	Bon (firewood)	Jo (sit down)
On (rice powder)	Gonthong (nose)	Netho (wait)

**/a (अ)/**: This phoneme occurs at the low and the mid place of the tongue. This vowel is called low mid unrounded vowel phoneme. It is also used in every position of Bodo origin vocabularies. Example-

Asugur (nail)	Gwjam (old)	Nala (cannel)
Agan (footstep)	Bar (air)	Mwsa (tiger)

From the above explanation we know that the using of /w (ओ)/ phoneme is one of the special character of Boro language which is not seen in another Bodo group of languages. Again found that every vowel phonemes were used in every position of Boro origin vocabularies which are not seen in other languages.

One of the most special characteristic of phonological conditioning of Boro language is the used of Tone. That's why the Bodo is called one of the Tonal Language of Tibeto-Burman language family. In Boro language there are two types of Tone that is high Tone and Low Tone they used. One meaningful morph may be change in to another meaning without changing any phoneme by using pitch stress in Boro language. Example-

<u>High tone</u>	<u>Low tone</u>
Ja (to eat)	Ja (to be)
Kha (to pluck)	Kha (to bind)
Bar (to jump)	Bar (wind)
Thwi (blood)	Thwi (to die)
Thang (to go)	Thang (alive)

#### **b) Consonant phonemes of Boro language:**

There are only 16 consonant phonemes including two semi-vowel "y" and "o" in Boro language. These are p<sup>h</sup>, t<sup>h</sup>, k<sup>h</sup>, b, g, j, <sup>t</sup>s, l, r, m, n, d, h, y, ô, ŋ. This phonemes are describe as below-

**/p<sup>h</sup>, t<sup>h</sup>, k<sup>h</sup> ( फ, थ, ख )/**: These phonemes are called bi-lexical, alveolar and veler stop or plosive aspirated consonant phonemes. These phonemes were used initial and medial position only. These were not used in final position in Bodo basic vocabulary. Example-

Phorai (read)	Apha (my father)	----
Thabai (walk)	Athing (foot)	----
Khana (blind)	Ukhum (roof)	----

**/m, n, ŋ ( म, न, ङ )/**: These phonemes were called bi-lexical alveolar and veler nasalize consonant phonemes. Except "ŋ" both the "m" and "n" phonemes were used in every position of Boro words. "ŋ" is not used in initial position on Boro origin words. It is used medial and final position only. Example-

Muphur (bear)	Amai (uncle)	Gwswm (black)
Nokhor (family)	Ansula (obedience)	Gwjwn (pleasure)
-----	Goŋse (single)	Gosoŋ (stand up)

**/b, d, g ( ब, द, ग )/**: These phonemes were called bi-lexical alveolar and veler stop/plosive unaspirated consonant phonemes. These all phonemes were also called voicing consonant

phonemes. “g” is used initially and medially only in Boro words. Both the “b” and “d” were used in every position in Boro basic vocabularies. Example-

Bijab (book)	Thabai (walk)	Adhob (Technique)
Dan (cut)	Gadob (dominate)	Afad (Organisation)
Goy (betel)	Lwgvse (with)	----

/<sup>t</sup>s, j, h ( स, ज, ह )/: These phonemes were called alveolar and pharyngeal fricative consonant phonemes. “j” is used in every position in Boro origin vocabularies but the “<sup>t</sup>s” and “h” were used initially and medially only. Example-

Somaj (Society)	Gusung (short)	.....
Jw (kick)	Aijw (woman)	Aroj (pray)
Ha (soil)	Dwhwrwm (religion)	.....

/r, l ( र, ल )/: These phonemes were called alveolar rolled and lateral voiced consonant phonemes.

These phonemes were used in every places in Bodo origin vocabularies. Example-

Rwisumwi (melodious)	Aroj (Pray)	Thalir (banana)
Laijam (letter)	Dalang (Bridge)	Gajwl (pin)

/ô, y ( व, य )/: These two phonemes are called bi-labial, palatal and lateral approximant consonant phonemes. These two phonemes were also called as semi-vowel. These phonemes were not applicable at initial position in Boro basic vocabularies. Example-

----	Gaônai (shoot)	Ajaô (receive)
----	Gaysôn (establish)	Aôgay (proceed)

### Conclusion:

Boro language is recognized as the eight schedule in the Indian Constitution. This is one of the most populous and a big community language in North-East India. So every Indian should know about the Boro Language and its impact in North East India. This is how the Boro language can acquired its developed position. Every Indian should try to understand about the problems and prospect of Boro language and try to uplift in to better position. That’s why it is very important to know about the characteristics of Boro phonology.

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