

## Sound System of Hawar Dialect in Dimasa

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### Abstract

This paper discusses the Phonological Features in Hawar dialect of Dimasa spoken in Cachar district of Assam. Dimasa belongs to Bodo-Garo group of Tibeto-Burman language family. The paper discussed the phonological features of Hawar dialect of Dimasa into two sections: segmental and supra-segmental. The segmental section includes phonemes of vowel and consonant, description and distribution of vowel and consonant, diphthongs, consonant sequence, consonant cluster, and syllable structure in Hawar dialect of Dimasa. The supra-segmental includes two register tones: high tone and low tone.

**Keywords:** Hawar, Dimasa, Assam, Cachar, Bodo-Garo.

### Introduction

Dimasa is one of the multi-cultured people of North-East India. They have well-preserved rituals and rich in history. They are racially Indo-Mongoloid origin (Barpujari, 2007) and linguistically they belong to Bodo-Garo group of the Tibeto-Burman language family (Lewis, Simons and Fennig, 2013). The term *Dimasa* means ‘son of the great river’ where ‘di’ means water ‘ma’ means big and ‘sa’ means son (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. Based on geographical distribution, Dimasa has four main four main dialects namely Hasao, Hawar, Dembra and Dijuwa. Hasao is standard dialect spoken in Dima Hasao (formerly North Cachar Hills) district of Assam. Hawar is spoken in Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi districts of Assam and bordering areas of Mizoram and Manipur state. Dembra is spoken in Hojai district of Assam and Dijuwa is spoken in Karbi Anglong district of Assam and Dimapur district of Nagaland.

This is the first attempt to analyze the phonological features of Hawar dialect in Dimasa. In this paper, we will discuss the segmental and supra-segmental features of the dialect.

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## 1. Segmental Inventories

This section presents the vowels, consonants, diphthongs, consonant sequence, consonant clusters and syllable structures.

### 1.1. Vowel

Hawar has six short vowels: /i, e, ə, a, o, u/ as shown in table 1.

	Front	Central	Back
High	<i>i</i>		<i>u</i>
Mid	<i>e</i>	<i>ə</i>	<i>o</i>
Low		<i>a</i>	

Table 1: Vowel Phonemes

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

/i/ vs /e/	/gidi/ ‘sweet’	/gede/ ‘big’
/i/ vs /u/	/gidzi/ ‘cot’	/gudzu/ ‘tall’
/e/ vs /a/	/ne/ ‘push’	/na/ ‘fish’
/ə/ vs /a/	/dʒəba/ ‘war’	/dʒaba/ ‘to become’
/e/ vs /o/	/leŋba/ ‘to be tired’	/loŋba/ ‘to call’
/u/ vs /o/	/huba/ ‘to paint’	/hoba/ ‘to make like bamboo basket’

Table 2: Minimal pair of Hawar

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

Vowels	Initial	Medial	Final
<i>i</i>	-	/mijun/ ‘elephant’	/harni/ ‘gum’
<i>e</i>	/ebo/ ‘this’	/meser/ ‘opposite’	/sere/ ‘who’
<i>ə</i>	-	/bəsa/ ‘body’	-
<i>a</i>	/anuwa/ ‘lake’	/jap <sup>h</sup> oŋ/ ‘thigh’	/sisa/ ‘dog’
<i>o</i>	/olainun/ ‘exactly’	/k <sup>h</sup> oip <sup>h</sup> ol/ ‘papaya’	/bao/ ‘think’
<i>u</i>	/uima/ ‘caterpillar’	/burun/ ‘goat’	/guru/ ‘sugarcane’

Table 3: Distribution of Vowel Phonemes in Hawar

### 1.2. Diphthongs

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

Diphthongs	Intial	Medial	Final
ai	/aida/ ‘sword with stand especially used in the kitchen’	/k <sup>h</sup> aisuŋ/ ‘ant’	/k <sup>h</sup> aisuŋ/ ‘ant’
ui	/uima/ ‘caterpillar’	-	-
oi	-	/k <sup>h</sup> oip <sup>h</sup> ol/ ‘papaya’	-
ao	-	/laok <sup>h</sup> ruŋ/ ‘skull’	/k <sup>h</sup> abao/ ‘chest’
ou	-	/houbo/ ‘those’	-

Table 4: Diphthongs in Hawar

### 1.3. Consonants

Hawar has 16 consonant phonemes: /p<sup>h</sup>, b, t<sup>h</sup>, d, k<sup>h</sup>, g, dʒ, s, h, m, n, ŋ, l, r, w/. It has six different place of articulation i.e. bilabial, alveolar, palatal, post alveolar, velar, glottal and seven manner of articulation i.e. stop, affricate, fricative, nasal, lateral, trill, semi-vowel. In the manner of articulation, Hawar has 6 stops /p<sup>h</sup>, b, t<sup>h</sup>, d, k<sup>h</sup>, g/, 1 affricate /dʒ/, 2 fricative /s, h/, 3 nasal /m, n, ŋ/, 1 lateral /l/, 1 flap /r/ and 2 semi-vowel /w, j/. Following table 5 presents a phonetic chart of Hawar consonant phonemes.

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

Table 5: Phonemic Consonants in Hawar

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

<i>p<sup>h</sup> vs b</i>	/p <sup>h</sup> i/ ‘shield’	/bi/ ‘pray’
<i>t<sup>h</sup> vs d</i>	/t <sup>h</sup> ubi/ ‘deep’	/dubi/ ‘costly’
<i>k<sup>h</sup> vs g</i>	/k <sup>h</sup> ahamp <sup>h</sup> ai/ ‘good mood’	/gahamp <sup>h</sup> ai/ ‘welcome’
<i>m vs n</i>	/malai/ ‘other person’	/nalai/ ‘always’
<i>n vs ŋ</i>	/bidin/ ‘ugly and poor’	/bidin/ ‘creeper’
<i>l vs r</i>	/lan/ ‘take away’	/ran/ ‘money’
<i>s vs h</i>	/samlai/ ‘curry/dishes’	/hamlai/ ‘gooseberry’
<i>w vs j</i>	/wasugur/ ‘a kind of weaving tools’	/jasugur/ ‘nails for toes’

Table 7: Minimal pairs in Hawar

In Hawar, the phonemic consonants cannot occur in all the three word positions. Following table 8 presents the distribution of consonant phonemes.

Consonants	Initial	Medial	Finally
<i>p<sup>h</sup></i>	/p <sup>h</sup> unu/ ‘show’	/daop <sup>h</sup> arsi/ ‘sparrow’	/nosip/ ‘broom’
<i>b</i>	/baosi/ ‘equal’	/nabdi/ ‘barber’	/mandab/ ‘squirrel’
<i>t<sup>h</sup></i>	/t <sup>h</sup> at <sup>h</sup> ai/ ‘potato’	/jat <sup>h</sup> ai/ ‘stair/step’	-
<i>d</i>	/dimisa/ ‘fisherman’	/gandu/ ‘pillow’	-
<i>k<sup>h</sup></i>	/k <sup>h</sup> onɔɟa/ ‘empty’	/ɔɟuk <sup>h</sup> uba/ ‘marriage’	/busuk/ ‘daughter’
<i>g</i>	/gubur/ ‘mad’	/lugu/ ‘friend’	/sig/ ‘pull’ (net)
<i>m</i>	/mosol/ ‘false’	/lumba/ ‘ill’	/lem/ ‘throw’
<i>n</i>	/naorai/ ‘guests’	/hanai/ ‘spirit of the death’	/gadain/ ‘new’
<i>ŋ</i>	-	/ronɔt <sup>h</sup> ep/ ‘flatten rice’	/k <sup>h</sup> odɔɟon/ ‘comb’
<i>l</i>	/laisi/ ‘book’	/k <sup>h</sup> olon/ ‘fishing trap made of bamboo’	/k <sup>h</sup> oip <sup>h</sup> ol/ ‘papaya’
<i>r</i>	/raigonma/ ‘lion’	/nok <sup>h</sup> orsi/ ‘family’	/nik <sup>h</sup> or/ ‘backyard’
<i>ɔɟ</i>	/ɔɟalai/ ‘young’	/saodɟan/ ‘alone’	-
<i>s</i>	/sanɔk <sup>h</sup> on/ ‘winnower’	/busuma/ ‘mother-in-law’	/p <sup>h</sup> us/ ‘december’
<i>h</i>	/hadɟin/ ‘ginger’	/jahon/ ‘after/behind’	-
<i>w</i>	/waik <sup>h</sup> udi/ ‘smoke’	/guwar/ ‘wide’	-
<i>j</i>	/jaodi/ ‘weapon’	/mijaha/ ‘yesterday’	-

Table 8: Consonant Phonemes in Hawar

In Hawar, the consonant phonemes /p<sup>h</sup>, b, k<sup>h</sup>, g, m, n, l, r, s/ occur in all the three positions. The phonemic consonant /t<sup>h</sup>, d, 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.

#### 1.4. Consonant Cluster

Consonant cluster is highly productive in Hawar dialect. In Hawar, consonant cluster occurs in the word initial and medial positions whereas no consonant cluster occur in the word final position. The medial consonant cluster is more frequent than initial consonant cluster. Examples are illustrated below.

##### Initial consonant clusters

<i>k<sup>h</sup>r-</i>	<i>/k<sup>h</sup>raŋ/</i> ‘rear’
<i>p<sup>h</sup>r-</i>	<i>/p<sup>h</sup>rap<sup>h</sup>aŋ/</i> ‘peeple tree’
<i>bl-</i>	<i>/blai/</i> ‘leaf’
<i>sb-</i>	<i>/sbama/</i> ‘bed bug’
<i>sg-</i>	<i>/sgaop<sup>h</sup>a/</i> ‘turban’
<i>sm-</i>	<i>/smadi/</i> ‘what’
<i>ml-</i>	<i>/mlo/</i> ‘swallow’
<i>dʒn-</i>	<i>/dʒnaba/</i> ‘bright’

##### Medial Consonant Cluster

<i>-p<sup>h</sup>r-</i>	<i>/daop<sup>h</sup>ri/</i> ‘pigeon’
<i>-p<sup>h</sup>l-</i>	<i>/t<sup>h</sup>ap<sup>h</sup>la/</i> ‘ash’
<i>-k<sup>h</sup>n-</i>	<i>/dak<sup>h</sup>na/</i> ‘tomorrow’
<i>-gr-</i>	<i>/sagrema/</i> ‘barren woman’
<i>-sn-</i>	<i>/masni/</i> ‘seven’
<i>-sr-</i>	<i>/bosro/</i> ‘lungs’
<i>-sl-</i>	<i>/waislai/</i> ‘flame’

#### 1.5. Consonant Sequence

Consonant sequence is common in Hawar dialect though it occurs only in the word medial position. It does not occur in the word initial and final position of the dialect. Hawar Consonant sequences are discussed into two groups: Homorganic and Contiguous. Examples are illustrated below.

##### Homorganic

<i>-g.d-</i>	<i>/mug.du/</i> ‘pot’
<i>-ŋ.m</i>	<i>/yuŋ.ma/</i> ‘eri worm’

-ŋ.k<sup>h</sup>- /k<sup>h</sup>aŋ.k<sup>h</sup>u/ ‘chin’

### Contiguous

-b.s- /hab.sao/ ‘world’

-ŋ.l- /gidiŋ.lu/ ‘circle’

-r.j- /bar.juŋ/ ‘cyclone’

## 1.6. Syllable Structure

Hawar has five types of syllables: monosyllabic, disyllabic, trisyllabic, quadrisyllabic and pentasyllabic. It has both open and closed syllables. The basic patterns of syllable in Hawar are VC, CV, CVC, CCV, CV̩, CV̩C and CCVC.

### 1.6.1. Monosyllable

Hawar dialect is mostly monosyllabic words. Hawar has many word structure with CCV and CVC. The CV and VC structures in Hawar are limited. Following are the examples of monosyllabic words.

Open Monosyllabic words		Closed Monosyllabic words	
CV	/di/ ‘water’	VC	/aŋ/ ‘I’
CV̩	/dao/ ‘bird’	CVC	/niŋ/ ‘you’
CCV̩	/blai/ ‘leaf’	CCVC	/k <sup>h</sup> raŋ/ ‘rear’

Table 9: Monosyllabic words in Hawar

### 1.6.2. Disyllable

Disyllabic word is one of the most common words found in Hawar dialect. Following are the examples of monosyllabic words.

Open Disyllabic words		Closed Disyllabic words	
CV.CV	/p <sup>h</sup> u.nu/ ‘show’	CV.CVC	/bo.dʒom/ ‘set’
CV.CV̩	/ri.jao/ ‘swim’	CV̩.CVC	/k <sup>h</sup> oi.p <sup>h</sup> ol/ ‘papaya’
CV̩.CV	/bai.si/ ‘habit’	CVC.CCVC	/saŋ.k <sup>h</sup> reŋ/ ‘rib’

Table 10: Disyllabic words in Hawar

### 1.6.3. Trisyllable

A word which consists of three syllables is called trisyllable. Some of the acceptable trisyllabic words in Hawar are shown below.

Open Trisyllabic words	Closed Trisyllabic words

CV.CV.CV	/sa.t <sup>h</sup> e.ma/ ‘doll’	CV.CV.CVC	/p <sup>h</sup> a.mi.bar/ ‘lotus’
CV.CV.CV̥	/no.k <sup>h</sup> a.sao/ ‘sky’	CV.CVC.CVC	/mi.rim.diŋ/ ‘backbone’
CV.CVC.CV	/k <sup>h</sup> o.dam.p <sup>h</sup> i/ ‘oyester’	CCV.CCV̥.CVC	/bru.brao.luŋ/ ‘husband’s younger brother’

Table 11: Trisyllabic words in Hawar

#### 1.6.4. Quadrisyllable

A word which consists of four syllables is called quadrisyllable. In Hawar, closed quadrisyllabic words are limited. Examples are illustrated below.

Open Quadrisyllabic words		Closed Quadrisyllabic words	
CVC.CCV.CV.CV	/sen.dre.go.ma/ ‘centipede’	CVC.CCVC.CVC.CVC	/dʒeŋ.gloŋ.man.der/ ‘rainbow’
CV.CV.CVV.CV	/k <sup>h</sup> i.t <sup>h</sup> a.rao.ba/ ‘brave’	-	-
CVV.CVC.CV.CV	/lai.laŋ.ja.ba/ ‘past’	-	-

Table 12: Quadrisyllabic words in Hawar

#### 1.6.5. Pentasyllable

In Hawar pentasyllabic words are very rare and it happens only in open syllabic words. Examples are illustrated below.

Open Pentasyllabic words		Closed Pentasyllabic words	
V.CV.CV.CV.CV	/a.ri.k <sup>h</sup> i.di.ma/ ‘divine bird’	-	-
CV.CV.CV.CV.CV	/su.mu.dʒa.ba.ni/ ‘why’	-	-

Table 13: Pentasyllabic words in Hawar

## 2. Tone

Hawar has two register tones: high tone and low tone. The high tone is marked as /<sup>h</sup>/, and low tone is marked as /<sup>l</sup>/.

High	Low
/ba <sup>h</sup> o/ ‘think’	/ba <sup>l</sup> o/ ‘allergy’
/ha <sup>h</sup> di/ ‘rain’	/ha <sup>l</sup> di/ ‘paddy field’
/se <sup>h</sup> ŋ/ ‘to put inside’	/se <sup>l</sup> ŋ/ ‘sword’

Table 14: Tone in Hawar

## 3. Conclusion

The present work is an attempt to provide a detailed analysis of some aspects of phonology. From the above phonological features, we can conclude that Hawar is a dialect of Dimasa which belongs to Tibeto-Burman language family. Hawar has six short vowels, five

diphthongs, sixteen consonant phonemes and two tones. Vowel phonemes /e, a, o, u/ occurs in all the three-word positions. The vowel phoneme /i/ occurs in the medial and final positions and the vowel phoneme /ə/ occurs only in the word medial position in Hawar dialect. The diphthongs /ai/ occurs in all the three-word positions, the diphthong /ao/ occurs in the word medial and final positions, the diphthongs /ui/ occurs in the word initially and finally and the diphthongs /oi, ou/ occurs only in the word medial position. Hawar does not have triphthongs. The consonant phonemes /p<sup>h</sup>, b, k<sup>h</sup>, g, m, n, l, r, s/ occurs in all the three positions. The phonemic consonant /t<sup>h</sup>, d, 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. In Hawar, consonant cluster is highly productive and occurs in the word initially. Syllable structure in Hawar varies from monosyllabic to pentasyllabic. A deeper study on tone is to be carried out for further research. However, this work has helped to provide a starting point for future work on Dimasa dialectology.

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