

Chapter- 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1. Introductory

The number of works on the Hajong language is very few as compared to other languages of the North East India. The available literature concerning Hajong are scattered since no intensive study has been done so far till date. Our survey regarding the literature reveals the fact that whatever research done so far are available in three languages- English, Assamese and Hajong published in books, journals, souvenirs and project reports. Further, most of the works are about the tradition and culture of the Hajong people where a little reference to their language is also available. Only a few studies have been done so far on particular aspects of the language such as grammar, phonological features and sociolinguistic survey etc. So, in this chapter, an attempt will be made to introduce the literature concerning Hajong and to review those works. The literature may be divided into two sections based on the subjects discussed in it and accordingly presented in the following sections.

2.2. Review of the Fundamental Research Works

Here, fundamental research works imply those works which are basically meant for language. There are a few works written on some particular aspects of the Hajong language whereas there are some which deal with other subjects such as history, society, culture and tradition and refer to the linguistic aspects as well. In this section, the review will be made on the works of the former group.

2.2.1. *Hajong Bhasha Parichiti*, ‘a linguistic book on the nature of Hajong language (dialect)’. The book written in Assamese, discusses some linguistic characteristics of the language. Written by Sri Paresh Hajong and published by Mrs. Chanchala Rani Hajong on behalf of Natun Pahar Prokashani, Tikrikilla, West Garo Hills (Meghalaya), and the First edition May, 2002. A ‘bhumika’ (foreword) regarding the book is written by Dr. Umesh Deka, Head of the Modern Indian Languages Department of Gauhati University. (Hajong, P. C. 2002). He writes about the usefulness of the book and how it may help the new learners of Hajong language. He writes that although the book is a primary level one which is helpful for new learners, it includes the applied Hajong words of different fields and their grammatical introduction has been presented by the author in a way as can be easily perceived by the readers. Another eminent writer Sri Basanta Das has given his opinion about the book which is written in ‘Abhimat’ (opinion/remark) in the beginning of the book. He writes that this book is useful for linguists as well as social sociologists. We agree with the above views since the contents of the book fully reflect what the reviewers have mentioned. The book may undoubtedly be considered a landmark of linguistic sphere of the Hajong language.

The objectives of the book may be mentioned as the following:

- a) To introduce the Hajong language.
- c) To establish the importance of language for the maintenance of identity of the people of the concerned community.

d) To lay importance on the written form of language that is very essential for the development of language.

The writer has given importance on the primary source. However, he has referred to some other writers somewhere while discussing the data. But the book contains abundant number of data on Hajong-Assamese vocabulary as well as their grammatical categories and their explanation etc. which he had collected himself. As a native speaker and a reputed writer in Assamese and Hajong exercising on the subjects relating the literature, language and culture of his community, his data can be taken as trustworthy one.

After thorough reading of the book the major findings that have come out may be discussed as under:

The book entitled *Hajong Bhasha Parisiti* is a primary linguistic work on Hajong-Assamese. The main intention of the author is to present the most used Hajong words and their meaning in Assamese. It is perceived that the author being a native speaker of Hajong realized that although the language has much similarities with Assamese words, most of the people even do not know about the existence of the language. On the other hand, the use of Assamese is so common amongst the Hajong people, particularly the young generation (in some regions) that they cannot speak in their own language appropriately. That might be one of the reasons for writing the book as first hand information about the Hajong language.

At the beginning of this book, some renowned writers have given their remarks about language in general and the Hajong language in particular in the context of the content of the book. They have also put opinion about the effort of the author and the significance of the book. Then the author puts his own remarks in the preface called '*Prak-Parisiti*' on language- its meaning, development, number of total languages in the world and many more information concerning language. Then he states about the Hajong language and its present status along with the recent efforts for its development. He also mentions about the problems of script for writing in Hajong and controversies that had arisen regarding it among the Hajong linguists. He remarks that controversy cannot solve any problem although it is impossible to avoid it and appeals to all concerned for amicable solutions of all such problems and work for development of the language.

The author has divided the main body of the book into eleven chapters along with the last one that contains the appendices etc. In the first chapter, he has presented Hajong-Assamese vocabulary on noun items which he systematically arranged as sub heads named '*Jiv Jantu Sambandiya*' (concerning animal), '*Sarai Sirikoti Sambandiya*' (relating birds) etc. Very commonly used and frequently occurred Hajong noun words with its Assamese meaning are produced in this chapter that is really helpful for a beginner, particularly a non-native who is familiar with Assamese. Similarly, in the subsequent chapters, the author has presented vocabularies of different grammatical items like the parts of speech, gender, tense and number etc. with some explanations up to chapter 8. The prepositional prefixes used in the Hajong language are discussed in chapter 9 while chapter 10 contains Hajong phrase and idioms as well as a few words with special meaning used for children. In chapter 11 proverbs of Hajong are presented

along with remarks regarding the influence of other languages on Hajong and some examples of loan words enlisted in the end of the chapter. The last chapter 12 contains different literary specimens in Hajong like poem, song etc. and dialectal divisions of the Hajong language.

To sum up, it can be said that the book is really helpful to the readers particularly those non-native speakers who know Assamese as the book is written in this language. However, the book is not free from flaws because the Hajong words presented in it are produced in Assamese script that does not reflect the sounds perfectly. It would be a better proof of linguistic data concerning proper pronunciation of the Hajong words if the author could present transcription of those words. Since the words are written following Assamese script, there is possibility to commit mistake by the readers while pronouncing them after reading it. This has been practically proved during my fieldwork when these words are verified by the native speakers. Secondly, the author has tried to give an introductory knowledge of Hajong language through some grammatical categories along with vocabularies, phrases, group verbs, and proverbs etc. It is a fact that to have an introductory knowledge of a particular language the first requirement is to be acquainted with the words of everyday use. Therefore, the writer should try to present the words of the target language category wise as he has done so but has failed to make the readers access them perfectly that is also due to the want of transcription. Lastly, the author could have succeeded more in his endeavour if he could have a more specified objective to introduce the language rather than trying to give an overview of the language. It has been observed that he has tried to make the non native readers introduce with the language and

at the same time, he has also stated about the language, its status, significance, and development etc.

Although the book is not free from demerits, it has its remarkable merits concerning linguistic data of Hajong language and so may be considered a praiseworthy work.

2.2.2. Phonological Description of the Hajong Language by Liza Guts in *North East Indian Linguistics Volume 4* is a research paper which tries to analyze in brief the phonological features of the Hajong language.

The main objectives of the study are as follows:

- a) To introduce the Hajong Language.
- b) To analyze the distribution of vowel and consonant segments of Hajong.
- c) To establish the phonemes of Hajong with contrastive pairs of vowel and consonants.
- d) To study the syllable and stress pattern of the Hajong language.
- e) To compare the phonological features of Hajong with the corresponding ones in TB, represented by Garo and IA, represented by Assamese.
- f) To study segments distribution patterns of Hajong at the syllable level, with comment on their position within the word.

The author has used mainly the primary source for the collection of data. She mentions in the beginning of the essay, “The basis for the current research is our linguistic work among the Hajong community in 2004-2006.” Further, her acknowledgement in the very first page justifies this: “... I would like to thank the Hajong people in Garo Hills in Meghalaya and Dhemaji in Assam, who allowed me to live among them, showed great hospitality and shared the richness of knowledge about their history, culture and the language. Special thanks to Mr. Biren Hajong, the president of Hajong Sahitya Sabha, for his valuable input and willingness to share rich knowledge about his people. I thank Mr. Nipon Hajong, the former president of Hajong Student Union, for providing some data for my research and sharing some linguistic insight....” However, she has referred to some writers in support of analyzing her subjects which she acknowledges in the following words: “..... I thank my colleagues David and Virginia Phillips for allowing me to use their linguistic data, and for their valuable input on the analysis.”

From our study and observation of the information/data as produced in the paper we may put conclusions as the following.

The paper furnishes a general phonological description of the Hajong language. The writer has adopted the traditional segmental approach while analyzing various phonological features. The main findings of the paper may be presented as the following: Hajong has twenty five consonant and six vowel segments with some conditioned and free variants in pronunciation. The author has not found the existence of tone in Hajong. Voiced and/or aspirated stops in word final position are neutralized to corresponding

voiceless phonemes. Approximants /w/ and /y/ are considered and interpreted as consonants since they show some consonant characteristics. The author has presented the six vowel segments that ‘stand in contrast with each other, at the same time they are grouped in pairs that interchange with each other in conditioned and/or free variation’. It seems that the study of vowels as has been undertaken is a primary one and not furnishing detail study which is pertinent from her own remark: “For further in-depth study of the vowels it would be advisable to apply other approaches in analysis such as generative or optimality theories, which might help to systemize various phonological processes in the language”.

The author has tried to establish her perception that from linguistic viewpoint Hajong is a ‘distinct language’. To establish this she has presented data concerning comparison of phonological features of Hajong language to that of Assamese as a representative of IA (Indo-Aryan) family and Garo as the closest TB (Tibeto-Burman) language spoken in the north eastern region. She tries to prove that although Hajong has some similarities with related IA languages such as Assamese or Bengali, it differs from them significantly. In support of her view, she mentions: “Hajong does not have any retroflexed plosives such a [t], [d], [ɽ] etc. which are present in Bengali, or velar fricative [x], common in Assamese. The interchangeable use of alveolar fricatives and affricates [ʃ̪], [dʒ̪], [tʃ̪], [dʒ̪̥], [s], and [z] is unique and needs further morphological analysis... The Hajong vowel /u/ is not present in most of the IA languages but typical for TB family. Stress patterns of Hajong are somewhat similar to Assamese but need further analysis of possible lexical importance in stress distribution”. (Guts, L 2012: 238).

Besides the above, it has been observed that the data collected by the author are mostly based on the spoken Hajong in the Meghalaya and Garo Hills region which has some dialectal differences concerning pronunciation and vocabulary compared with the Hajong language spoken in different regions of Assam. Hence, it is felt that an intensive study on the basis of data collected from Hajong spoken areas of Assam is necessary since the present work mainly intends to investigate the phonological features of Hajong spoken in Assam.

Again, it seems that the paper tries to analyze the phonological features of Hajong as a primary effort and detailed explanation is missing in some sections. For example, while describing the phonemes, the author has not given equal importance to all categories- vowel and consonants. The data presented are least and some features such as vowel glides, combinations of consonants, and morphophonemic analysis etc. are excluded. The investigation concerning supra-segmental features is also not fully done except a short discussion on syllable pattern. While discussing the syllable pattern, she has presented words containing up to three syllables only whereas our investigation finds out that there is Hajong words that consist up to five syllables.

From the above discussion, it is clear that there is necessity of an intensive study on the phonological features of Hajong language. With this viewpoint the present study is an effort in this direction.

2.2.3. Hajong (Jharua), an article included in the Chapter 3 (*Axomor Navya Sikrit/Asikrit Bhasa-Upobhasa*) of the book entitled *ASAMIYA ARU ASAMAR BHASA-UPABHASA* written by Dr. Upen Rabha Hakacham. Undoubtedly a scholarly and comparative

analysis of Hajong, the article furnishes a lot of information regarding the language. The article must be significantly necessary for researchers of comparative linguistics in general and Hajong language in particular.

The objectives of the article are as follows:

- 1) To introduce the Hajong language briefly.
- 2) To discuss various features of Hajong- phonological, morphological and syntactic.
- 3) To present a comparative study with other neighboring languages belonging to both IA and TB language families.
- 4) To discuss regarding the influence of other languages on Hajong concerning various linguistic aspects.

While preparing the article, the author has gathered information using both primary and secondary sources. He has referred to a lot of writings by other authors in support of his views and explanations. Primary source includes his collection of a large number of Hajong words through which he tries to describe various linguistic features of the language.

Major findings of the article may be stated as the following. In the beginning, the author has introduced the language as *Hajong* or *Jharua* along with a brief description regarding its background and the existence of various features of both IA and TB languages in it. He then discusses in some detail a few phonological, morphological, and

syntactic features of Hajong. Regarding the phonological features, he has presented examples to clarify his views such as how some sounds have lost its original form and changed afterwards. He mentions that although a Sanskrit origin language, it is observed that in Hajong the difference between short and long vowel sound has disappeared and many consonant sounds also have been lost or assimilated with other consonant sound. In word initial position /s/ has been found to appear as /h/ e.g. /sak/ > /hak/ ‘leafy vegetable’; /somaz/ > /homaz/ ‘society’ and in other positions /s/ changes into /ʃ/ e.g. /ses/ > /seʃ/ ‘end’. Some such phonological characteristics of Hajong are presented with examples. Similarly, /ɽ, r̃h/ change to /ɽ/; /zʰ/ > /z/; / aon, ny/ > /ŋ/ or curtailed somewhere as in the following examples: /bur̃ha/ > /bura/ ‘old’; /zʰola/ → /zala/ ‘trouble’; /zaon/ → /zaŋ/ ‘(I go)’; /pans/ → /pas/ ‘five’ etc.

We cannot agree with the above observation of the author regarding the replacement of sound since it has come out from our investigation that there are regional variations in the utterance of a particular sound. For instance, both /s/ and /h/ sounds are found to be pronounced by the speakers of *Susog* and *Daskahani* dialects respectively. In this connection, we may cite an example of a magazine published in Hajong named ‘*SAKON*’. The name is written in Assamese script and is transcribed as /sakon/ but pronounced as /hakon/ by the speakers of *Daskahani*.

Rather than replacement of sound, there is alternative use of sounds have been observed amongst the Hajong speakers about which the author has not mentioned anywhere. It has been also observed that the vowel sound /u/ and /a/ are alternatively used. /u/ as in /biu/, /guu/ etc. are alternatively used as /bia/, /gua/ by many Hajong

speakers. The reason behind this may be the influence of Assamese and Bangla where /u/ sound is not present.

The writer also mentions about the significance of two particular sounds /č/ [ts] and /z^h/ [dzh]/ in Hajong as available in words like, /čaŋ/ ‘granary’; /z^huri/ ‘stream’ which may be compared with /s/ and /z/ as in /masaŋ/ ‘meat’ and /zala/ ‘trouble’ to find out the difference of sounds between the pairs /č/, /s/ and /z/, /z^h/.

The author has mentioned about another vowel sound /u/ which is a typical sound of TB languages is also a unique feature of Hajong. He also mentions about the use of the diphthongs /au, ia/ as a common feature of Hajong with those of the two predominant ethnic dialects of Assam i.e. *Rabhamese* and *Rajbanshi*.

Then he has discussed about the morphological characteristics of the language in some detail with examples showing how different grammatical categories like parts of speech, number, and gender are formed.

Next, he discusses the phonetic features of Hajong. In this regard, he remarks that most of Sanskrit-origin words used in Hajong have been either deformed or simplified. For example, Sanskrit origin /baishnav/ → Hajong /boistom/ ‘vaishnab’; Sanskrit origin /bhog^hni/ → Hajong /buini/.

Use of loan words from other languages is another feature of Hajong. The author has mentioned this with examples such as-

Hindi /lomba/ → Hajong /lamba/; Bangla +Hindi /noya/ → Hajong /noya/etc.

Another feature of Hajong is the existence of a large number of words having similarities with *Kamrupi* or *Goalparia* dialect of Assam.e.g. /thut/→ /ot/ ‘lip’; /hathu/→ /athu/ ‘knee’ etc. Thus he has discussed in detail about morphological characteristics of Hajong with further analysis of Non-Aryan elements, similarities in vocabularies with neighboring languages like Assamese, Bangla etc. idiomatic formation of words and also different word categories used in the language.

The writer has also discussed the syntactic features of Hajong to show with examples how the characteristics of various languages have entered into the language. However, he has mentioned about the existence of the fundamental features of its own particularly in the folk songs.

To conclude, it may be said that the article is undoubtedly a valuable linguistic work and pertinently helpful for the scholars since it presents an overview of Hajong language. With the help of the data he has presented, a researcher may have a primary understanding about various linguistic features of Hajong which might help him to carry forward his study. Since the work may be considered as an overview of linguistic features of Hajong, it is not a complete analysis of particular aspect and so, further investigation may be undertaken by researchers.

2.2.4. *Hajong Bhasha: Eti Samu Dristipat*, an article written by Ramen Chandra Hajong and published in 2009 in the *Ranga Pathin*, souvenir of Silver Jubilee Celebration of Hajong Cultural Organization, Guwahati. The main purpose of this article may be determined as follows:

(1) to introduce the Hajong language and

(2) to discuss some grammatical elements of Hajong like person, case markers, tense, idioms and proverbs etc.

From the reading of the article following findings have come out. In the beginning, the writer presents a simple introduction to the Hajong language as the ‘own language’ of the ethnic tribe. He mentions about the process of systematic study of Hajong as has been going on with the efforts of various institutions and organizations like the Linguistics Department of Gauhati University, Hajong Sahitya Sabha, Hajong Silpi Sahityik Samiti, and Hajong Bhasha-Sanskritik Unnayan Samiti etc.

While introducing the language, he has discussed about the regional varieties of spoken Hajong that he has divided into five dialects. These are: (1) Daskahania, (2) Karaibaria, (3) Susongi, (4) Barohajari (Kalu-malu-para), and (5) Mesparia. The writer has remarked that although Hajong has its regional varieties it has been current among the speakers as an ethnic language.

Originally, the Hajongs belong to the Mongoloid race of Tibeto- Burman language family. Due to the deep influence of the Aryan culture, some changes have taken place in the original form of the language. Presently, the impact of Kamrupi and Goalparia dialects of Assamese are prevalent in the Hajong language. He has remarked that Dashkahania and Susong regional varieties of Hajong have phonological similarities with standard Assamese. On the other hand, Korobaia, Barohajari and Mechparia dialects

have such similarities noticed with that of the Goalparia dialect of Assamese. Again, he mentions about the existence of TB features in the language.

The author has discussed about some linguistic features of Hajong as presented below in brief:

(a) Grammatical: Person and personal pronoun of Hajong has more similarities with Bodo-Kachari, Rabha and Kamrupi apabhramsa as noticed in the examples given below.

Hajong	Assamese	Bodo	Rabha	
/moi/	/moi/	/aŋ/	/aŋ/	‘I’
/umru, amaglu/	/ami/	/zuŋ/	/zuŋp ^{har} /	‘we’
/toi/	/tumi/	/nuŋ/	/naŋ/	‘you’
/oi/	/xi, teu, tai/	/bi/	/u/	‘he, she’

Then we find three persons (1st, 2nd and 3rd) and two numbers (Singular and Plural) are used in Hajong as mentioned by the writer as presented below.

	Singular		Plural	
1 st Person:	/moi/	‘I’	/amaglu/	‘we’
2 nd Person:	/toi/	‘you’	/tumaglu, tuglu/	‘you’
3 rd Person:	/oi/	‘he, she’	/ora, uglu/	‘they’

Some other grammatical features of Hajong such as affix, tense, gender, proverb and phrase and idiom are discussed in some detail. Such discussion about the linguistic features is surely helpful for learners about Hajong language. However, this article provides information about only grammatical aspects of the language and therefore, there is a need for research to analyze the other aspects too.

2.2.5. Case Marking in Hajong, a research paper by V.C. Phillips included in the book entitled *North East Indian Linguistics Vol. 3*. The main objective of the paper is to introduce the Hajong language and its case marking system.

In the beginning, the author has introduced the Hajong people as a scheduled tribe of North East India and their language belonging to Indo Aryan language (IA) family. Then the case marking system of Hajong is discussed from a comparative viewpoint with four languages- Asomiya, Bangla (belonging to IA family), Garo, and Koch (belonging to TB family). Referring to Masica, she mentions and discusses about the three layers of formatives with case-like functions in New Indo Aryan (NIA) languages. Layer I is missing in NIA languages including Hajong While the other two Layers II and III are available. In this writing, the author has concentrated her discussion mainly on Layer II case markers, i.e. formatives which come immediately after a head noun or its classifier which include dative, genitive, locative, allative, ablative, and instrumental. Each case marker is discussed in detail by function and form as well as cross linguistic comparison.

The following table (Phillips, V.C.: 236) shows the possible cognates for Hajong case markers.

	Hajong	IA (Bangla, Asamiya)	TB (Koch, Garo)
DAT/ACC	<i>ge, gon</i>	<i>-ke</i>	
GEN	<i>La</i>	possibly <i>-[e]r</i>	
LOC	<i>Ni</i>		<i>ni</i> (GEN)
LOC	<i>b^ha^j</i>		<i>-wa^j</i>
ABL	<i>t^hiki, t^hake, t^hokon,</i>	<i>- t^heke,</i>	
INST	<i>diu</i>	<i>-dia</i>	

The study raises many possibilities and questions regarding the origin of the Hajong case markers. It also explores the relationship or interaction between the IA and TB language families in North East India. However, the writer is not free from mistakes concerning the presentation of data. As mentioned in the above table of case markers, she has wrongly put the data against DAT/ACC, ABL, INST against Assamese and Bangla. The fact is that the data presented in the chart belongs to Bangla only and not found in Assamese.

This study is no doubt, on a particular aspect of Hajong, but the data explored so far might lead the researchers for further investigation on this aspect as well as others.

2.2.6. The Hajong of Bangladesh: A Sociolinguistic Survey, a project report of the survey conducted by Amy Kim, Sayed Ahmad, Seung Kim, and Mridul Sangma, SIL International in the year 2011. “The main purpose of this sociolinguistic survey was to gather information that could tie into recent and ongoing language-development efforts among the Hajong in India. We wanted to know if Hajong speakers in Bangladesh could adequately use literature developed by Hajong speakers in India and if they might be interested in using such literature. We also wanted to learn about current language, culture, and literature-development efforts among the Hajong in Bangladesh.” (Amy Kim et.al: 2011). The main objectives of the work are evident from the above words.

The objectives of the survey are as the following:

1. To find out the linguistic variation among the Hajong living in Bangladesh and India.
2. To determine Hajong speakers’ attitudes toward varieties of their own language and toward Bangla.
3. To examine the long-term vitality of Hajong in Bangladesh.
4. To know about the initiatives among the Hajong in Bangladesh to develop and/or preserve their language and culture.
5. To ascertain which script would be most accepted and of most use to Hajong speakers living in Bangladesh.

“To accomplish these goals, this sociolinguistic survey of the Hajong in Bangladesh was carried out in three interrelated parts: 1) a study of the dialects of the

language, 2) a language use and bilingualism study, and 3) a language attitude and vitality study.”

The first objective mentioned above seems to be the most vital one in this study. To meet this purpose, the surveyors have furnished abundant numbers data concerning the Hajong vocabulary along with its pronunciation. Some such data are presented below. “In addition to using the standard procedures, the following conventions were followed when grouping the words: 1) non-syllabic vowels were sometimes counted as separate segments and sometimes counted as non-segments, whichever choice would maximize similarity between words; 2) nasalized vowels were treated as being equal to their non-nasalized counterparts; 3) dental consonants were counted as being equal to their alveolar counterparts; 4) and, most significantly, affixes were ignored in favor of the word root when it was clear that the affixes were not crucial components of the desired word (this occurred most often for verbs). The main reason for these conventions was to eliminate the unnecessary differentiation caused by the different ears and transcription habits of two different researchers. Thus, it can be said that we erred on the side of under-differentiating, rather than over-differentiating.

Occasionally, one or more of the standard 307 lexical items were found to be so problematic that consistent elicitation was impossible or evaluation of similarity became anomalous. In those few cases, the problematic lexical items were excluded from the lexical similarity counts.

Each elicitation is preceded by a number. For each gloss, all elicitations which have the same preceding number are considered to be phonetically similar and are grouped together. Following each elicitation is a list of one or more letters/number in

brackets. These letters/numbers represent the wordlist site of that particular elicitation.

The codes for these wordlist sites are as follows:

Code:	Wordlist site:
A	Nugapara /W.Garo Hills
b	Chilapara/W.Garo Hills
c	Nirghini/W.Garo Hills
d	Dalugau/W.Garo Hills
e	Balachanda/W.Garo Hills
f	Dhamor/Goalpara/Assam
B	Gopalbari/Bangladesh
C	Gopalpur/Bangladesh
D	Bhalukapara/Bangladesh
E	Nokshi/Bangladesh
0	Standard dictionary pronunciations (Bangla)

The wordlist data and transcribed texts, as included in the subsequent appendices, are field transcriptions and have not undergone thorough phonological or grammatical analysis.

1 sky

1	din	[BEaf]
2	akas	[Bbcde]
2	akaf	[0CD]

2 sun

1	bela	[CEabcdef]
1	bila	[a]
1	buula	[BD]
2	ɟurɟɔ	[0]
2	surɟɔ	e]

4 star

1	tara	[0BCDEabcdef]
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5 cloud

1	kaula	[Da]
2	mɛg ^h	[0]
2	mek	[BEbdef]
3	ap	[cf]
4	has	[C]

6 rain

1	mek	[BCDEacd]
1	mekpani	[bf]
2	pani	[e]
3	briɟti	[0]

7 rainbow

1	ramd ^h enu	[bf]
1	ramd ^h unu	[acde]
1	roŋd ^h uni	[DE]
1	roŋd ^h onu	[0]
2	bagd ^h unu	[BC]

8 wind

1	batas	[abcdef]
1	bataf	[0BCDE]

9 lightning

1	dinʃilkai	[BD]
1	dinʃilkai	[abcf]
1	dinʃilkawa	[d]
1	ʃilkui	[CE]
1	ʃilkani	[e]
2	biddut ʃomkano	[0]

10 thunder

1	dind ^h ukriwa	[d]
1	dindokre	[DEacf]
1	dokre	[C]

2	ʃforok	[be]
3	hapdo	[c]
4	mɛg ^h gərdʒon	[0]
5	t ^h at ^h a	[B]

11 sea

1	ʃagor	[BCDE]
1	sagor	[abcdef]
2	ʃəmudro	[0]
3	panidaŋor	[a]

12 mountain

1	pahaɾ	[0]
1	pahar	[BCDEacdef]
2	porbut	[b]
3	daha	[BCDE]

14 river

1	g aŋ	[BCDEacdf]
2	nodi	[0abde]
3	nala	[a]” (p. 39-40)

The above data furnishes differences in respect of vocabulary and pronunciation of a word area wise. So, the data must be considered significant for researchers of phonological features of Hajong.

Although a survey on sociolinguistic aspect of the Hajong language, the work provides introductory information about the language and its speakers with statistical data that is surely helpful for any researcher of the language. The research methodology (an overview of methodology is available in Table-1, page-7 of the report) used for the purpose also may enlighten researchers who use field work as a method for collecting primary data. Study of the dialects of the language furnishes data on the Hajong words which help to understand the variety of the language based on geographical location.

However, the study does not furnish light on all the phonological aspects of Hajong except pronunciation. Yet, the information and data are useful to understand the nature of the language that would be helpful in conducting research on any other aspect of Hajong.

2.3. Review of the Related Research Works:

Since not adequate numbers of books on Hajong language are available, we have included a few books written on the tradition and culture of Hajong people. However, such books have reference as well as elements concerning language for observation from linguistic viewpoint. For example, the language used in folk song, lullaby and other songs related to worship (puja) etc. are no doubt interesting sources of careful linguistic observation.

2.3.1. *Hajong Loka Sanskriti*, a collection of sixteen articles published in 2007 by the Director of Assam Institute of Research for Tribals and Scheduled Castes, Guwahati-22. The book contains articles on some aspects of Hajong. It conveys information on various aspects- mainly on the culture, tradition, religion and socio-economic life etc. of the Hajong tribe. Some aspects of their language are also referred to while discussing the topics.

The book is written by Sri Paresh Chandra Hajong, a renowned writer belonging to the Hajong community who has written out a large number of books on Hajong culture, tradition, language and literature. The main objectives of the work are:

- a) To introduce the Hajong tribe as an indigenous people of Assam.
- b) To preserve and present the folklores of the Hajongs as an alternative to perfect history and sufficient literature in both of which the community is lagging behind.
- c) To preserve the folklores of the Hajongs as a future source of study of the people and various aspects of their life

Both primary and secondary sources have been used for the collection of data. The secondary source includes mainly books and scholarly articles from different journals concerning Hajong people and various aspects of their life. A large number of references of eminent writers from the community such as K. R. Hajong, R.K.Ray Hajong, N.Hajong and B. Hajong as well as other non-Hajog authors writing on different topics concerning the Hajongs have been made. The author had collected various data through his own field investigation and through his communication with informants. He

mentions in the preface that the folk-songs and proverbs presented in the book are the outcome of his incessant effort for their collection since his student life till date.

The author has deeply observed the life and culture of the Hajong tribes living in and around Assam and furnishes significant information and data concerning their population, dwelling places, history, physiological features, language, literature and culture etc. In the first chapter named 'Hajong: Ek Samiksit Alusana' he discussed many facts concerning the Hajong people referring a large number of scholars in support of his explanation. In the subsequent chapters he mainly concentrates on various cultural activities of the Hajongs as observed by him and described how they reflect their life style, socio-economic and cultural status and thereby highlighting their language and literature also. The chapters – 'Bash Puja', 'Manasha Puja', 'Kati Puja', 'Kirtan', 'Biya Aru Biya Nam', 'Chor Khela', 'Din Dhawa', 'Lewa Tana Bihu', 'Tilenga Gahen', 'Rasi Gahen', 'Sawa Ghum Parani Gahen', 'Sawa Khelani Gahen', 'Selak' and 'Fakara Jojana' all depict not only various cultural aspects of the Hajong tribe but also reflects the folk literature and language very significantly. In fact, the work is no doubt a treasure of information and valuable data concerning the Hajong culture, society, literature as well as language. It will certainly remain as a valuable source of information for researchers who intends to carry a study on the Hajong people and their language, culture etc.

2.3.2. *Hajong Samaj Aru Sanskritit Dristipat*, is a collection of articles written by Ratan Kumar Ray Hajong which were published in newspapers and magazines in its various issues. These articles were collectively put in the form of a book which was published in

2003. The book written in Assamese furnishes “relevant data/information on the Hajong tribe”.

Ratan Kumar Ray Hajong, a poet and artist is a representative writer of the Hajong community. Apart from writing articles on the life and culture of the Hajong people, he writes documentaries and scripts; endeavoured for publicity of their folk-songs, folk-dance etc. through TV and radio thereby contributed a lot to revive the dying Hajong culture.

The main objectives of the work are:

- To introduce the Hajong Tribe.
- To introduce the social set up, culture, language and literature of the Hajong tribe.
- To furnish information/data on various aspects of the Hajongs.

While writing the articles, the author has used both primary and secondary sources for the collection of data. The secondary source includes mainly books and scholarly articles from different journals concerning Hajong people and various aspects of their life. The primary source includes the experiences and investigation of the author from different fields related to the Hajong people.

Major Findings: In the first chapter entitled ‘Hajong Samaj’, the author has tried to describe the backward status of the Hajong people living in the North Eastern states, especially Assam. The reasons for their financial backwardness which is the major cause of all other backwardness are mentioned as follows: a) The dominant Hajong areas such

as the villages of Goalpara, Mankacher, Garo Hills and West Khasi Hills District situated at the Indo-Bangladesh border were divided after the partition of India. b) These areas were full of forest and lacking in communication facilities. The writer has also described how the Hajong people had to face very pathetic situation during and after independence period. The second chapter named 'Hajong Samaj: Eti Samiksha', an analysis regarding the origin of the word 'Hajong' is made referring to an eminent scholar Mr. Asraf Ali Siddique, then Chairman of Bangla Sahitya Academy of Bangladesh. Through his discussion, the writer has tried to establish that the Hajongs belong to the greater 'Bodo' community of the Mongoloid race. In the third chapter called 'Axomot Hajonsakalor Janasankhya', a data based on a survey is presented showing the total number of Hajong population living in Assam. In the subsequent chapters- from fourth to twelve, various traditional and cultural items of the Hajong people such as marriage, religion, folk-song, folk festival etc. are analyzed that makes the readers acquainted with their life style, literature and language. The readers who are already aware of Assamese or Bengali can easily get introduced with the language as used in the songs and proverbs etc. of Hajong. The next chapter entitled 'Jatiya Mukti Andulan Aru Hajong Bidruha' provides information regarding the Hajong Farmers' movement. It also highlights the participation, contribution and sacrifice of the Hajong people to the Independence Movement of India. The writer has focused on how the Hajong people got introduced with revolutionary, political and economic concept through the communist activists as a result of which some prospective Hajong youths joined the communist party. But, as the author remarks, due to the conspiracy of politicians such political and economic

education could not be continued and the Hajong youths were lagging behind politically, economically and culturally.

2.3.3. Tribes of Assam Part-III, an AIRTSC (Assam Institute of Research on Tribal and Scheduled Castes) popular series book 'containing ethnographic write-ups on five scheduled tribes of Assam covering plains and hills with sufficient number of places representing their life and culture'. It was first published in 1991 by Dr. B.N.Bordoloi, the then Director of AIRTSC, Guwahati. Written in English the book provides information/data regarding five tribes- the Garos, the Hajongs, the Jaintias, the Khasis and the Meches. Here, we will concentrate our analysis on the 'Hajongs' section of the book co-relating our research topic.

Objectives: The main objectives of the work are:

- To introduce the Hajong Tribe.
- To introduce their racial affinity and language.
- To present the demographic features of the Hajongs.
- To analyze their clan system.
- To inform about the family structure, marriage, birth and death of the Hajongs.
- To explain their religious beliefs, social, economic and political life etc.

Procedure: The author has used both primary and secondary sources for the collection of data. The secondary source includes mainly books and scholarly articles from different books and journals concerning Hajong people and various aspects of their life. The

primary source mainly concerns the experiences and investigation of the author from different fields related to the Hajong people.

Major Findings: In the very beginning, the writer has given an introduction to the Hajong tribe and their dwelling places. He mentions about the migration of Hajong people from East Pakistan (present Bangladesh) to then undivided Assam. The migration was caused by the partition of India. It is mentioned that there has not been agreed opinion regarding the original inhabitation of the Hajong people. He referred to some representative scholars of the Hajong community while discussing the matter. He writes, “According to their own traditional belief, they originally inhabited ‘Has Pargana’ or in Hajo area of present Nalbari district. Due to some historical reasons they were compelled to leave Hajo area and they fled to Garo Hills from where they spread to Mymensing, Rajsahi, Sylhet, etc. places of the Bengal. Whatever might be their original place of inhabitation, it conclusively be said that the Hajongs like the other tribes of North-East, had been living in this part of the country including some areas of present Bangladesh, which was once an integral part of India, from time immemorial, although due to various socio-political, historical and economic reasons they had migrated within a specific area either voluntarily or out of compulsion’ (Bordoloi, 1991). The writer has also discussed the reasons why the Hajongs are called by this term and referred to by eminent writers and scholars like Paresh Hajong, Ratan Kumar Ray Hajong, Motilal Barman etc. who are from the same community and also referred to some non-Hajong writers. He writes in this regard, “Majority of the scholars, however, are of the opinion that the word ‘Hajong’ originates from Garo word ‘Ha-Jong’. In Garo ‘Ha’ means land and ‘Jong’ means ants or worms. Thus, Hajong literally means land-ants or worms. But here ‘ants’ or ‘worms’

should not be regarded in its literal meaning. Here the term ‘Jong’ meaning ‘ants’ or ‘worms’ refers to people who are expert in ploughing. Since the Hajongs depend mainly on agriculture with plough cultivation, hence the reference. The term ‘Jong’, therefore, should not be treated as derogatory equalizing a section of the people with ants or worms” (Bordoloi, 1991).

Next, about the racial affinity of the Hajongs are discussed when he writes, “About the racial affinity of the Hajongs, there has been a lot of confusions and it is very difficult to say what is precisely their racial affinity” He referred to many scholars like Colonel Dalton, Mr. L. A. Waddel and others as well as referred to the Census Report of 1891 to analyze this subject. He puts his remark in this regard in the following words, “...Whatever might be their racial affinity, it is certain that like other tribes of North-East India, the Hajongs are also Mongoloids. With the successive hordes of the different ethnic groups, the Hajongs perhaps entered into this part of the country in the long past and moved towards south-east and finally settled in the Garo Hills and the adjoining areas which are now a part of present Bangladesh.

While the Hajong male members have dark-tan complexion, the women are fair complexioned with long uncut hair. The average height of a man is about 1.60 metres while that of female it is about 1.40 metres. They have round face and the size of their eyes is not so small like some of the tribal communities of the North-East. Physically they are strong and stout and capable of hard labour and physical strain.” Then, the demographic characteristics of the Hajong people of Assam has been discussed that

reveal, apart from other facts, the low female literacy rate of Hajongs which almost one third of the males.

Again, about the different clans called NIKNI in Hajong has been analyzed which is also a subject of controversy for the scholars. The actual number of clans of Hajong is unknown today and some scholars say that there are 21 clans. However the author mentions, “During my field investigation I was given to understand that they had only seven clans. But when their names are asked, the people simply expressed their inability to memorize all of them except three, namely, Chondi, Kendagaiya and Baliati. One fact is, of course certain that whatever clans the Hajongs have at present these all belong to paternal line.” (Bordoloi: 1991). Then the author has described various traditional and cultural items including the following: family structure, marriage system, rites and rituals relating birth and death, religion and religious beliefs etc. Another important aspect of the life of Hajong people i.e. their social life is discussed in detail covering the following: village structure, housing pattern, food habits, language, fairs and festivals, dresses, ornaments etc. This provides a first hand knowledge about their social life including primary information about Hajong language too. Then he has discussed about the economic life of the Hajongs which reveals the fact that 90% of the Hajong people depend mainly on agriculture for their livelihood while the remaining 10% depend on service, wage-earning, petty business, carpentry etc.

After discussing about the Hajong people and their life, the author sums up his discussion in the following words: “the Hajongs are one of the numerically small tribes of Assam. They are also lesser known due to the lack of comprehensive literature and

studies on them. In this brief ethnographic note it has not been possible to cover all aspects of their life and culture in details. ... The Hajongs although numerically small, are one of the most colorful tribes of Assam with their own culture and tradition which find their manifestation in their songs, dances, music, fairs and festivals. They are a peace loving and mild natured people who are found to be conscious about their own place in the welfare and development field among the different ethnic groups of Assam. Their own conscious efforts together with the efforts of the state government would surely bring them at par with the others.” (Bordoloi: 1991).

2.3.4. *Hajong Loka Sanskriti* is a book on the folklore of the Hajong tribe written by Bhabesh Das and published by Ratnapeeth Prakashan, Dhupdhara, Goalpara. Although small in size, the book provides primary information regarding the Hajong people and their culture and tradition.

The book contains 14 chapters namely, *Parichay (Identity)*, *Pariyal(Family)*, *Janma(Birth)*, *Bibah (Marriage)*, *Mrityu (Death)*, *Sajpar aru Alongkar (Dress and Ornaments)*, *Utsav-parvan (Festivals)*, *Bans Puja*, *Kati Puja*, *Gitlu Gahen*, *Thuba Maga*, *Dharma aru Dharmiya Biswas (Religion and Religious Belief)*, *Ghor aru Khadya (House and Food)*, and *An An Lokogit (other folk songs)*. Along with these, a foreword is written by the eminent writer Dr. Ganesh Chandra Sarma Thakur and an introduction by the author.

In the beginning, the author has introduced the Hajong tribe along with the analysis of the term ‘Hajong’. He has referred to mythology as well as other writers while discussing about the origin of the Hajong people. Throughout the book, he has tried to

provide information regarding the tradition and culture of the Hajongs. The names of the chapters indicate the fact. In between he has mentioned about their language with reference to the views of other scholars particularly in the chapter named *Parichay* (identity). He writes, “The Hajongs have their own language. According to some scholars, the name of their language is *Jharua*. According to the report of Mekenji mentioned in the census of 1881, out of 3789 Hajongs only 581 speak in that language. Their language is close to the *Kamrupi* (dialect of Assamese) in some area while it is a mixture of *Bengali* and *Goalparia* in some other parts.” (Das: 1992). The writer has presented specimen Hajong words of with their Assamese counterparts. The words include some grammatical categories such as noun, adjective, pronoun and relative noun which he has presented in different lists and written in Assamese script. The pronunciation of the words enlisted by the author has some obscurity in respect of phonetic transcription particularly because of the use of Assamese script. In other words, the transcription may vary person to person and therefore a transcription if produced by the writer against the words would be very helpful for the readers to know the perfect pronunciation. Therefore, although the data furnished here are helpful to the readers, yet they lack perfection.

The book is a helpful document for obtaining primary information about the Hajong people and their culture, tradition as well as their language.
