

Language Contact and Borrowing in *A·beng* variety of *A·chik* language

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Linguistically and ethnologically, the *Garos* also known as *A·chiks*, belong to the Bodo race, who, at one time occupied a large part of the Brahmaputra valley, and most probably were pushed out from the plains into the hills by early Hindu arrivals from North India.¹

The Bodos in turn, were a section of the Tibeto-Burman race of the Tibeto-Chinese family, whose cradle is said to have been North-Western China between the upper waters of Yang-tse-Kiang and Hoangho. The Tibeto-Burman went fourth in successive waves of emigrants who spread down the valley of the Brahmaputra and other great rivers, such as the Chindwin, the Irrawaddy and the Mekong that flows towards the south. The Bodo or Bara is one of the most important sections of the Tibeto-Burman speech family. The Tibeto-Burman speech family comprises a series of dialects spoken from Tibet in the north to Burma in the south and from Baltistan in the west to the Chinese provinces of Sechuan and Yunnan in the East.²

Garo or *A·chik* language are used by the speakers of that tribe, who have a greater number of population in the five districts of Garo Hills of Meghalaya. *A·chik* Speaker are also found in some other district of Khasi Hills, Assam, (Kamrup, Goalpara, Sibsagar, Darrang, Nowgong), Nagaland, Tripura, Koch Bihar, Jalpaiguri in West Bengal and Bangladesh.³

The *A·chiks* call themselves *Mande* which is the word in their vernacular for 'man'. The *A·chiks* call their Language, *Mande Ku·sik* or the language of men, and also *A·chik Ku·sik* or the language of hillmen.⁴ Their main home is the Garo Hills but its speakers have overflowed far into the plains at their feet, as far as Koch Behar and Jalpaiguri, in the West, and almost all the parts of North-East India.⁵

The *A·we* is the standard variety of the *A·chik* language. The *A·beng* variety is one of the variety of the *A·chik* language. This variety is very rich in vocabulary and widely spoken by the *A·beng* speakers. The *A·beng* variety of the *A·chik language* is spoken by the group who occupies the entire Western part of Garo Hills, Notable *A·beng* settlements are *Babadam*, *Sadolbra* in the *Ranggira* Hills, *Tengkigre*, *Batabari* (*Bhaitbari*),

¹ Sangma, Milton. S. History of Garo Language and Literature. p1

² -ibid pp 1-7

³ Grierson, G. A Linguistic Survey of India p 68

⁴ -ibid p 68

⁵ Sangma, Milton. S History of Garo Literature p8

Phulbari, Tikrikilla, Ampati, Dalu, Damalgre, Garobadha, Betasing, Zikzak, Selsella, etc. In the South Garo Hills the *A-beng* speakers can be found in *Rongara, Mahadeo*, villages.

Language contact and borrowing:

Language contact occurs when two or more languages or varieties interact. When speakers of different languages interact closely, their language influences each other. Language contact leads to language borrowing. The most common products of borrowing are pidgins, creoles, code-switching and mixed language. Borrowing is the most common way that languages influence each other. Language contact can lead to language development.

Borrowing:

Borrowing in linguistics refers to the words adopted by the speaker of one language from different languages. Borrowing words can also be called loanwords. The abstract noun borrowing refers to the process of speakers adopting words from a source language into their native language. 'Loan' and 'borrowing' are metaphors, because there is no literal lending process. There is no transfer from one language to another, and no 'returning' words to the source language. The words simply come to be used by the speech communities that speak a different language from their origin.

Borrowing is a consequence of cultural contact between two language communities. Borrowings of words can go in both directions between the two languages in contact, but often there is an asymmetry, such that more words go from one side to the other. This is the case that the source language communities have more advantage of power and prestige that makes the objects and ideas more desirable and useful for the target language communities.

According to Heath (1994), another way in which different languages may become mixed up with each other is through the process of borrowing. Borrowing involves mixing the systems themselves, because an item is borrowed from one language to become a part of the other language.

English has borrowed words from other languages with which it comes into contact. English continues to enrich its store of words by such borrowing. Alcohol (Arabic), piano (Italian), and zebra (Bantu), boss (Dutch), etc.

Every language in the world changes throughout the change of time when they have a contact with other speech communities. This may happen when the speaker encounters new ideas, things, new objects and materials for which if they don't have a native name for that term, borrowing takes place. Borrowing also takes place when they have a contact by means of trade and commerce with different groups of people who belong to other communities etc. This is the process where they develop new words and create new meanings. Borrowing is a very productive and widespread process among the *A-beng*. *A-beng* language has borrowed a word for different

terms from other languages. Most of the *A·chik* parents send their children for education to different places. Where they had a contact with different group of people, who speak different language and they were influenced by the speaker of that place, slowly and gradually they adapt and borrowed a language.

They also have terms for all the objects that they use, of tools, implements and items used for construction, cultivation and other kinds of productive activities. The *A·beng* has sufficient vocabulary to express sorrows and emotions of joys, happiness, pain and fear, desire to do something, as well as lamentation. It has a rich store of wise sayings and proverbs, riddles, word-pairing as well as different styles of narrative and poetic expressions to suit every occasion, it may be a sacrificial rites, marriage, ceremonies, songs of joy, lamentation of dead, worship of the deities, and description of sacred object and so on.

As the languages are not static but dynamic, *A·beng* language is dynamic which continues to develop, adopting according to the needs of the present day. *A·beng* language is a vibrant and dynamic language and its contact with other languages brought it further enrichment. Just as the English languages took ideas and names from Latin and other languages, the *A·beng* borrowed words from other languages when they come across materials or ideas which they themselves did not have.

When the *A·beng* had contact with different language speaker in different period they had borrowed numbers of words for the names of different things and objects. The *A·beng* borrowed words are listed below which are written according to the *A·beng* spelling and pronunciation, but the changes are coming through the spread of education, many educated *A·beng* now a day prepare a correct spelling and pronunciation of the borrowed words.

Different periods of Borrowing:

Borrowing in *A·we* takes place in different phases or periods as mentioned by Milton S. Sangma in '*History of Garo Language*'. He states that borrowing in *A·chik* language takes place when they were influenced by other languages during the three different periods, the Indo-Aryan period, the Muslim period and the British period.

The American Baptist Missionary shifted the mission from Goalpara to Tura. The headquarter of Garo Hills was set up in Goalpara in the beginning later along with the mission the headquarter was shifted to west Garo Hills the heart of Tura. Slowly and gradually different Institution and administrative offices was set up. Different group of people came for different administrative purposes, education, trade and business. West Garo Hills is surrounded by *A·beng* speaking villages. The number of *A·beng* speaker is more when compared to other part of Garo Hills. The *A·beng* had a contact with different group of people which lead to borrowing of words from other languages. As *A·we* has borrowed a word during three different periods, similarly the *A·beng* variety has also borrowed words.

Indo Aryan Ages:

Indo Aryan invaded India around 1500 B.C and during 1000 B.C they have a contact with the tribal people of Himalaya region and North Eastern region. After the Indo-Aryan had a contact with the North Eastern region people, Garo Hills is one of them. When the *A-beng* speaker had a contact with the Indo-Aryan they have borrowed many word from them. They could see many things, object and vegetation of the plains which are different from the hilly region. Since they don't have the names for the entire particular terms, which is unfamiliar to them. *A-beng* have borrowed the names for the terms given by the plain people.

A-beng has many vocabularies which is borrowed from Indo-Aryan languages, namely Assamese, Bengali and Hindi, such as; *pul* 'flower', *raja* 'king', *rani* 'queen', *rong* 'colour', *rupa* 'silver'. *sabas* 'good', *sakki* 'witness', *sason* 'rule', *sikar* 'hunt', *somoi* 'time', *sona* 'gold', *sorok* 'road', and so on. Most of the borrowed word from Indo-Aryan languages are still used among the *A-beng* such as: *baji* 'time', *bazaar* 'market', *bakki* 'credit', *bichal* 'justice', *dam* 'price', *dos* 'fault', etc.

The borrowed words listed below are written according to the *A-beng* pronunciation. Some changes in pronunciation can be seen. Through the spread of education and the awareness create to them, many educated *A-beng* now a day try to use a correct spelling and pronunciation of the borrowed words, especially of the English words.

Borrowed or loan words have been taken from many aspects of life according to the situation, the circumstances and the need of time. Thus, words have been borrowed for different terms which are used in everyday life.

Borrowed word for Agricultural terms:

The *A-beng* have their own indigenous agricultural tools and implements for daily use such as *atti* 'dao', *gitchi* 'hoe', *matta* 'a pointed stake', *cholgi* 'a traditional hoe', and so on, however, since they practice wet cultivation which was borrowed from the plain area, the terms for these are borrowed along with the practice. Some of the borrowing which is mostly of Indic is as follows:

Table no. 1

| <i>A·beng</i> of Indic origin | <i>A·we</i> | Sources from Indic language | Meaning |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Belcha</i> | <i>Belcha</i> | Belcha | A Spade |
| <i>kodal/godal</i> | <i>Kodal/godal</i> | Kodali | A Hoe/ spade |

Word borrowed for different things from Indic origin:

Table no. 2

| <i>A·beng</i> of Indic origin | <i>A·we</i> | Sources from Indic language | Meaning |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Phan</i> | <i>Phan</i> | Paan | A betel leaf |
| <i>Raja</i> | <i>Raja</i> | Raja | A King |

Word borrowed for Food, Drink and Vegetables:

Most of the food items are available within their own surrounding environment, basically the *A·beng* practice jhum cultivation, they cultivate most of the food items by themselves, so they have a native or local names for those items,. The native names of some foods that are available are *ja·lika/a·lik* ‘chilly, *baring* ‘brinjal’ *gominda* ‘pumpkin’, *ta·a* ‘yam’, *ti·rik* ‘banana’, etc. *A·beng* prepared some of the food items by themselves such as, *karchi* ‘soda’ *karchi* is a native spice made from the ashes of burnt dry banana leaves and tree barks and bamboo’ etc, , *mia miseng* ‘fermented bamboo shoot’ *na·kam data* ‘fermented dry fish’, *chu bitchi* ‘wine’ etc all vegetables like *mi·su sambijak* (vegetables), *mia* ‘bamboo shoot’, *samskal* ‘Burmese dhunia’ etc. have local terms, except those items imported from other place or outside have a borrowed terms. Some of the borrowed items and the names which are used among the *A·beng* in their everyday life are mentioned in the table. For example:

Table no. 3

| <i>A·beng</i> of Indic origin | <i>A·we</i> | Sources from Indic language | Meaning |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------|----------|
| <i>Mosola/mosla</i> | <i>Mosola</i> | Masala | A Spices |
| <i>Dut cha</i> | <i>Dut cha</i> | Dud chai | Milk tea |
| <i>Chini</i> | <i>Chini</i> | Chini | Sugar |

Word borrowed for Clothes:

A·beng have borrowed the name of the clothes and hosiery from Indic origin such as *sari* ‘saree’, *gonji/gunji* ‘vest’, *tupi* ‘cap/hat’, *moja/muja* ‘socks’, *duti* ‘loin cloth’ *gamcha* ‘a towel/a cloth’, etc.

Table no. 4

| <i>A·beng</i> of Indic origin | <i>A·we</i> | Sources from Indo Aryan language | Meaning |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|---------|
| <i>Sari</i> | <i>Sari</i> | Saree | Saree |
| <i>Gonji/gunji</i> | <i>Gonji/genji</i> | Genji | Vest |
| <i>Chador</i> | <i>Chadol</i> | Chaddar | Chaddar |

Muslim period:

Muslim ruler invaded India in century A.D. Mohammad Ghorī fought the battle of Tarrain with the Hindu rulers and defeated them. He established the Mughal Empire in India. One of his commander Mohammad Bakhtyar Khilji invaded Assam in 1198. He was defeated by Ahom King; but came on invading now and then. After the Muslim invaded India they influenced the people of Assam as well as the neighbouring states including Garo Hills.

Words Borrowed for different Lexical items:

Some of the lexical items which they have borrowed from Muslims are, *tangka* ‘rupee’, *sallam* ‘greeting’, *kajina* ‘revenue’, *dolgasto* ‘written application’, *dolmaha* ‘weigh or salary’, *hajot* ‘jail’, *Hakim* ‘barrister’, *kachari* ‘court’, etc.

Table no. 5

| <i>A·beng</i> of Muslim origin | <i>A·we</i> | Sources from Muslim language | Meaning |
|--------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|---------|
| <i>Paisa/poisa</i> | <i>Paisa</i> | Paisa | Paisa |
| <i>porda</i> | <i>Porda</i> | Parida | Curtain |

Word Borrowed for Clothes:

The *A·beng* adopt the way of living and the style of dressing from Muslim, during Muslim period where the girls wear sari and salwar, and most of the boys wear genji, etc. The *A·beng* has borrowed the names of the clothes from Muslims.

Table no. 6

| <i>A·beng</i> of Muslim origin | <i>A·we</i> | Sources from Muslim language | Meaning |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|---------|
| <i>Paijama</i> | <i>Paijama</i> | Paijama | Pyjama |
| <i>Churidal</i> | <i>Churidar</i> | Churidar | Dress |

Words Borrowed for Weight and measurement:

A·beng use the borrowed term for weight and measurement such as; *poa*, *maud* etc, the term used for measuring the land are also borrowed from Muslims such as; *katha*, *lessa* etc. these are the terms which are still used by the *A·beng* speaker.

Table no. 7

| <i>A·beng</i> of Muslim origin | <i>A·we</i> | Sources from Muslim language | Meaning |
|--------------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Se·el</i> | <i>Se·el</i> | Seer | A weighing stone |
| <i>Bika</i> | <i>Bigha</i> | Bigha | A measuring plot of land |

THE BRITISH PERIOD:

After the British colonized India, maximum numbers of words are borrowed from English to Indian Languages. British period is named as the Golden period among the *A-chik*, as this was the period which brought a tremendous change in the way of living, development in all aspect life in the *A-chik* community. This was the period, which introduced Christianity to the *A-chik* by the American Baptist Missionaries. Rev. I. J. Stoddard and T.J. Keats came as first missionaries in 1867 for the *A-chiks*. They stayed at Goalpara mission centre and worked for the *A-chiks*. Later, after them Rev. E. G Phillips and Rev. M. C Masson came to Goalpara. They were the first American Baptist Missionaries who shifted their mission from Goalpara to Tura. The American Baptist missionaries translated the Holy Bible with the help of some Garo students. They are the only one who wrote a text books and journals in *A-chik* language. The American Baptist missionaries used the Roman script replacing the Bengali script which was used by the *A-chiks*. They made all the writing in A-we dialect making it the standard variety of *A-chik* language. They introduced the use of glottal stop which is known as raka (·) for *A-chik* writing. As such, many words for different terms and objects have been borrowed from English into *A-chik* language. Borrowing from English into *A-chik* language is very productive and widespread till date. Borrowing became one of the word formation processes, which helps to create many new words into the *A-chik* language similarly the same applies to *A-beng*.

WORDS BORROWED FROM THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE:

A-beng have a native name for different things, but still borrowing or loan words have been taken place in many aspects of life due to language contact for different situation, circumstances and need of time. Thus, words have been borrowed from some of the areas of life stated below: Borrowed word from English are *tibil* 'table', *lem* 'lamp', *klass* 'class', *ripot* 'report', *basket* 'basket', *rijat* 'result' and so on.

The *A-beng* have the borrowed words for the names of all the vehicles, educational terms, machines and new apparatus from English, for instances, *trectol* 'tractor', *bas* 'bus', *truck* 'truck', *ingin* 'engine', *staring wil* 'steering wheel', etc.

Words borrowed for food and drink:

A-beng speaker has borrowed terms for foods and drinks from English languages; as in, *koppi* 'coffee', *kerot* 'carrot' *letchu/lechu* 'leechie', *epil* 'apple', *greps* 'grapes', *biskut/biskit* 'biscuit', *kol drink* 'cold drink', *beans* 'beans' etc.

Table no. 8

| <i>A·beng</i> of English origin | <i>A·we</i> | Sources from English language | Meaning |
|---------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|---------|
| <i>Koppi</i> | <i>Koppi</i> | Coffee | Coffee |
| <i>Kerot</i> | <i>Kerot</i> | Carrot | Carrot |
| <i>Epil</i> | <i>Apil</i> | Apple | Apple |

Words Borrowed for flower:

The *A·beng speaker* have borrowed the terms for flowers from English such as rose, dahlia, silvia, petunia, marigold, etc.,

Table no. 9

| <i>A·beng</i> of English origin | <i>A·we</i> | Sources from English language | Meaning |
|---------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|----------|
| <i>Dalia</i> | <i>Dalia</i> | Dahlia | Dahlia |
| <i>Merigol</i> | <i>Merigol</i> | Marigold | Marigold |
| <i>Kektas</i> | <i>Kektas</i> | Cactus | Cactus |

Borrowed for the Clothes:

The *A·beng speaker* have borrowed the names or term for the clothes from English origin as *longpen* ‘long pant’, *happen* ‘half pant’, *switer* ‘sweater’, *mini skat* ‘mini skirt’, *tie* ‘tie’, *sot pen* ‘short pant’, *bet chit* ‘bed sheet’, etc.

Table no. 10

| <i>A·beng</i> of English origin | <i>A·we</i> | Sources from English language | Meaning |
|---------------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|---------|
| <i>Shat</i> | <i>Shat</i> | Skirt | Skirt |
| <i>Jins</i> | <i>Jins</i> | Jeans | Jeans |
| <i>Jaket/jeket</i> | <i>Jeket</i> | Jacket | Jacket |

Words Borrowed for Administrative terms:

A-beng used borrowed term for the names of offices, officers, official posts, etc., are mostly taken from the English sources as follows;

Table no. 11

| <i>A-beng</i> of English origin | <i>A-we</i> | Sources from English language | Meaning |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| <i>Magistret</i> | <i>Magistret</i> | Magistrate | Magistrate |
| <i>Govolment</i> | <i>Govorment</i> | Government | Government |
| <i>Sipailpulis</i> | <i>Sipai/polis</i> | Sepoy/police | Sepoy/police |
| <i>Spikar</i> | <i>Spikar</i> | Speaker | Speaker |

Conclusion:

Language is dynamic it keeps on changing from time to time. As each and every language is not static but dynamic, similarly the *A-beng* variety of *A-chik* language has changes in three different period. *A-beng* variety has widely influenced by other languages through the medium of instruction, education, media, television, etc. Thus, through language contact and borrowing the vocabulary in *A-beng* has been added which result in enrichment of *A-beng* variety. Due to language contact the present scenario of *A-beng* speakers of West Garo Hills are influenced by other languages ie, Indo-Aryan and English Language but most extensively from English language due to the spread of education, modernisation, media, television etc,. Among the *A-beng* the younger generation are mostly influenced by other languages and borrowed words for different things and objects.

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