Assonance

A Journal of Russian & Comparative Literary Studies

Department of Russian & Comparative Literature
University of Calicut
Kerala – 673635

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Assonance is a multilingual blind peer reviewed annual publication of the Department of Russian & Comparative Literature, University of Calicut. It publishes only original and unpublished research articles in English, Russian, Hindi and Malayalam. Its primary focus areas are Russian Language, Russian Literature, Russian Culture, Comparative Literature and Translation Studies.

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Submissions not following the prescribed style and received after the deadline shall be summarily rejected.

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From the Editors

The Department of Russian and Comparative Literature humbly presents before you the 19th issue of our departmental research journal *Assonance – A Journal of Russian and Comparative Literary Studies*. This issue has included a wide range of articles dealing with language, literature, linguistics, contrastive grammar, cinema studies and culture studies.

It has articles dealing with various characters of village prose in Russian Literature, Tagore's influence on contemporary Indian literature, how Lokenath Bhattacharya mediated between Bengali and French literatures, Malayalam cyber stories, thematic study of Mikhail Bulgakov's *Master and Margarita*, a comparative study of mother and son relationships in Lyudmila Petrushevskaya's *A Case of Virgin Birth* and Kamala Das's *Ammayum Makanum*, depiction of same-sex love in Madhavikutty's *The Sandal Trees*. There is another article investigating the manifestation of identity and otherness in *The Outlander* and *Komouraska*. This issue has also included articles dealing with linguistics and contrastive grammar like – a contrastive study of category of gender of nouns in Russian and Telugu, a sociophonetic study of vowels in *Pnar* and its variants. There is an article exploring philosophical thoughts of Evgenii Chelyshev from the perspective of Swami Vivekananda's philosophy. An article on the screen adaptation of *Devdas* has also been included. This issue has also included an article of culture studies dealing with status of Kyrgyz woman during Soviet period. In addition to these, articles on contemporary Hindi poem, Linguistics, October Revolution and Malayalam Literature, analysis of K.R. Meera's short stories also adorn this volume of *Assonance* to make it a complete multilingual journal. We hope that all these articles will be interesting and useful for our readers

While we are grateful to each of the authors who have contributed their valuable scholarly research articles for this issue, we appreciate the timely input provided by the Board of Referees with respect to quality of the articles being received for publication in this issue. We express our deepest sense of gratitude towards the administration of the University of Calicut for their continual financial support and patronage in our endeavour of publishing this journal. Last but not the least, we are thankful to all those who rendered their support towards bringing out this issue successfully.

The Editors

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A SOCIOPHONETIC INVESTIGATION OF VOWELS IN PNAR AND ITS VARIANTS

Curiously Bareh

Assistant Professor, Linguistics, Central University of Kerala

Abstract: *The variations within the Pnar speaking area are tremendously striking and are considerably noticeable even within a distant of 3- 4 kilometres. As a matter of fact, it is not an exception to Pnar but this is also applicable to all the Khasian speaking areas. This paper attempts to describe those sounds that ultimately provide the speaker's geographical identity in the course of their communication with others. Each regional variety has different regional variants which is unique. It is also an attempt to catalogue and map out how language varies regionally in and out of the Jaintia Hills Districts.*

Keywords: Sociophonetics, vowels, variation, correspondences

1. Introduction

Labov (1972) rightly states that the problem of language change seems to resolve itself into three separate problems. According to his observations, the origin of linguistic variations; the spread and propagation of linguistic changes; and the regularity of linguistic change. Trudgill (1999) in his attempt to differentiate between sociolinguistics and dialectology, states that the problematic nature of this relation clearly has to do with the problem of what exactly is sociolinguistics. Labov (op cit) resisted the term sociolinguistics for many years, since it implies that there can be a successful linguistic theory or practice which is not social. Until sociolinguistics developed a potentially wide discipline of its own, there are number of parallel branches of linguistics that focuses on variation. Dialectology is one such branch of linguistics fading away and now it is just a subfield of

sociolinguistics. So does ethnolinguistics. Dialectology seeks to find out the answers, what are the structural properties that distinguish one dialect from another, how is structural property spread across space and what structural properties co-occur in the same areas (Seiler, 2004). Dialectology is a branch of sociolinguistics that studies the systematic variants of language. Both dialectology and typology are both concerned with the empirical investigation of grammar. On the other hand, the term *typology* has a number of different uses both within linguistics and without (Croft, 2003). Croft (op cit) defines the term *typology* as roughly synonymous with 'taxonomy' or 'classification', a classification of the phenomenon under study into types, particularly structural types. Comrie (1989: 33) sees linguistic typology as the discipline that deals simultaneously about the diversity and uniformity of language, as it investigates the range of variation in human language and attempts to establish constraints and order in the diversity. However, both dialectology and typology share certain similarity. Seiler (2004) states that dialectology and typology are both concerned with the empirical investigation of the variability of grammars. He further states that linguistic typology seeks to attempt to answer the questions: what structural properties are common to all languages? What structural properties are variable between languages? And in which way do structural properties depends on each other?

This paper deals with how and why mutually intelligible linguistic varieties could influence one another, as well as discusses the variables that spread through geographical space and their correspondence with each other.

2. **An overview of Sociophonetics**

Many have discussed sociophonetics exclusively from the social dimensions of variation. However, there are others also who look sociophonetics beyond social criteria and include regional variation as part of it. This paper, in fact has no discussion on the

issue of social dimension but rather it mainly focuses on the regional variation. Regional variation may not display the social identity but a person's speech certainly indexes his geographical identity. Both dialectologists and typologists deal with these linguistic variations in their attempts to describe the variant forms of language. So be it sociolinguistics, sociology of language, dialectology or typology, they are all interested on variation of language that causes either by the social class of the speaker or by his regional location and hence we ultimately discuss the sociophonetics in that sense.

Jennifer Hay and Katie Drager (2007) define sociophonetics as the study of socially conditioned phonetic variation in speech. According to Baranowski (2013) the term *sociophonetics* refers to the interface of sociolinguistics and phonetics, and specifically to the use of modern phonetic methods in the quantitative analysis of language variation and change. Jennifer Hay and Katie Drager's discussion of sociophonetics is more on socially conditioned variation that has concentrated on phonetics whereas Baranowski's concept of sociophonetics is more on acoustic approach. Deshaies-Lafontaine (1974) is perhaps the first sociolinguist to use the term "sociophonetic" in his dissertation on variation in Canada French. This paper attempts to study the phonetic quality of vowels that creates these social and regional boundaries. Baranowski (op cit) points out that most sociophonetic studies of vowels have investigated variation and changes in the position of vowels in phonetic space.

3. Introduction of Pnar

Pnar also known as Jaintia (Spencer 1967) or earlier as Synteng (Grierson 1928) is a Khasian language spoken in the East and West Jaintia Hill Districts of Meghalaya and in a few pockets of Cachar Hills and North Cachar Hills districts of Assam. The Census of India 2001 puts the number of Pnar speakers in India at around 243,441 and the total number of Pnar speakers around the

world at 247,000 (Ethnologue, languages of the world). Whereas, the latest population census of Pnars stands at 3,92,853 as quoted from *People Linguistic Survey of India*, Volume 19, Part II, The languages of Meghalaya. As is attested in most of the Mon-Khmer languages, Pnar also is subjected to a number of regional variations. The variations may occur even within a short distance of 3 Kms.

3.1 Regional varities of Pnar

According to Daladier (2010) (as appeared in Ring (2015)) there are twelve Pnar dialects spoken within East and West Jaintia Hills Districts. However, my analysis shows that some of the dialects identified by her are not at all related or similar to Pnar. For example, Daladier (ibid) shows both Umlatdoh and Ummat dialects of Lakadong to be similar to Pnar. But based on my data, it is observed that both these dialects share more similarities with Pasadwar, a War Jaintia variety. Daladier adds that the varieties spoken in the entire Narpuh area are more similar to Pnar. However, in this present paper, I will show that the varieties spoken in Narpuh area from Lumshnong onwards are closer to the War-Jaintia variety. Another claim made by her is that Shangpung and Raliang are separate dialects. If one is to agree with this claim, one will have to consider each village's speech as a dialect. This is because Shangpung and Raliang are villages situated close to each other (a distance of 6 kms.) and linguistically, they are very similar to each other. The followings are the varieties ofPnar (I am only trying to provide an approximate distinction of these varieties. The variant forms can be easily identified even among the villages);

(a) Jowai-Pnar

Jowai-Pnar speech form is considered the standard speech form in the sense, that this variety is spoken in and around the headquarter of the then undivided Jaintia Hills District and everyone understands it, though it may not be possible to

imitate the accent. Villages like Ummulong and Wahiajer share this variety with a slight variation in the accent which is just enough to differentiate the variants in these varieties. Many of the works done in Pnar is actually recorded in this variety.

(b) Rymbai-Pnar

Rymbai-Pnar is spoken in Rymbaiand a few nearby villages like Shilliang-Umshong, Deinchalalu, Umsatai, etc. This variety is different from the other varieties in the consistent correspondence of the /-□/ with /-aj/ of the other varieties.

Rymbai-Pnar		The rest of Pnar	
[$c^h l$□]	<>	[$c^h laj$]	'overflow'
[l□]	<>	[laj]	'to go'

Deletion of the initial consonant ofthe minor syllable insesquisyllabic words is a regular phonological process in this variety.

Rymbai-Pnar		The rest of Pnar	
[□nt^h□]	<>	[k□$nt^h aj$]'female'	
[□nr□□]	<>	[k□nr□□] 'wall',	
[□nte]	<>	[k□nte]	'to

winnow'etc.

It is to be noted that in no way do these villages (Rymbai, Shilliang-Umshong, Deinchalalu, Umsatai, etc.) speak the same way or with the same accent. Each village has its own accent and there is always a noticeable variation among them.

(c) Shangpung-Mookaiaw-Pnar

This variety stretches throughout the eastern border of West Jaintia Hills along the border of Assam. The stretch starts

immediately after Phramer village and includes Shangpung, Raliang, Mookyndeng, Mookaiaw and some other smaller villages. In rough approximation, one can assume that this variety is spoken within the two *elakas* (Elaka refers to the tradition subdivision and boundary headed by the local chief known as *Doloi* under the king of Sutnga kingdom or the Hima Jaintia Chieftain) of Nartiang and Shangpung. The villages using this variety vary from each other and the variation is enough to identify the villages of the speakers. To compare the difference between Shangpung and Mookaiaw is quite easily noticeable, but it is difficult to categorize some of the villages in between them. *Shangpung-Mookaiaw-Pnar* may not be treated as a final sub-branch of Pnar, however, I simply use this term for the sake of analyses in this paper.Some of the regular correspondences are ej⬦ e:, a ⬦ e.

Shangpung-Mookaiaw-Pnar		*The rest of Pnar*
[*mej*] masculine singular'	⬦	[*me:*] 'second person
[*ac*] abandon'etc.	⬦	[*e⬜*] 'to leave, to

(d) Tuber-Pnar

This variety spreads all over the western part of EastJaintia Hills and it is believed that these villages speaking this variety emerged from Tuber. Villages towards the north western parts of the present East Jaintia Hills District are all included under these sub-branches and extend to Dkhiah and Jalyiah villages. As it is observed in the other varieties, the Tuber-Pnar variety too is no exception to variation. Any Pnar speaker settled near these villages can easily be identifiedby the variety they speak. Moolamanoh, Moolang and Musniang are closer to each other (approximately not more than three kilometres in between and

Moolang is in between the two) but they have their own accent to mark the differences among them.

(e) Bataw-Pnar

This variety is originally spoken in Batawvillageof East Jaintia Hills District.The variety spoken at Suchen is similar to Bataw-Pnar with slight variations, with the one spoken in Suchenhaving more nasalized vowels (though they are not phonemic). Bataw-Pnar is spoken largely outside Meghalaya. In the earlier days, many Pnarsmigrated to other states like Assam and Mizoram and are engaged in cultivating betel leaf and areca nut. One of the more noticing features of this variety is the omission or absence of the coda in some wordsand the rhyme [-aj] of some of the cognate words in Pnar regularly corresponds with the vowel [a] in Bataw-Pnar.

Other varieties		*Bataw-Pnar*	
[laj]	<>	*[la]*	*'to go'*
[daj]	<>	*[da]*	*'to sell'*

(f) Sutnga-Pnar

This variety is spoken throughouttheelaka of SutngaandNohkhlieh and surprisingly stretches to Kwatorvillage and Amlarivillage right in the heart of the War speaking area. One of the noticeable variants of this variety is that the low-mid back rounded vowel [-□:]always corresponds with [-aw] of Jowai-Pnar or other varieties.

Other varieties		*Sutnga-Pnar*
[ksaw]	<>	[ks□:] 'dog',
[ladaw]	<>	[lad□:]'banana'etc.

(g) Narwan-Pnar

Narwan falls under the Saipung Block of East Jaintia Hills. It is

situated about 36 kilometres from Jowai by road. There is no linguistic work done in this variety. Grierson (1904) worked extensively on the varieties of Pnar, however, Narwan-Pnar is missing from his work. The present sound system of Narwan presented in this analysis is based on my personal field work and analysis.

The list of these varieties can go on and on. Here is the list of some of the other varieties which are noticeable; *Chiehruphi-Pnar* (includes the villages; Nongthymme, Khliehriat, Byndihati, Kairang, Nongsning etc.), *Iapmala-Rangad* (Spoken in Iapmala, Lumskhen, Rangad, Lumputhoi, etc.)*, Mynsoo-Chiliang, Myntang, Nongbah,* etc. The variant forms of these varieties are often noticeable within the syllabic rhyme. The only case where correspondence is observed in the onset of the syllable is in Rymbai-Pnar. Rymbai-Pnar is different from the rest of the other varieties, in that it exhibits onset deletion. The onset /k-/ of the minor syllable is often omitted as in the following examples;

Pnar		*Rymbai-Pnar*	
[k□nro□]	<>	[□nro□]	'to shake'
[k□nte]	<>	[□nte]	'to winnow'
[k□rb□□]	<>	[□rb□□]	'to tremble, to vibrate'

4. Sociophonetic analysis of Pnar vowels

For the illustration of this paper a comparison of the phonological differences between Jowai-Pnar, Rymbai-Pnar, Bataw-Pnar, Shangpung-Mookaiaw-Pnar and Narwan-Pnar may be taken for illustration. Preliminary analysis of these varieties reveals that there are correspondences which are regular and uniformly found in almost all the cognate words. The vowels in these varieties have revealed their importance for sociological identity. For instance, the long vowel of one dialect corresponds to a diphthong in the other; the [e] of Jowai-Pnar corresponds to the [□] of
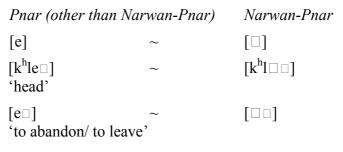
Narwan-Pnar and the [□] of Jowai-Pnar corresponds with the [e] of Narwan-Pnar in the environment when itprecedes [-□], [a] <> [□], [o] <> [□], [o] <> [□u], etc. However, this pattern of correspondence is seen only with the vowels and not with the consonants with the exception of few cases where the coda of Pnar [-□] corresponds to the [-c] of Shangpung-Mookaiaw-Pnar and Narwan-Pnar. In most cases, if there is any consonantal difference among the varieties of Pnar, it is a result of deletion or insertion.

4.1 [aj] ~ [□] ~ [a:] ~ [□j] / _#

At least four variants of the *sound could distinguish in the context where it occurs in the final position of the syllable. The [aj] of the Jowai-Pnar corresponds to the [□] of Rymbai-Pnar; [a:] of Bataw-Pnar; and [□j] of Narwan-Pnar. The four sounds vary in terms of length, height and position of the tongue. The word [laj] 'to go'ofJowai-Pnar corresponds to [l□] (Rymbai-Pnar), [la:] (Bataw-Pnar), and [l□j] (Narwan-Pnar). It is to be noted that the other varieties use [aj] wherever the sound occurs in that position.

4.2 [e] ~ [□] _□#

An illustration of the above claim, *[e] ~ [□]/_□#:* The occurrence of *mid-high [e]* and the *mid-low [□]*in Narwan-Pnar and the other varieties are mutually exclusive in the environment when they precede the [□] in the final position. If [e] occurs in JP, then in NP it corresponds to [□]. This can be illustrated with the following examples below;

Pnar (other than Narwan-Pnar)		*Narwan-Pnar*
[e]	~	[□]
[kʰle□]	~	[kʰl□□]
'head'		
[e□]	~	[□□]
'to abandon/ to leave'		

[le□]   ~   [l□□]
'white'

[sne□]   ~   [sn□□]
'skin'

However, consider the following examples

    Pnar   *Narwan-Pnar*

    [□]   ~   [e]

    [kʰl□□]   ~   [kʰle□]
    'to mix'

    [l□□]   ~   [le□]
    'to do'

    [h□□]   ~   [he□]
    'big'

    [□□]   ~   [e□]
    'hard'

Based on the examples shown above, it is seen that the occurrences of [e] and [□] in JP and NP is mutual only in the environment of [□] that is when the two vowels, [e] and [□] precedes a glottal stop [□].For instance, cognate words like [he□] 'big' of NP correspond to [h□□] of JP and [e□] 'hard' corresponds to [□□]. This paradigm is well-attested in all words having these sounds.

4.3 [aw] ~ [□:] ~ [aː] _#

Another three-way correspondence when these sounds occur in the final position of the syllable. Let's take (the rest) Pnar as a reference point; the [aw] that occur in the final position of the syllable inPnarcorresponds to [□:] of the Sutnga-Pnar and [aː] of Bataw-Pnar. This can be illustrated by the following examples;

    Pnar   *Sutnga-Pnar*   *Bataw-Pnar*

[ladaw]	~	[lad□:]	~	[lada:]
'banana'				
[ksaw]	~	[ks□:]	~	[ksa:]
'dog'				
[wataw]	~	[wat□:]	~	[bata:]
'Bataw'				

4.4 [e]_□# ~ [a]_c#

The [e] of Pnar, when it precedes the [□] corresponds to [a] of Shangpung-Pnar in the environment when it precedes the [c] in some of the words. Example; [e□] ~ [ac] 'to abandon'. This variety (Shangpung) contrasts with the rest of the varieties by having sound combination in this way. Another unique feature of this variety is that while that the rest of the varieties have the [e:] in the final position, Shangpung-Pnar has a closed syllable with the palatal approximant [j] as in the words like [me:] ~ [mej] 'second person singular masculine', [t^h□mme:] ~ [t^h□mmej] 'new' etc.

4.5 [e] ~ [a] /_□#

Narwan-Pnar closely resembles to Shangpung-Pnar in terms of having these kinds of correspondences between the front mid-high [e] and the low vowel [a] in different contexts. [a] of Narwan-Pnar regularly corresponds to the [e] of Pnar in the environment where it precedes the palatal nasal [□]. Cognate words like [c^h□a□] 'bone', [da□] 'tree', [l□mma□] 'tooth', etc. in Narwan-Pnar correspond to [c^h□e□], [de□] and [l□mme□].

4.6 [a] ~ [□] /_ □#

However, it is to be noted that there are cognate words in Pnar where the low vowel [a] precedes the palatal nasal in the final position. In such case, it corresponds to the back mid-low vowel [□] of Narwan-Pnar. So, words in Pnar like [tma□] 'moustache', [da□] 'to cut', etc. correspond to [tm□□] and [d□□] respectively

in Narwan-Pnar. Narwan-Pnar is quite different from the other varieties of Pnar in have different variants like these. Bareh (2016) notes there are thirteen variant forms that mark Narwan-Pnar as one of the most unique varieties of Pnar. Other varieties may have two to three different variant forms that distinguish from the other.

Conclusion

As argued in the beginning of this paper, regional variation may not display the social identity, but a person's speech certainly indexes his geographical identity. Though the term *sociophonetics,* may be used only when dealing with the kind of variation caused by social class, (caste, gender, age, status, power, etc) but the variation in Pnar also shows certain significant change caused by regional variations on social identity. Bataw-Pnar variety originally spokenin the village of Bataw, is the more used variety among the Pnars settled in different parts of Assam. In the earlier times most of these people were engaged in cultivating areca nut and betel leaf. They spread to different part of Assam in their search for better place to cultivate areca nut and betel leaf. In due course of time many others from different part of Jaintia Hills followed and engaged in the business. These speakers, mostly of the Sutnga and Shangpung varieties, when shifted to pockets of Assam, also adopted the Bataw variety. This variety immediately captures the mind of other speakers, as the variety of those who are engaged in areca nut and betel leaf business. It is indeed a regional variety that also has added a social significance to it.

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Department of Russian & Comparative Literature
University of Calicut
Kerala – 673635