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The Phonological Aspects of Nefamese

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ABSTRACT

Nefamese is the name given to the language spoken by different ethnic groups in Arunachal Pradesh, not only among themselves but also with outsiders. It was developed when these different tribes came into contact with economically developed Assamese for verbal communication for trade and other socio-economical purposes. The different tribes viz. Nishi, Adi, Apatani, Hill Miri, Khampti, Nocte, Wanchu, Mompa, Tangsha etc have their own languages but these are mutually unintelligible i.e. one tribe does not understand the language of another tribe. Hence they started using Nefamese as their contact language for verbal communication as it is understood by all the tribes. Though Nefamese is mainly based on Assamese, it is also influenced by Hindi & English to a considerable extent.

In Nefamese, there are 6 vowel phonemes, 18 consonantal phonemes & 6 Diphthongs in Nefamese. Among 18 consonants, there are 6 stops & 12 continuants. Among the stops there are 3 voiced & 3 voiceless. All the stops are unaspirated. Among the continuants, there are 3 nasals, 3 fricatives, 2 affricates, 1trill, 1 lateral & 2 approximants.

No linguistics work has been done on Nefamese so far. In the mean time there is a gradual language shift towards Hindi. This means that Nefamese is gradually dying out giving ways to Hindi. Our study will definitely help this language to be preserved for future generation.

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