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The Comparative Study of English and Khortha Phonology (Vowel Sounds)

By Mr. Abhishek Kaushal, Research Scholar, R.U. Jharkhand.

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List of Khortha letters in Devnagri lipi (Vowels and Vowel Glides)

Khortha	Roman	Example	Roman Script	English Meaning
अ	a	अनार	anaar	Pomegranate
आ	aa	आम	aaM	Mango
इ	i	इमली	iMli	Tamarind (Imli)
ई	ii	ईख	iikh	Sugarcane
उ	u	कुकुर	kukur	Dog
ऊ	uu	दूर	duur	Far away
ए	e	एक	ek	One
ऐ	ei	ऐनक	einak	Mirror
ओ	o	पोखर	pokhar	Pond
औ	ou	दौरा	douraa	Bamboo basket
अइ	ai	बैठ	baith	Sit

अउ	au	छअउआ	Chauaa	Child
अए	ae	खैलो	khaelo	Ate
आउ	aau	चाउर	chaaur	Rice

Three-term descriptions of vowels of Khortha

S.No.	Vowel symbol	Example	Three-term label
1.	[i]	ikh	Front close unrounded vowel
2.	[e]	jeto	Front unrounded vowel between half-close and half-open
3.	[ei]	eiso	Front unrounded vowel just above open position
4.	[u]	sunaw	Back rounded vowel between close and half-close
5.	[a]	apan	Central unrounded vowel between half-close and half-open position
6.	[ou]	dour	Back rounded vowel just above the open position
7.	[ii]	iimli	Front close unrounded vowel
8.	[aa]	gaachh	Back open

			unrounded vowel
9.	[o]	ondek	Back rounded vowel between half-close and half-open position
10.	[uu]	uuta	Back close rounded vowel

Abstract

In the course of learning of English phonology by the speakers of Khortha (Mother Tongue), it has been vividly observed that the phonological features of Khortha affect learning of English sounds even to the degree of loss of intelligibility in majority of the cases. This chapter deals with the degree of interference between the phonology of Khortha and English, and how it effects the learning of English among the Khortha speakers. For this purpose, a contrastive analysis of the sounds of English and Khortha has been made, and the points of interference and their reflection in actual performance have been traced out. Thus, this chapter deals with all such linguistic features in such a manner that it may give a comprehensive and concrete idea about phonology. It also talks about the basis for selection of certain parameters for carrying out contrastive analysis.

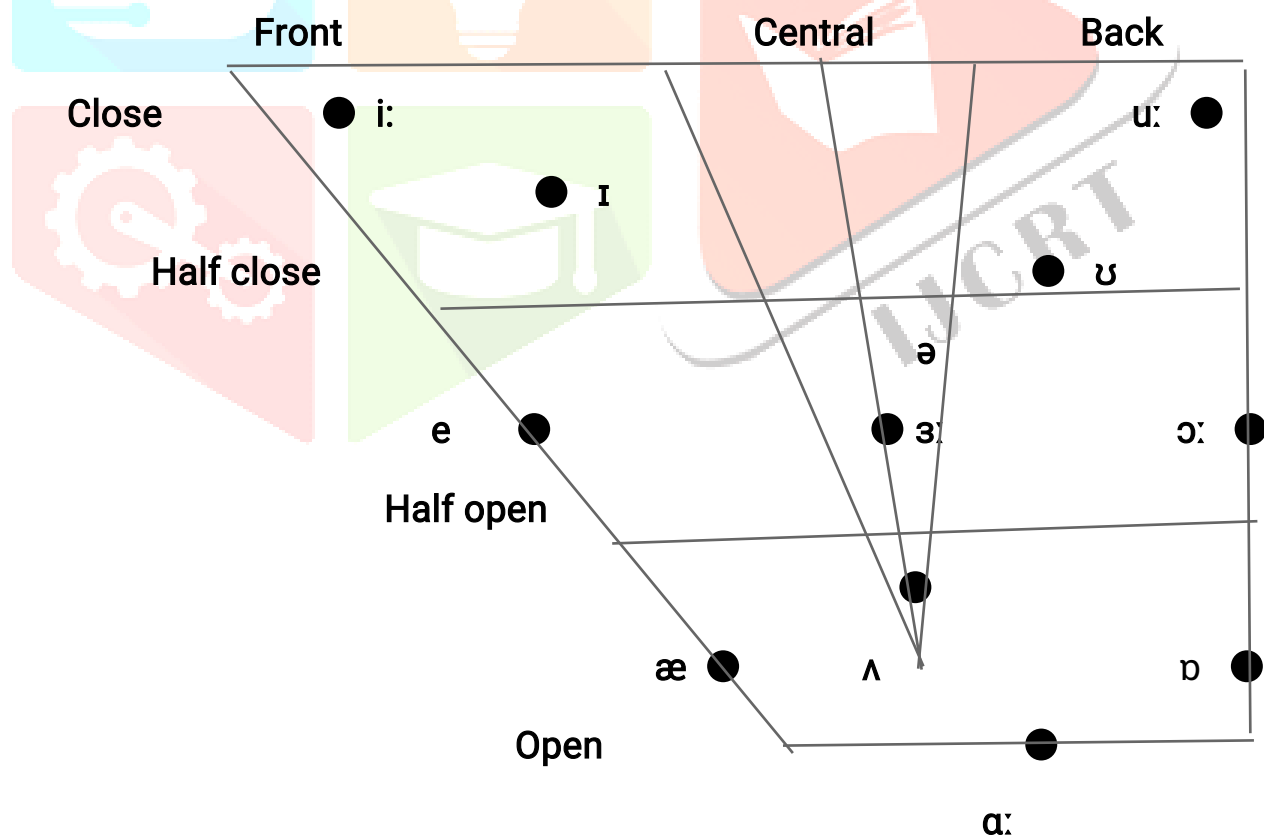
Vowels of English and Khortha:

Daniel Jones in his *"An Outline of English Phonetics"* defines vowels as "a voiced sound in forming which the air issues in a continuous stream through the pharynx and mouth, there being no obstruction and no narrowing such as would cause audible friction." According to David Crystal a vowel is "a sound made without closure or audible friction (which can function as the centre of a syllable). Leonard Bloomfield also defines vowels as "modifications of the voice sound that involve no closure, friction or contact of the tongue or lips. They are ordinarily voiced." These

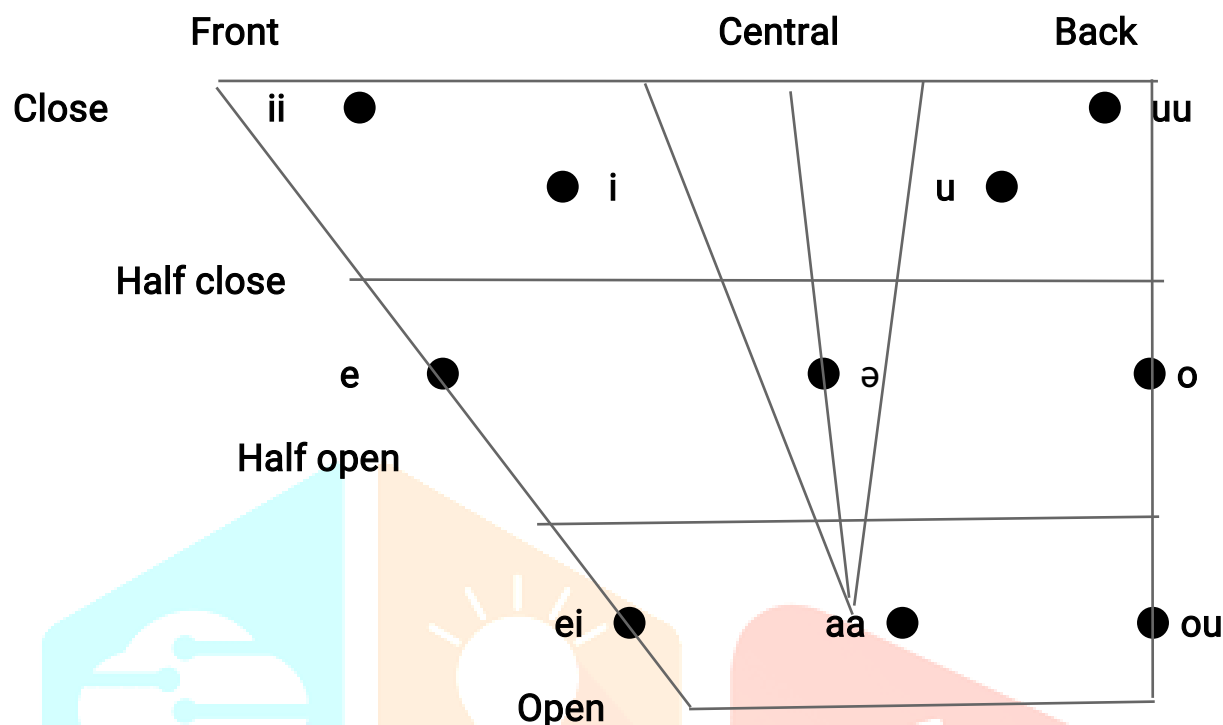
definitions and, for that matter, any other definition or definitions on vowels can briefly be summed up in terms of what J. D O'Connor in his *"Better English Pronunciation"* has stated about the vowels: "vowels are made by voiced air passing through different mouth-shapes; the differences in the shape of the mouth (are) caused by different positions of the tongue and the lips". From this statement it is clear that the production of vowels depends fully on the degree of raising the tongue without causing friction or closure on the part of the tongue that is raised and no matter, whether the lips are kept spread, open or rounded.

On the basis of the speech of Khortha speakers and the books of Khortha it has been observed that there are eleven vowels and six diphthongs (vowel glides) in Khortha as compared to twelve pure vowels and eight diphthongs of English. (T. Bala Subramaniam, A.K.Jha etc).

Vowels of English



Vowels of Khortha



From the chart of English and Khortha vowels, it is clear that there are 12 vowels in English (Out of 12 Vowels, there are 7 short Vowels and 5 long Vowels) whereas there are 10 vowels in Khortha (Out of which, 6 Vowels are short and 4 are long Vowels)

Besides these vowels, both the languages have their respective vowel-glides, known as diphthongs. English has Eight Diphthongs whereas Khortha has Four Diphthongs. They are as follows-

English Vowels:-

Short vowels: ɪ, e, æ, ʌ, ɒ, ʊ, ə.

Long vowels: i:, ɑ:, ɔ:, u:, ɜ:.

Khortha Vowels:-

Short vowels: ɪ [i], e [e], æ [ei], ʊ [u], ə [a], ɒ [ou].

Long vowels: i: [ii], ɑ: [aa], ɔ: [o], u: [uu].

Description of the Vowel Sounds in Khortha:

/i/: It is a high, front; close, short vowel that occurs in initial, medial and final positions. For examples-

Initially		Medially		Finally	
Khortha	Meaning	Khortha	Meaning	Khortha	Meaning
i-dane	This side	k-i-taab	Book	ha-i	is
i-Ta	This	j-i-be	Will go	Mushkaa-i	Smile

/ii/: It is central, close, long vowel that occurs in initial, and final positions. For examples-

Initial		Final	
Khortha	Meaning	Khortha	Meaning
ii-kh	sugarcane	sagaa-ii	Marriage
ii-Maan	faith	chhaa-ii	Ash

/u/: It is high, back, rounded, short vowel that occurs initially, medially and Finally. For examples-

Initially		Medially	
Khortha	Meaning	Khortha	Meaning
u-Ta	That	chh-u-aa	Child
u-dane	That side	k-u-k-u-r	Dog

/uu/: It is high, back, rounded, short vowel that occurs in initial, medial and final positions. For examples-

Initial		Medial		Final	
Khortha	Meaning	Khortha	Meaning	Khortha	Meaning
uu-par	Up	isk-uu-l	School	jhaa <u>D</u> -uu	Broom
uu-ba <u>D</u> - Rough	khaba- <u>D</u>	sb-uu-t	Proof	taraaj-uu	Weighing scale

/e/: It is high, short, open vowel that occurs initially, medially and finally. For examples-

Initially		Medially		Finally	
Khortha	Meaning	Khortha	Meaning	Khortha	Meaning
e-k	One	j-e-to	Will go	haM-e	I
e-kaThaa	Together	d-e-to	Will give	sabh-e	All

/æ / : It is front unrounded vowel between open and half open that occurs initially, medially and finally. For examples-

Initially		Medially	
Khortha	Meaning	Khortha	Meaning
ei-nak	Glasses	p-ei-na	Stick
ei-Than	Proudy	b-ei-l	Ox

/o/ : It is back, rounded vowel between half-close and half-open that occurs in initial,

medial and final positions. For examples-

Initial		Medial		Final	
Khortha	Meaning	Khortha	Meaning	Khortha	Meaning
o-khali	Mortar	kh-o-li	Cover	aa-o	Come
o-Th	lips	kh-o-pDi	Skull	j-o	Go

/au/ : It is back rounded vowel just above open, that occurs initially, medially and finally. For examples-

Initially		Medially	
Khortha	Meaning	Khortha	Meaning
au-r	And	d-au-r	Samay
au-ndh	Reverse	d-au-raa basket	Bamboo

/a/ : It is central, (short) unrounded vowel between half-close and half-open that occurs in initial, medial and final positions. For examples-

Initial		Medial	
Khortha	Meaning	Khortha	Meaning
a-khan	Right now	bh-a-san	Speech
a-ndhaar	Darkness	ch-a-ur	Rice

/a:/ : It is low, back, open, long vowel that occurs in initial, medial and final

positions. For examples-

Initially		Medially		Finally	
Khortha	Meaning	Khortha	Meaning	Khortha	Meaning
aa-M	Mango	s-aa-njh	Evening	buDh-aa	Old man
aa-Ta	Flour	g-aa-chh	Tree	keir-aa	Banana

The points of contrast among the vowels of English and Khortha are as follows -

(I) /i:/: It is a long vowel. During the articulation of this vowel, the front of the tongue is raised in the direction of the hard palate to an almost close position. The lips are spread and the opening between the jaws is from narrow to medium and thus it is a front, close unrounded vowel in English and Khortha, during its pronunciation. Further it occurs in initial, medial and final positions in both the languages. For examples-

English	Transcription	Khortha	Meaning
Eagle	/i:gl/	iikh	Sugercane
Meet	/mi:t/	ii-nT	Brick
Feel	/fi:l/	iiMaan	Faith
Tree	/tri:/	chhaaii	Ash
Bee	/bi:/	topii	Cap

(II) /i/: The short vowel /i/ is described as 'centralized front half-closed unrounded vowel (Sethi and Dhamija, 1999: 67), just above the half-close position in English, whereas in Khortha, it is front unrounded vowel placed between half-close and close

positions. It occurs in initial, medial and final positions in both the languages. In Khortha, the distinction between /i:/ and /i/ depends basically on the degree of emphasis a context requires. /i/ is used when no emphasis is required, as in the sentence /i naye ja hai/ that means "he does not go" here the emphasis is required to negativise the sentence and hence stress shifts from subject to adverb depending on the situation. Further, it occurs in initial, medial and final positions in both the languages. For examples:-

English	Transcription	Khortha	Meaning
Ink	/ɪŋk/	kitab	Book
Except	/ɪk'sept/	sikaar	Hunt
Give	/gɪv/	kariya	Black
Knit	/nɪt/	pipri	Ant
City	/sɪti/	kisaan	Farmer

(III) /e/: It is a front unrounded vowel between half-close and half-open positions in English, whereas in Khortha it is centralized front long unrounded vowel near half-close position. Tongue is comparatively firm in Khortha. In English it occurs initially and medially, but in Khortha it occurs in all the three positions such as in the words:-

English	Transcription	Khortha	Meaning
Any	/eɪnɪ/	ek	One
Epic	/eɪpɪk/	ekar	His
Pen	/pen/	dekh	Look

Said	/sed/	gael	Went
Lemon	/'lemən/	moke	Mine

Further /e/ occurs as an independent morphological unit in Khortha unlike English.

(IV) /ə/ : In the place of three central vowels /ə/, /ə:/ and /ʌ/ of English, Khortha has only one central vowel /ə/ placed between half-open and half-close position. It is very prominently pronounced when placed initially as in the words like- /mər/.

This English vowel /ə/ is a short vowel. It is articulated using the tongue position not much different from /ɜ:/ . It occurs in all positions :

English	Transcription	Khortha	Meaning
Again	/əgain/	hamar	Mine
Honour	/ɒnə/	bhasan	Speech
Picture	/pɪktʃə/	barad	Ox
Colour	/kʌlə/	ajgut	suffocation

(V) /ɑ:/ : It is a long vowel. During the articulation of this vowel, the back of the tongue is in the fully open position; it is very low in the mouth. The lips are neutral and the opening between jaws is medium to wide. It is thus a back open unrounded vowel in English as well as Khortha. It can occur initially, medially and finally in both the languages. For examples-

English	Transcription	Khortha	Meaning
Are	/ɑ:/	aaM	Mango

Ask	/ɑ:sk/	gaachh	Tree
Task	/tɑ:sk/	dawaaii	Medicine
Laugh	/lɑ:f/	saaf	Clean
Calf	/kɑ:f/	hasnaa	Laugh

(VI) /ɔ:/ It is a back rounded vowel placed just above the open position in English, but in Khortha it is a back rounded vowel placed below the half-close position in the words such as follows:

English	Transcription	Khortha	Meaning
Door	/dɔɹ/	dora	Bamboo basket
Poorest	/pɔɹɛs/	doɹ	Run
Before	/bɪfɔɹ/	sondha	Taste

(VII) /ʊ:/ It is a back rounded vowel placed just above half-close position in English, whereas in Khortha, it is a back rounded vowel placed between half-close and close positions. Tongue is slightly tense in Khortha. It occurs in medial and final positions in English. But in Khortha it occurs in initial, medial and final positions in the words like:-

English	Transcription	Khortha	Meaning
Would	/wʊd/	ujar	White
Put	/pʊt/	chauaa	Child
Book	/bʊk/	kukur	Dog

(VIII) /u:/: It is a back close rounded vowel in English as well as Khortha and hence, is pronounced similarly. It occurs in initial, medial and final positions in both the languages. The difference is that /u:/ occurs as an independent morphological unit in Khortha unlike English in the words like:-

English	Transcription	Khortha	Meaning
Chew	/tʃu:/	uuT	Camel
Blew	/blu:/	uupar	Up
Spoon	/spu:n/	uun	Wool
fool	/fu:l/	uubna	Tied

(IX) /ɒ/: It is similar to the /ɔ:/ sound, but it is shorter, /ɒ/ not /ɔ:/. To produce the sound, lower the tongue and at the back of the mouth and lightly push lips together while making a short voiced sound. The /ɒ/ sound is normally spelled with the letter 'o', But it can also be spelled with the letters 'a' or 'a-u'. As in the words:-

English	Meaning	Khortha	Meaning
Rob	/rɒb /	dour	Samay
Top	/tɒp/	doura	Bamboo basket
Watch	/wɒtʃ/	ourat	Woman
Squat	/skwɒt/	chhouki	Wooden bed

Wash	/wɒʃ/	souch	Toilet	
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Conclusion

In the light of the matters discussed in this chapter, it can be said that there is considerable inter-lingual interference at phonological level observed in the speech of Khortha speaking learners of English that very often results into the loss of intelligibility of English spoken by these learners. This issue has been discussed in detail that sufficiently highlights the seriousness of the problem faced by such learners. While teaching the pronunciation of English certain measures must be adopted by the teachers to overcome this problem. In this direction, the most useful tool for a teacher will be a chart showing a contrastive picture of the way of articulation of apparently similar sounds of English and Khortha that causes much confusion. James Flege has rightly remarked that "L2 learners have more problems with sounds that are similar to those in their L1 than with new sounds that are completely different."⁵ Such sounds must be selected on the basis of degree of loss of intelligibility and it must be granted accordingly. Here it is relevant to mention that there is no universal pattern of pronunciation of English sounds and so, the emphasis on pronunciation teaching must be limited to the point of making it globally intelligible. That is to say, effort must be made to cast off regional nuances (the effect of Khortha) from the speech of learners to such a degree that their speech may not lose intelligibility. At present, Indian English has been recognized the world over and hence these learners may be primarily taught to attain the standard Indian English pronunciation and later on, they may proceed towards, Received Pronunciation (R.P.) model according to the need.

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