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The Phonological Study of Toto Language

Chibiram Basumatary, M.A.

Toto People

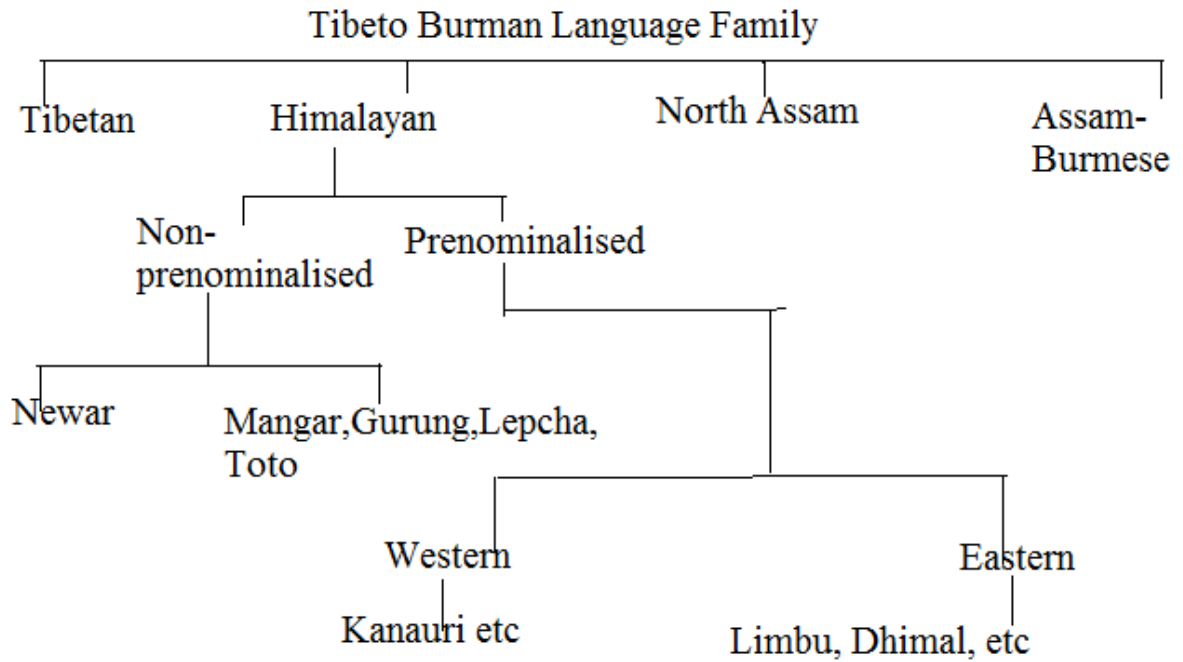
Ethnically Totos are considered as the Mongoloid race. According to G.A Grierson (1901), Linguistics Survey of India, Volume-III, Part-I, Toto language belongs to a Himalayan subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman Language family. Toto Language is spoken in an area called Totopara. Totopara is located in Madarihath under the Police Station of Alipurduar Sub-division of Jalpaiguri district of West-Bengal. The Toto villages are situated at the foothills of the Himalayas towards south of the border between Bhutan and West-Bengal. The Titi forest exists in the southern and western boundary of Totopara whereas Torsa river lies in the east. Totopara is sub-divided into six small villages namely, 1.Mondalgaon, 2.Dumsigaon, 3.Pujagaon, 4.Subagaon, 5.Ponchayetgaon and 6.Mitrangaon. According to Grierson ('Linguistics Survey of India', pp-250-251), Toto is a non-pronominalised language.

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The Phonological Study of Toto Language

The place of Toto language under Tibeto-Burman Language family is given in the following:



Only a few of the Toto speakers at present are in Totopara. According to 1901 census report, the total numbers of Toto speakers are only 171. At present total number of Toto speakers are 1411. The population of Totos of Totopara as per records:

Year	No. of Households	Male	female	Total
1901(census)	36	72	99	171
1911(census)	60	125	110	235
1921(census)	60	140	131	271
1931(census)	-	130	204	334
1941(census)	-	159	162	321
1951(census)	69	162	160	321
1962(I.S.I)	85	206	189	395

1971(Teacher-Cum Organiser)	96	332	318	650
1972 (C.Sanyal)	-	-	-	584
1976 (An.S.I)	-	-	-	641
1979 (C.R.L)	123	343	332	675
1980 (North Bengal University)	130	352	345	697
1985 (Amitabha Sarkar)	147	407	378	785
1991 (census)	-	-	-	926
2001 (census)	-	-	-	1184
2011 (census)	-	-	-	1386
2014 (at present)	-	-	-	1411

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to show under the Phonological features in the areas of Phonemic inventory, Descriptions and Distributions, Diphthongs, Vowel sequences, Germination, Clusters, Consonants sequences..

1.01 Inventory of Phonemes.

Toto language consists of 25 segmental Phonemes of which 19 are consonants and 6 are vowels. The phonemes of this language are as follows:

Vowels

There are 6 vowel phonemes in Toto language. They can be classified horizontally into three as front unrounded, central unrounded and back rounded vowels and vertically as close, close-mid, open-mid and open. These are shown in the following illustration:

Vowel Chart

	Front	Central	Back	
			Unrounded	Rounded
High	i			u
Mid	e	ə		o
Low		a		

The following minimal pairs establish the phonetics status of the vowel.

/i/~u/

/Jiya/ ‘rat’

/Juya/ ‘bird’

/gari/ ‘pot’

/garu/ ‘cart’

/i/~e/

/iŋ/ ‘brother in-law’

/eŋ/ ‘ginger’

/ciwa/ ‘tear’

/cewa/ ‘cut’ (cloth)

/i/~a/

/guJi/ ‘owl’

/guJa/ ‘pocket’

/nico/ ‘five’

/naco/ 'two'

/e/~o/

/je/ 'grass'

/jo/ 'breast'

/e~/a/

/lepa/ 'brain'

/lapa/ 'jungle betel leaf'

/kewa/ 'birth'

/kawa/ 'sound'

/e~/ə/

/kera/ 'sting'

/kəre/ 'finger'

/ceŋwa/ 'child'

/cəŋwa/ 'cucumber'

/e~/u/

/je/ 'grass'

/ju/ 'marua bear'

/leŋwa/ 'lough'

/luŋwa/ 'dissolve'

/a~/ə/

/ata/ 'grand father'

/əta/ 'goat'

/a/~o/

/lai/ ‘come’
/loi/ ‘village’

/lawa/ ‘bring’
/lowa/ ‘raise’

/a/~u/

/laka/ ‘rhino’
/luka/ ‘sheep’

/awwa/ ‘shoot’
/uwwa/ ‘horse’

/ə/~u/

/bəcuŋ/ ‘arm’
/bucuŋ/ ‘muscle’

/təiro/ ‘push’
/tuïro/ ‘dig’

/ə/ ~o/

/jəŋwa/ ‘antelope’
/joŋwa/ ‘appear’

/o/~u/

/lo/ ‘wake up’
/lu/ ‘put on’ (shoes)

/loŋwa/ ‘fold’
/luŋwa/ ‘brother’s wife’

1.2. Description and Distribution of Vowels

Vowel phonemes /i/,/e/,/a/,/o/ and /u/ occur in all positions, while /ə/ occurs in initial and medial positions.

/i/ High front unrounded short vowel occurs in all positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
/iŋ/ ‘brother in-law’	/biŋa/ ‘air’	/ti/ ‘water’
/icodaŋ/ ‘alone’	/ʃiŋna/ ‘sleeping’	/italei/ ‘come’

/e/ Mid-front unrounded short vowel occurs in all positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
/eroŋme/ ‘husband’	/lewa/ ‘tell’	/goije/ ‘escort’
/ecowa/ ‘speak’	/keka/ ‘hen’	/cəŋbe/ ‘kid’

/a/ Low central unrounded short vowel occurs in all positions.

Initial	Medial	Final
/aŋro/ ‘drink’	/daŋra/ ‘wife’s sister husband’	/gewa/ ‘shut’
/apa/ ‘father’	/wati/ ‘rain’	/dua/ ‘elder brother’

/o/ Mid back-rounded short vowel occurs in all positions.

Initial	Medial	Final
/oraŋpa/ ‘old man’	/Jomle/ ‘twin’	/lo/ ‘get up’
/oraŋme/ ‘old woman’	/ŋoisəŋ/ ‘small snake’	/laro/ ‘bring’

/u/ High back rounded short vowel occurs in all positions.

Initial	Medial	Final
/uhuwa/ ‘half’	/juti/ ‘milk’	/aju/ ‘mother’
/uwwa/ ‘horse’	/luintu/ ‘stone’	/barcu/ ‘sand’

/ə/ Mid-central unrounded short vowel occurs in initial and medial positions.

Initial	Medial	Final
/ədaŋcuwa/ ‘short man’	/cəŋwa/ ‘son’	-
/əraŋme/ ‘wife’s sister’	/cəŋke/ ‘lizard’	-

1.3. Diphthongs

There are eight diphthongs realized in Toto language. These are /ei/, /ai/, /oi/, /ui/, /əi/, /eu/, /au/ and /ou/. Diphthong /ui/ occurs in all positions, /eu/ occurs initial and medial positions, /ai/, /oi/, /əi/, and /ei/ occur medial and final positions. While /ou/ and /au/ occur only in the medial positions. They are given below.

Initial	Medial	final
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/ui/	/uipusa/ ‘request’	/guipu/ ‘pillar’	/kui/ ‘hand’
/eu/	/euwa/ ‘keep’	/beuʃidoŋmeme/ ‘bridegroom’	-
/ai/	-	/maibe/ ‘flower’	/hatai/ ‘spoon’
/oi/	-	/joipina/ ‘save’	/loi/ ‘village’
/əi/	-	/cəintra/ ‘orange’	/pisəi/ ‘aunt’
/ei/	-	/teiʃu/ ‘squarrel’	/ʃitei/ ‘aunt’
/ou/	-	/mourija/ ‘infant’	-
/au/	-	/tauki/ ‘snail’	-

1.4. Vowel Sequence

Vowel Sequence of Toto language realized in the medial and final positions. Examples are given below.

Medial

/o+ə/	/moəŋ/	‘paddy’
/i+a/	/pujoiawwa/	‘adopted child’
/o+a/	/joai/	‘face’
/o+a/	/joaibi/	‘intestine’

/o+a/ /joaibe/ ‘thigh’

/o+a/ /noai/ ‘boat’

Final

/u+a/ /dua/ ‘elder brother’

/o+a/ /noa/ ‘predict’

2. Consonants

There are nineteen Consonants including two Semi-Vowels realized in Toto language.

Consonants

		Bilabial		Alveolar		Palatal		Velar		Glotal	
Stops		Vl	vd	vl	vd	Vl	vd	vl	vd	vl	Vd
	unasp	P	b	t	d	C	ʃ	k	g		
	asp	p ^h		t ^h							
Nasal			m		n				ŋ		
Fricative				s						h	
Trill					r						
Lateral					l						
Semi-vowel			w				j				

These consonants have been established through the identification of Minimal Pairs.

/p/~b/

/poroi/ ‘pigeon’/-tr-/ /petreŋpuna/ ‘falling down’

/boroi/ ‘adams apple’

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/paiwa/ 'cut'
/baiwa/ 'get up'

/p/~p^h/

/puima/ 'moon'
/p^huima/ 'snake'

/t~/d/

/tuwa/ 'run'
/duwa/ 'elder brother'

/tace/ 'ten rupees'
/dace/ 'jackfruit'

/t~/t^h/

/tuna/ 'finish'
/t^huna/ 'running'

/c~/ʃ/

/cawa/ 'chew'
/ʃawa/ 'hang up'

/cəŋwa/ 'son'
/ʃəŋwa/ 'high'

/k~/g/

/ka/ 'I'
/ga/ 'sit'

/kawa/ 'bitter'
/gawa/ 'happy'

/m/~n/

/me/ 'fire'

/ne/ 'wait'

/namu/ 'name'

/nanu/ 'ear'

/m/~ŋ/

/makai/ 'cry'

/ŋakai/ 'five hundred'

/n/~ŋ/

/dina/ 'cutting jungle'

/diŋa/ 'human'

/s~/J/

/sa/ 'house'

/Ja/ 'standup'

/suta/ 'musk'

/Juta/ 'shoe'

/s~/h/

/sawa/ 'go'

/hawa/ 'take awa'

/h~/ J/

/hiŋwa/ 'listen'

/Jiŋwa/ 'sleeping'

/r~/l/

/murra/ ‘ant’

/mulla/ ‘radish’

/Jora/ ‘river’

/Jola/ ‘pocket’

/w~/j/

/waŋwa/ ‘come’

/jaŋwa/ ‘crowd’

2.1. Description and Distribution of Consonants

Out of 19 Consonants, /m/, /n/, /ŋ/, /l/ occur in all positions, /r/ occurs only in the medial position and /p/, /p^h/, /b/, /t/, /t^h/, /d/, /k/, /g/, /c/, /ʃ/, /s/, /h/, /w/ and /j/ occur initial and medial positions.

/p/ voiceless bilabial un-aspirated stop occurs in initial and medial positions.

Initial	Middle	Final
/paka/ ‘pig’	/ʃupa/ ‘body’	-
/pika/ ‘cow’	/lapa/ ‘leaf’	-

/p^h/ voiceless bilabial aspirated stop occurs in initial and medial positions.

/phuima/ ‘snake’	/kup ^h u/ ‘thumb’	-
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/b/ voiced bilabial un-aspirated stop occurs in initial and medial positions.

Initial	Medial	Final
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/bana/ ‘flute’ /nabe/ ‘nose’ -

/barcu/ ‘sand’ /lebe/ ‘tonque’ -

/t/ voiceless alveolar un-aspirated stop occurs in initial and medial positions.

Initial	Medial	Final
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/tari/ ‘star’	/ata/ ‘grant father’	-
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/tanaŋta/ ‘far away’	/ita/ ‘this’	-
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/t^h/ voiceless alveolar aspirated stop occurs in initial and medial positions.

Initial	Medial	Final
---------	--------	-------

/t ^h uina/ ‘running’	/det ^h a/ ‘south’	-
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/d/ voiced alveolar un-aspirated stop occurs in initial and medial positions.

Initial	Medial	Final
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/dua/ ‘elder brother’	/bida/ ‘comp’	-
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/da/ ‘nephew’	/nadiŋwa/ ‘dark’	
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/c/ voiceless palatal un-aspirated stop occurs in initial and medial positions.

Initial	Medial	Final
---------	--------	-------

/coka/ ‘tortoise’ /bucuŋ/ ‘shoulder’ -

/cəintra/ ‘orange’ /jacuwa/ ‘discuss’

/ʃ/ voiced palatal unaspirated stop occurs in initial and medial positions.

Initial	Medial	Final
---------	--------	-------

/ʃija/ ‘bird’	/teʃu/ ‘squirrel’	-
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/ʃi/ ‘leopard’	/taŋʃa/ ‘hawk’	-
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/k/ voiceless velar un-aspirated stop occurs in initial and medial positions.

Initial	Medial	Final
---------	--------	-------

/kuinero/ ‘keep time’	/dika/ ‘buffalo’	-
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/keka/ ‘hen’	/sika/ ‘jungle hen’	-
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/g/ voiced velar un-aspirated stop occurs in initial and medial positions.

Initial	Medial	Final
---------	--------	-------

/ga/ ‘sit’	/jiga/ ‘book’	-
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/gewa/ ‘intellect’	/jagoi/ ‘mountain’	-
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/m/ voiced bilabial nasal occurs in all positions.

Initial	Medial	Final
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/s/mocuro/ ‘dare’ /lambera/ ‘tomato’ /nomram/ ‘expect’

/meŋki/ ‘cat’ /namu/ ‘peek’

/n/ voiced velar nasal occurs in all positions.

Initial	Medial	Final
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/ni/ ‘salt’	/ana/ ‘elder sister’	/doken/ ‘market’
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/nico/ ‘two’	/hurana/ ‘circle’	/bagen/ ‘garden’
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/ŋ/ voiced alveolar nasal occurs in all positions.

Initial	Medial	Final
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/ŋoka/ ‘monkey’	/aŋro/ ‘drink’	/dijaŋ/ ‘swan’
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/ŋoisəŋ/ ‘worm’	/boŋoi/ ‘white ant’	/doŋ/ ‘horn’
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/s/ voiceless alveolar fricative occurs in the initial and medial positions.

Initial	Medial	Final
---------	--------	-------

/soka/ ‘rabbit’	/misiwa/ ‘alive’	-
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/sipuna/ ‘death’	/asi/ ‘gum’	-
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/h/ voiceless glottal fricative occurs in initial and medial positions.

Initial	Medial	final
/haiwa/ ‘diseases’	/mihijwa/ ‘deaf’	-
/hawa/ ‘accompany’	/sanahawa/ ‘diarrhea’	-

/r/ voiced alveolar trill occurs only in the medial position.

Initial	Medial	Final
-	/suru/ ‘lung’	-
-	/heɲpra/ ‘rib’	-

/l/ voiced alveolar lateral occurs in all positions.

Initial	Medial	Final
/luicuwa/ ‘fight’	/mola/ ‘musk’	/Jampal/ ‘axe’
/lu/ ‘put on’	/italei/ ‘come’	

/w/ voiced bilabial semi-vowel occurs in initial and medial positions.

Initial	Medial	Final
/wa/ ‘husband’	/duwa/ ‘step brother’	-
/waiwa/ ‘pul out’	/Jowa/ ‘do’	-

/j/ voiced palatal semi-vowel occurs in initial and medial positions.

Initial	Medial	Final
/jowa/ ‘push into’	/ijuwa/ ‘dance’	-
/jepiwa/ ‘attack’	/kuije/ ‘stay’	-

2.2. Germination

Germination is found only in the medial position. This type of consonant sequences are very few in Toto language.

/-ss-/	/Jisse/	‘snow’
/-ww-/	/məwwa/	‘walking’
/-rr-/	/murra/	‘tree’
/-pp-/	/lappa/	‘leaf’
/-ll-/	/mulla/	‘radish’
/-nn-/	/puinna/	‘burn’

2.3. Consonant Clusters

The term consonant cluster is a combination of two or more consonants occurring together within a syllable. In Toto up to two consonant clusters are realized which are found in the initial positions in a syllable. However, no consonant clusters are found in the word final position. It is also observed that the consonant clusters in Toto Language are very few in number.

Initial Consonant Clusters

/b+r/	/braŋ/	‘plate’
/k+r/	/kriŋ/	‘knee’
/m+j/	/mjaŋ/	‘stop’
/p+r/	/prai/	‘betel leaf’

2.4. Consonant Sequence

Consonant sequence is a combination of more than one consonants occurring across the syllable boundary. According to the Toto language, consonant sequences are found in the word medial positions of a syllable.

Stop+Stop Medial

/- pk-/	/hepkəŋ/	‘morning’
/-tk-/	/putkui/	‘wine’
/-kd-/	/mikdo/	‘eye brow’

Nasal+Nasal

/- ŋm-/	/paŋmi/	‘hungry’
/-ŋn-/	/maŋna/	‘don’t take’

Trill+Stops

/-rc-/	/barcu/	‘sand’
/-rp-/	/Jurpaito/	‘house lizard’
/-rd-/	/bordonj/	‘wood pecker’
/-ŋs-/	/taŋcamu/	‘all’
/-ŋp-/	/waŋpana/	‘flat’

Stops+Trill

/-pr-/	/epraŋ/	‘no problem’
/-kr-/	/kekreŋ/	‘left hand’
/-dr-/	/pendrasiŋ/	‘a kind of smelling tree’
/-gr-/	/pagruse/	‘pumpkin’
/-br-/	/ijunbri/	‘sister’
/-Jr-/	/JoJruwa/	‘help’

Nasal+ Stops

/-nt-/	/nopuntena/	‘decide’
/-ŋk-/	/miŋki/	‘cat’

/-ŋb-/	/leŋba/	‘police’
/-ŋg-/	/ojeŋga/	‘settle’
/-mb-/	/məimbuna/	‘dream’
/-ŋp-/	/petreŋpuna/	‘falling down’
/-md-/	/somdi/	‘daughter/son-in-law’s father’
/-ŋt-/	/haŋta/	‘where’
/-ŋb-/	/taŋba/	‘foot’
/-ŋp-/	/haŋpa/	‘why’
/-ŋʃ-/	/haŋʃopuna/	‘regret’

Nasal+Trill

/-ŋr-/	/aŋro/	‘drink’
/-mr-/	/nomram/	‘expect’

Nasal + Fricative

/-ŋs-/	/ceŋsuwa/	‘shout’
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Fricative+Nasal

/-sn-/ /loisna/ ‘warm’

Fricative+ Trill

/-sr-/ /dosro/ ‘meet’

/-rs-/ /tonɲorse/ ‘guava’

Lateral+ Stops

/-lt-/ /baltɪŋ/ ‘bucket’

Nasal+ Semi-vowel

/-ŋw-/ /loŋwa/ ‘pack’

2.5. Syllable

Syllable is a unit of pronunciation typically larger than a single sound and smaller than a word (David Crystal, *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*, p.342). Mono-syllabic is one of the most typical features of Toto language, even a simple vowel can be a syllable, or a word. The following is the structure of mono-syllabic words in Toto.

Mono-syllabic Words

Open V /e / ‘brother’

 VV /oi/ ‘yes’

 CV /ga/ ‘sit’

	CVV	/lei/	‘come’
Closed	CVC	/kuŋ/	‘I’
	CCVC	/braŋ/	‘plate’

Toto language has Disyllabic, Trisyllabic, Tetrasyllabic and Pentasyllabic words.

Disyllabic Words

Open	CV.V	/dua/	‘elder brother’
	CV.CV	/pika/	‘cow’
	CVC.CV	/miŋki/	‘cat’
	CCVV.CV	/klairo/	‘play’
Closed	CV.CVC	/lapuŋ/	‘door’
	CVC.CVC	/hepkon/	‘morning’
	CCVC.CCVC	/bruŋbruŋ/	‘sugar cane’

Trisyllabic Words

Open	CV.CV.CV	/hakoga/	‘honor’
	CV.CVC.CV	/tanaŋta/	‘far away’
	CVV.CV.CV	/tuicaro/	‘get up’

CV.CCVC.CVV /cepreŋsai/ ‘been’

Tetrasyllabic Words

Open. V.CVC.CV.CV /ədaŋcuwa/ ‘short’ (man)

CV.CV.CV.CV /cawacuti/ ‘mustard oil’

Pentasyllabic Words

Open. V.CV.CV.CV.CV /akumukuna/ ‘without’

V.CV.CV.CVV.CV /atacokoipa/ ‘until’

CVV.CV.CV.CV.CV /hairemotowa/ ‘nothing’

CVV.CV.CVC.CV.CV /beuʒidoŋpoʒa/ ‘bride’

Summary of the Phonology

1. According to data analysis there are six vowel phonemes, i.e. /i/, /u/, /e/, /ə/, /o/ and /a/. The vowels /i/, /e/, /a/, /o/ and /u/ can occur in all positions, while /ə/ occurs only initial and medial positions.
2. There are eight diphthongs in Toto language, i.e. /ui/, /eo/, /ai/, /oi/, /əi/, /ei/, /ou/, and /au/. The Diphthong /ui/ occurs in all positions, /ai/, /oi/, /əi/, and /ei/ occur in medial and final positions, and /eu/ occurs in initial and medial positions, while /ou/ and /au/ occur only in medial positions.
3. Vowel Sequences of Toto language are found in the medial and final positions.
4. Out of nineteen consonants /p/, /ph/, /b/, /d/, /c/, /ʒ/, /t/, /th/, /g/, and /k/ are the stops that occur in initial and medial positions. Nasal consonants /m/, /n/, and /ŋ/ occur in all positions, /s/ and

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/h/ occur in initial and medial positions, /l/ occurs in all positions, /r/ occurs in medial position only, and /w/ and /j/ occur in initial and medial positions.

5. Germination is found only in the medial position

6. Consonant sequences occur only in medial positions.

7. Consonant cluster occurs in initial positions.

8. Monosyllabic is one of the most typical features of Toto language, even a simple vowel can be a syllable or a word as in /e/ 'brother'. Toto language has Mono-syllabic, Disyllabic, Trisyllabic, Tetrasyllabic and Pentasyllabic words.

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