

Tense and Aspect in Banai

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Abstract

Banai is spoken by the Banai community who resides in Dhemaji, North Lakhimpur, Goalpara, Karbi Anglong districts of Assam and in the borders of Garo Hills in Meghalaya and Bangladesh. Banai is a language which has both Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman features. Banai is spoken mostly for intra-community communication by the community and they speak Assamese and Hindi for inter-community communication. Assamese script is used by the Banai speakers of Assam and the Bangla script is used by Banai speakers of Meghalaya. Tense and Aspect in Banai exhibit both the Indo Aryan and Tibeto- Burman features.

The present paper is an attempt to look into the inflectional processes of the tense and aspect in Banai. We also examine the Indo-Aryan and Tibeto Burman features in tense and aspect of this lesser known, lesser researched language of North east India.

Keywords: Banai, Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman, Tense, Aspect.

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1.0 Introduction

The Banai language understudy is spoken in Kechakathani, Bhoiyam Belguri, Nalbari, Chagalikata villages in Dhemaji district of Assam. Banai language is not found in any Government records. The Constitution of India recognizes 22 Scheduled languages, and languages with population over 10,000 as per the 1971 Census Report, are considered to be Non-Scheduled languages. Languages below 10,000 are considered as Mother Tongue and those languages with population below 5000 are considered as ‘other’ Mother Tongues. The population of the Banai people living in Assam and Meghalaya is around 35000 as per the number presented by North-East India Banai Welfare Association (NEIBWA) ¹.

Yet this language finds no mention in any of the Census Report. The most likely reason would be Banai merged with Hajong or Koch. This needs to be investigated, but it is not within the scope of this paper.



Map 1: Map of Assam showing the areas of Banai population.

¹ Ayyo-Uttor Pub Bharat Unnoyon Samitir Barkhik Adhibekhonor Smritigrantha-2015. Edited by N. Banai.

1.1 Typological Features of Banai

Banai shares many of the typological features of South-Asian languages. Some of them are given below:

- (i) The language has Subject-Object-Verb (SOV) word order.
- (ii) Morphologically, it is agglutinating and inflecting.
- (iii) It has Tense-Aspect-Mood (TAM) features.
- (iv) It does not have agreement markers.
- (v) Banai is a Nominative-Accusative language.

1.2 Objectives of the study

The main objectives of this paper are as follows:

1. To find out the different types of tense and aspect markers in Banai.
2. To identify which of these morphemes are sourced from Indo-Aryan and Tibeto-Burman.

1.3 Methodology

Primary data was collected from native speakers of Banai inhabiting in Kechakathanai and Bhoiyam Belguri villages in the Dhemaji district of Assam. Four field trips were conducted in these areas. A Zoom recorder was used for recording the data. Data was collected from eight native speakers, four male and four female in the age group of 20-60 years. A basic word list of 200 words (Swadesh, 1952) and a few basic phrases were noted.

2.0 Verbs in Banai

Verbs in Banai can be simple and complex: In table 1 we have some examples:

Simple Verb	Gloss	Complex Verb	Gloss
<i>k^ha</i>	‘to eat’	<i>kubai de</i>	‘to beat’

<i>lik^ha</i>	‘to write’	<i>kosto pai</i>	‘to be in pain’
<i>k^hela</i>	‘to play’	<i>b^hoi pai</i>	‘to fear’
<i>bera</i>	‘to walk’	<i>monpur se</i>	‘to forget’
<i>g^huma</i>	‘to sleep’	<i>laz pai</i>	‘to be ashamed’

Table 1: Verbs in Banai

2.1 Tense in Banai

Tense in Banai exhibits a three way contrast i.e. present, past and future in relation to time, as shown in the figure 1.

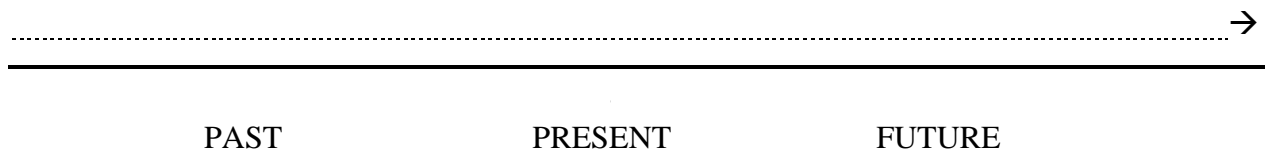


Figure1: Representation of time

Tense is discussed in terms of present moment. In figure 1, present is the moment of speech which acts as the deictic centre. Events before and after are respectively the past and future tenses.

1. *rita-ra* *am* *k^ha-i*
 rita-DEF mango eat-PRES
 ‘Rita eats mango.’

2. *oi* *bol* *k^hel-ile*
 S/he.NOM ball go-PST
 ‘S/he played football.’

3. *moi* *sit^hi* *eg-ra* *lik^h-ibo/-ibuu*
 I.NOM letter one-CLF write-FUT
 ‘I will write a letter.’

In examples (1-3), *k^ha* ‘eat’, *k^hel* ‘play’ and *lik^h* ‘write’ are the main verbs. It is seen that there is no person agreement attached to these verbs in the above examples. *-i* is the present tense marker (1). *-ile* is the past tense marker (2). *-ibo* and *-ibuu* are the future tense markers (3).

2.1.1 Difference between Banai and Assamese Present Tense marking

Comparing the Banai sentence in (1) with the Assamese sentence in (4), we find the following similarities and differences.

4. *rita -i* *am* *k^ha-i*
 rita-ERG mango eat-3P
 ‘Rita eats mango.’

The lexical words in both languages are similar. Grammatical words vary in both the languages. Assamese takes ergative case marker *-i*. Banai does not take an overt morphological case marker. The definite marker *-ra* suffixes to the noun giving the interpretation of ‘the one I am talking about’.

Banai has *-i* as the present tense marker, whereas the *-i* marker in Assamese is the first person agreement marker. Assamese does not have an overt present tense marker.

The evidence that *-i* in Banai is a present tense marker comes from the following sentences in (5a-c) where the *-i* marker occurs with First Person *moi* ‘I’, Second Person *toi* ‘You’ and Third Person *oi* ‘S/he’.

- 5a. *moi* *am* *k^ha-i*
 I.NOM mango eat-PRES
 ‘I eat mango.’

- b. *toi* *am* *k^ha-i*
 You.NOM mango eat-PRES
 ‘You eat mango.’

- c. *oi* *am* *k^ha-i*
 S/he.NOM mango eat-PRES
 ‘S/he eats mango.’

The present tense marker in Banai has an allomorphic variant *-ai* as shown in (6a-c).

- 6a. *moi* *bol* *k^hel-ai*
 I.NOM ball play-PRES
 ‘I play football.’

- b. *toi* *bol* *k^hel-ai*
 You.NOM football play-PRES
 ‘You play football.’

- c. *oi* *bol* *k^hel-ai*
 S/he.NOM ball play-PRES
 ‘S/he plays football.’

The present tense in Banai has two allomorphic variants marker as observed from (5) and (6) and the variation can be summarized as shown in (7) and in figure 2.

If the verb ends with a vowel, /-i/ is suffixed to the verb as in (7a).

- 7a. /-i/->[i] /V_# as in [k^ha-i] ‘eat’ as in 5(a-c).

If the verb ends with a consonant /-ai/ is suffixed to the verb as in (7b).

- 7b. /-i/->[ai] /C_# as in [k^hel-ai] ‘play’ as in 6(a-c).

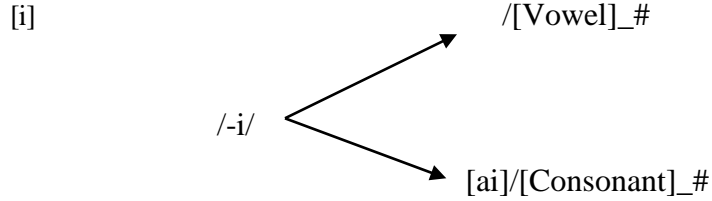


Figure 2: Allomorphs of /-i/

2.2 Banai and Assamese Past Tense Markers

We have (2) repeated here as (8c) where we observe that the past tense in Banai is *-ile*.

8a. *moi bol khel-ile* **Banai**

I.NOM ball play-PST

‘I played football.’

b. *toi bol khel-ile*

You.NOM ball play-PST

‘You played football.’

c. *oi bol k^hel-ile*

S/he.NOM ball go-PST

‘S/he played football.’

9a. *moi kitap-khon porh-il-u* **Assamese**

I.NOM book-CLF read-PST-1P

‘I read the book.’

b. *tumi bhat kha-l-a*

You.NOM rice eat-PST-2P

‘You ate rice.’

c. *xi bol k^hel-il-e*

He.NOM ball eat-PST-3P

‘He played football.’

Comparing (8) and (9), we find that the Assamese sentences have distinctive person agreement marker for 1st person, 2nd person and 3rd person. Unlike the Banai examples in (8), we find the past tense marker *-l* merges with the 3rd person agreement marker *-e* to form the Banai past tense marker *-ile* as is evident from the examples in (9). So Banai retains one important feature of Tibeto-Burman languages like the Bodo-Garo sub-group of Tibeto-Burman languages.

The Past tense allomorphs in Banai are shown in figure 3.

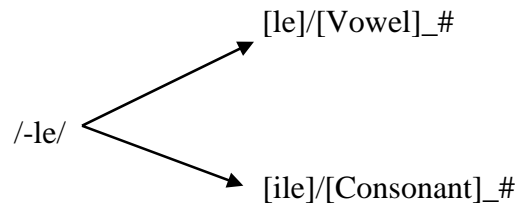


Fig 3: Allomorphs of /-le/

In Assamese, the past tense markers are *-il* and *-l* as shown in (9).

2.3 Future Tense in Banai

Banai verbs take future tense marker *-bo* as shown in examples in (10).

10a. *moi* *am-ge* *k^ha-bo*
 I.NOM mango-ACC eat-FUT
 ‘I will eat mango.’

b. *toi* *am-ge* *k^ha- bo*
 You.NOM mango-ACC eat-FUT
 ‘You will eat mango.’

c. *oi* *am-ge* *k^ha- bo*
 S/he.NOM mango-ACC eat-FUT
 ‘S/he will eat mango.’

Just like the Banai past tense marker *-ile*, the future tense marker also shows the same phenomena that is *-ibo* and in the Assamese sentences, *-o* is the third person agreement in future tense as shown in (11a-c).

11a. *xi* *bhat* *kha-b-o*
 He.NOM rice eat-FUT-3P
 ‘He will eat rice.’

b. *xi* *kitap-khon* *porh-ib-o*
 He.NOM book-CLF read-FUT-3P
 ‘He will read the book.’

c. *taha-i* *guahati-loi* *za-b-o*
 They-ERG guwahati-ALL go-FUT-3P
 ‘They will go to Guwahati.’

Banai alternately takes another future tense marker *-bu* or *-ibu* and the source apparently seems to be Tibeto-Burman. In 12(a-c) and 13(a-c), we have the examples.

12a. *moi* *bol* *k^hel* *-ibu*
 I.NOM ball play-FUT
 ‘I will play football.’

b. *toi* *bol* *k^hel* *-ibu*
 You.NOM ball play-FUT
 ‘You will play football.’

c. *oi* *bol* *k^hel* *-ibu*
 S/he.NOM ball play-FUT
 ‘S/he will play football.’

13a. *moi* *am-ge* *k^ha-bu*
 I.NOM mango-ACC eat-FUT
 ‘I will eat mango.’

b. *toi* *am-ge* *k^ha- bu*
 You.NOM mango-ACC eat-FUT
 ‘You will eat mango.’

c. *oi* *am-ge* *k^ha- bu*
 S/he.NOM mango-ACC eat-FUT
 ‘S/he will eat mango.’

In Table 2, we summarize the tense markers in both Banai and Assamese.

Tense	Banai	Assamese
Present	<i>-i, -ai</i>	\emptyset
Past	<i>-le, -ile</i>	<i>-i, -il</i>
Future	<i>-bo, -bu,</i> <i>-ibo, -ibuu</i>	<i>-m -im,</i> <i>-b, -ib</i>

Table 2: Tense Markers in Banai and Assamese

3.0 Aspect in Banai

Aspect in Banai has a number of markers and the sources are both Tibeto-Burman as well as Indo-Aryan. Banai has three types of aspects: (i) habitual, (ii) perfective and (iii) progressive.

3.1 Habitual Aspect

Habitual constructions in Banai do not take an overt aspectual marker. The habitual aspect characterizes a situation as regular or habitual as in (14) we have an example:

14. *dipika-ra* *iskul-bai* *dza-i*
 dipika-DEF school-ALL go-PRES
 ‘Dipika goes to school.’

Comparing the Banai sentence in (14) with the Assamese sentence in (15), we find the following similarities and differences.

15. *dipika* *iskul-oloi* *dza-i*
 Dipika.NOM school-ALL go-3P
 ‘Dipika goes to school.’

Both Assamese and Banai do not take overt case marker as the verb is intransitive. The allative case marker *bai* in Banai and *oloi* in Assamese vary.

3.2 Perfective Aspect

Banai Perfective markers are *-se* and *-ise* as shown in the following examples in (16) and (17).

16. *moi* *am-ge* *k^ha-se*
 I.NOM mango-ACC eat-PRES.PFV
 ‘I have eaten mango.’

17. *moi* *bol* *k^hel-ise*
 I.NOM ball play-PRES.PFV
 ‘I have played football.’

Comparing the Banai sentences in (16) and (17) with the Assamese sentence in (18), we find that *-is* is the perfective marker and it is followed by the first person agreement marker *-u*.

18. *moi* *am* *k^ha-is-u*
 I.NOM mango eat-PRES.PFV-1P
 ‘I have eaten mango.’

Going by examples (16) and (17), we can say that [se] and [ise] are perfective allomorphs in Banai as shown in Figure 4.

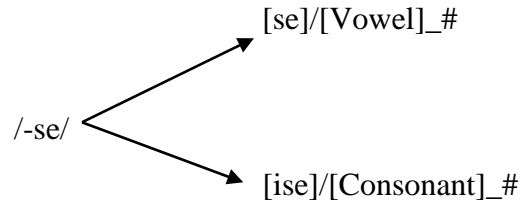


Fig 4: Allomorphs of /-se/

In Banai, the simple past tense marker *-le* as in (19) is also used to indicate present perfective aspect in certain specific context.

19. *moi* *ela* *bhat* *k^ha-le*
 I.NOM just now rice eat-PST
 ‘I had my meal just now.’

3.2.1 Aspect marker from Tibeto-Burman source

So far, we have seen the aspectual marker impacted from Assamese. Now we have few examples in (20) and (21) where the aspectual markers *-bun* (20a) and *-bun* (20b) occur in the language.

- 20a. *moi* *am-ge* *k^ha-bun*
 I.NOM mango-ACC eat-PST.PFV
 ‘I had eaten mango.’

- b. *moi* *am-ge* *k^ha- bun*
 I.NOM mango-ACC eat-PST.PFV
 ‘I had eaten mango.’

In 21(a –b), we have the allomorphic variants *-ibun* and *-ibun* respectively.

- 21a. *moi* *bol* *k^hel-ibun*
 I.NOM ball play- PST.PFV
 ‘I had played football.’

- b. *toi* *bol* *k^hel-ibun*
 You.NOM ball play- PST.PFV
 ‘You had played football.’

The suffixes *-bun/-bun* and *ibun/-ibuun* can be related to Harigaya Koch suffix *-mung/-mun*. This corresponds to *-mən* in Wanang and Kocho, to *-min* in the Modhupur Mandi (Burling 2004:155–158). *-chim* is its closest counterpart in Garo (Burling 2003b:390).

3.3 Progressive aspect

Banai Progressive markers are *-ju ase* as shown in the following examples in (22) and (23).

22a. *moi am-ge k^ha-ju ase*
 I.NOM mango-ACC eat-PROG be
 ‘I am eating mango.’

b. *toi am-ge k^ha-ju ase*
 You.NOM mango-ACC eat-PROG be
 ‘You are eating mango.’

23a. *moi bol k^hel-ju ase*
 I.NOM ball play-PROG be
 ‘I am playing football.’

b. *toi bol k^hel-ju ase*
 You.NOM ball play-PROG be
 ‘You are playing football.’

Comparing the Banai sentences in (22) and (23) with the Assamese sentence in (24), we find the following similarities and differences.

24. *moi am k^ha-i as-u*
 I.NOM mango eat-PROG be-1P
 ‘I am eating mango.’

The present progressive marker in the language which is *-ju ase* whereas *-i* is the present progressive marker in Assamese.

The past progressive marker is *-ju as-ile* as shown in (25) and (26).

25. *moi* *am-ge* *k^ha-ju* *as-ile*
 I.NOM mango-ACC eat-PROG be-PST
 ‘I was eating mango.’

26. *moi* *bol* *k^hel-ju* *as-ile*
 I.NOM ball play-PROG be-PST
 ‘I was playing football.’

The Future Progressive aspectual marker is *-ju thak-ibo* and *-ju thak-ibu* as in (27) and (28).

- 27a. *moi* *am-ge* *kha-ju* *thak-ibo*
 I.NOM mango-ACC eat-PROG AUX-FUT
 ‘I will be eating mango.’

- b. *moi* *am-ge* *kha-ju* *thak-ibu*
 I.NOM mango-ACC eat-PROG AUX-FUT
 ‘I will be eating mango.’

- 28a. *moi* *bol* *khel-ju* *thak-ibo*
 I.NOM ball play-PROG AUX - FUT
 ‘I will be playing football.’

- b. *moi* *bol* *khel-ju* *thak-ibm*
 I.NOM ball play-PROG AUX - FUT
 ‘I will be playing football.’

If we compare the Banai sentences in (27) and (28) with the Assamese sentences in (29) and (30), we find the following similarities and differences.

29. *moi* *am* *kha- i* *thak-im*
 I.NOM mango eat-PROG stay-FUT.1P
 ‘I will be eating mango.’
30. *xi* *bol* *khel-i* *thak- ibo*
 He.NOM ball play-PROG stay-FUT.3P
 ‘He will be playing football.’

The future progressive markers in the language which is *-ju thak* whereas *-i thak* is the first person future progressive marker in Assamese and *-m* marker in Assamese is the first person future marker and *-o* is the 3rd person agreement marker.

Table 4 shows the aspect markers in Banai and Assamese.

Aspect	Banai	Assamese
Habitual	∅	∅
Perfective	<i>-se, -ise</i> <i>-bun, -bun, -ibun, -ibun</i>	<i>-is</i>
Progressive	<i>-ju ase, -ju asile, -ju thak-ibo, -ju thakibuu</i>	<i>-i ase, -i asile, -i thakibo</i>

Table 3: Comparison of Aspect marking in Banai and Assamese

4.0 Conclusion

In this paper, we have discussed the system of tenses-present, past and future in Banai. We have observed that verbs in Banai are marked for present, past and future. Verbs in Banai have no agreement. The tense and aspect markers of Banai are interesting in that there is a mix of some obvious cognates with Indo-Aryan languages, some possible cognates with Tibeto-Burman languages and some cases where finding a cognate is difficult. In Banai, we have found that the habitual constructions do not take an overt aspectual marker. We have also observed that the aspect is divided into perfective and imperfective in Banai. We have also observed that the

occurrence of tense and aspect in Banai as an SOV language is VERB-ASPECT-TENSE. Banai also exhibits features of Assamese, an Indo-Aryan language and also some Tibeto-Burman features. Banai is a good example of a language which is in contact with a dominant language of the region and the constant contact has led to convergence of certain lexical and grammatical features of Assamese into Banai. This contact convergence feature needs further investigation.

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Naga Tikhir Language: An outlook on the challenges to develop Tikhir Language

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Abstract

The challenge that confronts the newly recognised Naga Tribe ‘Tikhir’ in context of language vitality and status of endangerment is explored and presented in this paper. In addition, what is the status of Tikhir Literature? What are the challenges of a lesser-known language? What is the action plan of the literary board to develop Tikhir language? These are some of the research questions that are answered in this paper. The study also delves into understanding complexity of elevating a language considered as a dialect to a standardised language.

Key words: Naga, Tikhir, Yimchunger, Vitality, Endangerment.

1. Tikhir People

The Tikhir Nagas are one of the Naga tribes living in the hills of Eastern Nagaland. With a population of 7,537 (2011, census report) Tikhir people are inhabited in two district of Nagaland- Tuesang and Kiphire. Tikhirs are an agricultural community whose livelihood depends on agricultural cultivation. Khianstu.T. (2008) explains the socio-economic life of Tikhir’s stating the essence and dependence of agricultures to sustain their daily life. Further, he elaborated the skilled works such as Handicrafts, Weaving, Blacksmith, and Pottery that are practice by the Tikhir community. Overall, in a nutshell Tikhirs are an agricultural community living a simple life remotely far from the urban settings.

With the advent of Christianity in Naga Hills, Tikhir people embrace Christianity and like other Naga tribes, the savage practice of head hunting and similar primitive ways came to an end. Khianstu.T. (2008), however, lamented the delay of evangelism in Tikhir land and says that it has prolonged head-hunting practices and their people must live longer in fear and insecurity

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when compared with other tribes who were transform by Christian beliefs and way of life much ahead of their tribe. For the Nagas, Christianity did usher them to a new dawn of social life, formal education pertaining to modern education was introduced to the Nagas and it blended with evangelism. The shift of paradigm in Naga society that came along with Christianity was so overwhelming that the history of Nagas can be understood better from the standpoint of Pre Christianity and Post Christianity.

2. Tikhir Tribe Recognition

Tikhir tribe was accorded as the 18th Naga Tribe by the Government of Nagaland only on 20th January, 2022. The recognition was a long - overdue for the Tikhir tribe and people who fought for their separate tribe recognition over four decades. The long delay of Tikhir tribe recognition was due to the decision of the State Advisory Board for Nagaland District Gazetteer in 1981(Khianstu.T.,2008) which has classified the Tikhirs as a sub-tribe and its language as a dialect variation of the more prominent tribe Yimchunger now known as Yimkhiung. This decision discounted Tikhir as a distinct tribe and regarding their language; it was registered as a dialect of Yimchunger from thereon.

3. Tikhir Language

3.1.Brief history

Primary documentation of Tikhir language was noted in Burling (2003) where Tikhir language was projected as a part of Yimchunger dialect group. Das (2014) “The Yimchungers are linguistically divided into four dialect groups: Chir, Mikori, Yimchunger and Tikhir. The shared language between these people is called Langa Yimchunger.” The linguistic map of Nagaland prepared by Robbins Burling (2003); we find these four dialects shown as **distinct linguistic sub-groups of the Nagas**. However, in his book on Himalayan languages, George van Driem (2001) put them together as one Yimchunger linguistic entity. It can be noted that all Naga languages are classified under the Kuki-Chin group of the Tibeto-Burman language family.

Das (2014) investigated the Tikhir identity struggle and her conflict with Yimchunger tribe extensively. The conflict had a significant impact on Tikhir language as the study presented

the historical difference and identity construction of both the Tribes and gives an understanding on how identity crisis can have a repercussion impact on developing minority language such as the Tikhir language. The study reported that till the 1970s, the Yimchungers and the Tikhirs lived together, although often with contempt and in-fighting between clans and villages. However, by 1980s identity contestation became intense and became severely violent as major clashes broke out between the Tikhirs and Yimchungers tribes. It is not unfair to say that though physical conflict has subsided in the present days, the tension between the two tribes is still inevitable. In context of their language, the detrimental fact confronted by Tikhir people were onerous matters, firstly, the issue of been a minority in terms of population, secondly, the fact that the language of Tikhir was overrule as a distinct language and was presented as a dialect of Yimchunger, has a massive setback for the Tikhir language to progress. The recognition of Tikhir as a distinct tribe was not approved for 40 years, hence, with absence of governmental support and assistance the language of Tikhir remains static for decades.

3.2. Status of Tikhir Literature

Nagaland Government has 18 recognised Tribes and 18 recognised Languages. In 2018, the State Government of Nagaland recognised the Nthenyi (alternate 'Ntenyi') a dialect of Rengma Naga as 18th Naga language in addition to the previous 17 recognised languages. These languages are attested to be use in media outlet and to be introduced at schools from primary level under MIL (Modern Indian Language). Though Tikhir tribe is now recognised, Tikhir language is yet to be recognised. Tikhir language is the only indigenous Naga language among the recognised tribes whose language is yet to be recognised by the State Government. It is certain that Tikhir language will be elevated as one of the recognised languages of Nagaland in time; however, the paucity of its literature is a concern to accelerate this process. The current status of Tikhir literature is still at its elementary stage. Direct input from the Tikhir Literary Board suggests that they are just rolling their sleeves to underpin their language and literature. The process of language standardisation can be broadly classified under these stages: **selection, codification, elaboration of function, and acceptance**. From primary source, it is understood that the language standardisation of Tikhir language is at its preliminary stage where the issues on codifying words, spellings, graphemes for sounds and similar issues are work in progress.

Naga's literatures are predominantly oral literature and the written literature was developed only with initiation of the Christian missionaries using Roman scripts. The American missionaries that came along with the colonial rule were credited for introducing the early written literature for all the Naga tribes. The literature of the major Naga tribes like the Ao, Angami, Lotha and Sema were directly developed by the American Missionaries in forms of Bible translation, which ultimately educated the people of these tribes. Holding on the momentum of the missionaries work in context of literature, these tribes further strengthen their literature and solidify their literature by introducing their language formally in schools and elaborated the function of their language. In the case of Tikhir language, evangelism delay and the categorisation of the language as a dialect of Yimchunger gave no scope for the Tikhir language to develop for decades. The oral literature of Tikhir have not been documented or recorded adequately where the language can be introduced formally in some capacity. References to Tikhir language studies are meagre and the publication of literary works in Tikhir language is limited to scholarly dissertation and some components of Bible Translation.

3.3. Language Vitality and Endangerment of Tikhir language

The preamble of UNESCO document on Language Vitality and Endangerment right away expresses the importance of language documentation and the need for it. Regardless of the internal and external forces that are contributing to language extinction and language endangerment, the document stress on raising awareness and proposes solution to revitalize delicate languages. The document also mentioned a caveat in the process of assessing language vitality and endangerment stating that the complexity and diversity of language communities is complicated and therefore one cannot infer on vitality and endangerment of a language by considering one single factor. In this regard, nine factors were presented as guidelines to assist language community to understand their language status.

Factor 1. Intergenerational Language Transmission (scale)

Factor 2. Absolute Number of Speakers (real numbers)

Factor 3. Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population (scale)

Factor 4. Trends in Existing Language Domains (scale)

Factor 5. Response to New Domains and Media (scale)

Factor 6. Materials for Language Education and Literacy (scale)

Factor 7. Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies, Including Official Status and Use: (scale)

Factor 8. Community Members’ Attitudes toward Their Own Language (scale)

Factor 9. Amount and Quality of Documentation (scale)

(The table is excerpt from UNESCO (2003) Language Vitality and Endangerment)

Table 1: Nine factors to assess Vitality of a language

Referring to Table 1, the present study assessed the Tikhir language vitality, the state of its energy and activeness. The study also examined the status of its endangerment. The grading for the factors were provided by the representative of Tikhir Literature Board and from post-graduate students belonging to Tikhir tribe. All the responds were unanimous.

Sl. No.	Evaluative Factor	Grade	Degree of Endangerment	Interpretation of the grade
1	Intergenerational Language Transmission	5	Safe	The language is used by all ages, from children up.
2	Proportion of Speakers Within the Total Reference Population	5	Safe	All speak the language.
3	Domains and Functions	4	Multilingual parity	Two or more languages may be used in most social domains and for most functions.
4	New Domains and Media Accepted by the Endangered Language	5	Dynamic	The language is used in all new domains
5	Accessibility of Written Materials	1		A practical orthography is known to the community and some material is being written
6	Official Attitudes toward Language	5		All languages are protected
7	Community Members’ Attitudes toward Language	5		All members value their language and wish to see it promoted.
8	Language Documentation	1		Inadequate. Only a few grammatical sketches, short wordlists,

				and fragmentary texts. Audio and video recordings do not exist, are of unusable quality, or are completely un-annotated.
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TABLE 2: Language Vitality Assessment of Tikhir language

The vitality of a language and the degree of language endangerment are two crucial aspects in the process of understanding status of a language. Tikhir language in the degree of endangerment scored ‘Safe,’ speakers of Tikhir language are estimated to be less than 10000, according to 2011 census report, however, the community are dedicated in the transmission of their language from generation to generation. Another reason that secures the safety of the language is the loyalty of the community towards their culture and language. A strong sense of unity among this minority tribe is observed as an outsider and this factor can persevered and accelerate the development of their language. In case of Activeness of the language, the Tikhir language is at its primary state. Language documentation and development of literature should be given the utmost priority to secure a better language vitality status.

4. ²Challenges facing by the Tikhir Literature Committee:

1. Lack of linguistic experts

Absence of linguistics experts and literary experts among the native people of Tikhir is one serious challenge faced by the Tribe. In order to assist in the development of their written literature and understanding their grammar, experts in language are most required but the dearth of such expertise is having an impact on the development of the language.

2. Tribal issues and other threats that unfurled over decades have severe impact on their progress as a tribe in general and this in turn stagnant their language development.

². The Tikhir Literary Board members after deliberation personally wrote back in respond to the questions send for enquiries. Q1. What are the challenges they are facing. Q2. What measures are been taken to elevate their language for recognition and also to be introduce formally in Education?

3. Differences of accent and pronunciation of some words from a village called Kiutikiu (Anatongre) with the other Tikhir villages needs to be address. The issue on **Selection and Codification** is a matter at present for the literary committee.
4. Need of financial support and resources from the government to expedite the literary work.

5. Measures the Tikhir Literature Committee is taking to push Tikhir language to be one of the recognize Naga language and to introduced formally in Education:

1. Collection of words/vocabulary through small group discussion.
2. Garnering and reviving of words spoken by the ancestors from elderly people of Tikhir tribes.
3. Documentation of words/vocabulary with consensus of the people to publish the first Tikhir dictionary.
4. Proposal to translate English textbooks to Tikhir is been forwarded to the School Education Department and SCERT Nagaland and anticipating responses from the Government.

The above statements are the concerns and challenges the Tikhir literary board is currently confront with. It is undeniable that the decade long inter-tribal conflict has truly pause the progress of this Tikhir tribe; they are behind the rest of the other Naga tribes' languages by miles. Focussing on language alone, all the recognised tribes of Nagaland have introduced their languages up to secondary level through the educational agency - State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) which is the concern body to develop indigenous language textbooks for formal education and through their independent literary boards.

An overview of other Naga languages in formal education is not disheartening as the Naga languages in literature are developing reasonably. It is also worth mentioning that the major Naga tribes under the umbrella of their concern literary boards have significantly progress in their literature and offer degree courses. Tenyidie is one of the Naga languages that has augmented notably and offers degrees till PhD level in Nagaland University.

Tikhir community to equate with the rest of the Naga languages have started the ground work. Their first initiative is collecting vocabularies, starting the process of language standardisation and attempting to elaborate the language function in form of formal education.

6. Conclusion

The objective of this paper is to introduce Tikhir language, a lesser-known language, a language of a minority tribe of Nagaland. The paper is an attempt to understand the status of Tikhir language in terms of language vitality and endangerment. The study also presented the challenges the community is facing to develop their language and literature. As concluding remark, the writer sincerely desires to entice researchers to contribute to Tikhir language in form of studying their language and documenting their language and culture.

Today, though the Tikhir tribe are behindhand in their language development, they embark a new beginning as a distinct tribe of the Naga family, with this re-establishment of their identity they are confident that now they can look forward for progress and not regress, harmony in their land and not conflict and they aspire to be at par with all other Naga tribes.

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Language Endangerment: A Case Study of Mising, An Endangered Language of Northeast India

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to discuss the nature and extent of language endangerment with special reference to the Mising community settled mainly in the states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh in the north eastern part of India. The Mising tribe is an Indo-Mongoloid tribe settled in the plains of Assam. The Mising tribes is one of the second largest groups among the 25th scheduled tribe inhabiting the state of Assam. According to the 2011 census the total population mising language speakers is 7,00,000 approximately. Geographically the population resides in the bank of Brahmaputra River and its tributaries. Based on the linguistics classification of languages, the Mising belongs to Sino- Tibetan subgroup of Tibeto-Burman language family. The tribe also known as Plain Miri, is a tani group of language. According to the UNESCO report(2003), Mising is one of the endangered languages of North-East India. The paper aims to look into the language endangerment of Mising and the causes that leads to language endangerment. The attitude of the native speakers towards the language will also be assessed and the suggestions to save the language from further endangerment will also be given.

Keywords: Mising, Status of language, Attitude, Endangerment.

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Introduction

An endangered language is a language that is at risk or fear of extinction or is diminishing out of use. If the language dies then gradually the cultural identity and diversity of the community will also die. According to UNESCO report 2021, 40% of the estimated 7,000 approximate languages around the world are endangered, out of which most of them are indigenous languages (Rahman.M:2021). The stepping phenomenon towards the extinction or loss of a language is known as language endangerment. The primary drivers of indigenous language loss involves different factors i.e. social, economic and political subjugation of Indigenous peoples, including centuries of social exclusion and poverty, genocide, forced displacement, policies of assimilation etc (Dewri, P& H. D. Mary:2021).

Mising: an overview

Mising also known as Plain Miri, based on Robbins Burling classification Mising belongs to Tani, a Sino- Tibetan subgroup of Tibeto-Burman language family. The tribe is inhabited mostly in districts of Sadiya, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Sivasagar, Jorhat, Golaghat, Dhemaji, Lakhimpur, Majuli, Sonitpur, Charaideo of Assam and in some parts of Arunachal Pradesh. Ethnically, Mising are close to the Tani groups of people in Arunachal Pradesh known as Adi. They had dwelt for long centuries in Siang (Tsangpo in Tibet) valley of the eastern Himalayan ranges before their migration to the Brahmaputra valley in Assam.

The language has nine dialects: Pagro, Dilu, Ojan, Sajan, Moying, Dambug, and Samuguria, Tamargoja, Bongkhul. The Samuguria, Tamargoja, and Bongkhul groups have largely adopted Assamese (an Indo-Aryan language) in preference to Mising for the majority of language situations (Doley and Post 2012: 3.3). The Apex body "Mising Agom Kebang" is working for the development of Mising language and literature. They had dwelt for long centuries in Siang (Tsangpo in Tibet) valley of the Eastern Himalayan ranges before their migration to the Brahmaputra valley in Assam.

Factors Responsible for Language Endangerment

Below we explain the six major factors identified: 1) Intergenerational Language Transmission; 2) Absolute Number of Speakers; 3) Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population; 4) Trends in Existing Language Domains; 5) Response to New Domains and Media; and 6) Materials for Language Education and Literacy. A language that is ranked highly according to one criterion may deserve immediate and urgent attention due to other factors.

(i) Intergenerational Language Transmission.

The most commonly used factor in evaluating the vitality of a language is whether or not it is being transmitted from one generation to the next (Fishman 1991). Endangerment can be ranked on a continuum from stability to extinction. Even “safe” (below), however, does not guarantee language vitality, because at any time speakers may cease to pass on their language to the next generation. Six degrees of endangerment may be distinguished with regards to Intergenerational Language Transmission:

Safe (5): The language is spoken by all generations. There is no sign of linguistic threat from any other language, and the intergenerational transmission of the language seems uninterrupted.

Stable yet threatened (5-): The language is spoken in most contexts by all generations with unbroken intergenerational transmission, yet multilingualism in the native language and one or more dominant language(s) has usurped certain important communication contexts. Note that multilingualism alone is not necessarily a threat to languages.

Unsafe (4): Most but not all children or families of a particular community speak their language as their first language, but it may be *restricted to specific social domains* (such as at home where children interact with their parents and grandparents).

Definitively endangered (3): The language is no longer being learned as the mother tongue by children in the home. The youngest speakers are thus of the parental generation. At this stage, parents may still speak their language to their children, but their children do not typically respond in the language.

Severely endangered (2): The language is spoken only by grandparents and older generations; while the parent generation may still understand the language, they typically do not speak it to their children.

Critically endangered (1): The youngest speakers are in the great-grand parental generation, and the language is not used for everyday interactions. These older people often remember only part of the language but do not use it, since there may not be anyone to speak with.

Extinct (0): There is no one who can speak or remember the language.

(ii) Absolute Number of Speakers

It is impossible to provide a valid interpretation of absolute numbers, but a small speech community is always at risk. A small population is much more vulnerable to decimation (e.g., by disease, warfare, or natural disaster) than a larger one. A small language group may also merge with a neighboring group, losing its own language and culture.

(iii) Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population

The number of speakers in relation to the total population of a group is a significant indicator of language vitality, where “group” may refer to the ethnic, religious, regional, or national group with which the speaker community identifies. The following scale can be used to appraise degrees of endangerment.

(iv) Trends in Existing Language Domains

Where, with whom, and the range of topics for which a language is used directly affects whether or not it will be transmitted to the next generation.

Universal use (5): The language of the ethnolinguistic group is the language of

interaction, identity, thinking, creativity, and entertainment, and is actively used in all discourse domains for all purposes.

Multilingual parity (4): One or more dominant languages, rather than the language of the ethnolinguistic group, is/are the primary language(s) in most official domains: government, public

offices, and educational institutions. The language in question, however, may well continue to be integral to a number of public domains, especially in traditional religious institutions, local stores, and those places where members of the community socialize. The coexistence of the dominant and non-dominant languages results in speakers' using each language for a different function (diglossia), whereby the non-dominant language is used in informal and home contexts and the dominant language is used in official and public contexts. Speakers may consider the dominant language to be the language of social and economic opportunity. However, older members of the community may continue to use only their own minority language. Note that multilingualism, common throughout the world, does not necessarily lead to language loss.

Dwindling domains (3): The non-dominant language loses ground and, at home, parents begin to use the dominant language in their everyday interactions with their children, and children become semi-speakers of their own language (receptive bilinguals). Parents and older members of the community tend to be productively bilingual in the dominant and indigenous languages: they understand and speak both. Bilingual children may exist in families where the indigenous language is actively used.

Limited or formal domains (2): The non-dominant language is used only in highly formal domains, as especially in ritual and administration. The language may also still be used at the community center, at festivals, and at ceremonial occasions where these older members of the community have a chance to meet. The limited domain may also include homes where grandparents and other older extended family members reside, and other traditional gathering places of the elderly. Many people can understand the language but cannot speak it.

Highly limited domain (1): The non-dominant language is used in very restricted domains at special occasions, usually by very few individuals in a community, e.g., ritual leaders on ceremonial occasions. Some other individuals may remember at least some of the language (rememberers).

Extinct (0): The language is not spoken at any place at any time.

Note that multilingualism is a fact of life in most areas of the world. Speakers don't have to be monolingual for their language to be vital. It is crucial that the indigenous language serves a meaningful function in culturally important domains.

(v) Response to New Domains and Media

New areas for language use may emerge as community living conditions change. While some language communities do succeed in expanding their own language into the new domain, most do not. Schools, new work environments, new media, including broadcast media and the Internet, usually serve only to expand the scope and power of the dominant language at the expense of endangered languages. Although no existing domains of the endangered language may be lost, the use of the dominant language in the new domain has mesmerizing power, as with television. If the communities do not meet the challenges of modernity with their language, it becomes increasingly irrelevant and stigmatized.

The type and use of these new domains will vary according to the local context. One example of the possible use of this criterion is: an endangered language enjoys one new domain, broadcast media, including radio and television, but only for a half-hour a week. Though the availability of these media gives the language a potentially high ranking, the extreme time limitation results in limited exposure to the language, which thus would rank only a 2 or 3. Inevitably, there will be different levels of achievement in different media. In education, assigning criteria can be based on two dimensions: up to what level, and how broadly across the curriculum, the endangered language is used. An endangered language which is the medium of instruction for all courses and at all levels will rank much higher than an endangered language that is taught only one hour per week. All new domains, be they in employment, education, or the media, must be considered together when assessing an endangered language community's response.

(vi) Materials for Language Education and Literacy

Education in the language is essential for language vitality. There are language communities that maintain strong oral traditions, and some do not wish their language to be written. In other communities, literacy in their language is a source of pride. In general, however, literacy is

directly linked with social and economic development. Needed are books and materials on all topics for various ages and language abilities.

(vi.a) Language Attitudes and Policies

The maintenance, promotion, or abandonment of non-dominant languages may be dictated by the dominant linguistic culture, be it regional or national. The linguistic ideology of a state may inspire linguistic minorities to mobilize their populations toward the maintenance of their languages, or may force them to abandon them. These linguistic attitudes can be a powerful force both for promotion and loss of their languages. Members of the dominant culture shape the ideological environment, propagating a value system in which their own language is seen as a positive asset, and believed to be a unifying symbol for the region or state. When several larger linguistic communities compete for the same political or social space, they may each have their own conflicting linguistic attitudes. This leads to the general perception that multiple languages cause divisiveness and are a threat to national unity. The fostering of a single dominant language is one attempt to deal with this real or merely perceived threat. In doing so, the governing body may legislate the use of language. Accordingly, the policies may discourage or even prohibit the use of other languages. National policy, including the lack of overt policy, has in any case a direct impact on the language attitude of the community itself.

(vi.b) Language Attitudes and Policies: Dominant and Non-dominant Language Communities

A country's government may have an explicit language use policy for its multiple languages. At one extreme, one language may be designated as the sole official language of the country, while all others are condemned. At the other extreme, all languages of a nation may receive equal official status. Equal legal status, however, does not guarantee language maintenance and long-term vitality of a language.

(vii) Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies, Including Official Status and Use

Governments and institutions have explicit policies and/or implicit attitudes toward the dominant and subordinate languages.

Equal support (5): All of a country's languages are valued as assets. All Languages are protected by law, and the government encourages the maintenance of all languages by implementing explicit policies.

Differentiated support (4): non-dominant languages are explicitly protected by the government, but there are clear differences in the contexts in which the dominant/official language(s) and non-dominant (protected) language(s) are used. The government encourages ethnolinguistic groups to maintain and use their languages, most often in private domains (as the home language), rather than in public domains (e.g., in schools). Some of the domains of non-dominant language use enjoy high prestige (e.g., at ceremonial occasions).

Passive assimilation (3): The dominant group is indifferent as to whether minority languages are spoken, as long as the dominant group's language is the language of interaction. Most domains of non-dominant language use do not enjoy high prestige.

Active assimilation (2): The government encourages minority groups to abandon their own languages by providing education for the minority group members in the dominant language. Speaking and/or writing in non-dominant languages is not encouraged.

Forced assimilation (1): The government has an explicit language policy declaring the dominant group's language to be the only official national language, while the languages of subordinate groups are neither recognized nor supported.

Prohibition (0): Minority languages are prohibited from use in any domain. Languages may be tolerated in private domains.

3.8 Community Members' Attitudes toward their own language

Members of a speech community are not usually neutral towards their own language. They may see it as essential to their community and identity and promote it; they may use it without promoting it; they may be ashamed of it and, therefore, not promote it; or they may see it as a nuisance and actively avoid using it. When members' attitudes towards their language are very positive, the language may be seen as a key symbol of group identity. Just as people value family traditions, festivals and community events, members of the community may see their language as

a cultural core value, vital to their community and ethnic identity. If members view their language as a hindrance to economic mobility and integration into mainstream society, they may develop negative attitudes toward their language.

3.8.1. Language Attitudes and Policies: Interaction and social effects

Attitudes towards the language, be they positive, indifferent, or negative, interact with governmental policy and societal pressures to result in increased or decreased language use in different domains. In many cases, community members abandon their language because they believe they have no alternative, or because they do not have enough knowledge about the long-term consequences of the “choices” they make. People in such a situation have often been presented with an either-or choice (“either you cling to your mother-tongue and identity but don’t get a job,” or “you leave your language and have better chances in life”). Actually, maintaining and using both languages will allow even better chances in life. When languages have an unequal power relationship members of the subordinate group usually speak both their native language and the dominant language. Speakers may gradually come to use only the dominant language. On the other hand, the subordinate group may resist linguistic domination and mobilize its members to revitalize or fortify their language. Strategies for such linguistic activism must be tailored to the particular sociolinguistic situation, which generally is one of three types:

- a. Language Revival: Re-introducing a language that has been in limited use for some time, such as Hebrew after the creation of the state of Israel, or Gaelic in Ireland;
- b. Language Fortification: Increasing the presence of the non-dominant language to counterbalance a perceived linguistic threat of a dominant language, such as Welsh;
- c. Language Maintenance: Supporting the stable use, in speaking and in writing (where orthographies exist), of the non-dominant language in a region or state with both multilingualism and a dominant language (lingua franca), such as Maori in New Zealand. For language vitality, speakers ideally not only strongly value their language, but they also know in which social domains their language is to be supported. A positive attitude is critical for the long-term stability of a language.

3.8.2. Urgency for Documentation

As guided for assessing the urgency of documenting a language, the types and quality of existing language materials must be identified. This constitutes the factors in the assessment of language endangerment.

3.9. Amount and Quality of Documentation

As a guide for assessing the urgency for documenting a language, the type and quality of existing language materials must be identified. Of central importance are written texts, including transcribed, translated, and annotated audiovisual recordings of natural speech. Such information importantly helps members of the language community formulate specific tasks, and enables linguists to design research projects together with members of the language community.

4. Assessment of the degree of language Endangerment of Mising

Based on the factors discussed above regarding responsibility for Language Endangerment, this section tries to discuss the nature and degree of language endangerment in Mising.

4.1. Intergenerational Language Transmission

It is important to mention that the Misings are settled in the riverine areas of Brahmaputra valley and in some part of Arunachal Pradesh. In the case of Mising most children or families of the community speak this language as their first language but this is becoming restricted to specific social domains such as the home where children interact only with their parents and grandparents. Misings are mostly multilingual in their native language, the neighboring languages and the dominant language of the state and country. In the case of inter marriages, particularly in the case of educated and working parents, children are often found giving up their mother tongue and shifting to Assamese, Hindi or even English. In the case of Misings working and settled in cities intergenerational transmission is even more less. Therefore, the language can be said to be unsafe and gradually moving towards Definitely Endangered.

4.2. Absolute Number of Speakers

The number of Mising speakers according to the census of India 2001 and 2011 is given in the table below:

Year	2001	2011
Mising	5,51,182	5,87,310

Table 1: Absolute Number of Speakers

Considering the total number of speakers, Mising is a severely endangered language.

4.3. Proportion of Speakers with the total Population

Misings are scattered over the Brahmaputra valley and Arunachal Pradesh. The Mising lives in riverine areas bounded by Assamese, Boro, Bengali and Nepali speaking Communities. And thus, Mising becomes the linguistically minority language whereas Assamese becomes the dominant language. As a result the present generation has adopted a dominant language and they are gradually shifting to Assamese Language and Culture. Therefore, this language can be categorized as severely endangered taking the proportion of speakers within the total population in North East India

4.4. Shifting in Domains of Language use

As mentioned earlier, there is a gradual shift from the mother tongue to other neighboring dominant languages. Assamese plays a very crucial role in this regard. Fluency in Assamese and other dominant languages is regarded as prestigious and a younger generation prefers to speak in public even if they know their own mother tongue. Rather, Assamese English and Hindi also plays a vital role as those who pursue their formal education in Assamese , English and Hindi medium schools prefer using Assamese, English and Hindi. As a result, Mising are slowly losing their language because they have started speaking Assamese, Hindi and English inter and intra communication across different generations in everyday interaction. Hence most of the Mising community people are multilinguals. Therefore, we can say that the use of language in different domains is decreasing rapidly.

4.5. Response to New Domain and Media

The language finds no place in the public domains such as school and colleges but it is not found to be used as the official language of the State. Therefore, the response of the language to new domains and media is minimal and is somehow managed in some digital media Facebook, YouTube, Instagram etc.

4.6. Materials for Language Education and Literacy

As Mising has its own script 'Roman' therefore, they use 'Roman' script for writings as well as they use "Assamese" script for writing. The language is not implemented in the educational system yet. But there are very few institutions where Mising language learning is being taught. The language has a Dictionary and few works on grammar. But the language is not used as a medium of instruction and it also finds no importance in the curriculum in all domains.

4.7. Government and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies

As mentioned earlier, Mising is not an official language in the states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. Therefore, the other non-dominant languages don't enjoy any high prestige. In a secular country like India the Constitution safeguards and protects all minority languages. However, in practice, the reality is very different and minority languages are often neglected and allowed to perish. Thus, we can say that in regard to official attitudes towards the language, Mising can be said to be protected primarily as the language of the private domain and gets differentiated support. Therefore, the language needs serious attention in this regard.

4.8. Communication Members Attitudes Towards their Own Language

The community member's attitude towards Mising can be considered as a positive in spite of many external factors. This can be seen from the fact that there are many philanthropic organizations and literary bodies trying to develop, improve and preserve the language. Language is still seen as a mark of distinct identity in a state where there are many ethnic linguistic groups. Many independent scholars of the community are also taking necessary steps for writing and publishing different books in Mising language. At present, the younger

generations are also taking active role in social media for promoting and preserving the Language.

4.9. Type of Quality Documentation

There is very limited literature available in the language in the form of religious and cultural books. There are also magazines and journals trying to spread language use and thus helping in preservation and revitalization of the language. Thus, we can say, with regard to the type and quality of documentation, the language is inadequate and still needs a lot of support.

Based on the above discussion, the degree of language endangerment in Mising may be summed up in the following table.

5. Factors responsible for Endangerment of Mising

The factors responsible for language endangerment vary from language to language in certain socio-linguistic settings.

The following factors are responsible for the endangerment of Mising language.

1. Languages are threatened by external forces such as economic, political, religion, cultural or educational subjugation, or by internal forces such as a community's negative attitude towards its own language. At present, for Mising, the increasing intermarriage, and rapid urbanization often bring along the loss of traditional ways of life and a strong pressure to speak a dominant language, which is perceived to be necessary for full civic participation and economic advancement. The rich indigenous culture of Mising is gradually disappearing due to globalization, modernization, westernization and urbanization.
2. The older people in rural areas use all the lexical items related to culture, food habits, flora-fauna including medical plants, games, household materials etc. However, in the urban areas, they do not use any Mising lexical items rather they use Assamese language, leading to further language endangerment.
3. There is no Mising medium educational institution for learning or imparting mother tongue education. Therefore, students go to English and Assamese medium schools further leading to language shift and language endangerment.

4. Borrowing is a very common phenomenon among the educated and younger generation. Here, the state dominant language and English languages can be considered as the main killer of the indigenous languages.
5. Use of folk songs, dances and proverbs are almost extinct among the urban area Mising, but in rural area they are still practicing and preserving their own cultural rituals.

6. Observations

Mising is one of the endangered languages of North East India, as intergenerational transmission is declining due to pressure from the dominant languages. In the rural area, Mising are multilinguals as they are fluent in their mother tongue, the neighboring language and the state dominant language. However, in the urban areas, they generally speak Assamese in all the domains. Due to this reason, there is shifting of language due to the dominant state language.

There is very few mother tongue education and so in urban areas, there is no scope for learning the language. Therefore, it is very important to implement mother tongue education in the formal educational institutions especially in Mising dominated areas.

There is an urgent need to improve and develop the status of the language and for which proper planning and documentation is very important for the survival of the language.

Recommendations

1. If language dies, the culture and identity of the people also dies. Therefore, it is very important to safeguard endangered languages and the older generation must pass the language to the younger generation.
2. Practicing one's own cultural rituals is very important for preservation of the culture and language. Therefore, the community members must continue to practice and preserve their cultural and religious heritage.
3. Awareness program about the importance of language and cultural preservation must be organized.

4. Learner's books, dictionaries, grammar books and literary books related to language and culture in Mising must be written and published for enriching the literature.
5. Documentation of language, folk songs, folk dances, folk music, cultural rituals etc. are important and it must be available to the younger generation for learning.
6. Workshops related to cultural activities like folk songs, dances etc. can be conducted in different Mising villages.
7. The state educational curriculum should give importance to Mother tongue education for protection and preservation of minority and endangered languages like Mising.
8. Native speakers also have a major role to play in the maintenance and preservation of the language. They should preserve their language by using it in different domains.
9. Native linguists and language experts can help in the preparation of primers, dictionaries and grammars in the language.
10. Modern technology like online digital archiving can be used for documenting and archiving the language and culture. This can later be used for teaching and learning purposes.

Conclusion

Due to globalization, modernization, and a variety of other factors, language endangerment is on the rise. This is especially true for languages with fewer speakers, such as Mising, where migration to the dominant nearby language is widespread. When native speakers of a language stop passing it down to future generations, the language is endangered. If the current generation does not take action immediately, all of the endangered languages will perish. As a result, suitable steps should be made, and awareness programmes about all of the issues should be held. With this in mind, the current study attempts to address several concerns related to language endangerment and proposed solutions for preserving the Mising language and culture in North East India.

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Segmental Phonemes in Tripura: A variety of Kokborok

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Khawlsongkim Suantak²

Abstract

The present paper attempts to provide the description of the segmental phonemes in Tripura, a variety of kokborok which is a Tibeto-Burman language of Bodo-Garo branch. In Tripura state, this variety is spoken in Sabroom and Belonia sub-divisions of South Tripura, Amarpur and Karbook sub-divisions of Gomati District, North Tripura, Longtharai valley and Gandacherra sub-divisions of Dhalai district and Agartala. Tripura speakers are also scattered in Hailakandi, Karimganj and Cachar districts of Assam state, and Mamit District of Mizoram. According to the Census of India 2011 the total population of Tripura and Tripuri is 5,92,255 persons in the state and highest in number among all the other scheduled tribal groups. However, no specific number of Tripura speakers is mentioned. Tripura is also spoken in present-day eastern Bangladesh. This paper is the first attempt of linguistic work undertaken in Tripura variety.

Aims of the study

The main aim of this paper is to describe the segmental phonemes occurring in Tripura variety focusing on the number of phonemes (monophthongs, diphthongs, triphthongs, consonants) marked in this variety. In respect of place of articulation, Tripura consonants can be divided into five bilabials sounds, seven alveolar, three palatals, four velars and one glottal. And with regard to the manner of articulation and voicing, Tripura consonants can be further categorized into (i) stops {/p, t, c, k, b, d, ʃ, g, p^h, t^h, k^h/}, (ii) nasals {/m, n, ŋ/}, (iii) fricatives {/s, h/}, (iv) tap or flap {/r/}, (v) lateral {/l/} and (vi) semivowels {/w, y/}.

Keywords: Segmental phonemes, Tripura, Kokborok, Tibeto-Burman, Bodo-Garo.

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1. Introduction

'Tripura' is one of the scheduled tribes among the 19 scheduled tribes in the state of Tripura. It is located in serial no.18 (The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 1976 (No. 108 of 1976) & The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 2002 (No.10 of 2003), The Gazette of India of Scheduled Tribes list of the state.

Tripura variety of Kokborok belongs to Bodo-Garo group of Tibeto-Burman, branch of Sino-Tibetan family. According to G.A. Grierson (1904), the Bodo group comprises of Mech and Kachari and the cognates languages spoken by other tribes like Tripuri, Garo, Rabha, Chutiya, Dimasa, Lalung, Hojai etc. The speakers of Kokborok and the different dialects of Kokborok in the state of Tripura are Debbarma (puranTripuri), Tripura, Jamatia, Noatia (New Tripuri), Reang, Uchoi, Rupini, Kalai, and Murasing. Tripura variety is used only in spoken word such as folk songs, folk tales and religious songs like goria dance. This variety has no script of its own. It is written in both Bengali and Roman Scripts. The clans of Tripuras are (1) Naitong (2) Anok (3) Khaklu (4) Khali (5) Gorjong (6) Kewa (7) Dendak (8) Phatung (9) Gaigra (10) Gabing (11) Tongbai (12) Mongbai (13) Totaram (14) Harbang (15) Mwiching (16) Bilok (17) Saka Rupini (18) Aslong (19) Kema (20) Charai and (21) Masbeng. The dialects and sub-dialects of Kokborok are recognised and label after the speakers of the Tribes or sub-tribes and clans who use the patronym namely Debbarma, Tripura, Reang, Jamatia, Murasing, Koloï, Rupini and Noatia.

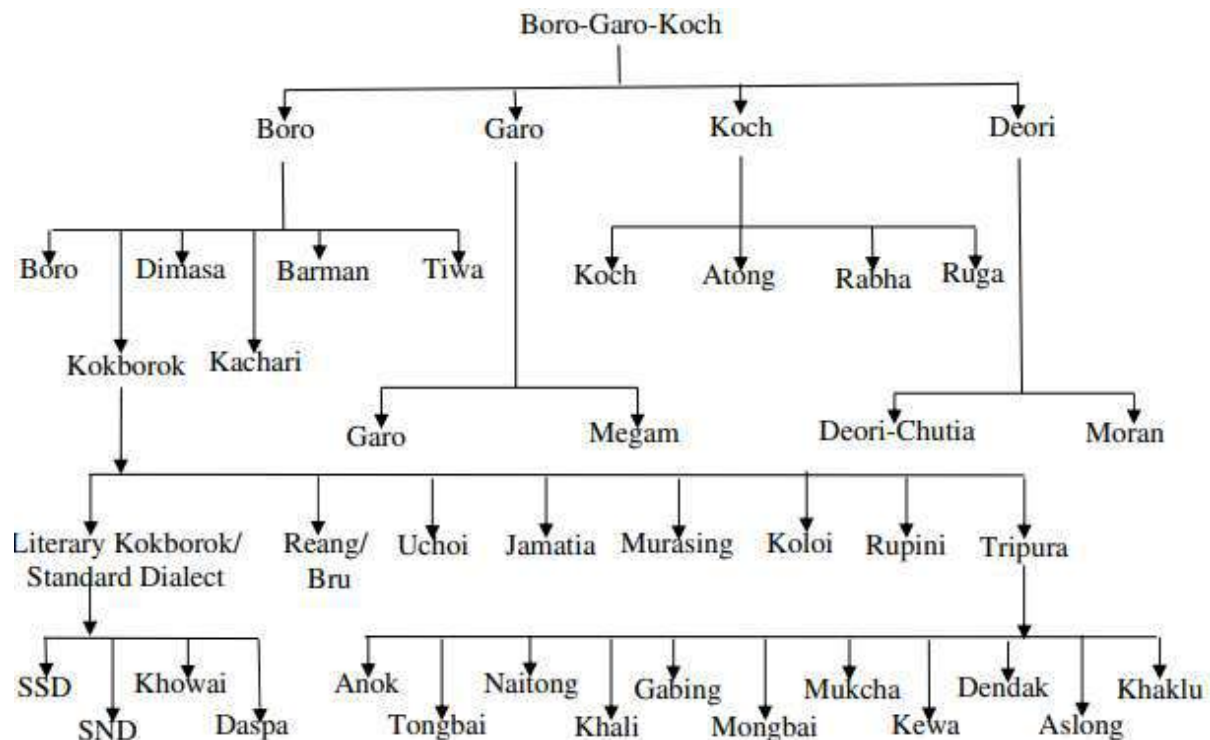


Fig 1: Kokborok Language Family and its Dialects

2. Phonemic Inventory

The phonemic inventory of the Tripura variety of Kokborok comprises of six pure vowels, six diphthongs and twenty consonants as segmental phonemes. The term segment refers to the individual speech sounds that make up syllables whereas phoneme is the minimal distinctive unit of speech in a language. Segments are distributed into two kinds; vowels and consonants. Typical vowel segments are [i a u]; a few examples of typical consonants are [m b k f s]. At first, we will discuss about the vowels in Tripura and followed by consonants thereafter.

2.1. Vowels in Tripura

Phonetically, vowels are sounds articulated without a complete CLOSURE in the mouth or a degree of narrowing which would produce audible Friction; the air escapes evenly over the centre of the TONGUE. When the air escapes solely through the mouth, the vowels are said to be ORAL whereas if some of the air is simultaneously released through the nose, the vowels are said to be NASAL. At the phonological level, vowel is defined as syllabic, the sound that forms the peak of a syllable (Crystal, 2003, p.496).

At the phonological level, Tripura does not have instances of long and short vowels phonemes. The length of vowels does not affect the meaning in this variety.

Based on the quality of the vowel sounds, vowel is classified into two types: monophthongs and diphthongs.

2.1.1 Monophthongs in Tripura

A vowel whose quality remains relatively constant and does not glide is called a pure vowel or monophthongs. Tripura has six pure vowel sounds, they are /i, e, a, ɔ, u and ʊ/. Among the six pure vowels in Tripura, five vowels are primary whereas the other one /ʊ/ is secondary. Figure 1 shows the primary and secondary cardinal vowels of Tripura on the vowel quadrilateral.

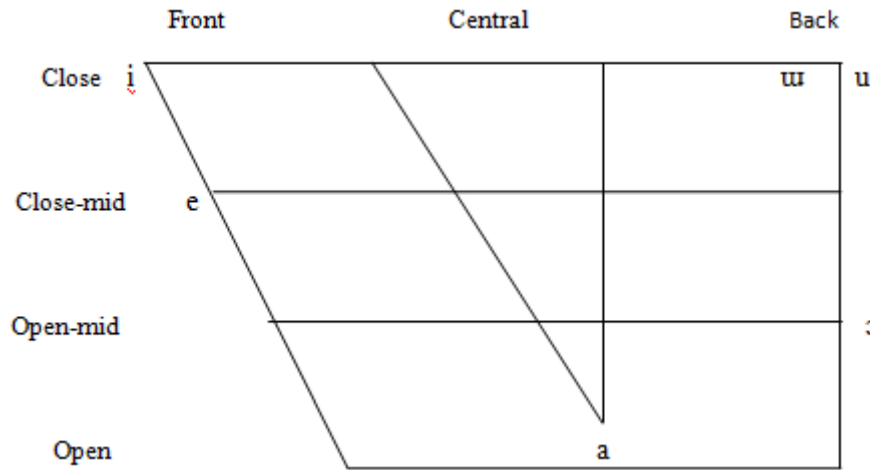


Figure 2: Pure Vowels or Monophthongs chart in Tripura.

The vowels occurring in different language of the world can be classified into three different parameters such as (i) **vowel frontness and backness** (horizontal dimension) (ii) **vowel height** (vertical dimension) and (iii) **rounding** (lip position or shape of the lips). The first parameter classifies the vowels into (a) **front** (b) **central** and (c) **back** and the second parameter classifies the vowels into (a) **high** (close) (b) **mid** and (c) **low** (open). The third parameter classifies the vowels into (a) **rounded** (round lips) and **unrounded** (spread lips).

For the purpose of describing speech sounds we need to recognise five areas of the tongue which are given here for reference.

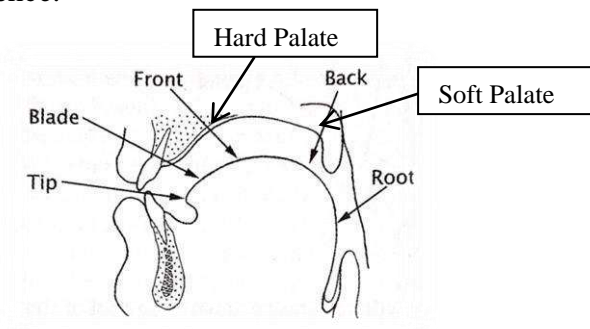


Figure 3: Areas of the tongue.

Monophthongs in Tripura can be described on the basis of these three qualities as shown in (1-3).

1. **Vowel frontness and backness** (horizontal dimension).

Tripura encompasses two front vowels, one central vowel and three back vowels which are described underneath.

(a) Front Vowels: /i, e/. Front vowels are produced by raising the front of the tongue towards the hard palate.

(b) Central Vowel: /a/. This vowel is produced by raising the central part of the tongue towards the junction of the hard and soft palates.

(c) Back Vowels: /ɔ, u, ʊ/. These vowels are produced by raising the back of the tongue towards the soft palate.

2. Vowel height (vertical dimension). It refers to the relationship between the highest point of the tongue and the roof of the oral cavity. Tripura consists of three high vowels, two mid vowels and one low vowel as shown in (2a), (2b) and (2c) respectively.

(a) High (close) Vowels: /i, u, ʊ/. During the articulation of high vowel the tongue is raised towards the roof of the mouth.

(b) Mid Vowels: /e, ɔ/. If the tongue body is positioned at a neutral height in the oral cavity, the vowels articulated are mid vowels.

(c) Low (open) Vowel: /a/. If the tongue is only slightly raised, so that there is a wide gap between its highest point and the roof of the oral cavity, then an open or low vowel is produced.

3. Rounding (lip position or shape of the lips). The lips are the second articulator involved in the production of vowels. Thus the position of the lips controls the vowel quality.

In Tripura variety, the phonemic inventory comprises of two rounded vowels and four unrounded vowels which are displayed below in (a) and (b).

(a) **Rounded** (round lips): /ɔ, u/

(b) **Unrounded** (spread lips): /i, e, a, ʊ/.

Vowels in (3a) are called ‘rounded’ because during the articulation of these vowels the lips are rounded. Similarly, those in (3b) are called ‘unrounded’ because the lips are spread apart during articulation.

This Tripura variety highlighted in having a high back unrounded vowel feature.

2.1.1.1. Description of Tripura vowel monophthongs

The six vowel monophthongs in Tripura are described below with an example of each vowel monophthongs.

Phoneme	Description	Example
/i/	high/close front un-rounded vowel	as in /kisip/ ‘hand fan’
/e/	close-mid front un-rounded vowel	as in /ceper/ ‘narrow’
/a/	low open central un-rounded vowel	as in /kabaŋ/ ‘many’

- /ɔ/ open-mid back rounded vowel as in /kɔbɔŋ/ ‘pillow’
- /u/ high/close back rounded vowel as in /buduk/ ‘rope’
- /ʉ/ high/close back un-rounded vowel as in /mʉsu/ ‘chilli’

2.1.1.2. Description and Distribution of Vowel phonemes and their occurrence:

All the vowels phonemes or monophthongs of Tripura can occur in all word positions i.e., in initial, medial and final positions.

The following table shows the distribution of vowels in Tripura variety:

Vowels	Initial	Gloss	Medial	Gloss	Final	Gloss
i	/irʉ/	‘here’	/kitiŋ/	‘round’	/cini/	‘our’
	/imaŋ/	‘dream’	/bihik/	‘wife’	/peli/	‘liver’
e	/er/	‘to increase’	/bekereŋ/	‘bone’	/tɔte/	‘frog’
	/emprɔ/	‘tadpole’	/beŋ/	‘spider’	se	‘shift’
a	/aŋ/	‘I’	/kacak/	‘red’	/la/	‘take’
	/ani/	‘my/mine’	/katal/	‘new’	/basa/	‘offspring’
ɔ	/ɔk/	‘belly’	/mɔkɔl/	‘eye’	/bɔrɔ/	‘where’
	/ɔkra/	‘elder’	/kɔlɔk/	‘long’	/ʒɔtɔ/	‘all/everybody’
u	/ulʉ/	‘later’	/kutʉŋ/	‘hot’	/ru/	‘boil’
	/ul/	‘grind’	/bukʉŋ/	‘nose’	/lu/	‘pour’
ʉ	/ʉi/	‘response to calling’	/tʉi/	‘water’	/sʉrʉ/	‘who’
	/ʉk/	‘yes’	/sʉi/	‘dog’	/mʉsu/	‘chilli’

Table 1: Distribution of Tripura vowel phonemes

2.1.2. Diphthongs in Tripura

A diphthong is a sound which consists of a movement or glide from one vowel to another within a single syllable. Examples of diphthongs in English words are **tie**, **toy** and **town** etc.

Tripura has six vowel glides or diphthongs, i.e, /ai/, /ɔi/, /ui/, /ʉi/, /au/ and /ɔa/, and one triphthong, i.e, /aui/. Tripura has one centring and five closing diphthongs. See the classifications of diphthong in Figure 2 and the ‘trajectory’ involved in the formation of each of the diphthongs of Tripura shown in Figure 3, 4 and 5.

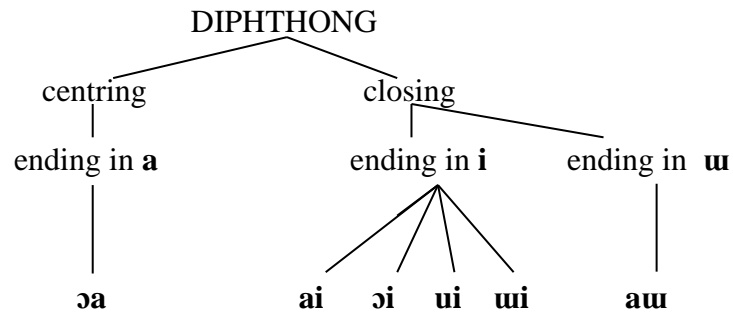


Figure 4: Classifications of Tripura diphthongs.

2.1.2.1. a-ending diphthongs: /ɔa/

There is only one a-ending diphthongs /ɔa/ in Tripura as demonstrated in Figure 3 below.

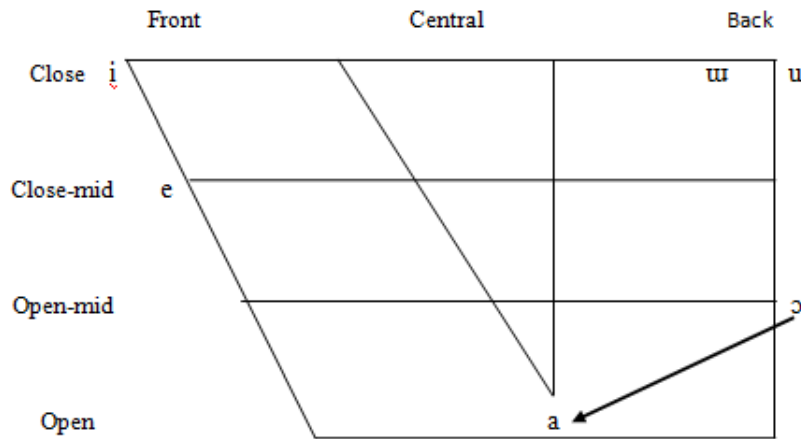


Figure 5: a-ending diphthongs in Tripura.

2.1.2.2. i-ending diphthongs: /ai, ɔi, ui, ui/

Tripura retain four i-ending diphthongs viz. /ai, ɔi, ui, ui/. It is one of the idiosyncratic features of Tripura diphthongs. Consider the Figure below.

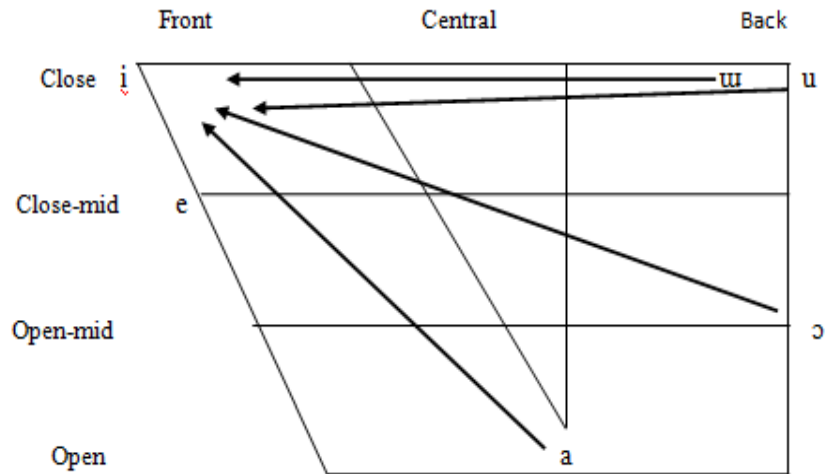


Figure 6: i-ending diphthongs in Tripura.

2.1.2.3. u-ending diphthongs: /au/

Figure 5 shows the u-ending diphthong gliding towards the **u** vowel, as the symbol indicates.

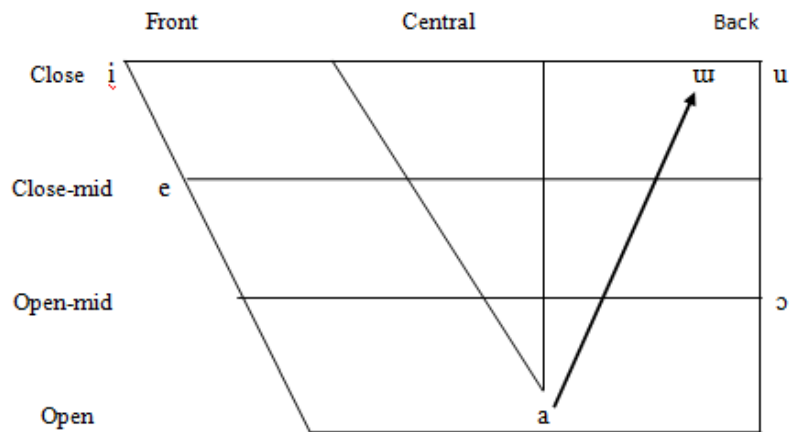


Figure 7: u-ending diphthongs in Tripura.

2.1.2.4. Distribution of diphthongs in Tripura.

The diphthongs cannot occur in all the word positions in Tripura. Only two diphthongs such as /ai, ui/ can occur in all the positions of words whereas /ɔi/ and /ɔa/ take place only in the medial and final position of words. There is one distinctive diphthong, namely /au/ which occurs primarily in the word final position. See the table below.

Diphthongs	Initial	Gloss	Medial	Gloss	Final	Gloss
ai	/aisri/	‘early morning’	/t ^h aipɔŋ/	‘jackfruit’	/balai/	‘leaf’
	/ai/	‘just’	/mairɔŋ/	‘rice grain’	/slai/	‘instead of’
ɔi	-		/sɔitan/	‘devil’	/tɔtɔi/	‘uncle’
			/lɔiɣya/	‘shame’	/bɔi/	‘water flow’
ui	-	-	/kuica/	‘eel’	/sukui/	‘wheel’
			/buruima/	‘woman’	/sui/	‘write’
au	-	-	-	-	/cau/	/‘eating’
					/sau/	‘paining’
ui	ui	‘responses to calling’	muik ^h an	‘meat’	suui	dog
	-				yugui	mother
ɔa	-	-	/pɔaha/	‘250 gm’	/gɔa/	‘sharp bamboo’
			/mɔani/	‘kind of superstitious belief’	-	

Table 2: Distribution of Diphthongs

From the above data it is comprehensible to state that all the diphthongs in Tripura conclude with a closing diphthong /ai, ɔi, ui, uui and au/ except one with a centring diphthong that is /ɔa/. The closing diphthongs predominantly end in /i/.

2.1.3 Triphthong in Tripura

When the three auditory elements are involved in a single syllable, the vowel glide is referred to as a triphthong, e.g. power, player. “Precisely, Tripura has no triphthongs; however certain combinations of /a/ and closing diphthong, specifically /auui/ as in /caui/ ‘eating’ are generally called triphthong”.

Tripura has only one triphthong, i.e. /auui/. It occurs when the glide /au/ is followed by the vowel /i/. For example:

- (1) caui ‘eating’
- (2) laui ‘taking’
- (3) k^hauui ‘tightening’
- (4) rauui ‘cutting’
- (5) wauui ‘raining’

2.1.3.1 Distribution of Tripura Triphthong

Tripura triphthong is found only in the word final position.

Triphthong	Initial	Gloss	Medial	Gloss	Final	Gloss
auui	-	-	-	-	caui k ^h auui	eating tightening

Table 3: Distribution of Triphthong

2.2. Consonants in Tripura

Crystal, David (2003:98) define consonant as ‘those UNITS which functions at the MARGINS of SYLLABLES, either singly or in CLUSTERS.

Tripura has twenty consonants sounds which are further classified on the basis of place of articulation; based on the manner of articulation and voicing. In respect of place of articulation, Tripura consonants can be divided into five bilabials sounds, seven alveolars, three palatals, four velars and one glottal. And with regard to the manner of articulation and voicing, Tripura consonants can be further categorized into (i) voiceless unaspirated stops {/p, t, c, k/}, (ii) voiceless aspirated stops {/p^h, t^h, k^h/}, (iii) voiced stops {/b, d, ʒ, g/}, (iv) nasals {/m, n, ŋ/}, (v) fricatives {/s, h/}, (vi) tap or flap {/r/}, (vii) lateral {/l/} and (viii) semivowels {/w, y/}. Tripura dialect does not have voiced aspirated stops. On the whole Tripura has eleven voiced and nine voiceless sounds. The semi vowel /j/ in IPA is written here as /y/.

Aspiration is phonemic in Tripura.

Manner of Articulation		Place of Articulation									
		Bilabial		Alveolar		Palatal		Velar		Glotal	
		vl	vd	vl	vd	vl	vd	vl	vd	vl	vd
Stop	Un-aspirated	p	b	t	d	c	ʒ	k	g		
	Aspirated	p ^h		t ^h				k ^h			
Nasal			m		n				ŋ		
Fricative				s						h	
Tap or Flap					r						
Lateral					l						
Semi-vowel			w				y				

Table 4: Tripura Consonant chart.

2.2.1 Description of Tripura consonants

Descriptions of Tripura consonants phonemes are presented in Table 5 below.

Sl. no	Consonants	Phonemic descriptions	Tripura	Gloss
1.	/p/	Voiceless unaspirated bilabial stop	/pɔlək/	‘forget’
2.	/p ^h /	voiceless aspirated bilabial stop	/p ^h ai/	‘come’
3.	/b/	voiced unaspirated bilabial stop	/bedek/	‘branch’
4.	/t/	voiceless unaspirated alveolar stop	/tan/	‘chop’
5.	/t ^h /	voiceless aspirated alveolar stop	/t ^h ui/	‘blood’
6.	/d/	voiced unaspirated alveolar stop	/dui/	‘interrogative marker’
7.	/c/	voiceless aspirated palatal stop	/cati/	‘traditional lamp’
8.	/ʃ/	voiced unaspirated palatal stop	/ʃala/	‘rice sapling’
9.	/k/	voiceless unaspirated velar stop	/kuk/	‘grasshopper’
10.	/k ^h /	voiceless aspirated velar stop	/k ^h iri/	‘naughty’
11.	/g/	voiced unaspirated velar stop	/gɔra/	‘fermented rice’
12.	/m/	voiced bilabial nasal	/muŋ/	‘name’
13.	/n/	voiced alveolar nasal	/nuŋui/	‘paternal aunt’
14.	ŋ	voiced velar nasal	/puŋuŋ/	‘to make sound’
15.	/s/	voiceless alveolar unaspirated fricative	/sui/	‘dog’
16.	/h/	voiceless glottal fricative	/hiŋ/	‘cold’
17.	/r/	voiced alveolar tap or flap	/ruŋ/	‘touch’
18.	/l/	voiced alveolar lateral	/luŋ/	‘drink’
19.	/w/	voiced bilabial approximant	/wayeŋ/	‘cradle’
20.	/y/	voiced palatal approximant	/yat ^h ek/	‘leg’

Table 5: Description of Tripura consonants phonemes.

2.2.2 Distribution of Tripura Consonants phonemes and their occurrence

Tripura has nineteen consonants occurring in the initial word positions, nine final consonants and eight consonants which occur in all the word position. Table 6 illustrates the distribution of Tripura consonants phonemes.

Phonemes	Initial	Gloss	Medial	Gloss	Final	Gloss
p	/pəɔk/	‘forget’	/t ^h aipəŋg/	‘jackfruit’	/but ^h uɔp/	‘nest’
t	/tək/	‘bird’	kətək	‘neck’	cat	a roof to support the edible climber plants
k	/kəsək/	‘rotten’	yakuŋ	‘leg’	hilik	‘heavy’
p^h	/p ^h andək/	‘brinjal’	bəp ^h aŋ	‘tree’	-	-
t^h	/t ^h apla/	‘ashes’	əkmat ^h ai	‘navel’	-	-
k^h	/k ^h unɟur/	‘ear’	bak ^h a	‘heart’	-	-
b	/bukuŋ/	‘nose’	bəbar	‘flower’	gab	‘gum’
d	/duwar/	‘door’	bedek	‘branch’	-	-
g	/gəbər/	‘cow dung’	geguma	‘wolf’	-	-
ɟ	/ɟabuɪ/	‘everyone’	k ^h unɟur	‘ear’	-	-
m	/makk ^h ra/	‘monkey’	lama	‘road’	‘gam’	‘good’
n	/nək/	‘house’	munuɪma	‘to laugh’	karan	‘dry’
ŋ	-	-	/k ^h aŋa/	‘cheek’	bekreŋ	‘bone’
c	cuwak	‘wine’	kacak	‘red’	-	-
s	sui	‘dog’	kuustum	‘black’	-	-
h	hər	‘night’	bihik	‘his wife’	-	-
r	raŋ	money	gufusa	‘small’	bukur	‘skin’

l	lecu	‘litchi’	kələk	‘tall’	məkəl	‘eye’
w	watui	‘rain’	‘muiwa’	‘bambooshoot’	-	-
y	yak	‘hand’	miya	yesterday	-	-

Table 6: Distribution of Tripura Consonants phonemes

Conclusion

After the analysis of the segmental sounds of Tripura, it is found that Tripura has six vowels and twenty consonants phonemes. All the vowels phonemes of Tripura can occur in all word positions i.e., in initial, medial and final. There are six diphthongs and one triphthong in Tripura. Among all the six diphthongs, only /ai/ and /ui/ occur in all the word positions. A triphthong /awi/ exclusively occurs only in the word final position. At the phonological level, Tripura does not have instances of long and short vowels phonemes. The length of vowels does not affect the meaning in this variety. The voiced stops /d, g/ and the voiceless aspirated stops /p^h, t^h, k^h/ are missing in the word final position in Tripura which is one of the typological features of Tibeto-Burman languages shared by this variety.

There are no dental, labiodentals, retroflex, uvular and pharyngeal sounds in Tripura. It is also found that aspirated consonants and voiced consonant (except velar nasal /ŋ/) cannot occur in the word final position. Tripura does not have voiced aspirated stops. Aspiration is phonemic in Tripura. Fricative sound /f/ is absent in Tripura, however at the present time it is observed to be utilized by the young speakers due to the influence of Indo-Aryan languages viz. Bengali, Assamese and Hindi in the state of Tripura.

This paper has brought forth the segmental phonemes of Tripura which would be a great interest for the Tripura community in particular and other Kokborok speakers and researchers in general who are keen to do research in Kokborok language. This will also further enrich the development of the Kokborok language.

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Serial Verb as Complex Predicate Construction in Assamese

Bipasha Patgiri

Abstract

Assamese, due to language contact situation, has developed the generally unusual Indo Aryan construction of serial verbs which is a sub-category of the larger class called Complex Predicates. The notion of complex predicate in South Asian languages includes construction such as compound verb construction, explicator compound verb construction, conjunct verb construction, serial verb construction, participial construction, converbs, small clause construction and infinitival construction etc. In this descriptive paper, I would be investigating the event predication and scope of negation in different types of serial verb construction in Assamese.

Keywords: complex predicate, serial verb, event predication, negation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Typologically, the easternmost language of the Indo Aryan language family in the Indian subcontinent Assamese has gained features from neighboring languages of Tibeto-Burman and Mon-Khmer (Austic) origin and has features from its genetic lineage too. The areal diffusion of the language due to such prolonged contact situation with these languages seems to be productive. Development of lexical stress, emergence of tonogenesis, use of an extensive list of classifiers and relator nouns along with serial verb constructions are some such traits. In contrast, it has shed some typical Indo-Aryan features such as a five-way distinction in the obstruent series, phonemic vowel length and nasality distinction, gender-number agreement on the verb and the extended paradigm for case forms etc.

II. SERIAL VERBS

A. *Cross linguistic tendencies*

- Serial verbs are believed to be capable of standing alone as the single verb of a single predicate.
- The members of a serial verb construction are not overtly conferred as subordinated to or coordinated with a main verb.
- All the verbal subsets share the same argument structure, the same subject, and same TAM specification.

- Serial verbs mostly encode a single event and hence, can be regarded as a simple predicate. Sometimes they also mean tightly bound sequence of temporally or analytically distinct events often entailing causality or result (Post, 2004).
- These constructions usually fall under the same intonation contour at least in the examples from Assamese.
- Like any other South-Asian languages, verbs of feeling, achievement etc can never be expressed through a single verb.

B. *Complex predicates in Assamese*

- The notion of complex predicate in South Asian languages includes construction such as compound verb construction, conjunct verb construction, serial verb construction, participial construction, coverbs, small clause construction and infinitival construction etc.
- Serial verbs typically stack several events in a single clause hereby forming a simple predicate. Complex predicates denote a single event.
- In Assamese also, we find complex predicates comprising adjectives and light verb (with a change in its lexical meaning) as in Hindi.

1) *mor gan-to bhal lag-e*
I.GEN song.CLA good want.Pres
'I like the song.'

Or,

2) *moi gan-to bhal pao*
I.NOM song.CLA good get.Pres.1P
'I like the song.'

III. TYPES OF SERIAL VERBS AND EVENT PREDICATION IN ASSAMESE

Type 1: Serial verbs which mean one single event:

3) *mɔi ah-i golu*
I.NOM come.ConjPart go.PresPerf.1P
'I have come'
(‘See, I have come/arrived’ with intonation of surprise)

4) *mɔi ahi-l-u*
I.NOM come.PresPerf.1P
'I have come'

5) *mɔi am-tu kat-i tʰɔlu*
I.NOM mango.CLA cut.ConjPart keep.PresPerf.1P
'I have cut the mango.'

Type 2: Serial verbs meaning two distinctive but inter-related events:

- 6) xi **olai** **goi** **dek^hile** je baraxun
 he.NOM emerge.ConjPart go.ConjPart see.PresPerf.3P that rain
di **ase**
 give.NF have.Pres.3P
 ‘He went out and saw that it is raining.’

- 7) *ami* **pori** *zua* *lɔra-tu-k* **agur-i** **d^horilu**
 We.NOM fall.ConjPart go.PresPerf boy.CLA.ACC surround.ConjPart hold.PresPart.1P
 ‘We have surrounded the fallen boy.’

Again, it may include some kind of verbal nouns too.

- 8) *tai* **xaji-kasi** **ahil**
 she.NOM dress up.Echo come.PresPref.3P
 ‘She has properly dressed-up and come.’
- 9) kɔt^ha-to lahe lahe mur **b^hal** **lag-i** **ahil**
 matter.CLA slowly I.GEN good feel.ConjPart come.PresPerf
 ‘I have started liking the matter and the feeling is growing.’

Type 3: Serial verbs which encode simultaneous events:

- 10) xi **douri** **ahil**
 he.NOM run.ConjPart come.PresPerf.3P
 ‘He came running.’
 (Interpretation - he not only came, but had to run while coming.)
- 11) bowari-joni-e **kandi-kandi** g^hɔtɔna-to **kole**
 daughter in law.CLA.NOM cry.conjpart.REDUP incident.CLA say.PresPerf.3P
 ‘The daughter in law cried and narrated the incident.’

Type 4: Complete delexicalization of verbs in usage:

- 12) biya-k^hɔn ahise, ami ataye **ut^h-i**
 marriage.CLA come.PresPerf.3P we.NOM all.NOM getup.ConjPart
por-i **lag-i-m**
 fall.ConjPart stick.Fut.1P
 ‘The marriage function is approaching; we have to try hard (for arrangements).’

- 13) *moi* *ajikali* *ghor-o-loi* **cha** **zoa** **kori** **tʰaka** **nai**
 I.NOM nowadays home.to come.Pres go.Pres do.conjpart stay.Pres NEG
 ‘I am not going home these days.’

Type 5: X+V formations: Mostly the verbs of experiencer subjects. In Assamese, these nouns take auxiliaries like /kora/ stems with grammatical function as auxiliaries at the sentence final position and take all the inflections, such as /as/ ‘have, exist’, /tʰak/ ‘stay’, /lo/ ‘take’ etc.

Assamese Auxiliary Verbs	Lexical Equivalents in English	Functional Meanings
<i>as</i>	Have, exist	Progressive aspect
<i>tʰak</i>	Stay	Durative aspect
<i>tʰɔ</i>	Keep	Completion
<i>lo</i>	Take	Inward-directedness
<i>di</i>	Give	Outward-directedness
<i>go</i>	Go	Outward motion
<i>ah</i>	Come	Inward motion
<i>pela</i>	Throw	Completion
<i>pa</i>	Get	Achievement
<i>sa</i>	See	Trial
<i>lag</i>	Want	Completion
<i>dʰɔr</i>	Grab	Effort

IV. SCOPE OF NEGATION

Monoclausality of serial verb construction as a complex predicate construction is not beyond question, as grammatical operations like negation does not take scope over the whole chain of verbs but is attached only to the final verb. It may be since only chain-final verb takes all the inflections in Assamese.

- 14) **mɔi* *am-tu* *na-kat-i* *tʰɔlu*
 I.NOM mango.CLA NEG.cut.ConjPart keep.PresPerf.1P
 ‘I have not cut the mango.’

But,

- 15) *moi* *am-tu* *kati* *nɔ-tʰɔlu*
 I.NOM mango.CLA cut.ConjPart NEG.keep.PresPerf.1P
 ‘I have not cut the mango.’

However, examples (14) & (15) above show the negative clitic. If we consider the same sentence with negative morpheme floating for special intonational contour,

- 16) *mɔi* *amtu* *kati* *tʰoa* *nai*
 I.NOM mango.CLA cut.ConjPart keep.Pres NEG
 ‘I have not cut the mango.’
- 17) **mɔi* *amtu* *nai* *kati* *tʰoa*
 I.NOM mango.CLA NEG cut.ConjPart keep.Pres
 ‘I have not cut the mango.’
- 18) *mɔi* *amtu* *kati* *nai* *tʰoa*
 I.NOM mango.CLA cut.ConjPart NEG keepPresPerf.1P
 ‘I have not cut the mango.’

Hence, the scope of negation applies only before the chain-final verb that carries all the grammatical information of the sentence or the clause. The other verb generally carries its lexical meaning whereas, the grammatical verb is completely delexicalized in such contexts. This is also a typical feature of explicator compound verb formation.

V. CONCLUSION

- The verbs within a serial verb construction can have only a single subject with no possible embedded overt/covert subject or clause. The basic idea was to see whether Assamese serial verbs can encode several events or not.
- Examining these serial verb constructions, it becomes evident that it typically stacks several events in a single clause while complex predicates may denote a single event only. Analyzing the possible event-structure of the serial verb construction in further detail may throw light upon the study of typology of complex predicates in the South Asian linguistic area at large.

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Adjective Class in Verb-Adjective-Noun Continuum: A Case of Bangla

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Abstract

The nature of Adjective class in Bangla (Indo-Aryan) is the focus of this article. Cross-linguistically four types of adjective class are found in world languages. They are *verb-like adjective class*, *noun-like adjective class*, *verb-like and noun-like adjective class* and *distinct adjective class*. It investigates the place of adjective class in verb-adjective-noun continuum in case of Bangla. It shows adjectives combine the grammatical properties of those nouns as well as verbs. Like verbs, adjectives can carry the grammatical features tense, aspect, and person. Based on this, Bangla possesses a *verb-like and noun-like adjective class*.

Keywords: adjective, verb-like and noun-like adjective class language, Bangla.

1. Introduction

Adjective class is one of the fascinating parts-of-speech. It seeks attention of researchers from descriptive as well as typological point of views time to time. Although each POS is differentiated based on distinct grammatical properties, it is found that there are some common properties they may share. This may happen between *noun* and *verb*, *noun* and *adjective* or *verb* and *adjective* and others. As a result, the identification of a POS becomes arbitrary (Schachter and Shopen, 2007). The similarity between adjective and other POS is highlighted in the succeeding sub-section.

1.1. Similarity between Adjective and other two main POS

Firstly, *noun*, *verb*, and *adjective* all three are lexical categories which have semantic content in them though semantic areas for these POS may vary language to language. Secondly, stative vs. active/dynamic is such a property which is found in the mentioned three in (Lakoff, 1966) and (Schachter and Shopen, 2007). Stative noun/verb/adjective denote relatively permanent states as they are usually fixed and are not controlled by the entity in question. For examples, *brother*, *know* and *tall* are stative noun, verb, and adjective respectively in (1), (4) and (7). They are not used in progressive construction as seen in (2), (5) and (8). Due to the feature of permanence and not being controlled, they are not able to be used in imperative construction as shown in (3), (6) and (9).

- Stative noun:

- 1) John is my brother.
- 2) *John is being my brother.
- 3) *Be my brother.

- Stative verb:

- 4) You know the answer.

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- 5) *You are knowing the answer.
- 6) *Know the answer.
- Stative adjective:
- 7) John is tall.
- 8) *John is being tall.
- 9) *Be tall.

On the contrary, the attributes or characteristics of this active/dynamic noun, verb, and adjective are controlled by the person, animal, or object which possesses them. The example in (10) and (11) show stative noun *boor* in complement clause and progressive construction separately.

- Active noun:
- 10) John is boor.
- 11) John is being a boor.

Likewise, verbs and adjectives can be dynamic in nature. They can be used in progressive constructions in (13) and (16) as well as imperative sentences in (14) and (17).

- Active verb:
- 12) You will do the task.
- 13) You are doing the task.
- 14) Do the task.
- Active adjective:
- 15) They are quiet.
- 16) Are they being quiet?
- 17) Be quiet.

1.2. Distinctions between Adjective and other two main POSs

Now focusing on the POS *adjective*, the differences are made between adjective and other POSs below.

1.2.1. Noun vs. Adjective

Adjective as a POS has a distinct semantic characteristic from nouns (Schachter and Shopen, 2007, p. 6). Nouns refer entities having a group of more conspicuous or permanent features, whereas adjectives contain a single less conspicuous characteristic contrastively. For example, the noun *cripple* specifies the physical state of the person and labels her permanently. On the other hand, the adjective *sick* expresses her sole temporary characteristic.

- 18) The woman is a cripple.
- 19) The woman is sick.

Therefore, nouns play the functions of reference and categorisation, and adjectives are applied attributively more easily than nouns. The given noun *woman* provides a broad categorization of the referent while the adjective *sick* serves to modify the categorization and indicates a set.

1.2.2. Verb vs. Adjective:

To distinguish verbs and adjectives, Schachter and Shopen (2007, p. 9) follows Langacker (1987) and highlights the prominence of temporal and atemporal relations, respectively. Verbs designate actions, states and processes anchored in time which are not foregrounded in adjectives. Besides, it is seen that only an adjective can build a comparative construction in

unmodified form; adjective and verb behave differently while modifying a noun and making reduplication (Dixon 2010, v. 2, p. 64-65).

2. Early literature

2.1. Adjective in traditional grammar:

Traditional grammar defines *adjective* in the POS system as a word class which denote qualities or attributes. Jespersen (1924) emphasised three criteria of the classification of POS. They are form, function and meaning. He adds that classification of various POS may vary from one language to another; a distinct POS of a language may not be a POS of another; rather it may be a sub-class of the main class. This is also found in the cross-linguistic typological study (Dixon, 2010, v. 2). In notionally based grammar, adjective class is defined as words which modify nouns; which may also function as predicates; and which possesses a unique feature of degree formations or constructions. Traditionally, there are three degrees: positive, comparative, and superlative. E.g., English tall/taller/tallest; Ilocano (Austronesian language, spoken in Philippines) *natayag* 'tall' / *nataytayag* 'taller' / *katatayagan* 'tallest'. Sometimes adjectives may also make a grammatical agreement with the head noun and the noun of which they are predicated in terms of gender, number, and case.

2.2. Adjective in Bangla:

Now some of the early pieces of literature in Bangla relating to the POS *adjective* (*biśeṣaṇ*) can be reviewed briefly.

- **Definition:**

- **Chatterjee (1939, p. 255):** The word by which the characteristic relating to quality, property, act, state or number of noun, verb, any other *biśeṣaṇ*, pronoun is expressed is called *biśeṣaṇ*.
- **Chakraborty (1963, p. 162):** A POS which indicates quality, property, state, quantity, number, and others is called *biśeṣaṇ*. It is usually placed before the POS which it modifies.
- **Morshed (2007, p. 336):** The POS which modifies nouns is called *biśeṣaṇ*.
- **Islam and Sarkar (ed., 2011, v. 1, 173):** *biśeṣaṇ* is a word class which modify the meaning of other words by elucidating or limiting. When *biśeṣaṇ* expresses the quality, peculiarity of anything, the meaning of nouns gets elucidated. E.g., *faḍa baḗi* 'white house', *funḍor bagan* 'beautiful garden'. When *biśeṣaṇ* expresses the quantity, numbers, relation etc., the meaning of words gets limited. E.g., *ekti boi* 'one book', *proḡ^hom puroḡkar* 'first prize'.
- **Bhattacharya (2012, p. 294):** A POS which expresses quality, defect, property, state, number, and others is called *biśeṣaṇ*.

- **Predicative adjective:**

Bangla possesses predicative adjectives (termed as *bidheya biśeṣaṇ*) in the predicative slot as documented in Chatterjee (1939, p. 256), Shahidullah (Phalguna, 1342, p. 49), Chakraborty (1963, p. 254), Morshed (2007, p. 336), Islam and Sarkar (ed., 2011, v. 1, 173), Bhattacharya (2012, p. 294) and others. For example, *b^halo* 'good' in *mejeta b^halo* 'the girl is good' is a predicative adjective.

• **Grammatical agreement:**

The native Bangla adjectives do not get changed for their head noun in case of gender system. But there are some exceptions. For examples, *pagla c^hele* ‘mad boy’, *pagli meye* ‘mad girl’ where [-i] suffix is added to the latter instance (Chatterjee, 1939, p. 261). In *sadhu* style of Bangla, inanimate adjectives are marked with [-i] feminine gender marker as in *mrinmoji* of *mrinmoji murṭi* ‘statue made of mud’. Besides, ordinal numbers which are borrowed from Sanskrit are used with feminine gender marker [-a] and [-i] as found in *proṭ^homa* ‘first’ and *coṭ^hurṭ^hi* ‘fourth’ respectively (Chatterjee. 1939, p. 261). In case of Sanskrit loan words, gender agreement happens. E.g., [a] in *k^horosroṭa noḍi* ‘a river with strong current’ is used with the given adjective (Islam and Sarkar (ed., 2011, v. 1, 173). The number and case markers are not attached to adjectives which modify the nouns (Shahidullah, Phalguna 1342, p. 173). For example,

20) <i>fuṅḍori</i>	<i>balikaḍigōke</i>	<i>ḍæk^ho</i>
beautiful-FEM	girl-PLU-ACC	see- IMP.2P.polite
‘See the beautiful girls.’		

• **Conjugated verb:**

Finally, it is remarkably interesting to note down here that some conjugated forms derived from adjectives in Bangla are also found. “In general, a conjugated verb form in Bengali is tagged with markers related to person, tense, aspect, auxiliary, honorification or non-honorification, emphatic particle etc. to provide a complete sense of an action as well as aspectual, temporal, spatial, telic and other information embedded within the conjugated form” (Dash, 2015, p. 119). For examples,

21) <i>tokec^he</i>	(Islam and Sarkar (ed., 2011, v. 1, 173)
‘has become sour’	
22) <i>buṛijec^he</i>	(Dash, 2015, p. 123)
‘has become old’	
23) <i>mutijec^he</i>	”
‘has become fat’	
24) <i>tokijec^he</i>	”
‘has become sour’	

2.3. Adjective in Indo-Aryan language family:

There are three functions namely reference, predication, and modification to establish an adjective class in the continuum of noun-adjective-verb. It is claimed that Indo-Aryan language family possesses an adjective class which is “generally indistinguishable from that of nouns” in (Bhat, 1994).

2.4. Typological study on adjective:

The typological study on adjective class exhibits that there are four types of adjective class based on some semantic and syntactic features as proposed by Dixon (2010, v. 2, p 72 - 73). These are verb-like adjective class, noun-like adjective class, noun- and verb-like adjective class, and distinct adjective class. Depending on them, the languages in turn are also classified into four types and named accordingly: verb-like adjective class language, noun-like adjective class language, verb-like and noun-like adjective class language, and distinct adjective class language. Now the characteristics of four types of adjective classes are mentioned below.

a) Verb-like adjective class:

The adjectives have similar grammatical properties to those of verbs. Both verb and adjective may function as head of an intransitive predicate. The features like tense, aspect, mood, and modality of verbs may be marked on adjectives. They may modify a noun within an NP through relativization. E.g., Mandarin Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, and Korean are verb-like adjective class languages.

b) Noun-like adjective class:

The adjectives have similar grammatical properties to those of nouns. Both noun and adjective may appear inside the NP, that is, they cannot be used in a predicate. An NP may consist of noun, noun with adjective, or just adjective. Adjectives may have similarity with nouns in bearing the grammatical features like gender and number. E.g., Latin, Spanish, Finnish, Hungarian, Igbo, Quechan, and Dyirbal are noun-like adjective class languages.

c) Verb-like and noun-like adjective class:

The adjectives may occur inside an NP, then bear the grammatical features of nouns; and they may function as an intransitive predicate, then bear the grammatical features of verbs. E.g., Berber (North Africa), Tariana (Amazonia), Nunggubuyu (North Australia), Takelma (Oregon) belong to the language type of verb-like and noun-like adjective class.

d) Distinct Adjective Class:

The adjectives have grammatical properties different from those of nouns and verbs. Neither they can be the sole lexeme in an NP, nor they function as intransitive predicate. The morphological processes are different nouns and verbs. Thus, they make a distinct category of adjectives. E.g., English, Tunica (Louisiana), Mam and Teribe (Central America) pertain to the language type of distinct adjective class.

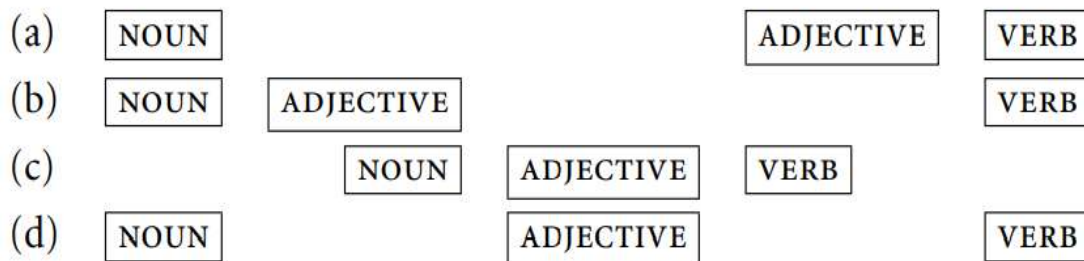


Diagram: 1

Extracted from Dixon (2010, v. 2, p. 67)

The above diagram shows the position of an adjective class in the noun-adjective-verb continuum in case of various language types of the world.

2.4.1. Criteria for the establishment of adjective class:

Dixon (2010, v. 2, p. 70 - 72) outlines the criteria for the establishment of adjective class. The characteristics are four in number. The first two are semantic tasks: (A) State a property and (B) Specify the referent of a noun. Other two are syntactic in nature: (C) Appear in a comparative construction and (D) Function like an adverb in further specification of the reference of a verb. Now these can be exemplified one by one.

(A) State a property:

A property can be stated or coded by means of the following two syntactic techniques.

(A-i): Adjectives are placed in copula complement position in many languages. E.g.,

English

25) The chief is tall.

[The chief]_{CS} [is]_{COP.PREDICATE} [tall]_{CC}

(A-ii): Adjectives may play the role of a head of an intransitive predicate in many languages.

E.g.,

Fijian (Austronesian, Fiji)

26) E balavlu a tuuraga

[E balavlu]_{INTRANSITIVE PREDICATE} [a tuuraga]_s
 3sgS tall ARTICLE chief
 'The chief is tall.'

(B) Specify the referent of a noun:

Adjectives modify the referent of the head noun in an NP.

E.g., *English*

27) The tall chief laughed.

Fijian

28) E aa dredre a tuuraga balavu

[E aa dredre]_{INT.PREDICATE} [a tuuraga balavu]_s
 3sgS PAST laugh ARTICLE chief tall
 'The tall chief laughed.'

Studies show that there are some languages where there are either of the above parameters available.

(C) Comparative construction:

Some languages have comparative constructions. Adjectives may function as the 'parameter of comparison'. E.g.,

English

29) Suva is more beautiful than Nadi.

[Suva]_s [is]_{COP.PREDICATE} [more beautiful]_{CC} [than Nadi]_{STANDARD}

Fijian

30) E toto'a ca'e o Suva mai Nadi

[E] [toto'a ca'e] [o Suva] [mai Nadi]_{STANDARD}
 3sgS beautiful more ART place FROM place
 'Suva is more beautiful than Nadi.'

Comparative construction is an extension of the copula complement clause where an index of comparison and standard of comparison are added.

(D) Adjectives may be used to modify verbs:

In this case, the adjective may be used in unmodified form or derivational process. In the subsequent examples adjectives are used as adverbs.

Colloquial American English

31) He speaks *bad*.

Standard British English

32) He speaks *badly*.

Adverbs may be used to modify adjectives.

English

33) Openly hostile

Features	Techniques	Verb-like adjective	Noun-like adjective	Verb-like and Noun-like adjective	Distinct adjective
(A) State a property	A-i	-	Adjective functions as a complement in a copula clause or a verbless clause.	Occurs as copula complement.	appears in copula complement slot.
	A-ii	Adjective as a head of an intransitive predicate like verbs.	They cannot be used in a predicate.	Adjective as a head of an intransitive predicate like verbs.	Cannot function as an intransitive predicate.
	Grammatical agreement	Take similar grammatical features for some or all of tense, aspect, modality, mood of verbs.	-	Take inflections like a verb.	Do not take inflections of verbs.
(B) Specify a head noun	modification	Adjectives like verbs modify a head noun only in a relative clause construction.	Adjectives modify a head noun within an NP.	Adjectives modify a head noun within an NP.	Adjectives modify a head noun within an NP.
	combination		An adjective can be a sole lexeme or accompany with nouns within an NP.		Cannot be a sole lexeme within an NP.
	Grammatical agreement	Do not share any morphological processes with nouns.	sometimes agree with the head noun in terms of inflectional features like gender, number, and/or case.	Take inflections like nouns.	Do not agree with noun in terms of grammatical features.
Examples		Mandarin Chinese, Thai, Vietnamese, Korean	Latin, Spanish, Finnish, Hungarian, Igbo, Quechua, Dyirbal	Berber languages, Tariana, Nunggubuyu, Takelma	English, Tunica, Mam, Teribe

Table 1

Excerpted from Dixon (2010, v. 2, p. 63–65 and 72 - 73)

3. Research questions:

In the present paper, the following research questions will be investigated:

- Which characteristics are found in Bangla for adjective class?
- Which type of adjective class does Bangla possess? and Which language type does Bangla belong to?

4. Bangla Data:

Following the criteria as mentioned in (2.4.1) the characteristics of Bangla adjectives will be analysed.

Characteristic A: State a property

A-i: Adjectives as copula complement

A-i-VCC

34) c^heleta lɔmba

boy-CLA tall

‘The boy is tall.’

35) gaṛita noḡun

car-CLA new

‘The car is new.’

36) mejeta b^halo

girl-CLA good

‘The girl is good.’

37) boita lal

book-CLA red

‘The book is red’

A-i-CC

38) ād^har holo maḡar-gac^her ṭɔla

dark be-IND.PST.3P coral tree-GEN underneath

‘The underneath of the coral tree became dark.’

39) nik^hiler alo kalo holo ...

earth-GEN light dark be-IND.PST.3P ...

‘The light of the earth became dark ...’

The examples (38) and (39) are taken from Chakraborty (1936, p. 258-259).

A-ii: Adjectives function as intransitive predicate

A-ii-INT-FV

40) p^hol pekec^he

fruit ripen-PRF.PRS.3P

‘fruits ripen.’

41) cul pekec^he

hair whiten-PRF.PRS.3P

‘Hair has become white/grey.’

42) barandaj jama fukoc^he

balcony-LOC cloth become dry-PRG.PRS.3P

‘In the balcony clothes are getting dried.’

- 43) *ʃe* *buɽijec^he*
 s/he grow old-PRF.PRS.3P
 ‘S/he has grown older.’

A-ii-INT-NFV

- 44) *amta* *peke* *gec^he*
 mango-CLA ripen-NF go-PRF.PRS.3P
 ‘the mango has ripened.’

- 45) *am* *pakle* *k^habo*
 mango eat-NF eat-FUT.1P
 ‘I will eat the mangoes when they are ripe.’

- 46) *ʃamata* *ʃukije* *gec^he*
 dress-CLA dry-NF go-PRF.PRS.3P
 ‘The dress has dried.’

- 47) *paka* *g^hūti* *kēce* *gelo*
 stable piece reverse-NF go-IND.PRS.3P
 ‘A piece in ludo reversed into its starting position.’

- 48) *ɽək* *kucke* *ʃaj* *ebəŋ* *buɽije* *ʃaj*
 skin wrinkle-NF go-IND.PRS.3P and age-NF go-IND.PRS.3P
 ‘Skin gets wrinkled and aged.’

A-iii: Adjective function as Transitive predicate

A-iii-T-FV

- 49) *ʃe* *paka* *g^hūtita* *kācalo*
 s/he stable piece-CLA reverse-IND.PST.3P
 ‘S/he reversed the stable piece (in Ludo)’

- 50) *tomrai* *c^heletake* *pakiec^ho*
 you-PLU-EMP boy-CLA-ACC ripen-PRF.PRS.3P
 ‘It is you people who have made the boy matured.’

- 51) *ɽara* *ʃidur* *ɽije* *raŋijec^he* *muk^h*
 they vermilion by-POSTP colour-PRF.PRS.3P face
 ‘They have coloured their faces with vermilion.’

A-iii-T-INFV

- 52) *c^heleta* *ʃamakapoɽ* *ʃukaɽe* *ɽebe*
 boy-CLA clothes dry-INF give-IND.PRS.3P
 ‘The boy will let the clothes dry.’

Characteristic B: Specify a head noun

B-i

- 53) *lal boita*
 red book-CLA
 the red book

B-ii

- 54) *ʃuŋɽori najika*
 beautiful actress

55) *funḡor balok*
handsome boy

Characteristic C: Adjectives in comparison constructions

C-i

56) *pəllobi cinməjer ʃoman lɔmba*
Pallabi Chinmay-GEN equal tall
'Pallabi is as tall as Chinmay.'

C-ii

57) *pəllobi cinməjer tʰeke lɔmba*
Pallabi Chinmay-GEN from-POSTP tall
'Pallabi is taller than Chinmay.'

C-iii

58) *pəllobi ʃɔbar tʰeke beʃi lɔmba*
Pallabi all-GEN from-POSTP more tall
'Pallabi is the tallest among all.'

Characteristic D: Adjectives modify verbs

D-i

59) *pəllobi ḡhire kəʃa bəle*
Pallabi slowly talk speak-IND.PRS.3P
'Pallabi speaks slowly.'

D-ii

60) *bʰalo kore khælo*
good do-NF play-IND.PRS.2P
'Play well.'

Characteristic E: Adjectives function as Intensifiers

61) *pəllobi bəʒo bʰalo meje*
Pallabi very good girl
'Pallabi is a very good girl.'

5. Findings:

5.1. Characteristic A (State a property)

The Characteristic A (State a property) is found to be encoded in Bangla by means of two ways. They are copula complement (A-i) and intransitive predicate (A-ii). The first one is exemplified with copula *be* verb and without it. The verbless copula complement (by A-i-VCC) is presented in (34) to (37) and the copula complement (by A-i-CC) accompanied by copula *be* verb is presented in (38) and (39). Bangla adjectives function as intransitive predicate via finite verb constructions (A-ii-INT-FV) and non-finite verb constructions (A-ii-INT-NFV) in (40) to (43) and (44) to (48) respectively. It is important to note here that Bangla adjectives also play the role of transitive predicate. There are two means of representation: finite verb constructions and infinite verb constructions. They are exhibited in the construction types as A-iii-T-FV and A-iii-T-INFV in (49) – (51) and (52) separately.

5.2. Construction B (Specify a head noun)

As Bangla is a reservoir of words belonging to various languages of different language families, its agreement system is peculiar in nature. Nouns and adjectives in colloquial speech (and in the case of native Bangla) do not agree in terms of gender as mentioned in (53). But Sanskrit loan words (adjectives and the nouns which they modify) make an agreement with each other regarding gender (54)– (55).

5.3. Characteristic C (Make constructions in comparison)

Bangla adjectives are found to make constructions in comparison. They are equative constructions (C-i), comparative constructions (C-ii) and superlative constructions (C-iii) in (56), (57) and (58) respectively.

5.4. Characteristic D (Modify Verbs)

Words belong to adjective class (which modify nouns) may also be used to modify verbs in Bangla. Here two means are shown. Firstly, the given adjective is suffixed with [-e] marker in (59) which is presented in as (D-i). Secondly, D-ii manifests adverbial phrase which contains an adjective followed by a non-finite verb [kore] in (60).

5.5. Characteristic E (Modify Adjectives)

The example in (61) displays that adjective may also function as a modifier (which is called intensifier) of adjectives themselves.

Features	Techniques			
(A) State a property	A-i	Complement clause	A-i-VCC	
			A-i-CC	
	A-ii	Intransitive predicate	A-ii-INT-FV	Grammatical agreement: Take inflections of verbs in case of Intransitive and Transitive predicates both.
			A-ii-INT-NFV	
	A-iii	Transitive predicate	A-iii-T-FV	
A-iii-T-INFV				
(B) Specify a head noun	modification		Modifies a head noun	
	Grammatical agreement		Take inflections of nouns sometimes	
(C) Comparison Constructions	C-i			
	C-ii			
	C-iii			
(D) Modify verbs	D-i			
	D-ii			
(E) Function as Intensifiers				

Table 2: Characteristics of Bangla Adjective class

To conclude, it can be said that the criteria to recognize an adjective class is fulfilled in case of Bangla based on the proposition made by Dixon (2010). Apart from the Characteristics A (state a property), B (specify a noun), C (make comparison constructions) and D (modify verbs), there is a unique feature Characteristic E: function as intensifiers available to Bangla. Including the earlier studies, this article supports the view that Bangla adjectives behave like nouns. They share grammatical features like gender sometimes (see Characteristic B). Along with this, they can also behave like verbs based on the parameters like transitivity, finiteness and infiniteness as exhibited in section 4. They are marked for grammatical features like tense, aspect and person as shown in the examples under the construction type A-ii and A-iii. Therefore, it can be said that Bangla adjectives combine the grammatical properties of both verbs and nouns. That is why, Bangla is verb-like and noun-like adjective class language.

Abbreviations:

1P	1st Person	GEN	GENITIVE	PLU	Plural
2P	2nd Person	IMP	Imperative	POSTP	Postposition
3P	3rd Person	IND	Indefinite	PRF	Perfect
ACC	Accusative	INFV	Infinite Verb	PRG	Progressive
CC	Copula Complement	INST	Instrumental	PRS	Present
CLA	Classifier	INT	Intransitive Predicate	PST	Past
EMP	Emphatic marker	LOC	Locative	T	Transitive Predicate
FUT	Future	NF	Non-finite	VCC	Verbless clause complement
FV	Finite Verb	NFV	Non-finite Verb		

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Verb-Subject Incorporation in Bodo

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Abstract

This is an attempt to identify some important themes and issues relating to the verb-subject incorporation in Bodo, a Tibeto-Burman language of Bodo-Garo group.

The personal pronoun occurring as a subject of a finite verb in a colloquial form of Bodo spoken in Assam and other states of NE India, West Bengal, Nepal and Bangladesh, can move and occur immediately after the verb and incorporates with the verb. During this process, the co-occurring tense, aspect and mood (TAM) and gender discourse marker (GDM) with the verb get fused with the pronoun subject. Thus, the finite verb-pronoun incorporation in Bodo can be dealt with at morphophonemic and morphosyntactic levels. Usually, this incorporation happens in case of 1st person singular pronoun subject *àŋ* 'I'. The usual structure of verb-subject incorporation is V+(TAM)+(GDM)+S.

It is observed that the regressive movement of the subject towards the final position of the construction helps in the verb-subject incorporation process.

Keywords: Verb-Subject incorporation; Bodo; Bodo-Garo; Tibeto-Burman; Gender discourse marker.

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1. Introduction

According to the classification of languages by Grierson (1927: 53-4), Bodo comes under the Bodo-Garo group of the Assam-Burmese branch under Tibeto-Burman sub-family of Tibeto-Chinese family. Again, according to a recent classification by Post & Burling (2017: 224-5), it comes under the Boro part along with Dimasa, Kokborok and Tiwa under Boro-Garo branch of Sal (Bodo-Konyak-Jingpho, Brahmaputran) languages of Tibeto-Burman family.

Generally, in 1980s, noun incorporation (NI) has been studied as the movement of the head of an object into the verb creating a complex or compound verb; e.g., a noun+verb conjunct verb. NI derives from word formation rules applying in the lexicon, presyntactically (Rosen 1989: 294). Both of these two types of NI, are found in Bodo; e.g., the noun+verb conjunct verb *lùgù mún* ‘meet’ from *lùgù* ‘friend’ incorporated to *mún* ‘find’; formation of *muidér* ‘elephant’ derived through the incorporation of the noun *mi* ‘mammal’ to *der* ‘become big’. A third type of NI is also found in Bodo which is verb-subject incorporation; it is a kind of noun incorporation where the first personal singular pronoun *àŋ* moves to the main verb and gets incorporated with it. Verb-subject incorporation in Bodo spoken by 14,82,929 people in India (Language data, June 2018; Census of India 2011), is a fresh topic of research that needs attention of several levels of linguistic studies, such as *syntax*, *morphology* and *phonology*. Hence, it also needs the attention of *morphosyntax* as well as *morphophonemics*. However, the contraction of the subject and some verb suffixes such as {-*duŋ*} and *àŋ* becoming {-*dàŋ*} as in *nó-aó-sú t^háŋ-nú p^hui-dàŋ* (home-LOC-PTL go-INF come-PFV.1SG) ‘I come (started coming) to go home’; {-*lur*} and {-*àŋ*} becoming {-*láj*} as in *nú-nánui lùŋ-nù-sù lùbui-bai-láj* (see-NF drink-NF-EMPH want-PRF-MAL.1SG) ‘Having seen (it), I wanted to drink’ and {-*hai*} and {-*àŋ*} becoming {*háŋ*} as in *nú-nánui lùŋ-nù-sù lùbui-bai-háj* (see-NF drink-INF-EMPH want-PRF-FEM.1SG) ‘Having seen (it), I wanted to drink.’ (Brahma 2012: 180-1; Brahma 2015: 113-5).

The word order of a kernel clause in Bodo is SOV. But, if the subject of the clause is first person singular number *àŋ* ‘I’ then it can move to the final position of the clause and in certain environments it incorporates with the verbs. But the question

is that ‘How are two components or constituents separated by another constituent(s) or conjunct(s), synthesized together?’ Moreover, second and third personal pronouns also move to the co-occurring verbs where the verb-subject incorporation is not prominent as the juncture between the verbs and their respective subjects is considerably high.

2. Methodology

The data used in this study are taken mainly from the colloquial form of Bodo spoken in Bodoland Territorial Region of Assam. Being a native speaker of the language and as both the major dialects of it i.e. *Sànzárí* and *Sùnábárí* are fully intelligible to the author, the author also relies on his knowledge of the language for data elicitation. Thus, most of the data are introspective.

The data are written in IPA with the two types of registered tones in the language i.e., *high* and *low*. The rising tone is represented with the acute accent symbol whereas the grave accent symbol has been used to mark the falling tone. The data are analysed morpheme-by-morpheme in interlinearized form following *Leipzig Glossing Rules* (May 31, 2015).

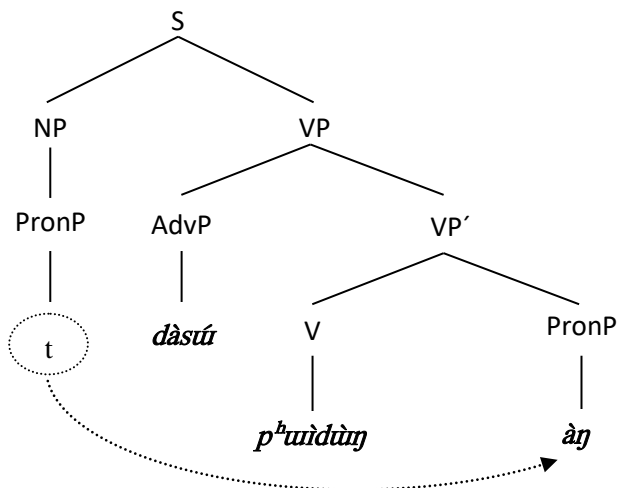
3. Results and Discussion

The regressive movement of the subject towards the final position of the clause helps in the verb-subject incorporation process. For examples-

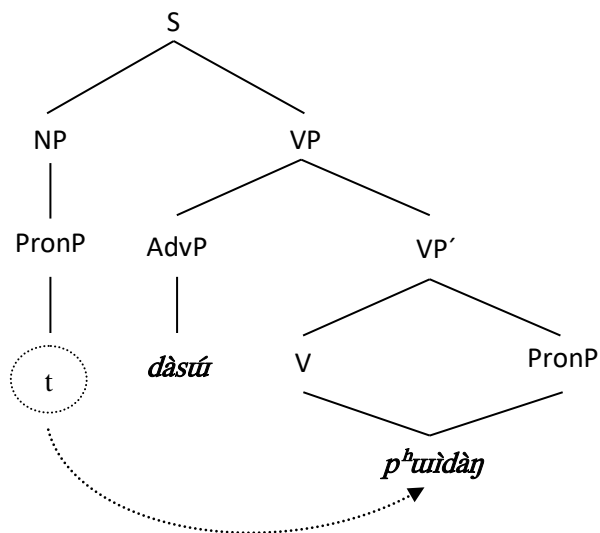
- | | | | | | |
|-----|-----|-------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|
| (1) | (a) | <i>àŋ</i> | <i>dàsú</i> | <i>p^huì-dùŋ</i> | |
| | | I | just now | come-PFV | |
| | > | <i>dàsú</i> | <i>p^huì-dùŋ</i> | <i>àŋ</i> | |
| | | just now | come-PFV | I | |
| | > | <i>dàsú</i> | <i>p^huì-dàŋ</i> | | |
| | | just now | come-PFV.I | | |
| | | | | | ‘I have come just now.’ |

The intermediate stage of verb-subject incorporation is *personal pronouns subject movement* towards the final position of the syntactic construction, which is just next to the main verb. The movement of subject from NP position to VP position can be shown in the following diagram:

Stage: (1b): Figure-1



Stage: (1c): Figure-2



After the movement, the subject occurs with the verb and the verb is fused with the subject. As soon as the fusion happens the TAM suffix of the verb and the subject undergoes morphophonological changes in stage (1c).

- (2) (a) **àŋ** *gàbùn* *tʰáŋ-nú-suí*
 I tomorrow go-INF-TER
- > (b) *gàbùn* *tʰáŋ-nú-suí* **àŋ**
 tomorrow go-INF-TER I
- > (c) *gàbùn* *tʰáŋ-nú-sáy*
 tomorrow go-INF-TER.I
- > (d) *gàbùn* *tʰáŋ-ø-sáy*
 tomorrow go-(INF)-TER.I
 ‘I am going tomorrow.’

The kind of verb-subject incorporation is very frequently observed in *Sùnábári variety* of the language, spoken in Gossaigaon and Kokrajhar areas of the Kokrajhar district of Assam. The most interesting part in the fusion of this NI is that the infinitive marker {-*nuu*} is dropped at the final stage (2b).

- (3) (a) **àŋ** *hàtʰaí-jaó* *tʰáŋ-á-haí*
 I market-LOC go-NEG-FDM
- > (b) *hàtʰaí-jaó* *tʰáŋ-á-haí* **àŋ**
 market-LOC go-NEG-FDM I
- > (c) *hàtʰaí-jaó* *tʰáŋ-á-háy*
 market-LOC go-NEG-FDM.I
 ‘I do/will not go to the market.’
- (4) (a) **àŋ** *gúduí* *zá-nú* *bà-jù-luí*
 I sweet eat-INF bore-HAB-MDM
- > (b) *gúduí* *zá-nú* *bà-jù-luí* **àŋ**
 sweet eat-INF bore-HAB-MDM I
- > (c) *gúduí* *zá-nú* *bà-jù-láy*
 sweet eat-INF bore-HAB-MDM.I
 ‘I don’t like sweet.’
- (5) (a) **àŋ** *duì* *lábú-á*
 I water bring-NEG

- > (b) *duì lábú-á àŋ*
 water bring-NEG I
- > (c) *duì lábú-a:ŋ*
 water bring-NEG.I
 ‘I will/do not bring water.’

Here, in (5b) i.e., at the intermediate stage, a brief hiatus is observed but crasis of the identical *a* vowel is observed at (5c).

- (6) *àŋ dánijá bèdór zá-líjá*
 I now-a-days meat eat-HAB.NEG
- > *dánijá bèdór zá-líjá àŋ*
 now-a-days meat eat-HAB.NEG I
- > *dánijá bèdór zá-líjáŋ*
 now-a-days meat eat-HAB.NEG.I
- > *dánijá bèdór zá-láŋ*
 now-a-days meat eat-HAB.NEG.I
 ‘Now-a-days, I do not use to eat meat.’

The first person singular number subject that moves to the final position of a clause does not necessarily incorporate with the verb. But, if the verb is suffixed with certain inflections such as *perfective aspectual suffix* {-*duŋ*}, *termination suffix* {-*suŋ*}, *female discourse marker suffix* {-*haŋ*}, *male discourse marker suffix* {-*luŋ*}, *declarative negative* {-*a*} and *habitual negative suffix* {-*lija/-la*}, then only the moved subject gets incorporated and fused with the verb. As per the data presented above, the environments that influence the subject-verb incorporation are discussed below:

- I. {VERB}{perfective aspectual suffix} + {first person singular}
 {VERB}{-*duŋ*} + *àŋ*
 {VERB}{-*daŋ*}

Morphophonemic process: The onset /d/ of the final incorporating suffix syllable {-*duŋ*} of the verb and the first personal pronoun subject constitute a morph {-*daŋ*} which consists of *perfective aspectual suffix* and *first person singular morphemes* respectively {-*duŋ*} and *àŋ*.

- II. {VERB}{ termination suffix } + {first person singular}
 {VERB}{-suɪ} + àŋ
 {VERB}{-saŋ}

Morphophonemic process: Only the onset /s/ of the final incorporating suffix syllable {-suɪ} of the verb and the first personal pronoun subject constitute a morph {-saŋ} which consists of *termination suffix* and *first person singular morphemes* respectively {-suɪ} and àŋ.

- III. {VERB}{female discourse marker suffix} + {first person singular}
 {VERB}{-har} + àŋ
 {VERB}{-haŋ}

Morphophonemic process: Only the onset /h/ of the final incorporating suffix syllable {-har} of the verb and the first personal pronoun subject constitute a morph {-haŋ} which consists of *female discourse marker suffix* and *first person singular morphemes* respectively {-har} and àŋ.

- IV. {VERB}{male discourse marker suffix} + {first person singular}
 {VERB}{-lur} + àŋ
 {VERB}{-laŋ}

Morphophonemic process: Only the onset /l/ of the final incorporating suffix syllable {-lur} of the verb and the first personal pronoun subject constitute a morph {-laŋ} which consists of *male discourse marker suffix* and *first person singular morphemes* respectively {-lur} and àŋ.

- V. {VERB}{declarative negative suffix} + {first person singular}
 {VERB}{-a} + àŋ
 {VERB}{-aŋ}

Morphophonemic process: The final incorporating suffix {-a} of the verb gets merged with the same nucleus /a/ of the *first person singular morpheme syllable* /aŋ/.

- VI. {VERB}{habitual negative suffix} + {first person singular}
 {VERB}{-lija/-la} + àŋ
 {VERB}{-lian/-laŋ}

Morphophonemic process: Only the onset /l/ of the final incorporating suffix syllable {-lija/-la} of the verb and the first personal pronoun subject constitute a morph {-lijaŋ} which consists of *habitual negative suffix* and *first person singular morphemes* respectively {-lija/-la} and àŋ.

The second person singular number subject also moves to the final position of an imperative clause, which also incorporates with the verb. The verb in an imperative clause is either in bare form or an imperative particle {-du} co-occurs with it. In both cases, the second person singular subject can incorporate with the verb. For examples-

- (7) (a) **núŋ** gàbù̀n **p^huì**
2SG tomorrow come
- > (b) gàbù̀n **p^huì** **núŋ**
tomorrow come 2SG
- > (c) gàbù̀n **p^huì-núŋ**
tomorrow come-2SG
'(You) come tomorrow.'
- (8) gàbù̀n nó-waó **t^háŋ-á-bí**
tomorrow home-LOC go-NEG-s/he
'S/he may go to home tomorrow?'
- (9) ù̀n-p^hr-aó mù̀zàŋ **zà-jà-bé**
later-PL-LOC good become-NEG-it
'it may become good later on?'
- (10) **p^huì-k^hà-gù̀n-bí**
come-(in advance/for sure)-FUT-s/he
'S/he is coming for sure.'

The increase in agglutination is also observed as a result of verb-subject incorporation as in (10).

4. Conclusion

Verb-subject incorporation is not used in Bodo formal writing at all; a native Bodo language user is very much conscious about it. And, the absence of it in writing makes the language not undergoing any change like Tiwa.

How {-aŋ/-ŋ} person marker came into existence in other Bodo-Garo languages like Tiwa? This question is somehow related to regressive movement of subject and verb-subject incorporation. Usually, person-verb agreement is not employed in Bodo-Garo; it might be a result of verb-subject incorporation in case of Tiwa. Because, Tiwa exhibits partial person-verb agreement i.e. only first person-verb agreement. On the other hand, Tiwa has been so much influenced by Assamese where person and verb agreement is fully employed.

However, it is a case of pronominal subject movement in Bodo; when the pronominal subject moves towards the finite verb to incorporate with it, what the subject leaves behind is only the *trace* which is always covert. But it has been grammaticalized in Tiwa, because the verb of the first personal pronominal subject always takes pronominal suffix {-aŋ/-ŋ} to form a grammatically acceptable construction. In this way, the incorporation of first personal singular pronoun with the finite verb may lead to attestation of person-verb agreement rule in Bodo grammar.

Abbreviations

AdvP	-	Adverb Phrase
EMPH	-	Emphatic Particle
FDM	-	Feminine Discourse Marker
FEM	-	Feminine marker
FUT	-	Future Tense
HAB	-	Habitual Aspect
INF	-	Infinitive
LOC	-	Locative Case
MAL	-	Masculine marker
MDM	-	Masculine Discourse Marker
NEG	-	Negative

NF	-	Non-final
NP	-	Noun Phrase
PFV	-	Perfective Aspect
PL	-	Plural Number
PRF	-	Perfect Aspect
PronP	-	Pronoun Phrase
PTL	-	Particle
S	-	Sentence
S	-	Subject
SG	-	Singular Number
TER	-	Termination
V	-	Verb
VP	-	Verb Phrase

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