

Variation in the lexicon of the Mech (Boro) dialect of North Bengal and standard Boro language spoken in Assam

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Abstract- The Bodos are known by different names in different places. In North Bengal they are known as Mech, in Nepal as Meche, in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam as Boro or Bodo. Racially they are the people of Mongoloid origin and linguistically to the Tibeto-Burman branch of Sino-Tibetan language family. Lexical variations can be observed among the Boro speakers of different geographical areas. As such there are variations in the lexicon among the Boro speakers of North Bengal and Assam. In this paper, a study will be made on the lexicon variation of the Mech dialect of North Bengal and standard dialect of Boro spoken in Assam.

Index Terms- Mech, Boro, dialect, standard language, lexicon, variation

I. INTRODUCTION

The Mech tribe is one of the scheduled tribe that belongs to the Northern part of the state of West Bengal in India. The Government of West Bengal recognizes them as Mech. Scholars are not unanimous in their opinions about the generic term 'Mech'. There are a few discussions about the origin of the name, 'Mech'. The Bodos of Jalpaiguri and Terai call themselves Mech because they settled on the banks of the river Mechi,¹ which flows across India and Nepal. Some scholars think that the word 'Mech' is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Mlechha' which means barbarian or unclean.² At present, they would like to introduce themselves as Boro or Bodo. K. Kiryu, notices Mech as a western Boro dialect.³ Speakers of this dialect estimate their population to be more than one lakh (non official).

The generic term 'Boro' was first applied by Hodgson.⁴ The Boro or Bodos are concentrated in the vast area of the Brahmaputra valley of the state of Assam of North East India. It is an official language of BTAD and associate state language of Assam. This language was included in the eight schedule of the constitution of India in the year 2003. According to the census report of 2001, the total Boro speakers in Assam is 12, 96,162. The Kokrajhar dialect is considered as standard Boro language. The Bodos belong to Mongoloid origin and linguistically, to the Tibeto-Burman sub-family within the Sino-Tibetan language family.

II. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This paper is a study on lexical variation of the Mech dialect of North Bengal and standard Boro language spoken in Assam. The main objective of this paper is to highlight the variation of

words used by the Boro speakers of two geographical areas i.e. North Bengal and Assam.

III. METHODOLOGY

During data collection, primary and secondary methods were used. For primary data sources, a visit was made to the areas of North Bengal concentrated by the Mech people. Then with the application of interview and observation method, a collection of words used by the Mech people was obtained. For secondary source, different books written on Mech dialect and Boro standard was collected and referred.

¹ Bordoloi, B.N., forward in the book 'Tribes of Assam' 1991, p-80

² Kiryu, Kazuyuki: An Outline of the Meche Language-grammar, text and glossary, p-2

³ Endle, S., The Kacharis, 1997, p-xp

⁴ Linguistic Survey of India, vol. iii, part-ii, 1903, p-1

IV. LEXICON VARIATION

A. Fruits

<i>Mech dialect</i>	<i>Boro Standard</i>	<i>English</i>
/kaklɔu/	/juɔgunad/	pumpkin
/lambhera/	/baŋɔn/	tomato
/banzut/	/banlu/	chilly
/t ^h ulmul/	/muɪtru/	mapaya
/t ^h am/	/sɔmpram/	muava
/dumba/	/jukam/	maize
/guai/	/gɔi/	betel nut
/juɔgunad/	/panlu buɔduɔn/	small chilly

B. Body Parts

/musrum/	/musugur/	eyebrow
/mɔɔn/	/megɔn/	eye
/gɔntuŋ/	/gɔtɔŋ/	nose
/nasi/	/asi/	nail
/gusuti/	/gusti/	lip
/nagda/	/agda/	right
/gɔdɔna/	/guduna/	neck
/t ^h ɔi/	/t ^h ui/	blood
/athɛŋ/	/atiŋ/	leg
/ashima/	/ashibima/	toe

<i>C. Animals</i>			/dintiya/ /dadaəri/	/diŋkiya/ /təŋali/	a kind of vegetable loose character's girl
/məkra/	/mukra/	monkey			
/məided/	/muider/	elephant	/senja/	/patisina/	jute sticks
/məisə/	/muisu/	buffalo			
/mushə/	/musuə/	cow	/dudu/	/gaiker/	milk
/barma/	/burma/	goat	/seŋgri/	/sikla/	young girl
/məi/	/mui/	deer	/seŋgra/	/seŋgra/	young boy
<i>D. Household Articles</i>			/majeti/	/mainə/	lizard
/udsuŋ/	/usuŋ/	backyard	/taduŋ/	/taruŋ/	arum
/sali/	/kamsali/	frontyard			
/guuri/	/taŋguuŋ/	a piece of wood used in cutting meat	/bedəd/	/bedər/	meat
			/hatəki/	/hatərki/	star
/daədab/	/ərdab/	oven	/muukruui/	/uŋkruui/	curry
/batiri/	/bakri/	granary			
/tuku/	/thuəsi/	grinder	/ə/	/uə/	bamboo
<i>E. Adjective Words</i>					
/gudui/	/gudi/	basic			
/gului/	/guɾlui/	simple			
/gumu/	/gumu/	yellow			
/guzza/	/guza/	red			
/mutaŋ/	/gutaŋ/	blue			
/guccchuŋ/	/guccchuŋ/	black			
/gəpəd/	/gupur/	white			
/gədəi/	/undui/	small			
/majəŋ/	/mujaŋ/	good			
/gədəi/	/gudui/	sweet			
/gəka/	/guka/	bitter			
<i>F. Verb words</i>					
/bad/	/bar/	jump			
/lid/	/lir/	write			
/kad/	/kar/	run			
/pran/	/puran/	to dry			
/musha/	/muasha/	dance			
/klam/	/kalam/	make			
/khui/	/ukui/	hungry			
/pəi/	/puui/	come			
<i>G. Adverb Words</i>					
/miya/	/muya/	yesterday			
/habə/	/buiya/	there			
/bə/	/be/	here			
/aglayə/	/sigəŋə/	past			
<i>H. Miscellaneous words</i>					
/gaŋgrim/	/baŋgrin/	earthquake			
/bader/	/sambəramgupur/	garlic			
/hu/	/ha/	land			
/akundui/	/ukundui/	smoke			
/swi/	/kəpri/	a kind of umbrella made of leaves			
/deəsi/	/pujari/	priest			
/batri/aped/	/ruati/	housemaid			
/bhatu/	/dahuma/	male servant			
/slathai/	/ək ^h a kuurumnai/	thunder			
/nəka/	/ək ^h a/	rain			
/əat/	/or/	fair			

V. CONCLUSION

Above discussion notices the lexical variation of the two dialects spoken in two different geographical areas. It can be observed that some words have marginal differences. For example, the verb 'jump' is termed as {bad} in Mech and as {bar} in Boro. In this example, phone /r/ of Boro is pronounced as /d/ in Mech. There are also some words which are completely different, but the meaning is same. For example, the noun 'milk' is termed as {dudu} in Mech and as {gaiker} in standard Boro. The differences observed in their lexicon may arise from the geographical separation which leads to minimal verbal communication. The variation also might have arisen due to the influence of other neighboring languages. The above discussion and examples are not enough to draw a line of difference between the two dialects. There are scopes and areas which can be compassed into with further researches on this aspect.

ABBREVIATION

BTAD- Bodoland Territorial Area District

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