

Reception of Assamese words into Boro: Morphological view point

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Abstract- Here analysis will be made on the mutual reception of linguistic elements (particularly in case of morphological elements) between the two languages spoken within the geographical and cultural context of Assam. The two languages are Boro, a Tibeto-Burman language and on the other hand an Aryan language i.e Assamese. From a structural view point it may be believed that Boro and Assamese have received mutually some morphological elements through the ages. This part will be attempted to highlight in this paper.

Index Terms- Mutual impact, morphology, reception, cross-linguistic, adaptation

I. INTRODUCTION

Scholars hypothesize that the ancestral Tibeto-Burman (TB) linguistic people may be migrated to India through different hilly roots and inhabited by the river valley sometime around 4000 BC. In India TB linguistic people are called Indo-Mongoloid.¹ The Boro linguistic community² shows genetic relationship to the TB languages spoken in Assam and abroad. Scholars have opinions regarding migration root of the Boro linguistic people. There are two diverse opinions: (a) A group of the Boros is thought to have migrated from the Tibet via Myanmar and (b) the other group may be migrated through **Nathula** border root via **Mechi** River and concentrated by different river banks of North Bengal. So a large number of Boro speaking people are found in North Bengal. Even in Bhadrapur area of Nepal, concentration of Boro speaking (Called **Meche**³ themselves) people are found in a large number. Chatterji had a minute observation that the Boro linguistic community who spread over the whole of Brahmaputra valley and North Bengal as well as East Bengal forms a solid bloc in NE India and main bases of the present day population of these tracts. The Bodos appear first to have settled over the entire Brahmaputra valley, and extended West into North Bengal. [Chatterji, 1998: p.46]. AS a result, a good number of words have been mutually diffused into the languages that concentrated in NE India. Even the word 'Bangla' (Bengal) has also been derived from its

¹ Here **TB** denotes Tibeto-Burman group of languages.

² The concentration of Boro linguistic community is found through out the state of Assam and a few adjacent regions like near Tura of Meghalaya, Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border and North Bengal.

³ **Meche** is a generic term that has been used to denote the Boro speaking people of North Bengal. They suppose that Koch, Mech and Lapse of Bengal, Darjeeling and Sikkim are kith and kinfolk. As a result, a large number of common linguistic features are noticed among the linguistic groups.

ancient Bodo term **Ha-bang-la** i.e plenty and wide land. The Boros have, now a day, concentrated through out the length and breadth of Assam. The number of present population is estimated 12, 96,162 (as per 2001 census report).

II. OBSERVATION ON RECEPTION OF MORPHOLOGICAL ELEMENTS

In Assam, the Boro linguistic community has a close attachment with other linguistic communities surrounded by different languages. As a result they have received (mutually) an enormous number of linguistic elements from other sources. Particularly from Assamese, Boro has received a variety of linguistic elements through the process of socialization. It may be observed in the level of lexis, phonology and morphology in particular.

2.1 Reception of Morphological elements

There are some striking morphological units⁴ that frequently used in Boro which have no TB source or genetic relationship with TB group of languages. But comparison may be made with Assamese. This may be noticed in class of words and its formation.

2.1.1 Reception in lexical level

- Nothing to discuss about reception of linguistic elements from Bodo group of languages to Assamese; because, Kakati and many scholars have made a strong comments that Assamese has been influenced by other linguistic communities like TB group of languages in particular.
- Various words generally used in Assamese language have a frequent used in Boro. But they have not originated from TB source. Its genetic relationship may be shown with other Indo-Aryan languages.

(A) Adapted from Assamese: Words related to birds, animals, insects etc.

Br. maslaŋk^har <Ass. mas rōka- the king fisher

Br. sila (kite) (< Proto-Boro. dauliŋ)< Ass. śila

Br. sigun (vulture)< Ass. śōgun

Br. badali (padlock)< Ass. baduli

Br. haŋsuŋ (duck)< hāh

Br. P^haruŋu (domestic pigeon)< parō etc.

- The above cited words related to birds name are not derived from TB origin; but used in Boro usually.

⁴ Here **unit** means any kind of morphological form/morpheme.

- TB words regarding names of bird have a special feature. Particularly in Boro, the word *dau*⁵ is used before the particular name of birds; e.g: *dau-k^ha* (crow), *dau-bə* (heron), *dau-rai* (peacock), *dau-t^hu* (dove), *dau-sri* (martin) etc.

(B) Words related to animals

The following words (may be) have been adapted from Indo-Aryan Assamese language; e.g: Br. *sial*<Ass. *śial* (fox), Br. *gərai*<Ass. *g^hōra* (horse), Br. *neulai*< Ass. **neul** (mongoose) etc.

Let's see the comparison-

(C) TB structure: words of animal & insect name

TB words related to animals are usually composed of at least two morphological segments. This feature occurs in Boro animal names; e.g: *muḡ-k^hra*> *muḡk^hra* (monkey), *mu-p^hur*> *mup^hur* (bear), *mu-sa*> *muṣa* (tiger), *mi-de*>*muḡider* (elephant), *ma-dab*>*mandab* (squirrel), *mu-suḡu*> *muṣsuḡu* (cow), *muḡi-suḡ*> *muḡisuḡ* (buffalo), *muḡ-sruḡm*> *muṣsruḡm* (ant), *muḡ-duḡi*> *muḡduḡi* (porcupine) etc.⁶

In Boro, the word /*mi*/ denotes animal and has relationship with other TB languages. Now a day, the word /*zunar*/ is used; it derives from Assamese word **zontu**.

(D) An exceptional example: *ant^hu* (knee)

The word /*ant^hu*/ used in Boro. Whether it is originated from PTB (Proto-Tibeto-Burman) or Assamese? It is a matter of debate. But easily we can tress out to the conclusion, if it is observed to the basic structure of TB word. In TB/Boro language, the names of body parts are generally composed of two morphological segments i.e two syllabic components. The names of body parts of **Bodo-Garo** group of languages have phonemic prefixes like {*a-*, *u-*, *bi-*, *muḡ-*} that occurred before the names of body parts; e.g: *a-k^hai* (hand), *a-si* (finger), *a-p^ha* (palm), *a-t^hiṅ* (leg), *bi-k^ha* (heart), *muḡ-k^haṅ* (face), *bi-gur* (skin), *bi-bu* (liver) etc. Here the word /*ant^hu*/ is also composed by two morphological segments; e.g: *a-t^hu*>*ant^hu*. Assamese speaking people articulates it as /*ã^hu*/; therefore it is to be supposed to have derived from Boro origin. Thus Br. /*bi-k^ha*/ is comparable to Ass. *buk/buku* (chest)⁷.

(E) Cross linguistic features: Adaptation in Boro

For instances:

/ai/: There is separate basic vocabulary for mother; i.e 'ma' is originated form TB source. (Br. *nuṅ-ma* –your mother, *bi-ma-his*/ her mother)

/ali/: The TB source is /*lam*/, becomes in Boro as /*lama*/ (road/way/path).

/giri/: Similar to Assamese /*giri*/, at the same time Boro has equivalent use of the word /*guṛa* ~ *gra*/- means doer, master. E.g: *lir-giri* (writer), *buṅ-giri* ~ *buṅ-guṛa* ~ *buṅgra* (speaker) etc.

/sali/: /*p^horai-sali*/- (school), *sibi-sali* (place of worship), /*t^han-sali*/ (general place of worship of the villagers), /*diṅk^hi-sali*/- (rice husking place) etc. Here /*sali*/ may be the Boro origin; it means place; not equivalent to Assamese 'śal/śali'. But all the first segments are of Assamese origin. Some other examples:

- Br. *duḡi-bana* <*ban/banpani* <Skt. *vany ā* (flood)
- Br. /*abad-ari*/-cultivator (Urdu/Hindi via Bangla to Boro). Here /*abad*/ has no TB origin, but /*ari*/ denote man in Boro.

Thus /*zayga-ari* /- (e.g- mention for comparison), /*sibi-ari*/- (worshiper, devotee) etc.

(F) Use of phrases: cross-linguistic features

- /*man bau*/- pay respect; (<Ass. /*man*/)
- /*bibar mala*/-garland of flower (<Ass. *mala*, Br. *luḡ*)
- /*t^huri bari*/-garden of thatch (<Ass. *bari*)
- /*muṣsuḡu gəli*/-place of cow for taking rest (<Ass. *gohali*)
- /*asan mut^hi*/- bangle worn on the arms (<Ass. *mut^hi k^haru*)
- /*gaḡduṅ huḡ*/- money given as marriage agreement to the family of bride (<Ass. *gadhən*) etc.

2.1.2 Use of affixes

Similarities have found in case of plural suffixes; e.g:

Ass. {-*bor*} ~ Br. {-*p^huṛ*}⁸:

- e.g: Ass. *kitab-bor* (books), Br. *bizab-p^huṛ* (books)
- On the other hand, the word Ass./*raij*/ is also being used in Boro in the sense of plurality; e.g: /*raizup^huṛ*/

(A) Regarding use of case-marker

(a) Ass. Accusative case-marker {-*kə/ək*}, vs Br. {-*k^huḡ*}

e.g: Ass. /*tomak*/, Br. /*nuṅk^huḡ*/, cf. Gr. /*naṅk^hə*/

(b) Ass. Ablative case-marker {-*rə-pəra*}, vs Br. {-*ni-p^hrai*}, e.g: Ass. /*mərpəra*/ cf. Br. /*aṅp^hrai*/

(B) Regarding gender variation⁹

TB process regarding gender variation is a quite simple. Gender distinction is made in case of animate beings. Usually gender variation is realized by using separate sets of words or sometimes by using word of male or female representing separate words with the word of animate beings. Besides these, a variety of suffixes are used in Boro to distinguish male or female

⁵ The term **dau** denotes bird. Here the second syllables of all the words have an onomatopoeia feature; from a morphological view point they may be used as bound base.

⁶ Thus the similar structure is also occurred in all cognates of Boro.

⁷ Ass. word **buku** has Skt. origin; on the other hand, **k^ha** denotes chest/heart in TB origin and it becomes **bik^ha** in Boro.

⁸ It is very much complicated to emphasize that whether Assamese receives or Boro receives from Assamese. To come to the approximate decision, it is very important to mention the examples of Skt. *bəhulə*, Old Ass. {*bəla*, *bəlak*} etc.

⁹ The feminine suffixes {-*i*,-*u*, -*e*} etc. are used in Boro. It is possible to take place due to impact of Assamese language. Ass. fem. suffixes: {-*i*,-*ni*, -*əni*,-*ri*} etc.

sex; e.g. mas. /hait^ha/-short man, fem. /hait^hu/- short woman, mas./p^hagla/-mad man, fem./p^hagli/-mad woman, etc.

(C)Regarding use of numeral classifiers

- A lot of numeral classifiers are used in Boro which corresponds closely to Assamese classifiers; e.g. Br. {ak^ha-, p^habu-, zora-, hali-, k^handi-, mut^ha/muṭ^hi-}, Ass. {ak^hi-, pab-, zor-, hal-, k^hon/k^hondɔ-, mut^hi-} etc. Here interesting point is that, in Boro, classifiers are added before numerals while in Assamese these are added after numerals.

E.g:

Ass. /eak^hi kɔl/, /ek^hon tamol/ etc.

Br. /ak^hase t^halir/, k^handise gɔy/¹⁰ etc.

(D)Regarding use of negative prefix¹¹

- Boro has adapted from (through) Assamese a system of negation which is made of using prefix with noun or verb class of words; e.g. be-k^haida, be-dɔk^hɔl, ɔ-subida, ɔ-gian, ni-maɔza, ni-k^hauri etc.
- Thus Assamese has also similar use of prefixes; e.g. be-dɔk^hɔl, be-nam, ɔ-subid^ha, ɔ-sɔmɔi, ni-kin, ɔp-man etc.

(E)Regarding use of derivational suffix

- Boro has received some derivational suffixes in relationship with Assamese that have been used with noun class of words;

Example: {-i, -ua,} etc.

Br. /gian-i/-man of knowledge, /dan-i/-donner, /hal-ua/-cultivator, /sɔrkar-i/-connected to government etc.

Ass. /gian-i/, /dan-i/, /hal-ua/, /sɔrkar-i/, bɔdmas-i, /japan-i/ etc.

{-ari}¹² is also a derivational suffix that is used with verb and noun class of words; Ass. zua-ari>zuari, Br. /bibay-ari/-begger, /abad-ari/-cultivator, /b^harɔt-ari/-Indian, /daɔbay-ari/-traveller etc.

2.1.3 Adaptation of cultural terms: A cross-linguistic features

(A)

Ass. /nakp^huli/> Br. /nakp^huli~ nakbali/-an ornament of nose

Ass. /kanp^huli/>Br. /kan p^huli/ -an ornament of ear

Ass. /gad^hon/>Br. /gaɔɔn hu/- money given as marriage agreement to the family of bride

Ass. /sɔra g^hɔr/>Br. /suqura nɔ/-sitting room

Ass./gɔsai/>Br. /gɔsai/-god (Proto-Br. muṭdai)

Ass. /zati kul/>Br. /zat k^hul/ - family, kith and kin

(B)

Various words are used in folk-literature that has been found correspondences with Assamese words, e.g. /bat^hu buṛai mharaza/, /bagraza/, /bulli buri/, /suk^hubay suk^hu huṇaṇṇuṇ/, /rɔg biadi/, /uraibayduṇ/, /aṅk^hu dabilai/, /ɔgini k^hona/, /zerao

zuṇ nuu/, /daut^hu k^hɔrɔ hena daba/, /zuṇni p^huk^hri/, /bari haga/, /bip^ha guru/, /at^hi mɔṅgɔl sep^hainay/, /guṣuṇni k^huṭ^ha guṛbuṇɔ/¹³ etc.

Here the terms **buṛai** (old man), mɔharaza (great king), bagraza (the tiger king), buri (old age woman), suk^hu (calm and peace), rɔg biadi (disease), urai (flying), bilai (give to), ɔgini (fire), zuṇ (people), hena (like as), p^huk^hri (pond), haga (evacuation), guru (religious preceptor), at^hi<at^h (eight), mɔṅgɔl (auspicious), k^huṭ^ha (speech), guṛbuṇ (the interior of the heart) etc. are found uses in Assamese and these may be assumed to confluence in Boro by the process of socialization.

III. CONCLUSION

The topic of discussion has a great scope of investigation and analysis. It has an academic importance besides its linguistic significance. More debatable and thought-provoking analysis may be made among the scholars. From an empirical investigation it becomes clear that Boro and Assamese have mutually received linguistic elements at the level of lexis, phonology and morphology.

ABBREVIATION

Br.-Boro

Ass.-Assamese

Fem.-feminine

Skt.-Sanskrit

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¹⁰ Here Skt./k^hondɔ/ > Ass. /k^hon/ > Br. /k^handi/ - (a part, a piece of betel nut) fairly corresponds from structural view point.

¹¹ {be-, ɔ-, ɔp-, ni-} corresponds to each other. As TB language, Boro does not have such type of prefixes.

¹² The derivational suffix {-ari} is used in both the languages; it means man.

¹³ The above cited words are extracted from charms of **Kherai** worship, Boro folk songs and proverbial sayings.

