

Morphophonemic Processes of Words Borrowed from Indo-Aryan Languages to Bodo

Bihung Brahma, M.A.
Ismail Hussain, Ph.D.

Introduction

Bodo is a Tibeto-Burman Language of the Bodo Garo Group. It is mainly spoken in Assam and is included as one of the Eight Scheduled Indian Languages. Besides Assam it is spoken in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and West Bengal states of India. Outside India some speakers are found in Nepal (as Meche Language) and in Bangladesh. Bodo language is more similar with Kok-Borok Language of Tripura and Dimasa of North Cachar Hills of Assam. The 2011 census of India estimates 1.5 million Bodo speakers. Bodo has at least four dialects as described in (Bhattacharya 1977) which are divided based on the map of Assam as North-West, South-West, North-Central and South. The Kokrajhar variety is considered to be standard by many speakers and writers which is the headquarter of Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) and the speakers of this variety are found in its neighbouring District Bongaigaon and newly created district under BTC called Chirang. But in some part of Chirang District itself there is an interesting dialect spoken by good number of speakers which is similar to Bodo dialect of West Bengal and Nepal. As per as dialects of the language is concerned all the dialects are mutually intelligible and speakers don't look from status point of view.

Being one of the important languages of Tibeto-Burmese family of India, Bodo has made tremendous development in the last few decades. The Boro-Garo group belongs to the greater Boro-Konyak-Jingphaw sub branch of Tibeto-Burman family and consists of at least eleven languages: Bodo, Garo, Rabha, Tiwa, Dimasa, Kokborok, Atong, Wanang, Moran and Koch (Wood, 2008). However, as far as the present population of Bodo speakers are concerned it is assimilated with other Indo-Aryan Language groups such as Assamese, Bengali and Hindi speakers a lot and with English too at many extend. So, in this paper an attempt has been made to look at the changes in the borrowed words from IA roots which are used and nativized with some changes at the level of phonology and morphology.

Bodo Consonants

The native consonant inventory is relatively simple, with two series of stops at three positions, and three fricative/affricates (DeLancey, 2010):

p	t	k
b	d	g
	z	

s h
 m n ŋ
 l r

Bodo consonant voiceless stops are all aspirated whereas IA consonant stops are both aspirated and unaspirated. On the other hand, voiced stops are all unaspirated in Bodo but IA languages do have both the aspirated and unaspirated forms.

Vowels and Diphthongs

There are six vowel phonemes and eight diphthongs. The vowels are:

i u
 e u o
 a

/u/, as the symbol implies, is pronounced somewhat higher and farther back than the central position represented on the chart.

/i e a o/ all occur with a back rounded offglide, which can be represented as /u/: /iu/, /eu/, /au/, and /ou/. /a w o u/ occur in diphthongs with a high front offglide: /ai/, /wi/, /oi/, and /ui/(DeLancey,2010).

Morphophonemic Processes of Borrowed Words from IA Languages

Unlike other Indo-Aryan (IA) languages the Bodo phonology is quite simple. So, naturally the Bodo phonological characters influence many loan words from Assamese, Bengali or Hindi. The explanation of the morphophonemic processes or changes of the borrowed words from Indo-Aryan into Bodo is the main focus of this paper.

The voiced aspirated stops borrowed from IA origin are conformed to corresponding voiced unaspirated stops in Bodo (Table 1).

Table 1: List of IA words with voiced aspirated stops changed to unaspirated stops in Bodo

IA words	Root Language	Bodo	Meaning
b ^h ol	Assamese	bohol	gourd sp.
b ^h ut	Assamese, Bengali, Hindi	buhut	ghost
b ^h azi	Assamese	bahaza/bahazi	fry
d ^h atu	Assamese, Bengali, Hindi	dahatu	metal
d ^h ar	Assamese, Bengali, Hindi	dahar	loan, debt
g ^h orial	Assamese	guler	crocodile

Similarly, words having voiceless unaspirated stops borrowed from IA origin are often nativized and changed to corresponding voiceless aspirated stops in Bodo (Table 2).

Table 2: List of IA words with voiceless stops changed to aspirated stops in Bodo:

IA words	Root Language	Bodo	Meaning
pap	Assamese, Bengali, Hindi	p ^h ap	sin
pan)	Assamese, Bengali, Hindi	p ^h at ^h ui	betel leaf
teteli	Assamese	t ^h int ^h laŋ	tamarind
tōka	Assamese	t ^h ak ^h a	money
kōmōla	Assamese	k ^h omla	orange
kōdal	Assamese	k ^h odal	spade
kasō	Assamese	k ^h aseo	tortoise

On the other hand, the voiced aspirated /d^h/ and /g^h/ are changed to corresponding unaspirated /d/ and /g/ since the aspirated /d^h/ and /g^h/ simply do not exist in the Bodo consonant inventory (Table 3).

Table 3: List of words with aspirated velar stops changed to unaspirated velar stops in Bodo

IA words	Root Language	Bodo	Meaning
d ^h ōrmō	Assamese, Bengali	duhurum	religion
d ^h ōni	Assamese, Bengali	duuni	rich
g ^h ōra	Assamese, Bengali, Hindi	gorai	horse
g ^h ōnta	Assamese, Bengali	gont ^h a	hour
g ^h ōri	Assamese, Bengali	gori/guri/gwri	watch
xad ^h u	Assamese	sadu	sage
s ^h radd ^h a	Assamese, Bengali, Hindi	saradu	post funeral ceremony
pakg ^h ōr	Assamese, Bengali	p ^h akgor	kitchen

Monosyllabic words of IA origin are often changed to disyllabic and disyllabic to trisyllabic words in Bodo. This is often done either through vowel modification or vowel insertion (Table 4).

Table 4: List of IA mono-/di-syllabic words changed to di-/tri-syllabic words in Bodo

IA words	Root Language	Bodo	Meaning
b ^h ol	Assamese	bohol	gourd sp.
b ^h ut	Assamese, Bengali, Hindi	buhut	ghost
b ^h azi/bhaza	Assamese, Bengali	Bahazi/bahaza	fry

d ^h ar	Assamese, Bengali, Hindi	dahar	current
d ^h al	Assamese	dahal	armour
d ^h ormo	Assamese, Bengali	duhuruum	religion
doŋ	Assamese	dongo	canal
dal	Hindi	dali	pulses
kam	Assamese, Bengali, Hindi	k ^h amani	work
sah	Assamese	saha	tea

Bodo consonants lack affricates, which are common in Bengali and Hindi. So, the affricate /tʃ/ is simply changed to alveolar voiceless fricative /s/ in Bodo. Similarly, post-alveolar /ʃ/ is also changed to /s/ as shown in Table 5 below.

Table 5: List of IA words with /tʃ/ and /ʃ/ changed to /s/ in Bodo

IA words	Root Language	Bodo	Meaning
tʃai	Hindi	saha	tea
tʃoli	Bengali	suuli	be of use
ʃanti	Bengali, Hindi	sant ^h i	peace
k ^h itʃiʃi	Bengali, Hindi	k ^h isri	Hotchpotch (of rice, dal)

Assamese mono-/disyllabic words having /ɔ/ vowel sounds are changed to /o/ and /u/ in Bodo as shown in Table 6.

Table 6: List of IA words with vowel /ɔ/ changed to /o/ and /u/ in Bodo

IA words	Root Language	Bodo	Meaning
kɔdal	Assamese	k ^h odal	spade
mɔna	Assamese	mona	bag
gɔlam	Assamese, Bengali, Hindi	golam	slave
g ^h ɔra	Assamese, Bengali, Hindi	gorai	horse
kumɔra	Assamese, Bengali	k ^h umbra	gourd sp.

Assamese words having /ɔ/ and /u/ are customized to /u/ and /u/ in Bodo as exemplified in Table 7 below.

Table 7: List of IA words with vowel /ɔ/ and /u/ changed to /u/ and /u/ in Bodo

IA words	Root Language	Bodo	Meaning
jɔnmɔ	Assamese, Bengali	juuntum	birth

pɔt ^h ar	Assamese	p ^h ut ^h ar	field
issɔr	Assamese	isur	god
kɔt ^h a	Assamese	k ^h ut ^h a	speech, word
gɔzal	Assamese	gazul	pin, nail
k ^h ub	Assamese, Bengali	k ^h ub	very much
xɔtru	Assamese	sut ^h ur	enemy

IA words having /ɔi/ diphthongs are changed to /ui/ in Bodo (Table 8).

Table 8: List of IA words with diphthongs /ɔi/ changed to /ui/ in Bodo

IA words	Root Language	Bodo	Meaning
dɔi	Assamese, Bengali	dui	butter
pɔisa	Assamese, Bengali	p ^h uisa	coin/rupee
mɔi	Assamese	mui	cultivation tool
mɔina	Assamese	muina	'mynah'bird
xɔjtɔ	Assamese	swit ^h u	truth

Another interesting feature of morphophonemic change is found in the final syllable of Assamese with vowel /a/ changing into /ai/. It is usually found with verb formation where /ai/ is added in final syllable. The examples are shown in Table-9.

Table 9: List of IA words ending with /a/ changed to /ai/ in Bodo

IA words	Bodo	Meaning	Word Class
pɔrha	phorai	read	verb
bɔna	banai	make	verb
t ^h ɔga	thogai	cheat	verb
dɔba	dabai	press downward	verb
sɔla	salai	ride, drive	verb
buza	buzai	teach	verb

Conclusion

Bodo language is growing day by day as one of the most promising Modern Indian Languages of the Tibeto-Burman root in India. In the process of its development and due to intense contact, consciously or unconsciously it has borrowed, adapted the patterns and models of other developed IA languages. It can be said as borrowing consciously because elderly generations from the communities were educated through Assamese and Bengali Medium. And Bodos have shared traditions, culture, religion (some) with the Aryan groups, which naturally demand many terms, and terminologies, which are not immediately available in the language. It is very natural that contact or influence occurs among the languages. As per as Bodo is concerned the influence is seen more in morphological and

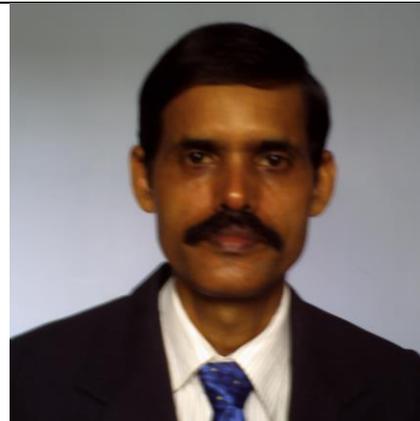
phonological level and in very minutely at sentence level. The vowel /uu/ is the easiest and most frequently used vowel in Bodo phonology which is very uncommon in the IA languages. So in the morphophonemic changes the vowel 'uu' and diphthong 'uii' are used very regularly. It creates a good number of vowel-harmony also. So, in the case of loan words the native speakers tend to modify them according to the pattern and structure of Bodo morpho-phonology. Some of the morphophonemic processes are: (1) at the syllable structure with vowel harmony while transforming aspirated to unaspirated forms, (2) the affricate /tʃ/ to /s/, (3) the vowel 'o' sound of Assamese is changed to 'o' vowel sounds, (4) diphthong 'oi' of Assamese roots are changed to typical Bodo diphthong 'uii', (5) the verb roots and some word-final syllables with 'a' vowel are changed to '-ai' to suit the Bodo phonological patterns.

References

- Basumatary, P. (2017). *Verbal semantics in a Tibeto-Burman Language: The Bodo Verb*. Peter Lang, Oxford, U.K.
- Basumatary, P.C. (2005). *An Introduction to Bodo Language*. Assam, India: Mittal Publications.
- Bhattacharya, P.C. (1977). *A Descriptive Analysis of Boro Language*. Guwahati, Assam, India: Gauhati University Press.
- Bradely, D. (1997). *Tibeto-Burman languages and classification*. Canberra.
- DeLancey, S. et al (In preparation). *A grammar of spoken Boro*. Kokrajhar, India.
- Thurgod, G (2003). *Sino-Tibetan Languages*. (1st Ed.) London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.
- Wood, D.C. (2008). *An Initial Reconstruction of Proto-Boro-Garo*. M.A. Dissertation, University of Oregon, U.S.A.



Sri Bihung Brahma, M.A.
 Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
 Assistant Professor, Central Institute of
 Technology, Kokrajhar
b.brahma@cit.ac.in



Ismail Hussain, Ph.D.
 Assistant Professor in Department of Bodo
 Gauhati University
hiya20092009@gmail.com