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Negation in the Southern Dialect of Bodo

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Abstract

This paper presents an analysis of negation used in the Southern dialect of Bodo. Negation is a process or construction in grammatical and semantic analysis which typically expresses the contradiction of some or all of a sentence's meaning. Some languages use more than one particle in a single clause to express negation (David Crystal, 1980). In the Southern dialect of Bodo, there are two ways of expressing negation, one is by using negative markers and the other is with the help of negative copula. The negative marker /da-/ is prefix negative marker and /-nɔŋa/, /-a/, /-ja/, /-daja/, /-laja/ and /-haj/ are the suffix negative markers in the Southern dialect of Bodo which occurs in the post-verbal position. The negative markers /-ja/ and /-nɔŋa/ are used in equation constructions and nominal predicates. The negative copula

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/-gija/ is added immediately in the final position of a sentence to make the negative.

Introduction

Assam is a North-Eastern State of India, the garden of human languages. The area of Assam covers 78,438 sq.km. and according to 2001 Census of India the total population of Assam is 26,655,528. The Assamese, Bengali, Bodo and Karbi are the official languages of the state of Assam. According to 2001 Census of India, the total population of Bodo in Assam is 1,352,771.

Bodo is the most colourful tribes of North-East India preserving their language, culture and custom. Genetically, they are Mongoloids and their language belongs to Tibeto- Burman family of languages. Bodo is the term which denotes the name of people and the language. Though, the Bodo word is known by other tribes in various names like Mech or Mlessah or Kirata or Kachari in different times of different places. However, the Bodo tribe is the same people. The following are the some authorities who placed the Bodo with their facts and figure in their works.

The people who speak Bodo language call themselves '**Bara**' or '**Bara-fisa**', i.e., sons of the **Baras**. The word 'Bara' has been identified by the first English enquirers with their nationality, and is usually written 'Bodo.' They do not apply the name 'Kachari' to themselves (Grierson, 1903, p-5). The Bodo is known as Bodo or Boro or Kachari or *kirata* or other variations in different places in different times. The Bodos are one of the earliest settlers of Assam. Bodo language is a branch of the great Bodo-Naga group under the Assam Burmese section of the Tibeto- Burman language family.

Again, Grierson (1903) wrote about the term 'Bodo' in his Linguistic Survey of India, Vol.III, Part-II, as "the generic name 'Bodo' was first applied by Hodgson to this group of languages. The exact sound is better represented by spelling it Băḍă or Băṛă. Bodo or Băṛă is the name by which the Mech or Mes and the Kacharis call themselves."

According to Suniti Kumar Chatterji (1951) and Kalaguru Bishnu Prasad Rabha, the word Boro or Bodo was derived from the word **BOD**. The word **Bod** is supposed to mean a

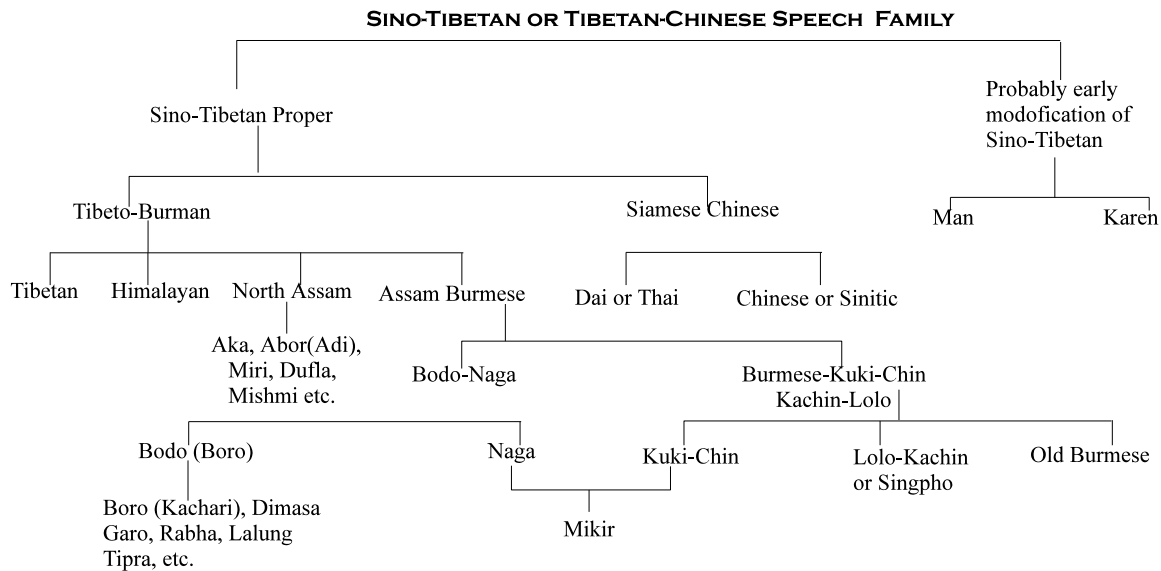
homeland. It is also said that there were many parts of the country known as **Hor Bod, Kur Bod** etc. The inhabitants of **Bod** country are known as the Bodo phicha or Bodocha or Bodosa (Bod means land or country and **Phicha** or **Cha** means son or children, hence the children of **Bod** or country). In course of time they come to be known as simply Boddo-Bodo-Boro. At present they are known as Bodo or Boro.

The noted historian Pratap Chandra Choudhury (1959) mentioned the origin of the name “**Assam**” in his doctoral thesis as follows: “The origin the Assam is probable that the name was first applied to the land by the Bodos, a Tibeto-Burman people, as it may be derived from a Bodo formation like **Hā-com**, meaning low land. If this derivation be correct, the name Asama may go back to a period long before the coming of the shāns or the Ahoms; because the Tibeto- Burman must have entered Assam long before them. It appears, therefore, reasonable to suggest that the Sanskrit formation ‘Asama’ is based on an earlier Bodo form, Hā- com.”

Interestingly, Pratap Chandra Choudhury (1956) has shown that “the evidences of “The Geography of Ptolemy”, a work of about A.D.150 where Ptolemy mentions the country of **Seres**, which stands, like **Thina** of the **periplus**, for Assam, while the name Seres appears like the **Thinae** to have been applied to the inhabitants of the plains and hills ... the reference is probably to the hill tribes of Assam, such as the Bodo.”

As P.C. Bhattacharya (1977) has observed, “the Bodos or Boro language belongs to the branch of Barish section under Baric division of the Sino-Tibetan family as per the classification given by Robert Shafer. *Linguistic Survey of India* describes the Bodo or the Boro-Kachari as a member of the Bodo (Boro) sub section under the Assam-Burmese group of the **Tibeto-Burman** branch of the Sino-Tibeto-Chinese speech family”.

The following is the brief tabular representation of the Sino-Tibetan languages drawn by Robert Shafer taken from the thesis of P.C. Bhattacharya (1977) entitled as: “A Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language”.



The Classification of Bodo Dialects

Promod Chandra Bhattacharya (1977) in his doctoral thesis, ‘A descriptive analysis of the Bodo languages’ says that “there are four dialect areas of the Bodo or Boro language. These dialects are: North- West Dialect area having sub dialects of North-Kamrup and North-Goalpara, (ii) South-west dialect area comprising South Goalpara and Garo Hills Districts, (iii) North-Central Assam areas comprising Darrang, Lakhimpur district and a few places of Arunachal Pradesh, (iv) the southern Assam dialect area comprising Nowgaon, North Cachar, Mikir Hills and adjacent districts.”

On the other hand, according to Phukan Basumatary (2005), “the Bodo language has only three dialects: (i) Western Bodo dialect (ii) Eastern Bodo dialect and (iii) Southern Bodo dialect.”

Of course, **Burdum** is also a dialect of Bodo which has very unique differences from the other dialects of Bodo. **Burdum** areas include Bengtol of Chirang district, North-Western part of Kokrajhar district and the indigenous people who are residing in the state of West-Bengal.

So, observing all those dialects including above mentioned comments of authorities and as per data it would be better to mention that there are four dialects in Bodo. These are: (i) Western (ii) Eastern (iii) Burdun, and (iv) Southern dialect of Bodo.

Populations

The native speakers of Southern dialect of Bodo are concentrated mainly in Goalpara district and South Kamrup. It is located in southern bank of Brahmaputra valley of lower Assam. According to 2001 census, the total population of Goalpara district is 8,22,306 and its scheduled Tribes population are 1,15,099 out of which more than 40,000 population are native speakers of the southern dialect of Bodo in Goalpara district.

The native speakers prefer to call this dialect as “*Dik^hɔŋk^hulari*”, “**river bank of the south**” which is the most popular dialect among the Bodo because it has the first-ever written book “**Boroni P^hisa O Ayen**” (Sons of Bodo and Their Customary Laws) edited by Ganga Charan Kachari, et al., and published in 1915.

Negation

According to David Crystal (1980), “Negation (Negative) is a process or construction in GRAMMATICAL and SEMANTIC analysis which typically expresses the contradiction of some or all of a sentence’s meaning.”¹ Thus, negation is expressed by the presence of the ‘negative particles’ or other possible means such as ‘prefixes’ or ‘suffixes’ or words such as ‘deny’ in English.

There are two ways of expressing negation in the Southern dialect of Bodo, one is by using negative markers and the other is with the help of negative copula. The negative markers of Southern dialect of Bodo are: /da-/ , /-a/ , /-ja/ , /-daja/ , /-laja/ , /-haj/ and /nɔŋa/. Among them, /da-/ is prefix negative marker and the /-a/ , /-ja/ , /daja/ , /-laja/ and /-haj/ are suffix negative markers in Southern dialect of Bodo which is the most frequently used form occurring in the post-verbal position. The negative markers /-ja/ and /-nɔŋa/ is used in equation constructions and nominal predicates. The /gija/ is negative copula which is used to express negative in existential constructions, locative predicates, and possessive sentences.

The marker /da-/ is used to express negative imperative or prohibited and occupies a pre-verbal position, i.e. the use of /da-/ is restricted to imperative and it is prefixed to the verb root. Consider the following examples:

1. /t^haŋ/ ‘go’
 /da- t^haŋ/
 Neg.-go
 ‘Don’t go.’
2. /mau/ ‘do’
 /da-mau/
 Neg.-do
 ‘Don’t do.’
3. /hu/ ‘give’
 /da-hu/
 Neg.-give
 ‘Don’t give.’
4. /labu/ ‘bring’
 /da-labu/
 Neg.-bring
 ‘Don’t bring.’
5. /za/ ‘eat’
 /da-za/
 Neg.-eat
 ‘Don’t eat.’
6. /iruŋ-k^hɔ da-bu/
 Rope-Acc.Neg.-pull
 ‘Don’t pull the rope.’

7. /nuŋ da -razab/
 You Neg.-sing
 ‘You should not sing.’

The negative markers /-a/, /-ja/, /-daja/, /-laja/ and /-haj/ are suffixes in the Southern dialect of Bodo which occur in the post-verbal position. Let us consider the following examples:

8. /aŋ k^hanzuŋ k^han-a/
 I comb comb-Neg.
 ‘I do not use the comb.’
9. /be man-a/
 It itch -Neg.
 ‘It is not itch.’
10. /aŋ za-ja/
 I eat-Neg.
 ‘I do not eat.’
11. /aŋ eŋk^ham za-ja/
 I rice eat-Neg.
 ‘I do not eat rice.’
12. /bi urai-ja/
 He/she fly-Neg.
 ‘He/she will not fly.’
13. /bi p^hai-ja/
 he come-Neg.
 ‘He does not come.’

As per the data shown above, the negative markers /-daja/ and /-laja/ occur only in future tense, suffixed with the verb. Consider the following examples:

14. /abi -a en^ham za-daja/
 grandma-Nom. rice eat- Neg.
 ‘Grand mother will not eat rice.’
15. /bi dui luŋ -daja/
 He/she water drink-Neg.
 ‘He/she will not drink water.’
16. /aŋ urai-daja/
 I fly - Neg.
 ‘I shall not fly.’
17. /bi zak^ha en^ham- k^hɔ za-laja/
 He/she scented rice-Acc. eat- Neg.
 ‘He will not eat the scented rice.’
18. /masa p^hai-laja/
 tiger come-Neg.
 ‘The tiger will not come.’
19. /bi t^haŋ- laja/
 He/she go-Neg.
 ‘He/She will not go.’

However, the other post verbal negative marker /-haj/ is used to occur only in perfective aspect in Southern dialect of Bodo. Consider the following examples:

20. /bi mija en^ham za - a - haj -mun/
 He/she yesterday rice eat-Neg.-Neg.-Pfv-Past
 ‘He/she had not eat rice yesterday.’
21. /aŋ dabu buru - a - haj/
 I yet sleep-Neg.Neg.Pfv.

‘I have not slept yet.’

22. /aɲni gaza sɔla-a p^hur-a- haj/

My red shirt-Nom. fade-Neg.-Neg.Pfv.

‘My red shirt has not faded.’

Again, there is also another negative marker in the Southern dialect of Bodo, i.e.: -/nɔŋa/ which is used to add in the final position of a sentence. Consider the following examples:

23. /be haŋk^hu nɔŋa/

This/it duck Neg.

‘This/It is not duck.’

24. /aɲ t^haɲ-nai nɔŋa/

I go-Nmlz. Neg.

‘I shall not go.’

25. /Ram-a k^hamu za-nai nɔŋa/

Ram-Nom. snail eat-Nmlz. Neg.

‘Ram will not eat snail.’

26. /aɲni beda-a razab-nai nɔŋa/

my brother-Nom. sing-Nmlz. Neg.

‘My brother will not sing.’

Negative Copula

The negative copula /gija/ is used to express negative in existential constructions, locative predicates, and possessive sentences. Consider the following examples:

27. /dui-jɔ na - gija/

water-Loc. fish-Neg.Cop.

‘There is no fish in the water.’

28. /hagra-jɔ masa - gija/
forest-Loc. tiger - Neg.Cop.
'There is no tiger in the forest.'
23. /aɲni kəbɔr -gija/
my news-Neg.Cop.
'There is no news for me.'
24. /landu-jɔ dui - gija-mun/
well-Loc.water -Neg.Cop.-Past.
'There was no water in the well.'
25. /muk^hu-a put^har-ɔ - gija/
cow-Nom. field-Loc.-Neg.Cop.
'The cow is not in the meadow.'
26. /be put^har-ɔ imp^hu gija/
this field-Loc.insect Neg.Cop.
'There is no insect in this field'

Conclusion

On the basis of the above discussion it can be concluded that the Southern dialect of Bodo has a typologically similar negative construction with most of the languages of Tibeto-Burman family, where negation is mainly formed by affixes, i.e. by pre-fixation or by suffixation. In the Southern dialect of Bodo, negations are expressed in two ways. It is expressed by using negative markers and the other mode of expression is with the help of negative copula. There are eight negative markers in the Southern dialect of Bodo. These are prefix negative marker /da-/ and the suffix negative markers /-nɔŋa/, /-a/, /-ja/, /daja/, /-laja/ and /-haj/ which is the most frequently used form occur in the post verbal position. And the negative copula marker is found as /gija/.

Abbreviations

Neg.=Negative, Neg.cop.=Negative Copula, Nom.=Nominative, Acc.= Accusative, Pfv.= Perfective tense, past.= Past tense, Nmlz.= Nominalizer.

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