

A Contrastive Study on Bodo and Assamese Gender System

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ABSTRACT :

Bodo and Assamese languages are originated from different language family. Genetically the Bodo language belong to the Tibeto-Burman branch of Sino-Tibetan languages family. On the other hand, Assamese language belong to the Indo-European group of the Indo-Aryan language family. This paper aims at focusing a contrastive study on Bodo and Assamese gender system.

Keywords: Gender, mascaline, feminine, similarities, dissimilarities.

1.0 INTRODUCTION:

Bodo language is one of the major speaking languages in North East India. It is originated from the Sino-Tibetan languages family. Bakul Chandra Basumatary define, “*Bodos belong to the Mongoloid race and the Bodo is one of the Bodic languages. The Mongoloid have been divided into two group in ‘the Sino-Tibetan Etymological Dictionary’. They are the Chinese and the Tibeto-Burmans. The Mongoloid as a whole are also called Sino-Tibetans.*”¹ According to Swarna Prabha Chainary, “*In North East India, Bodo language is mainly spoken in Assam and nearby the inter-state boundaries of Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, and North Bengal area of the state of West Bengal and Nagaland and also in the neighbouring countries Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh.*”²

Assamese language is one of the State languages of Assam. It is belong to the Indo-European group of the Indo-Aryan family. Golockchandra Goswami says, “*Assamese is an Indo-Aryan language originated from the Vedic dialects.*”³ As well Upendranath Goswami says, “*Assamese is a Magadhan speech. Coming from the regions of Videha-Magadhan through North Bengal, Assamese entered into Kamarupa or western Assam where this speech was first characterized as Assamese.*”⁴

1.1 OBJECTIVES:

- (i) To study the Bodo and Assamese languages gender system.
- (ii) To study the similarities and dissimilarities of gender in Bodo and Assamese languages.

1.2 METHODOLOGY:

The proposed topic ‘A contrastive study on Bodo and Assamese gender system’ is discussed through the observation method. In this study data is collected from secondary sources, like- books, magazine, articles, journals, dissertation etc.

2.0 DISCUSSION:

The word which categorised into male and female is known as Gender. In the book ‘*A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*,’ David Crystal defines Gender as “*A GRAMMATICAL CATEGORY used for the analysis of WORD-CLASSES displaying such CONTRASTS as masculine (m, masc, MASC), feminine (f, F, fem, Fem) and neuter (n, neut, NEUT, animate and inanimate, etc.*”⁵ Bodo and Assamese both languages are natural gender. There is no grammatical gender in both languages and only animate objects distinguish gender.

¹ Basumatary, Bakul Chandra. *A Treatise on the Bodos*. Samson Printers: Kokrajhar. 2012, Page-42.

² Chainary, Swarna Prabha. *Tibeto-Burman Languages of North East India*. Mittal publication: New Delhi. 2018, Page-1.

³ Goswami, Golockchandra. *Structure of Assamese*. Gauhati University, 1982. Page-3.

⁴ Goswami, Upendranath. *A Study on Kamrupi: A Dialect of Assamese*. Gauhati University, 1970. Page-1.

⁵ Crystal, David. *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics (sixth edition)*. Blackwell. 2008. Page- 206.

Process of gender distinction in Bodo and Assamese languages

a) Using Opposite Sets of words

Bodo and Assamese languages gender distinction is made in case of kinship term by using opposite sets of words referring to masculine and feminine respectively. For example-

Bodo-

Masculine	Meaning	Feminine	Meaning
/ap ^{ha} /	father	/ai/	mother
/abu ^q /	grandfather	/abu ^q i/	grandmother
/biha ^o /	father in-low	/bik ^{bunzuq} /	mother in low
/bisai/	husband	/bisi/	wife
/amai/	uncle	/anu ^q i/	auntie
/ada/	elder brother	/bazu ^q i/	elder brother's wife
/p ^h o ^q bai/	younger brother	/binana ^o /	younger sister

Assamese-

Masculine	Meaning	Feminine	Meaning
/deutâ/	father	/ma/	mother
/kâka/	grandfather	/aita/	grandmother
/khura/	uncle	/kuri/	auntie
/khohur/	father in-low	/khahu/	mother in-low
/bhindeu/	brother in-low	/baideu/	elder sister
/kâkai/	elder brother	/nâbâu/	elder brother's wife
/dâra/	bridegroom	/kâina/	bride

b) Using Attributive Words

In Bodo and Assamese languages used of attributive words. In Bodo language, attributive words like /huqua/ meaning male and /hinzaw/ meaning female are used for human noun. Moreover the attributive words like /ba^{ng}ra/, /bunda/, /p^hant^ha/, /dambra/ are used in case of male animals and /ba^{ng}ri/, /bundi/, /p^hant^hi/, /dambri/ are used in case of female animals. Again in Bodo language used in the case of birds to denote masculine /zuqla/ and feminine /zuq/. For example-

Gender distinction of human nouns

Masculine	Meaning	Feminine	Meaning
/h̥qua-sa/	son	/hinzaaw-sa/	daughter
/h̥qua-alasi/	male guest	/hinzaaw-alasi/	female guest
/h̥qua-mansi/	male	/hinzaaw-maansi/	female
/h̥qua-gɔtʰɔ/	male child	/hinzaaw-gɔtʰɔ/	female child

Gender distinction non-human animate nouns

Masculine	Meaning	Feminine	Meaning
/suqima-baŋgra/	male dog	/suqima-baŋgri/	female dog
/suqima-bunda/	male dog	/suqima-bundi/	female dog
/oma-bunda/	male pig	/oma-bundi/	female pig
/maozi-bunda/	male cat	/maozi-bundi/	female cat
/b̥aqma-pʰantʰa/	male goat	/b̥aqma-pʰantʰi/	female goat
/m̥aŋswu-dambra/	male cow	/m̥aŋswu-dambri/	female cow
/dau-zuqla/	cock	/dau-zuql/	hen

In Assamese language attributive words /matâ/ means male and /mâiki/ means female, the case of human and non-human they used before the noun represent. For example-

Masculine	Meaning	Feminine	Meaning
/matâ-mânuh/	male	/mâiki-mânuh/	female
/matâ-kukurâ/	male dog	/mâiki-kukurâ/	female dog
/matâ- sâgoli/	male goat	/mâiki-sâgoli/	female goat
/matâ-haah/	male duck	/mâiki-haah/	female duck

c) Gender Distinction by Adding Suffixes to noun

Many linguistics define, the third system of changing gender is not found in Bodo language. It's influenced by the Indo-Aryan language. In Bodo language feminine suffixes are {-i}, {-u} and {-e}. These feminine suffixes are morphologically conditioned. Bodo language the feminine suffixes {-i,-u,-e} can added a few nouns ended with vowel {-a} and change the gender from masculine to feminine. For example-

Bodo-

{-i}:	Masculine	Meaning	Feminine	Meaning
	/k ^h ana/	a blind man	/k ^h an-i/	a blind women
	/benja/	a deaf man	/benj-i/	a deaf women
	/zamba/	idiot man	/zamb-i/	idiot women
	/p ^h agla/	a mad man	/p ^h agl-i/	a mad women
	/ak ^h unda/	unmarried man	/ak ^h und-i/	unmarried women
	/k ^h anda/	flat nosed man	/k ^h and-i/	flat nosed women
	/gendra/	potbellied man	/gendr-i/	potbellied women
	/balonda/	a widower	/balond-i/	a widow
{-u}:	/g ^h ait/	a short man	/g ^h ait-u/	a short women
	/hait ^h a/	a short man	/hait ^h -u/	a short woman
{-e}:	/hɔŋla/	a man of hollowed nose	/hɔŋl-e/	a women of hollowed nose
	/nabla/	a man of flat nose	/nabl-e/	a women of flat nose

In Assamese language feminine suffixes are {-ɔni} which has a host of allomorphs such as {-i}, {-ni}, {-ini}, {-uni} and {-ri}. For example-

Assamese-

{-ɔni}:	Masculine	Meaning	Feminine	Meaning
	/mastɔr/	a teacher	/mastɔr-ɔni/	a lady teacher
	/napit/	a barbar	/napit-ɔni/	a lady barbar
	/girihot/	house owner	/girihot-ɔni/	house lady
{-i}:	/peha/	father's sisters	/peh-i/	father's sister
		husband		
	/khura/	father's brother	/khur-i/	father's brothers wife
	/moha/	mother's sisters	/mah-i/	mother's sister
		husband		

{-ni}:	/kɔlita/	a man of Kalita caste	/kɔlita-ni/	a woman of Kalita caste
	/xɔikia/	Mr. Saikia	/xɔikia-ni/	Mrs. Saikia
	/bɔrua/	Mr.Baruah	/bɔrua-ni/	Mrs.baruah
{-ini}:	/bag ^h /	tiger	/bag ^h -ini/	tigerss
	/nati/	grand son	/nati-ini/	grand daughter
{-uni}:	/sor/	thief	/sor-uni/	women thief
	/dhoba/	washer man	/dhub-uni/	washer women
{-ri}:	/beŋa/	deaf	/beŋe-ri/	deaf women
	/bandor/	monkey	/bandor-ri/	monkey

d) Gender Unique forms

Bodo and Assamese both languages, there are some unique masculine and unique feminine nouns which are always masculine and feminine gender. These are unchangeable into different genders by adding gender-marker. For example-

Bodo: Unique Masculine

/duquci/	Meaning	priest
/badari/		wood-cutter
/k ^h asi/		castrated animal
/lauk ^h ar/		cowherd
Unique Feminine	Meaning	
/bɔk ^h ali/		a baby nurser
/bihari/		co-wife
/saŋgrema/		a barren women
/adunŋgari/		spinster

Assamese: Unique Masculine

Meaning
an aged unmarried man

Unique Feminine

Meaning
woman who plans paddy
woman skilled in weaving
a reaper woman

3.0 FINDING:

From the contrastive point of view we have found some similarities and dissimilarities of gender system in Bodo and Assamese languages. These similarities and dissimilarities are given below-

Similarities-

- i. Bodo and Assamese both languages have natural gender system.
- ii. Both languages have same process of gender distinction.
- iii. Both Languages have suffix characteristics in gender construction.

Dissimilarities-

- i. Bodo and Assamese both languages originated from two different languages family.
- ii. Bodo language has more attributive word but Assamese language has a few attributive word.
- iii. The Bodo language have only three feminine suffixes. these are{-i}, {-u}, {-e}. But Assamese language have more feminine suffixes. These are{-i}, {-ni}, {-ini}, {-uni} and {-ri} etc.

4.0 CONCLUSION:

From the above discussion it has seen that Bodo and Assamese both languages are originated from two different languages family. Bodo language originated from Sino-Tibetan language and on the other hand Assamese language originated from Indo-Aryan language family. Both languages are only natural gender.

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