



TYPES AND FORMS OF THE PLACE DEIXIS IN BODO

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Abstract: The proposed research paper has tried to study a comprehensive pragmatic and structural analysis of motion place deixis in the Bodo language. Bodo Language is a prominent Tibeto-Burman language spoken primarily in Northeast India. Traditional grammar of Bodo language categorizes the place references by using a strict binary framework as proximal and distal demonstrative pronoun. But, this study explores how verbs are used to denote the place connected to the participants in the utterances. The finding of this study indicates that Bodo language relies on verbs to refer the place or position. This study fills a research gap in Bodo pragmatics.

Keywords: Deixis, place deixis, Bodo language, Tibeto-Burman, motion deixis, pragmatics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Bodo language belongs to Bodo-Garo subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman language family and it is recognised as the national language in 2003 by the 92nd Constitutional Amendment of India. This language predominantly is spoken in Assam and an associate language of the state. Structurally, Bodo language is an agglutinating, post-positional language with flexible Subject-Object-Verb word ordering. The previous research on Bodo language details phonology, morphology, syntax, vocabulary. But, study on pragmatic related to speaker interacts with place or spatial reference is limited. So, this article aims to examine the distribution of place deixis of Bodo language, mapping how proximity, distance in everyday communication

Pragmatics studies the contextual meaning of a words or a part of speech and identify the referential meaning and presupposition meaning of a spoken in the context. According to the Stephen C. Levinson, *Pragmatics is “the study of the ability of language users to pair sentences with the contexts in which they would be appropriate”*.¹ Geoffrey Leech also defines “*Pragmatics studies meaning in relation to the speech situation, focusing on how*

¹ Levinson, Stephen C. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge University Press, 1983, p. 24.

utterances are interpreted in context.”² Another linguist, George Yule defines as *Pragmatics* is “the study of speaker meaning as distinct from word or sentence meaning”.³

Deixis is a subject to be studied in pragmatics. The ‘deixis’ word is derived from the Greek word ‘deixis’ and this word means ‘pointing’.⁴ According to Stephen C Levinson, *deixis* is the study of deictic or indexical expression in language, like you, now, today. It can be regarded as a special kind of grammatical property instantiated in the familiar categories of person, tense, place etc.⁵ There are five types of deixis and these are person, place, time, discourse and social.

Place deixis is also known as the spatial deixis. Place deixis is the grammatical expression to locate objects, persons or events related to specific anchoring in context. *Place deixis* refers to the encoding of spatial location relative to the location of the participants in the speech event. There is (at least) a proximal and a distal (non-proximal) deixis, linguistically encode by demonstratives (this and that) or deictic adverbs of place (here and there).⁶

Birner defines that “Spatial deixis makes reference to space, and includes, and words like here, there, come, go, arrive, leave this, and that. In English, spatial deictics are generally organized into pairs of **proximal** and **distal** term, where the proximal member of each pair indicates closeness or proximity to the speaker and the distal member indicates distance from the speaker.”⁷

Alan Cruse also defines as “Spatial deixis indicate location in space relative to the speaker. The most basic spatial deictic are the adverbs *her* and *there*. This can be glossed ‘place near to the speaker’ and ‘place not near to the speaker.’”⁸

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH GAPS

The structural orientation of Bodo linguistic analysis dates back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Rev. Sidney Endle’s *An Outline Grammar of the Kachari (Boro) Language* (1884) and G. A. Grierson’s *Linguistic Survey of India* (1903) both established early descriptive foundations. They meticulously catalogued phonology, vocabulary, nouns, pronouns and adverbs. However, both the works represented the traditional and the skeletal grammatical descriptions, as they primarily provide basic structural outlines of the language without offering a comprehensive analysis of its deeper linguistic features, functional aspects, theoretical perspectives, and broader socio-cultural contexts. Swarna Prabha Chainary’s *Boro Raokhanthi* (2008) details complex features like phonology, morphology and syntax through Immediate Constituent analysis and phrase structure

² Leech, Geoffrey. *Principles of Pragmatics*. Longman, 1983, p. 13

³ Yule, George. *Pragmatics*. Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 3

⁴ Yule, George. *The Study of Language*. Cambridge University Press, 2010. p.130

⁵ Horn, Lawrence and Ward, Gregory. *The Handbook of Pragmatics*. Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2006. p. 100

⁶ Nagy, Imola Katalin. *An Introduction to the Study of Pragmatics*. Scientia Publishing House, 2015. p. 23

⁷ Birner, Bettly J. *Pragmatics: A Slim Guide*. UK: Oxford University Press, 2021. p. 86

⁸ Cruse, Alan. *A Glossary of Semantics and Pragmatics*. Edinburgh University Press Ltd, 2006. p. 166

grammar. Similarly, Guneswar Mushahary's *Boro Bima Rao Phwrwngnay Khanthi* (2015) utilizes a traditional pedagogical lens to analyze parts of speech, number and orthography.

In summary, over a century of Bodo linguists have successfully catalogued the language's formal properties. But, they isolated pragmatic investigation into how speakers use these structures to navigate physical, temporal and social space.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify and classify the exact lexical and grammatical forms used to encode place deixis in the Bodo language.
2. To examine how and what verbs refer the place or location connected to the participants in the context of utterance.

14. METHODOLOGY & DATA COLLECTION

The proposed study has been conducted by employing the descriptive method as the principal research approach to systematically examine and interpret the subject matter. The primary data have been collected through careful observation and structured interviews, while the secondary data have been gathered from a wide range of authentic sources, including published books, scholarly research articles, unpublished theses, dissertations, and other relevant written documents. The integration of both primary and secondary sources has enriched the study by providing a comprehensive, balanced, and meaningful understanding of the research problem.

5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study holds significant importance in preserving, documenting, and analysing the Bodo language from a pragmatic perspective. It particularly highlights the use of motion deixis in the spoken form of Bodo and explores how these deictic expressions function meaningfully within specific contexts of utterance and communication. The study makes a valuable theoretical contribution to the understanding of Bodo as a Tibeto-Burman language by enriching the field of pragmatics and providing deeper insights into the relationship between language, meaning, and contextual interpretation.

6. TYPES AND FORMS OF THE PLACE DEIXIS IN BODO

This research has found out that there are two types of place deixis and these are proximal and distal. This type of place deixis exists in the Bodo language on the basis of morphological roots of demonstrative pronouns. Proximal place deixis refers the place close to the speaker and the distal place deixis refers the place far from the speaker.

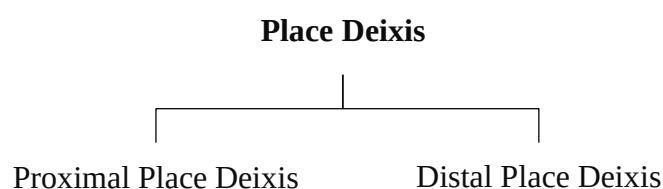


Fig. 1 Types of Place Deixis

But, in the Bodo language, verbs, case markers and others words also used by speaker to refer the place or position of something or person mentioned in the context of utterance. So, place deixis in the Bodo language can be classified as following provided figure 2.

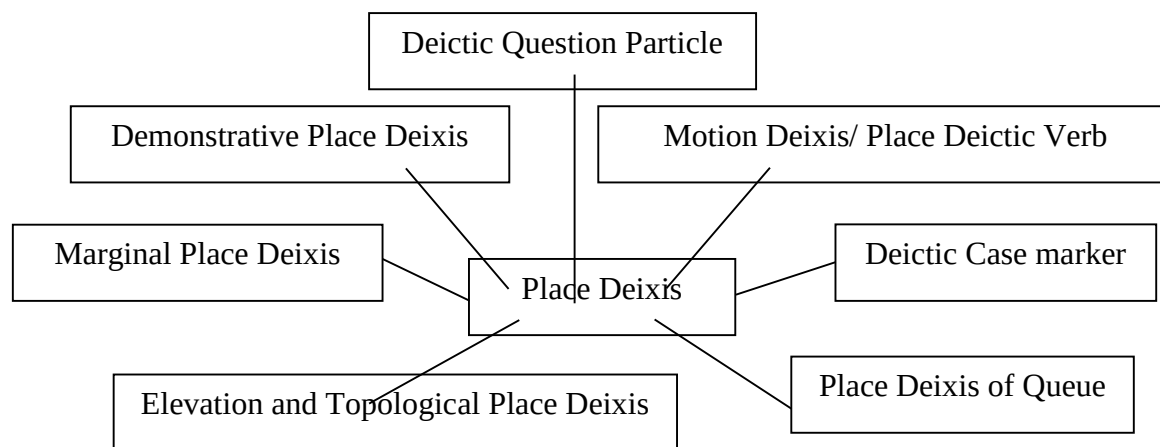


Fig. 2 Types of Place Deixis in the Bodo Language

6.1 MOTION DEIXIS

Motion deixis is also known as the deictic verb. Motion deixis does not refer a stable location or place in the context, but it refers the movement of a place of an object or person mentioned related to the speaker in the utterance. There are four motion deixes in Bodo language and these are /*p^hui*/, /*t^haŋ*/, /*laŋ*/ and /*labu*/. These are classified into two types: proximal and distal place deixis. (Fig. 3)

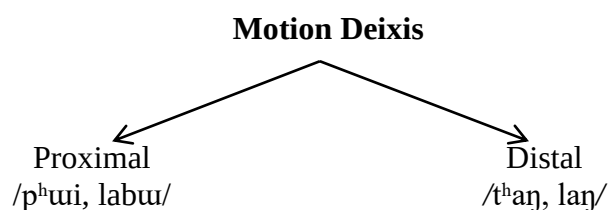


Fig. 3 Types of Motion Deixis in the Bodo Language

6.1.1 /*p^hui*/ ‘come’, /*labu*/ ‘bring’:

These motion deixes refers the place or location of an object or person mentioned in the context of utterance that moving towards the speaker. In this condition, the speaker and the addressee are at audible distance each other.

Example:

1. /*nun* *p^hui*/.
 2SG come.
 You come.
2. /*nun* *daba-k^huu* *labu*/.
 2SG knife-ACC bring.
 You bring the knife.

In the example, /*p^hui*/ and /*labu*/ means the place of addressee and knife with addressee that moving towards the speaker.

6.1.2. /*t^han*/ ‘go’, /*lan*/ ‘take away’:

These motion deixes refers the place of an object or addressee mentioned in the utterance context that moving far from the speaker. The place mentioned in the context of utterance is at close or near to the speaker and this becomes more distance from the speaker.

Example:

3. / <i>nuŋ</i>	<i>t^han</i> /.
2SG	go.
You go.	

4. / <i>nuŋ</i>	<i>daba-k^huu</i>	<i>lan</i> /.
2SG	knife-ACC	take away.
You take away the knife.		

In the example, /*t^han*/ and /*lan*/ means the place of addressee and knife with addressee that moving far from the speaker, how far have to move isn't fixed. These distal place deixes have fixed distance to move if the speaker mentions the destination.

Example:

5. / <i>nuŋ</i>	<i>hat^hai-jaw</i>	<i>t^han</i> /.
2SG	market-LOC	go.
You go to the market.		

In the example, *market* is the destination of the speaker and the motion place deixis /*t^han*/ means the movement of the addressee on the way from the place of speaker to the place of the market.

7. CONCLUSION

Place deixis in the Bodo language comprises proximal and distal categories which are expressed through verbs to indicate motion relative to the speaker. Motion verbs, specifically /*p^hui*/ ‘come’ and /*labu*/ ‘bring’ for proximal movement and /*t^han*/ ‘go’ and /*lan*/ ‘take away’ for distal movement and track the direction of objects or persons relative to the speaker's position. The analysis reveals a dynamic system where spatial location is defined by the relational trajectory and movement of an entity towards or away from the speaker with specific destination.

ABBREVIATIONS

2SG	Second Person Singular Deixis
ACC	Accusative Case
LOC	Locative Case

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