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A Comparative Study On Noun Formation

Dialects of Kokborok: Debbarma and Reang (Bru)

Umesh Reang, MA in Kokborok
Guest Lecturer, Department of Kokborok
Bir Bikram Memorial College
Email: umsbru@gmail.com

Abstract

A Dialect is a regional or social variation of a language that differs in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary from the standard language. It is a spoken form of a language, and a language may have many dialects. Similarly, the Kokborok language also has many varieties of dialects. The Kokborok language is part of the Tibeto-Burman language family, which is mainly spoken in Tripura, India. The Kokborok language was declared an official language of Tripura on January 19, 1979. The state government of Tripura designated Kokborok as an official language along with Bengali.

This research paper provides a comparative study on the morphological structures and derivational processes involved in noun formation in the dialects of Kokborok. The research paper focuses on two primary dialects: Reang (Bru) and Debbarma. The Reang dialect, also known as Kaubru, and the Debbarma dialect, which is considered the standard form of Kokborok. This paper aims to highlight the similarities and dissimilarities in noun formation between these two dialects.

Keyword: Kokborok language, Debbarma dialect, Reang dialect, Noun formation

1. Introduction

Kokborok is the mother tongue of Tipra people, which is mainly spoken in state of Tripura in Northeast India. Apart from Tripura state, the Kokborok language is also spoken in the state of Assam, Mizoram, and neighbouring country of Bangladesh. Kokborok is a member of the Bodo-Garo group within the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. It is one of the state languages of Tripura and is spoken by various indigenous communities, including the Tripura, Reang, Debbarma, Jamatia, Noatia, Kalai, Murasing and Uchoi. Each of these communities has its own dialect of Kokborok, which adds to the linguistic richness of the language. Each dialect reflects unique linguistic features shaped by historical, social and geographical influences.

According to the 2011 census, the indigenous population of Tripura is about 30% of the state's total population. The Reang (Bru) dialect, spoken by the second-largest indigenous community in Tripura, and the Debbarma dialect is the largest indigenous community, it is historically associated with the royal family. Despite sharing a common linguistic heritage, these dialects exhibit notable differences in their phonological and morphological structure, particularly in noun formation.

The Reang (Bru) dialect also referred to as Kaubru, is characterized by its unique phonetic features, which influence noun formation. In contrast, the Debbarma dialect serves as the standard form of Kokborok. In these dialects, noun formation processes such as affixation and compounding, and reduplication are used. This research aims to compare these two dialects to understand the similarities and differences in their noun formation processes.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The main objectives for this study are:

- To find out the process of noun formation in Debbarma dialect
- To find out the process of noun formation in Reang(Bru) dialect
- To find out the linguistics affiliation and differentiation of noun formation in these dialects.

1.3 Methodology

The data for this research paper has been collected from the both primary and secondary sources. The primary data has been collected from self-information source. Being a native speaker, the researcher can provide the necessary data for this study by acting as an informant. Secondary data have been collected from various published and unpublished books, journals, published papers, theses, magazines etc., for the proposed study.

2. Noun

A noun is a kind of word that is usually the name of something, such as place, person, animal and thing. Nouns in Kokborok, like in many languages, form the largest open word class and can serve various grammatical functions within a sentence, such as the subject or object of a verb. In terms of noun formation, the Reang (Bru) and Debbarma dialects have some differences and similarities. The following is a discussion on the noun formation of these dialects in relation to the topic given above.

2.1 Noun formation

The formation of nouns refers to the process by which new nouns are created from other words or word forms. This can involve the modification of existing words or the combination of multiple elements to produce a new noun. Common methods include derivation, where affixes are added to a base word, and compound, where two and more words are combined to form a new noun. Reduplication, where a whole or part of a word is repeated to create a new noun.

Morphologically, there are three types of noun formation processes in both the Debbarma and Reang dialects. These processes are –

- Derived noun
- Compound noun
- Reduplication noun

2.2 Derived noun

Like other languages, these two dialects also have derived nouns. A derived noun is a noun that is created from another word through the process of derivation. This typically involves adding a prefix or suffix to a base word, transforming it into a noun. Derived nouns can come from verbs or adjectives, and they often change the meaning or grammatical category of the original word. However, in these dialects of Kokborok, derived nouns are formed from verbs by adding suffixes. In terms of suffixes, the noun formation structure is similar in both dialects, except for lexical words and a suffix difference is observed, which is that the suffix 'ma' is used with the verb root in the Debbarma dialect and 'mo' in the Reang dialect. These examples are shown below.

2.2.1 Examples of entirely similarities are given below.

Verb + suffix (bound morpheme) = Noun.

Debbarma

tang (v, do) + {-phang} (s) = tangphang (n, secretary)
 cha (v, eat) + {-mung} (s) = chamung (n, food)
 tung (v, be hot) + {-mari} (s) = tungmari (n, temperature)
 ri (v, give) + {-thai} (s) = rithai (n, debt)
 tang (v, do) + {-nai} (s) = tangnai (n, doer)

Reang (Bru)

tang (v, do) + {-phang} (s) = tangphang (n, secretary)
 cha (v, eat) + {-mung} (s) = chamung (n, food)

tung (v, be hot) + {-mari} (s) = tungmari (n, temperature)

ri (v, give) + {-thai} (s) = rithai (n, debt)

tang (v, do) + {-nai} (s) = tangnai (n, doer)

2.2.2 Examples of the same structure and suffixes but dissimilar noun words are given below

Debbarma

san (v, ask) + {-thai} (s) = santhai (n, demand)

nahar (v, to look) + {-mung} (s) = naharmung (n, goal)

phunuk (v, to show) + {-mari} (s) = phunukmari (n, example)

muruk (v, to guard) + {-nai} (s) = muruknai (n, guard)

achuk (v, sit) + {-phang} (s) = achukphang (n, chairperson)

Reang

saing (v, ask) + {-thai} (s) = saingthai (n, demand)

naihui (v, to look) + {-mung} (s) = naihuimung (n, goal)

phnu (v, to show) + {-mari} (s) = phnumari (n, example)

mru (v, to guard) + {-nai} (s) = mruunai (n, guard)

achou (v, sit) + {-phang} (s) = achouphang (n, chairperson)

2.2.3 An example of same structure but dissimilar suffix is given below

Debbarma

wansuk (v, think) + {-ma} (s) = wansukma (n, thinking)

Reang (Bru)

waingsou (v, think) + {-mo} (s) = waingsoumo (n, thinking)

2.3 Compound noun

A compound noun is a noun that is made up of two or more words combined to create a single noun with a specific meaning, such as naming a person, place, thing or idea. These words can be joined together in various ways, such as by combining two nouns, an adjective and a noun, or a verb and a noun. The formation of compound nouns often follows specific patterns, such as noun + noun, adjective + noun or verb + noun. Like other languages, the Reang (Bru) and Debbarma dialects of Kokborok also have compound nouns. In terms of compound nouns, similarities and differences can be seen in the structure of noun formation. Examples are showing in the below.

2.3.1 Examples of entirely similarities are given below.

Debbarma

khunju (n, ear) + khi (n, stool) = khunjukhi (n, earwax)

sal (n, sun) + ka (v, rise) = salka (n, east)

ka (v, step) + lam (n, way) = kalam (n, stair)

Reang (Bru)

khunju (n, ear) + khi (n, stool) = khunjukhi (n, earwax)

sal (n, sun) + ka (v, rise) = salka (n, east)

ka (v, step) + lam (n, way) = kalam (n, stair)

2.3.2 Examples of the same structure but dissimilar noun words are given below

Debbarma

tokha (n, crow) + rung (n, boat) = tokharung (n, oroxylum indicum)

thwng (v, play) + nuk (v, to see) = thwngnuk (n, drama)

mui (n, curry) + kuthung (n, raw) = muikuthung (n, vegetable)

swkal (n, witch) + thwi (n, blood) + nwnng (v, drink) + {-nai} (s) = swkalthwinwngnai (n, chameleon)

Reang (Bru)

taukha (n, crow) + rung (n, boat) = taukharung (n, oroxylum indicum)

thung (v, play) + nou (v, to see) = thungnou (n, drama)

mui (n, curry) + kthung (n, raw) = muikthung (n, vegetable)

skal (n, witch) + thui (n, blood) + nung (v, drink) + {-nai} (s) = skalthuinwngnai (n, chameleon)

2.3.3 Examples of differences in structure are given below.

Debbarma

mui (n, curry) + sele (adj, lazy) = muisele (n, python)
 ganti (n, a kind of room) + nok (n, house) = gantinok (n, kitchen)
 mui (n, curry) + ham (v, to good) + {-jwk} (s) = muihamjwk (n, tortoise)
 mui (n, curry) + masing (n, winter season) = muimasing (n, pigeon pea)
 moso (n, chilly) + deng (v, to rub) = mosodeng (n, chilli chutney)

Reang (Bru)

murbei (n, python)
 mai (n, rice) + sung (v, to cook) + nou (n, house) = maisungnou (n, kitchen)
 tui (n, water) + mui (n, curry) = tuimui (n, tortoise)
 khau (v, pluck) + {-khling} (s) = khaukhling (n, pigeon pea)
 thamso (n, chilly) + hu (v, to rub) + {-mo} (s) = thamsohumo (n, chilli chutney)

2.4 Noun reduplication

Noun reduplication is a linguistic process where a noun or part of a noun is repeated to form a new noun word with a specific meaning. Like other languages, both the Reang (Bru) and Debbarma dialects of Kokborok also exhibit noun reduplication. In terms of noun reduplication, there are no differences in the structure of noun formation, except noun words. Examples are showing in the below.

2.4.1 An example of entirely similarities is given below.

Debbarma

lama (n, road) + lama (n, road) = lama-lama (several road)

Reang

lama (n, road) + lama (n, road) = lama-lama (several road)

2.4.2 Examples of the same structure but dissimilar noun words are given below

Debbarma

nok (n, house) + nok (n, house) = nok-nok (several house)
 kami (n, village) + kami (n, village) = kami-kami (several village)
 bolong (n, jungle) + bolong (n, jungle) = bolong-bolong (several jungle)

Reang

nou (n, house) + nou (n, house) = nou-nou (several house)
 para (n, village) + para (n, village) = para-para (several village)
 blong (n, jungle) + blong (n, jungle) = blong-blong (several jungle)

2.5 Conclusion

From the above discussion, it can be seen that both the dialects belong to the Sino-Tibetan language family. According to the 2011 census, these two dialects are the majority among kokborok speakers. Among the kokborok dialects, the Reang dialect has most differences compared to the other dialects. Although there are some similarities and differences in noun formation structure between these two dialects, the structure of derived nouns is mostly similar except for lexical words. However, compound nouns exhibit both structural similarities and differences. Furthermore, aside from the structure in noun formation, more differences are observed in noun lexical words.

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