# A Comparative Analysis of the Numeral Classifiers of Bodo, Rabha and Kok Borok Languages

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## Abstract

This paper attempts to compare and analyze numeral classifiers of Bodo, Rabha and Kok Borok languages. They have been recognised with same sub-group and they migrated together in North-East India. (Chatterji, Suniti Kumar, Kirata Jana Kriti, 2007, page -45-46). Some Similarities and Dissimilarities are found among these languages. Each language has its own Structures and Functions in numeral classifiers.

Key Words: Classifiers, Structures, Functions, Similarities and Dissimilarities.

## 1. Introduction

Bodo, Rabha and Kok Borok languages has developed from same sub-group of Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family which is second largest language family in the world. These languages spread in different places in North-East India. Today the Bodo and Rabha have their basic concentration in Assam and the Kok Borok in Tripura. The gap in communication and relation among these languages led to dissimilarities among them. To study the historical relationship between these languages many comparative study has been done by writers and researchers.

#### 2. Scope of Study

This study is to explore the comparative analysis of some of the classifiers (structure and function) of Bodo, Rabha and Kok Borok languages, which have its own unique characters in classifiers.

## 3. Methodology

Conversation and Observation methods were used to collect the data from native speakers for the primary data, and for the secondary sources written materials in form of Books, Journal Articles, Internet and Newspapers, etc., have been collected.

#### 4. Meaning of Classifiers

In grammatical category, the classifier is the important category of nominal group of Bodo Morphology. The classifiers are used for the shape and size, quantity and quality of things and objects. These relate to human beings, nonhuman beings, God, Goddess and Ghost. In Bodo, Rabha and Kok Borok languages classifiers are added to numerals to define the original nature of things and original quantity of human and nonhuman beings.

The topic of discussion is the structure and function of classifiers among these three languages.

#### 5. Classifiers of Bodo Language

1.{sa} : This classifier is used for human beings and for God and Goddess in Bodo language.

For example -

sa – se mansi or mansi sa – se. (One man)

sa – nuji gosai or gosai sa – nuji. (Two Gods)

2.{ma} : This classifier is used for all kinds of animals, birds, insects, water animals, creatures and sometimes for ghosts.

For example -

ma – se mujsuju or mujsuju ma – se. (a cow)

ma – nuți bat<sup>h</sup>o or bat<sup>h</sup>o ma – nuți. (Two parrots)

 $ma - t^{h}am$  gondola or gondola  $ma - t^{h}am$ . (Three dragon flies)

ma – bruji na or na ma – bruji. (Four fishes)

ma – ba t<sup>h</sup>ampuji or t<sup>h</sup>ampuji ma – ba.(Five mosquitoes)

ma – d<sup>h</sup>o mudai or mudai ma – d<sup>h</sup>o. (Six ghosts)

3.{p<sup>h</sup>ang} : This classifier is used in Bodo language for tree, herb and climbers.

For example -

 $P^{h}$ ang – se goi or goi  $p^{h}$ ang – se. (one areca nut tree)

P<sup>h</sup>ang – nuți t<sup>h</sup>aizuțu or t<sup>h</sup>aizuțu p<sup>h</sup>ang – nuți. (Two mango trees)

4.{gong} : This classifier is used for things, house, musical instruments, furniture, household articles, fishing, hunting tools, agricultural tools, transport, electronic media and many other related things.

For example –

gong – se k<sup>h</sup>anzong or k<sup>h</sup>anzong gong – se. (One comb)

gong – nuji no or no gong – nuji.(Two houses)

gong – t<sup>h</sup>am sipung or sipung gong – t<sup>h</sup>am. (Three flutes)

gong - bruți bisina or bisina gong - bruți. (Four beds)

gong – ba t<sup>h</sup>ursi or t<sup>h</sup>ursi gong – ba. (Five dishes)

gong – d<sup>h</sup>o zek<sup>h</sup>ai or zek<sup>h</sup>ai gong – d<sup>h</sup>o. (Six fishing tools)

gong – sni ruuqa or ruuqa gong – sni. (Seven axes)

gong – dain laot<sup>h</sup>i or laot<sup>h</sup>i gong – dain.(Eight sticks)

gong – gu nao or nao gong – gu. (Nine boats)

gong – zi T.V. or T.V. gong – zi.(Ten Televisions)

 $5.{t^{h}ai}$ : This classifier is used for fruits and vegetables.

For example –

 $T^{h}ai - se t^{h}alir or t^{h}alir t^{h}ai - se.$  (one banana)

 $T^{h}ai - nuji t^{h}aibeng or t^{h}aibeng t^{h}ai - nuji.$  (Two cucumbers)

 $T^{h}ai - t^{h}am \text{ pant}^{h}ao \text{ or pant}^{h}ao t^{h}ai - t^{h}am.$  (Three brinjals)

6.{pong} : This classifier is used for human speech, biting, kicking hands and beating with sticks.

For example –

Pong - se batra or batra pong - se. (One word)

Pong – nuți zuțnai or zuțnai pong – nuți. (Two kick)

Pong  $-t^{h}$ am bunai or bunai pong  $-t^{h}$ am. (Three times beating)

7.{duqng} : This classifier is used for long and flexible things like –hair, rope, necklace, tail, string and electrical string.

For example –

dung – se k<sup>h</sup>anai or k<sup>h</sup>anai dung – se. (A hair)

dung nui dirung or dirung dung – nui. (Two ropes)

 $dung - t^{h}am$  mala or mala  $dung - t^{h}am$ . (Three necklaces)

dung - brui lanzai or lanzai dung - brui. (Four tails)

dung – ba  $k^h$ undung or  $k^h$ undung dung – ba. (Five strings)

8.{t<sup>h</sup>ong} : This classifier is used in Bodo language for cutting bamboo and tree for posts.

For example -

 $t^{h}$ ong – se  $k^{h}$ untia or  $k^{h}$ untia  $t^{h}$ ong – se. (One post)

t<sup>h</sup>ong – nui sal k<sup>h</sup>unt<sup>h</sup>a or sal k<sup>h</sup>unt<sup>h</sup>a t<sup>h</sup>ong – nui. (Two posts of weaving loom)

9.{dung}: This classifier is used in Bodo language for holes of insects.

For example -

dung – se k<sup>h</sup>angk<sup>h</sup>rai gudung or k<sup>h</sup>ank<sup>h</sup>rai gudung dung – se. (One hole of crab)

dung – nuți anzor gudung or anzor gudung dung – nuți. (Two holes of rat)

{g<sup>h</sup>or} : This classifier is used in Bodo language for small and round things like – seeds, stones.

For example -

- $g^{h}or se$  sibing or sibing  $g^{h}or se$ . (One lentil)
- g<sup>h</sup>or nuți but<sup>h</sup> or but<sup>h</sup> g<sup>h</sup>or nuți. (Two grams)
- g<sup>h</sup>or t<sup>h</sup>am ont<sup>h</sup>ai or ont<sup>h</sup>ai g<sup>h</sup>or t<sup>h</sup>am. (Three stones)
- {muzum} : This classifier is used for things like rice, paddy seed, sugar, sand, soil and seeds.

For example -

mujzujm – se mai or mai mujzujm – se. (One handful of paddy seeds)

muzum – nui sini or sini muzum – nui. (Two handful of sugars)

mu<sub>z</sub>u<sub>m</sub>  $- t^{h}$ am bala or bala mu<sub>z</sub>u<sub>m</sub>  $- t^{h}$ am. (Three handful of sands)

muzuum - bruqi dali or dali muzuum - bruqi. (Four handful of dhal seeds)

12. {haldinga} : This classifier is used for a string of meat, insects and fishes and also sometimes for fruits, vegetables and flowers too.

For example –

haldinga – nuji khusengra or khusengra haldinga – nuji. (Two strings of one kind of insects)

haldinga  $-t^{h}$ am na or na haldinga  $-t^{h}$ am. (Three strings of fishes)

haldinga – bruųi pit<sup>h</sup>ai or pit<sup>h</sup>ai haldinga – bruųi. (Four strings of fruits)

#### 6. Classifiers of Rabha Language

1.{sak} : This classifier is used for human being in Rabha language.

For example -

sak – sa k<sup>h</sup>ai or k<sup>h</sup>ai sak – sa. (One man)

sak – niN triNgir or triNgir sak – niN. (Two students)

2.{ma}: This classifier is used for all kinds of animal, birds, insects, water animals and creature.

For example -

- ma sa masu or masu ma sa. (One cow)
- ma niN t<sup>h</sup>ok<sup>h</sup>a or t<sup>h</sup>ok<sup>h</sup>a ma niN. (Two crows)
- $ma t^{h}am k^{h}arok^{h} or k^{h}arok^{h} ma t^{h}am.$  (Three cockroaches)

 $ma - c^{h}ar k^{h}en or k^{h}en ma - c^{h}ar.$  (Four crabs)

- ma ba luk<sup>h</sup>bak<sup>h</sup> or luk<sup>h</sup>bak<sup>h</sup> ma ba. (Five frogs)
- $3.\{p^{h}aN\}$ : This classifier is used for tree, herb and climbers.

For example –

 $p^{h}aN - sa k^{h}ui \text{ or } k^{h}ui p^{h}aN - sa.$  (One areca nut tree)

p<sup>h</sup>an – niN p<sup>h</sup>oc<sup>h</sup>o or p<sup>h</sup>oc<sup>h</sup>o p<sup>h</sup>aN – niN. (Two mango trees)

 $p^{h}aN - t^{h}am zaluk^{h} or zaluk^{h} p^{h}aN - t^{h}am$ . (Three chilli trees)

 $p^{h}aN - c^{h}a$  narim or narim  $p^{h}aN - c^{h}a$ . (Four cucumber trees)

4.{k<sup>h</sup>on}: This classifier is used in Rabha language for leaves, pieces of cloths, wings, books and papers, all kinds of flat things, house, household things, furniture, musical instruments, fishing tools, hunting tools, agricultural tools, utensils, transport, sport and educational tools and so on.

For example –

 $k^{h}on - sa sak or sak k^{h}on - sa.$  (A leaf)

k<sup>h</sup>on – niN nen or nen k<sup>h</sup>on – niN. (Two cloths)

k<sup>h</sup>on – t<sup>h</sup>am t<sup>h</sup>areN or t<sup>h</sup>areN k<sup>h</sup>on – t<sup>h</sup>am. (Three wings)

 $k^{h}on - c^{h}ar$  boi or boi  $k^{h}on - c^{h}ar$ . (Four books)

- $k^{h}$ on ba nok or nok khon ba. (Five houses)
- $k^{h}on soi k^{h}oc^{h}eN or k^{h}oc^{h}eN k^{h}on soi.$  (Six combs)
- $k^{h}$ on siya  $t^{h}$ ibil or  $t^{h}$ ibil  $k^{h}$ on siya. (Seven tables)
- k<sup>h</sup>on gin domphol or d<sup>h</sup>omp<sup>h</sup>ol k<sup>h</sup>on gin. (Eight drums)
- k<sup>h</sup>on gin k<sup>h</sup>odur or k<sup>h</sup>odur k<sup>h</sup>on gin. (Eight baskets for keeping fish)
- k<sup>h</sup>on –biN bak<sup>h</sup>eN or bak<sup>h</sup>eN k<sup>h</sup>on biN. (Nine axes)
- k<sup>h</sup>on sat<sup>h</sup>a t<sup>h</sup>ursi or t<sup>h</sup>ursi k<sup>h</sup>on sat<sup>h</sup>a. (Ten dishes)
- k<sup>h</sup>on sat<sup>h</sup>a tringdam or tringdam k<sup>h</sup>on sat<sup>h</sup>a. (Ten schools)
- $5.{t^he}$  : This classifier is used in Rabha language for fruits and vegetables.

For example -

- $t^{h}e sa poc^{h}o or poc^{h}o t^{h}e sa.$  (A mango)
- t<sup>h</sup>e niN bant<sup>h</sup>ao or bant<sup>h</sup>ao t<sup>h</sup>e niN. (Two brinjals)
- $6.{t^{h}uka}$ : This classifier is used for the human speech.

For example -

- $t^{h}uka sa kat^{h}a or kat^{h}a t^{h}uka sa.$  (One word)
- t<sup>h</sup>uka niN kat<sup>h</sup>a or tat<sup>h</sup>a t<sup>h</sup>uka niN. (Two words)
- 7.{tuqng} : This classifier is used for long and flexible things like rope, hair, necklaces, tail, string and so on.

For example –

- tuqng sa k<sup>h</sup>ur or k<sup>h</sup>ur tuqng sa. (A rope)
- tuqng sa k<sup>h</sup>oro or k<sup>h</sup>oro tuqng sa. (A hair)
- tuqng niN zimi or zimi tuqng niN. (Two tails)
- tuing  $-t^{h}am$  nent<sup>h</sup>eng or nent<sup>h</sup>eng tuing  $-t^{h}am$ . (Three strings)

8.{t<sup>h</sup>ok} :This classifier is used in Rabha language for drops of liquids.

For example –

t<sup>h</sup>ok – sa c<sup>h</sup>oki or c<sup>h</sup>oki t<sup>h</sup>ok – sa. (A drop of wine)

 $t^{h}ok - niN mac^{h}u-p^{h}u$  or  $mac^{h}o-p^{h}u t^{h}ok - niN$ . (Two drops of milk)

9.{bada} : This classifier is used for bunch of fruits like – areca nut, grapes, coconut and litchi.

For example –

bada – sa k<sup>h</sup>ui or k<sup>h</sup>ui bada – sa. (A bunches of areca nuts)

bada - sa nariyol or nariyol bada - sa. (A bunch of coconuts)

bada - niN lesu or lesu bada - niN. (A bunch of litchis)

10. {pal} : This classifier is used in case of flock of birds, herd of cows, cattle etc.

For example –

pal – sa bugil or bugil pal – sa. (A herd of cranes)

pal – sa masu or masu pal – sa. (A herd of cows)

11. {halsiN} : This classifier is used for a string of fishes, meat or so on.

For example –

halsiN - sa na or na halsiN - sa. (A string of fishes)

halsiN - niN kaka or kaka halsiN - niN. (Two string of meats)

12. {zor} :This classifier is used for pairs of peoples and birds.

For example –

zor - sa misa or misa zor - sa. (A pair of girls)

zor - niN tiya or tiya zor - niN. (Two pair of parrots)

## 7. Classifiers of Kok Borok Language

1.{khorok/borok}: This classifier is used in Kok Borok language for human being. For example –

 $k^{h}$ orok – sa borok or borok  $k^{h}$ orok – sa. (One man)

k<sup>h</sup>orok – nui serai or serai k<sup>h</sup>orok – nui. (Two children)

2.{ma} : This classifier is used for all kinds of animals, insects, birds and creatures.

For example –

ma – sa musuk or musuk ma – sa. (A cow)

ma - nui larima or larima ma - nui. (Two butterflies)

ma – t<sup>h</sup>am tak<sup>h</sup>um or tak<sup>h</sup>um ma – t<sup>h</sup>am. (Three ducks)

3.{p<sup>h</sup>ang} : This classifier is used for all kinds of tree, herb and climbers.

For example –

p<sup>h</sup>ang – sa boroi or boroi p<sup>h</sup>ang – sa. (A plum tree)

p<sup>h</sup>ang – nui t<sup>h</sup>alik or t<sup>h</sup>alik p<sup>h</sup>ang – nui. (Two banana trees)

p<sup>h</sup>ang – t<sup>h</sup>am fant<sup>h</sup>ak or fant<sup>h</sup>ak p<sup>h</sup>ang – t<sup>h</sup>am.(Three brinjal trees)

p<sup>h</sup>ang – brui milok or milok p<sup>h</sup>ang – brui. (Four pumpkin trees)

4.{k<sup>h</sup>ung} : This classifier is used for house, weapons, all kinds of household things, furniture, musical instruments, agricultural tools, hunting and fishing tools, utensils and any kind of things.

For example -

k<sup>h</sup>ung – sa gatinok or gatinok k<sup>h</sup>ung – sa. (One kitchen)

k<sup>h</sup>ung – sa manui or manui k<sup>h</sup>ung – sa. (A weapon)

k<sup>h</sup>ung – nui betra or betra k<sup>h</sup>ung – nui. (Two combs)

 $k^{h}ung - t^{h}am$  tailam or tailum  $k^{h}ung - t^{h}am$ . (Three windows)

k<sup>h</sup>ung – brui godal or godal k<sup>h</sup>ung – brui. (Four spades) **Language in India** <u>www.languageinindia.com</u> **ISSN 1930-2940 16:4 April 2016** Asha Rani Brahma. M.A, B.Ed., Ph.D. Research Scholar A Comparative Analysis of the Numeral Classifiers of Bodo, Rabha and Kok Borok Languages 9

- k<sup>h</sup>ung ba c<sup>h</sup>ai or c<sup>h</sup>ai k<sup>h</sup>ung ba. (Five fishing nets)
- $k^{h}$ ung ba mairang or mairang  $k^{h}$ ung ba. (Five dishes)
- 5.{t<sup>h</sup>ai} :This classifier is used for fruits and vegetables.
- For example -
- $t^{h}ai sa jambi or jambi t^{h}ai sa.$  (One lemon)
- t<sup>h</sup>ai nui fant<sup>h</sup>ak muk<sup>h</sup>ui or fant<sup>h</sup>ak muk<sup>h</sup>ui t<sup>h</sup>ai nui. (Two tomatoes)
- 6.{pung} : This classifier is used for human speech and beating by hands, kicking by legs and with other things like stick.

For example -

- pung sa tapora or tapora pung sa. (One slab)
- pung nui yamasung or yamasung pung nui. (Two times of kick)
- 7.{tung} : This classifier is used for long and flexible things like rope, hair, tail and string.

For example -

- tung sa kut<sup>h</sup>ung or kut<sup>h</sup>ung tung sa. (A string)
- tung nui kanai or kanai tung nui. (Two hairs)
- tung  $-t^{h}$ am dukui or dukui tung  $-t^{h}$ am. (Three ropes)
- 8.{kok} : This classifier is used for small round things like seed.

For example –

kok - sa sobai or sobai kok - sa. (One land till)

- kok nui hujiruj or hujiruj kok nui. (Two seeds of mustard oil)
- 9.{lam} : This classifier is used for hole of insects.

For example –

lam – sa bulam or bulam lam – sa. (One hole) Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 16:4 April 2016 Asha Rani Brahma. M.A, B.Ed., Ph.D. Research Scholar A Comparative Analysis of the Numeral Classifiers of Bodo, Rabha and Kok Borok Languages 10 lam – nui sinzo bulam or sinzo bulam lam – nui. (Two holes of snake)

10. {bar} :This classifier is used for flower.

For example -

bar - sa bubar or bubar bar - sa. (One flower)

bar – nui bubar or bubar bar – nui. (Two flower)

11. {lai} :This classifier is used in Kok Borok language for leaves.

For example -

lai – sa bulai or bulai lai – sa. (One leaf)

lai – nui bulai or bulai lai – nui. (Two leaves)

12. {lap} :This classifier is used for small pieces of skin.

For example -

lap – sa buk<sup>h</sup>ur or buk<sup>h</sup>ur lap – sa. (One piece of skin)

lap – nui buk<sup>h</sup>ur or buk<sup>h</sup>ur lap – nui. (Two pieces of skin)

#### 8. Structure of Classifiers

The classifiers of these languages have some similarities and dissimilarities in structure. In Bodo, Rabha and Kok Borok languages, the classifiers are found to be monosyllabic and polysyllabic (more than one syllable) too. Like in Bodo {sa}, {ma}, { $p^{h}ang$ }, {gong}, { $t^{h}ai$ }, { $p^{h}ong$ }, {dung}, { $t^{h}ong$ }, {dung}, { $g^{h}or$ }, are monosyllabic and some classifier like {muzum}, {haldinga} are found to be polysyllabic.

In Rabha language, the classifier  $\{sak\}$ ,  $\{maN\}$ ,  $\{p^{h}an\}$ ,  $\{k^{h}on\}$ ,  $\{t^{h}e\}$ ,  $\{tuqng\}$ ,  $\{t^{h}ok\}$ ,  $\{pal\}$ ,  $\{zor\}$  are monosyllabic and  $\{t^{h}uka\}$ ,  $\{bada\}$ ,  $\{halsing\}$  are polysyllabic.

In Kok Borok language, the classifiers like  $\{ma\}$ ,  $\{p^hang\}$ ,  $\{k^hung\}$ ,  $\{t^hai\}$ ,  $\{pung\}$ ,  $\{tung\}$ ,  $\{kok\}$ ,  $\{lam\}$ ,  $\{bar\}$ ,  $\{lai\}$ ,  $\{lap\}$  are monosyllabic and the classifier  $\{k^horok\}$  is polysyllabic.

In Kok Borok language, maximum classifiers are monosyllabic in structure unlike in Bodo and Rabha languages. The first phonemes of classifiers of these Languages starts with consonant phoneme than vowel phoneme like Alveolar fricative voiceless consonant  $\{s\}$ , Bilabial voiced nasal consonant  $\{m\}$ , Bilabial stop voiceless consonant phoneme  $\{p^h\}$ , velar voiced stop un aspirated phoneme  $\{g\}$ , alveolar voiceless stop phoneme  $\{t^h\}$ , Alveolar voiced stop phoneme  $\{d\}$ , glottal fricative phoneme  $\{h\}$ , alveolar voiced fricative phoneme  $\{z\}$ , velar voiceless stop phoneme  $\{k^h\}$ , alveolar lateral voiced phoneme  $\{l\}$  and bilabial stop voiced phoneme  $\{b\}$ .

#### 9. Function of Classifiers

The classifiers of these languages are used before and after a noun and before the numeral in sentence. Noun precedes or follows the classifier and most of the classifiers of these three languages are used as bound morphemes in sentence.

#### **10. Conclusion**

This paper tries to explore the similarities and dissimilarities of classifiers of three cognate languages in structure and function. In North-East India, four language families, Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic and Dravidian (a small number of Tamil speakers in Morch District of Manipur) are found. The Bodo, Rabha and Kok Borok belong to the Bodo group of Tibeto-Burman language family. This paper tries to highlight the unique characters of classifiers of Bodo group of languages that it shares by other languages families.

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