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


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 – nuqi gosai or gosai sa – nuqi. (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 mゥsゥqゥ or mゥsゥqゥ ma – se. (a cow)

   ma – nuqi batʰo or ba⁵ho ma – nuqi. (Two parrots)

   ma – tʰam gonḍola or gonḍola ma – tʰam. (Three dragon flies)

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

   ma – ba tʰampॱi or tʰampॱi ma – ba.(Five mosquitoes)

   ma – dʰo muḍai or muḍai ma – dʰo. (Six ghosts)
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3. \{p\textsuperscript{h}ang\} : This classifier is used in Bodo language for tree, herb and climbers.

For example -

\begin{itemize}
  \item \(p\textsuperscript{h}ang\) – se goi or goi \(p\textsuperscript{h}ang\) – se. (one areca nut tree)
  \item \(p\textsuperscript{h}ang\) – nuqi \(t\textsuperscript{h}aiz\u{u}\) or \(t\textsuperscript{h}aiz\u{u}\) \(p\textsuperscript{h}ang\) – nuqi. (Two mango trees)
\end{itemize}

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 –

\begin{itemize}
  \item gong – se \(k\textsuperscript{h}anz\u{ong}\) or \(k\textsuperscript{h}anz\u{ong}\) gong – se. (One comb)
  \item gong – nuqi no or no gong – nuqi. (Two houses)
  \item gong – \(t\textsuperscript{h}am\) sipung or sipung gong – \(t\textsuperscript{h}am\). (Three flutes)
  \item gong – bruqi bisina or bisina gong – bruqi. (Four beds)
  \item gong – ba \(t\textsuperscript{h}qr\textsuperscript{si}\) or \(t\textsuperscript{h}qr\textsuperscript{si}\) gong – ba. (Five dishes)
  \item gong – d\textsuperscript{h}o zek\textsuperscript{b}ai or zek\textsuperscript{b}ai gong – d\textsuperscript{h}o. (Six fishing tools)
  \item gong – sni ruu\textsuperscript{u}a or ruu\textsuperscript{u}a gong – sni. (Seven axes)
  \item gong – dain laot\textsuperscript{b}i or laot\textsuperscript{b}i gong – dain. (Eight sticks)
  \item gong – gu nao or nao gong – gu. (Nine boats)
  \item gong – zi T.V. or T.V. gong – zi. (Ten Televisions)
\end{itemize}

5. \{t\textsuperscript{b}ai\} : This classifier is used for fruits and vegetables.

For example –

\begin{itemize}
  \item T\textsuperscript{b}ai – se t\textsuperscript{b}alir or t\textsuperscript{b}alir \(t\textsuperscript{b}ai\) – se. (one banana)
  \item T\textsuperscript{b}ai – nuqi t\textsuperscript{b}aibeng or t\textsuperscript{b}aibeng \(t\textsuperscript{b}ai\) – nuqi. (Two cucumbers)
  \item T\textsuperscript{b}ai – \(t\textsuperscript{b}am\) pant\textsuperscript{h}ao or pant\textsuperscript{h}ao \(t\textsuperscript{b}ai\) – \(t\textsuperscript{b}am\). (Three brinjals)
\end{itemize}
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 – nuqi znai or znai pong – nuqi. (Two kick)

Pong – t'am bunai or bunai pong – t'am. (Three times beating)

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

For example –

dang – se k'anai or k'anai dang – se. (A hair)
dang nuqi dirung or dirung dang – nuqi. (Two ropes)
dang – t'am mala or mala dang – t'am. (Three necklaces)
dang - bruq lanzai or lanzai dang – bruq. (Four tails)
dang – ba k'undung or k'undung dang – ba. (Five strings)

8. {t'ong} : This classifier is used in Bodo language for cutting bamboo and tree for posts.

For example –

t'ong – se k'untia or k'untia t'ong – se. (One post)
t'ong – nuqi sal k'unth'a or sal k'unth'a t'ong – nuqi. (Two posts of weaving loom)

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

For example –

dung – se k'angk'rai gudung or k'ank'rai gudung dung – se. (One hole of crab)
dung – nuqi anzor gudung or anzor gudung dung – nuqi. (Two holes of rat)
10. \{g^h 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)

\(g^h\) or – núi but\(^b\) or but\(^b\) \(g^h\) or – núi. (Two grams)

\(g^h\) or – \(t^h\) am ont\(^b\) ai or ont\(^b\) ai \(g^h\) or – \(t^h\) am. (Three stones)

11. \{muzum\} : This classifier is used for things like – rice, paddy seed, sugar, sand, soil and seeds.

For example –

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

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

muzum – \(t^h\) am bala or bala muzum – \(t^h\) am. (Three handful of sands)

muzum – bruqi dali or dali muzum – 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 – núi khusengra or khusengra haldinga – núi. (Two strings of one kind of insects)

haldinga – \(t^h\) am na or na haldinga – \(t^h\) am. (Three strings of fishes)

haldinga – bruqi pîl\(^b\) ai or pîl\(^b\) ai haldinga – bruqi. (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 \(k^h\) ai or \(k^h\) 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^hok^h a or t^hok^h a ma – niN. (Two crows)

ma – t^h am k^harok^h or k^harok^h ma – t^h am. (Three cockroaches)

ma – c^har k^hen or k^hen ma – c^har. (Four crabs)

ma – ba luk^h bak^h or luk^h bak^h 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 u i or k^h u i p^h aN – sa. (One areca nut tree)

p^h an – niN p^h oc^h o or p^h oc^h o p^h 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^h 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^h on – niN nen or nen k^h on – niN. (Two cloths)

k^h on – t^h am t^h are^N or t^h are^N k^h on – t^h am. (Three wings)

k^h on – c^h ar boi or boi k^h on – c^h ar. (Four books)
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1. \(k^h\)on – ba nok or nok \(kh^on\) – ba. (Five houses)
2. \(k^h\)on – soi \(k^h\)oc\(eN\) or \(k^h\)oc\(eN\) \(k^h\)on – soi. (Six combs)
3. \(k^h\)on – siya \(t\)ibil or \(t\)ibil \(k^h\)on – siya. (Seven tables)
4. \(k^h\)on – gin domphol or \(d^h\)omp\(h\)ol \(k^h\)on – gin. (Eight drums)
5. \(k^h\)on – gin \(k^h\)odur or \(k^h\)odur \(k^h\)on – gin. (Eight baskets for keeping fish)
6. \(k^h\)on –bi\(N\) bak\(h\)eN or bak\(h\)eN \(k^h\)on – bi\(N\). (Nine axes)
7. \(k^h\)on – sat\(h\)a \(t\)\(u\)rsi or \(t\)\(u\)rsi \(k^h\)on – sat\(h\)a. (Ten dishes)
8. \(k^h\)on – sat\(h\)a tringdam or tringdam \(k^h\)on – sat\(h\)a. (Ten schools)

5. {\(t^h\)e} : 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)
\(t^h\)e – ni\(N\) bant\(h\)ao or bant\(h\)ao \(t^h\)e – ni\(N\). (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)
\(t^h\)uka – ni\(N\) kat\(h\)a or tat\(h\)a \(t^h\)uka – ni\(N\). (Two words)

7. {\(t\)\(u\)ng} : This classifier is used for long and flexible things like – rope, hair, necklaces, tail, string and so on.

For example –

\(t\)\(u\)ng – sa \(k^h\)ur or \(k^h\)ur \(t\)\(u\)ng – sa. (A rope)
\(t\)\(u\)ng – sa \(k^h\)oro or \(k^h\)oro \(t\)\(u\)ng – sa. (A hair)
\(t\)\(u\)ng – ni\(N\) zimi or zimi \(t\)\(u\)ng – ni\(N\). (Two tails)
\(t\)\(u\)ng – \(t^h\)am nent\(h\)eng or nent\(h\)eng \(t\)\(u\)ng – \(t^h\)am. (Three strings)
8. \{t^b{ok}\} : This classifier is used in Rabha language for drops of liquids.

For example –

t^b{ok} – sa c^b\{oki\} or c^b\{oki\} t^b{ok} – sa. (A drop of wine)

t^b{ok} – niN mac^b\{u-p^b\{u\} or mac^b\{o-p^b\{u\} t^b{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^b\{ui\} or k^b\{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)
1. {khorok/borok}: This classifier is used in Kok Borok language for human being.

For example –

\[k^h\text{orok} – \text{sa} \text{ borok} \quad k^h\text{orok} – \text{sa.} \quad \text{(One man)}\]

\[k^h\text{orok} – \text{nu} \text{ serai or serai} \quad k^h\text{orok} – \text{nu}. \quad \text{(Two children)}\]

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

For example –

\[\text{ma} – \text{sa musuk or musuk ma – sa.} \quad \text{(A cow)}\]

\[\text{ma} – \text{nu} \text{ larima or larima ma – nui.} \quad \text{(Two butterflies)}\]

\[\text{ma} – t^h\text{am tak}^h\text{um or tak}^h\text{um ma – t}^h\text{am.} \quad \text{(Three ducks)}\]

3. {p^h\text{ang}}: This classifier is used for all kinds of tree, herb and climbers.

For example –

\[p^h\text{ang} – \text{sa boroii or boroii p}^h\text{ang} – \text{sa.} \quad \text{(A plum tree)}\]

\[p^h\text{ang} – \text{nu} \text{ t}^h\text{alik or t}^h\text{alik p}^h\text{ang} – \text{nui.} \quad \text{(Two banana trees)}\]

\[p^h\text{ang} – t^h\text{am fant}^h\text{ak or fant}^h\text{ak p}^h\text{ang} – t^h\text{am.} \quad \text{(Three brinjal trees)}\]

\[p^h\text{ang} – \text{brui milok or milok p}^h\text{ang} – \text{brui.} \quad \text{(Four pumpkin trees)}\]

4. {k^h\text{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 –

\[k^h\text{ung} – \text{sa gatinok or gatinok k}^h\text{ung} – \text{sa.} \quad \text{(One kitchen)}\]

\[k^h\text{ung} – \text{sa} \text{ manui or manui k}^h\text{ung} – \text{sa.} \quad \text{(A weapon)}\]

\[k^h\text{ung} – \text{nu} \text{ betra or betra k}^h\text{ung} – \text{nui.} \quad \text{(Two combs)}\]

\[k^h\text{ung} – t^h\text{am tailam or tailum k}^h\text{ung} – t^h\text{am.} \quad \text{(Three windows)}\]

\[k^h\text{ung} – \text{brui godal or godal k}^h\text{ung} – \text{brui.} \quad \text{(Four spades)}\]
kʰung – ba cʰai or cʰai kʰung – ba. (Five fishing nets)
kʰung – ba mairang or mairang kʰung – ba. (Five dishes)

5. {tʰai} : This classifier is used for fruits and vegetables.
For example –

tʰai – sa jambi or jambi tʰai – sa. (One lemon)
tʰai – nui fantʰak mukʰui or fantʰak mukʰui tʰai – 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 kutʰung or kutʰung tung – sa. (A string)
tung – nui kanai or kanai tung – nui. (Two hairs)
tung – tʰam dukui or dukui tung – tʰam. (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 hɯwargs or hɯwargs kok – nui. (Two seeds of mustard oil)

9. {lam} : This classifier is used for hole of insects.
For example –

lam – sa bułam or bułam lam – sa. (One hole)
lam – nui sinzo buŋlam or sinzo buŋlam 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 buŋlai or buŋlai lai – sa. (One leaf)

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

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

For example –

lap – sa buŋhur or buŋhur lap – sa. (One piece of skin)

lap – nui buŋhur or buŋhur 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}, {pʰang}, {gong}, {tʰai}, {pʰong}, {ɗung}, {tʰong}, {dung}, {gʰor}, are monosyllabic and some classifier like {muzum}, {haldinga} are found to be polysyllabic.

In Rabha language, the classifier {sak}, {maN}, {pʰan}, {kʰon}, {tʰe}, {tʰung}, {tʰok}, {pal}, {zor} are monosyllabic and {tʰuka}, {bada}, {halsing} are polysyllabic.

In Kok Borok language, the classifiers like {ma}, {pʰang}, {kʰung}, {tʰai}, {pung}, {tung}, {kok}, {lam}, {bar}, {lai}, {lap} are monosyllabic and the classifier {kʰorok} 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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