

## Word Formation in Bugun: Compounding and Affixation

**Riniva Thakuria**

Assistant Professor, Department of English  
University of Science & Technology Meghalaya, Techno City  
Ri-Bhoi, Meghalaya-793101  
[avinir18@gmail.com](mailto:avinir18@gmail.com), Contact: +918486646916

---

---

### Abstract

The present paper makes an attempt to examine the major word formation processes developed in Bugun, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken by the Bugun community of West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh, India. Word formation process, also known as Morphological Process, is a means by which new words are produced either by modification of existing words or by complete innovation, which in turn becomes a part of the particular language in study. Morphological process is the process of word formation in a language (Lieber, 2016). Under the cover term 'word formation process', a number of methods can be examined such as compounding, blending, clipping, affixation, coinage, backformation, acronym, borrowing, derivation, conversion, incorporation, reduplication, metathesis etc. It is found that throughout the history of Bugun language, new words have been incorporated into the language depending on different contexts. This paper will mainly focus on **compounding** and **affixation**, the two most common devices to create new words in the Bugun language. The researcher has used descriptive and qualitative method for analysing the present paper.

**Keywords:** Bugun, Tibeto-Burman, morphological process, compounding, affixation.

1. **Introduction to the Bugun Language and Community:** Bugun or Khowa is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken by the Bugun community of Arunachal Pradesh. The Buguns are the indigenous inhabitants of the West Kameng district (Grewal 1997:89). The West Kameng district covers an area of 7,422 sq. kms. i.e., it accounts for 8.86% of the total area of the state. The name of the district is derived from Kameng River, a tributary of the Brahmaputra that flows through the district. The district lies approximately between 91° 30' to 92° 40' East longitudes and 26° 54' to 28° 01' North latitudes. The altitude ranges from 650 to 13,714 feet. West Kameng shares an international border with Tibet in the north, Bhutan in the west, Tawang district in the northwest, East Kameng district in the east, and Sonitpur and Darrang districts of Assam in the south. West Kameng district is the home of five major tribes, namely, Monpa, Miji, Aka, Sherdukpen and Bugun (Khowa). Amongst these, the Buguns have the lowest population count of 1,432 speakers according to 2011 census (Barbora 2015:3). The Buguns reside mainly in the Singchung Administrative Circle of the district. There are roughly 10-12 villages located at about 32 kms from Bomdila, the district headquarter of West Kameng.

2. **Word formation:** The term ‘word formation’ refers to the various ways in which new words are created from existing words. In word formation research, the patterns and regularities underlying the formation of complex lexemes are investigated. It aims at formulating rules and other types of generalizations with the help of existing words. In the various processes of word formation, the internal structures and constituents of complex lexemes are analysed. Word formation process identifies and classifies the forms and meanings of the lexical and morphological building blocks of a language. It models the processes underlying the formation of existing and new lexemes (Schmid, 2015).

This paper will mainly focus on two types of word formation processes observed in the Bugun language, namely, Compounding and Affixation. Since there are handful of population in the Bugun community and much research has not been done yet, thus, the researcher could not cite too many examples to show the process of Affixation in the respective language. Whatever data has been gathered, the researcher has mentioned those under section 2.2. The figure below represents one of the most common ways of classifying the major types of word formation patterns found in the languages of the world.

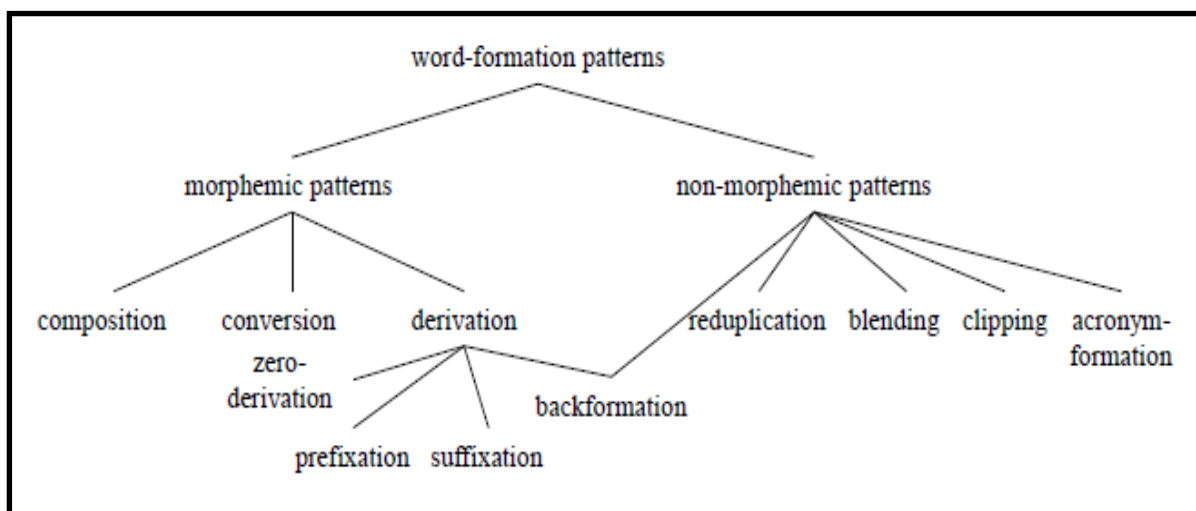


Figure 1: Different word formation patterns (Schmid, 2015).

**2.1 Compounding:** It is a linguistic phenomenon that “joins two separate words to produce a single form” (Yule, 2010). It is a process that involves the combination of two already existing word forms into a single compound. In layman language, compounding means the combination of two root words. These roots are usually nouns, prepositions, adjectives or verbs. It is one of the most extensively studied ways of adding words to the Bugun lexicon. In the Bugun language, the most common combination is the combination of two or more nouns in order to form a resulting noun. The other combinations are nouns combining with verb to form a resulting noun as well as nouns combining with preposition to give a resulting noun.

(a) **Examples of (Noun + Noun > Noun) combination:**

misia ‘worship’ + hō ‘house’ > misiahō ‘temple’  
 mitfiə ‘food’ + hō ‘house’ > mitfiəhō ‘kitchen’  
 wad ‘hand’ + gab ‘knot’ > wadgab ‘fist’  
 wad ‘hand’ + bien ‘finger’ > wadbien ‘finger’  
 wad ‘hand’ + k<sup>h</sup>imiəg ‘joint’ > wadk<sup>h</sup>imiəg ‘wrist’  
 wad ‘hand’ + k<sup>h</sup>am ‘portion used for hitting’ > wadk<sup>h</sup>am ‘palm’  
 lai ‘leg’ + bien ‘finger’ > laibien ‘toe’  
 lai ‘leg’ + k<sup>h</sup>lim ‘joint connecting the foot’ > laik<sup>h</sup>lim ‘heel’  
 hamaŋ ‘sky’ + ŋjak ‘soil’ > hamaŋŋjak ‘universe’  
 hamaŋ ‘sky’ + k<sup>h</sup>luə ‘middleman’ > hamaŋk<sup>h</sup>luə ‘angel’  
 aŋin ‘grandfather’ + moi ‘grandmother’ > aŋinmoi ‘grandparents’  
 ap<sup>h</sup>uə ‘father’ + amuə ‘mother’ > ap<sup>h</sup>uə-amuə ‘parents’  
 deŋfai ‘deer’ + duə ‘baby’ > deŋfaiduə ‘foal’  
 hazəŋ ‘wall’ + ʃo ‘hole’ > hazəŋʃo ‘window’  
 gedəŋ ‘head’ + zəŋ ‘bone’ > gedəŋzəŋ ‘skull’  
 p<sup>h</sup>adəŋ ‘back’ + zəŋ ‘bone’ > p<sup>h</sup>adəŋzəŋ ‘backbone/spine’  
 miəg ‘eye’ + k<sup>h</sup>o ‘water’ > miəgk<sup>h</sup>o ‘tears’  
 k<sup>h</sup>oh ‘ear’ + mēhən ‘ring’ > k<sup>h</sup>ohmēhən ‘earring’  
 k<sup>h</sup>o ‘water’ + march ‘vegetable’ > k<sup>h</sup>omareh ‘boiled vegetables’  
 k<sup>h</sup>ɛ ‘cock/hen’ + ibej ‘meat’ > k<sup>h</sup>ɛ-ibej ‘chicken’  
 fuaŋ ‘outside’ + bran ‘person’ > fuaŋbran ‘outsider/foreigner’  
 k<sup>h</sup>ia ‘come out’ + dun ‘go’ > k<sup>h</sup>iadun ‘migrate’

**(b) Examples of (Noun + Verb > Noun) combination:**

k<sup>h</sup>rug ‘head’ + rog ‘pain’ > k<sup>h</sup>rugrog ‘headache’  
 lui ‘stomach’ + rui ‘ache’ > lui<sup>r</sup>ui ‘stomachache’  
 lai ‘leg’ + thum ‘press/mark’ > laithum ‘footstep’  
 k<sup>h</sup>o ‘water’ + noi ‘flow’ > k<sup>h</sup>onoi ‘river’  
 k<sup>h</sup>o ‘water’ + bəh ‘big’ > k<sup>h</sup>obəh ‘sea’

nou ‘think’ + ruə ‘keep’ > nooruə ‘remember’

hanai/hasianj ‘sun’ + ʃiə ‘move upward’ > hanaiʃiə ‘sunrise’

hanai/hasianj ‘sun’ + jem ‘move downward’ > hanaijem/ hasianjem ‘sunset’

**(c) Examples of (Noun + Preposition > Noun) combination:**

hamaŋ ‘sky’ + k<sup>h</sup>uŋ ‘above’ > hamaŋk<sup>h</sup>uŋ ‘heaven’

hamaŋ ‘sky’ + k<sup>h</sup>uŋ ‘above’ + ap<sup>h</sup>uə ‘father’ > hamaŋk<sup>h</sup>uŋ-ap<sup>h</sup>uə ‘God’

**2.2 Affixation:** An affix is a grammatical element that is combined with a word, stem, or phrase to produce derived or inflected forms. Affixation is a morphological process whereby a bound morpheme, i.e., an affix, is attached to a morphological base. According to Manova (2015:1), affixation is the morphological process whereby an affix is attached to a root or stem. Affixation is one of the major morphological devices for creating new words in the languages of the world. Affixation occurs when a morpheme is attached to a root (Alhasibunur, 2016).

**(a) Examples:**

haləŋ ‘family’ + p<sup>h</sup>o (suffix) > haləŋp<sup>h</sup>o ‘family member’

hō ‘house’ + p<sup>h</sup>o (suffix) > hōp<sup>h</sup>o ‘house member’

at<sup>h</sup>iəŋ ‘strange’ + p<sup>h</sup>o (suffix) > at<sup>h</sup>iəŋp<sup>h</sup>o ‘stranger’

zigi ‘word’ + gam (suffix) > zigigam ‘alphabet’

p<sup>h</sup>uaŋ ‘outside’ + bran ‘man’ + t<sup>h</sup>ek (suffix) > p<sup>h</sup>uaŋbrant<sup>h</sup>ek ‘foreigner’

**3. Conclusion:** This paper is a preliminary study on the most common types of word formation processes found in the Bugun language. This language is one of the endangered languages listed in the UNESCO Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger. Only a handful of research can be found on the language of this community. Hence, it is essential to document and preserve the language before it becomes extinct. Therefore, focus should be given on this community and further research needs to be done.

---

---

**References**

1. Alhasinubur. (2016). “The Analysis of Morphological Process of Students' English Utterances” in Journal of Languages and Language Teaching, Vol. 4 No.2.
2. Barbora, M. (2015). *Bugun Nyo Thau: Bugun reader: A Collection of Bugun Folk Tales, Stories, Proverbs, Songs, Rituals and Lexical items*. EBH Publishers, Guwahati.

3. Grewal, D. S. (1997). *Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh: Identity, Culture, and Languages*, (Vol. 1). South Asia Publications.
  4. Leiber, Rochelle. (2016). *Introducing Morphology*. Cambridge University Press, UK.
  5. Manova, S. (2015). *Affix Ordering across Language and Framework*. Oxford University Press, USA.
  6. Schmid, H.J. (2015). "The Scope of Word-Formation Research"
  7. Yule, G. (2010). *The Study of Language*. Cambridge University Press, UK.
- 



**Riniva Thakuria**

Assistant Professor, Department of English

University of Science & Technology Meghalaya, Techno City

Ri-Bhoi, Meghalaya-793101

[avinir18@gmail.com](mailto:avinir18@gmail.com), Contact: +918486646916