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Grammatical Moods in Bodo

Aleendra Brahma, M.A. (Double), M.Phil., Ph.D. Scholar

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1.0 Abstract

Every clause or sentence of a language has a basic illocutionary force on the basis of which it is categorized under any of the types, namely, affirmative, interrogative, imperative, optative and exclamatory. The illocutionary force is nothing but the modality of the clause/sentence, and this modality is signaled by a device called mood. So, mood is the grammatical device that signals any of the modalities like fact, command, question, wish or conditionality, etc. It may be a distinctive grammatical form/element such as a grammatical category (affix) or a post-position of a verb. However, illocutionary forces categorize clauses/sentences into limited kinds while moods can categorize them into larger kinds. This paper investigates different types of morphological and syntactic moods in the Bodo language.

As the enumeration of different types of moods by Sheridan (2010), there are, at least, ten types of grammatical moods in Bodo, namely, energetic ({-thar} and {-mar}), subjunctive or conjunctive ({-bla... -guo}), imperative ({-du}, {-lai} and {-nai}), optative ({-thun}), Cohortative ({-ni}), permissive ({-hu}, {-ni}), dubitative ({-gun} and {k^huma}),

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interrogative ({-na}, {na-} or {-da}), inferential or renarrative ({-nu}), precative ({-zen}) and decisive ({-si}) mood. Of them, subjunctive, imperative, permissive, optative, interrogative, precative and presumptive moods are expressed morphologically; dubitative is expressed both morphologically and syntactically whereas dubitative and inferential are expressed syntactically.

Moods can be sub-categorized into two different kinds, namely, realis or factual and irrealis or contrafactual or contrafactive. There is only one realis mood in Bodo while the majority of irrealis kinds of grammatical mood are found.

1.1 Introduction

The investigation of a large number of languages suggests that what has traditionally been called "mood" is only one type of grammatical sub-category, another such sub-category being "modal system" within a wider grammatical category "modality" (Palmer 2003). However, mood and modality are not so easily defined as tense and aspect. A definition often proposed is that modality is the grammaticalization of speakers' (subjective) attitudes and opinions (ByBee 1994). Mood is a feature of the verb that reflects the speaker's attitude toward what he is saying. Of course, in all languages there are lots of ways that a speaker can reflect his attitude toward what he is saying: through intonation, by overtly commenting upon what he says, by raising his voice or swinging his fist (McShane 2003). And, modality differs from tense and aspect in that it does not refer directly to any characteristic of the event, but simply to the status of the proposition (Palmer 2001). Mood is more or less related only to a verb phrase, a clause or a sentence though it has often morphological structure. And, the mood of a verb designates the relationship of the verb's action relative to reality. It is broadly of two kinds, namely, *realis* or factual and *irrealis* or contrafactual or contrafactive. Both realis and irrealis kinds of mood exist in almost all the languages. But, morphologically distinct forms of all kinds of mood are hardly found in a particular language. However, they are expressed in most languages either morphologically or paraphrastically or through the different manners of expressions. However, as one of the inflectional categories of verb different kinds of mood used in the Bodo language are discussed below.

In Bodo, all kinds of realis mood such as indicative, declarative, evidential, etc. are not expressed morphologically except energetic mood. But, a large number of irrealis moods have their morphologically distinct faces, such as subjunctive or conjunctive, imperative,

optative, cohortative, permissive, energetic, dubitative, interrogative, inferential or renarrative, precative and presumptive. So, there are not less than ten kinds of irrealis mood in Bodo. This large set of irrealis mood makes the Bodo language very much expressive.

1.2 Grammatical Moods in Bodo

Mood is one of the confusing grammatical categories, which, in most times, is thought of as a semantic device. But, mood is realized with the use of any of some linguistic elements which have grammatical structure- a morpheme or a word. So, the morphologically and syntactically distinct linguistic elements/devices which show modality are considered here as grammatical mood. Mood can be of various types, but they can be subcategorized under two heads- Realis and Irrealis. Different types of realis and irrealis mood are discussed below with illustration of examples.

1.2.1 Realis Mood

In Bodo, there is only one realis mood that is realized with a distinct morphological form and it is called energetic mood. It is illustrated below along with some examples.

1.2.1.1 Energetic Mood: {-t^har}, {-mar}

The energetic mood expresses something which is strongly believed or which the speaker wishes to emphasize or say something with assurance. So, the energetic mood functions like an emphatic marker. There are two but almost the same (semantically) energetic mood inflections in Bodo. For example-

- (1) aŋ gabun p^hui -t^har -guun
 I tomorrow come -ENER -FUT
 'I shall come tomorrow (surely).'

- (2) aŋ gabun p^hui -mar -guun
 I tomorrow come -ENER -FUT
 'I shall come tomorrow (really).'

From the above examples it is clear that the two energetic mood inflections are used in different semantic environments. It can be more clearer if they occur at the same time. Let's see in the following example-

- (3) aŋ gabun p^hui -mar -t^har -guun
 I tomorrow come -ENER -ENER -FUT
 'I shall come tomorrow (really and it is assured).'

These inflections can occur interchangeably with a slight change in meaning. e.g.-

- (4) aŋ gabuun p^hwi -t^har -mar -guun
 I tomorrow come -ENER -ENER -FUT
 'I shall come tomorrow (surely and it is real).'

Position of Energetic Mood Suffix: The energetic mood suffixes occur immediately after the verb roots/stems that carry modality, as adverbial suffixes.

1.2.2 Irrealis Mood

An irrealis mood indicates that something is not actually the case. It may be a part of expressions like necessity, possibility, requirement, wish (desire), fear, a counterfactual reasoning, etc. A verb or verb phrase which consists of an irrealis mood is used when speaking of an event which has not happened, not likely to happen or otherwise far removed from the real course of events.

There are a large set of irrealis moods in Bodo which are very distinct morphologically. These are- *subjunctive* or *conjunctive*, *imperative*, *optative*, *cohortative*, *permissive*, *dubitative*, *interrogative*, *inferential* or *renarrative*, *precative* and *decisive*. There may be other types of irrealis mood than which are mentioned here. But, as it is the first attempt to find out whether there are morphologically distinct moods or not in Bodo, one or more may be dropped out from this enumeration. However, all the types of irrealis mood mentioned above are discussed below with illustrations of examples.

1.2.2.1 Subjunctive Mood: {-bla... -guo}

The subjunctive mood can be defined as an expression of the possibility of completion of the action of the verb. It indicates that the speaker is not asserting the truth of the proposition expressed by the clause, and that the situation described by the clause is not an actual one.

In the Bodo language, the subjunctive or conjunctive form is used primarily as the suffix of the main verb (or predicative adjective/noun where the main verb is absent especially in equational sentences) of the conditional clause where the subjunctive mood exists. In general, subjunctive mood has its uses as co-relatives, one with the conditional clause or protasis (dependent clause) and the other with the apodosis (main clause) of a sentence with, at least, a conditional clause. So, two different elements of subjunctive mood are used at once; one with the apodosis and the other with the protasis of a sentence with conditional clause(s). But, if the apodosis of such a sentence is in imperative clause it has two

options to have or not to have an imperative mood; likewise, if it is in optative, it is obligatory to use the optative mood.

In Bodo, the past tense marker {-m^hu:n} always follows subjunctive mood inflection {-guo} suffixed to the main verb of the apodosis.

- (5) raŋ t^ha -nai -mun -bla aŋ maorija
 rupee (money) stay -NOMLZ -PST -SUB(if) I orphan
- gɔt^hɔ -p^hur -nu dan hu -guo -mun
 child -PL -DAT donate -SUBJ -PST
 'I would donate to orphan childer if I had money.'
- (6) p^hui -bla ham -guo -mun
 we -SUB(if) be good -SUBJ -PST
 'It would be good if (you/he/she/it/they) come(s).'

Position of Subjunctive Mood Suffix: Subjunctive mood suffixes occur as correlatives like *neither...nor*, *either...or*, etc. This mood always occurs in a complex sentence where the {-bla} occurs with the main verb (finite/nonfinite) in the subordinate clause and {-guo} with the main finite verb of the main clause. {-bla} occurs as a termination whereas {-guo} is always followed by the past tense marker {-m^hu:n}.

1.2.2.2 Imperative Mood: {-du}, {-lai} and {-nai}

In the Bodo imperative clauses, verbs do not have any other forms except their respective lexical forms. But, to mean some different degrees of politeness and purposes of the action of the verbs, sometimes, different suffix particles expressing different imperative moods are used. However, imperative mood suffixes are optional; because, imperativeness is, basically expressed through certain kind of tone. They occur like particles as they indicate, more or less, some kind of emphasis. For example-

- (7) a) p^hui → 'Come'
 b) p^hui -du → 'Come' (polite)
 c) p^hui -nai/-lai → 'Come' (for a purpose)

Of them, {-du} has its allomorph {-di} which is found preceding the cohortative or permissive inflection {-ni}. This allomorphic form is due to the post-lexical vowel copy/harmony. For example-

- (8) zuŋ t^haŋ -di -ni
 we go -IMP -COHRT
 'Let us go.'
- (9) aŋ za -di -ni

I eat -IMP -COHRT
'Let me eat.'

Position of Imperative Mood Suffix: Imperative mood inflections are suffixed to the verb root or stem immediately, i.e., they do not follow any other inflection.

1.2.2.3 Optative Mood: {-t^huŋ}

The verb in a Bodo optative clause takes an inflectional mood suffix {-t^huŋ} which expresses a wish. For example-

(10) bi -juu gabuun t^haŋ -t^huŋ
 s/he -NOM tomorrow go -OPT
'Let him go tomorrow.'

(11) isur -a zuŋ -k^huo mɔdɔt k^halam -t^huŋ
 God -NOM 1.PL -ACC help do -OPT
'May God help us.'

Position of Optative Mood Suffix: Optative mood suffix occurs immediately after the verb that carries modality. Like imperative mood suffix, it does not follow any other inflection.

1.2.2.4 Cohortative Mood: {-ni}

It is said that cohortative constructions can only be used in first person plural utterances; because the term 'cohortative' was derived from Latin 'cohortatus' of which 'co-' means 'together' and 'hortari' means 'encourage or urge'. This kind of mood signals the speaker's encouragement or discouragement toward the addressee(s) bringing about the proposition of an utterance along with the speaker. In other words, it signals mutual encouragement for the speaker and the addressee(s). For example-

(12) p^hui zuŋ k^huose -juui agan sur -ni
 come we united -ADVLZ stem start -COHRT
'Come, let's move forward unitedly.'

(13) t^hu/t^huo nɔ -wao t^haŋ -ni
 let home -LOC go -COHRT
'Let's go home.'

The same mood inflection is also used in first person singular utterances. But, the constructions with the modality of 'let+me' (i.e., first person singular) are not hortative but rather permissive as the term cohortative is not meant for singular. It is discussed under permissive mood below.

Position of Cohortative Mood Suffix: The cohortative mood suffix {-ni} occurs as the imperative mood suffices as it is somehow similar to imperative illocutionary force.

1.2.2.5 Permissive Mood: {-huw} and {-ni}

This kind of mood shows the modality of permission. The permissive mood indicates that the action is permitted by the speaker. This kind of mood, in broader sense, includes causativization. The use of the causative suffix {-huw} adds permissive mood to the verb which it occurs with. So, {-huw} as a permissive mood is an inflectional suffix. Some examples are given below-

- (14) an t^han -nanwui p^hwui -ni
I go -NF come -PER
'Let me go and come.'

- (15) alasi -p^hur -k^huo zirai -huw
guest -PL -ACC rest -PER
'Let the guests rest.'

Position of Permissive Mood Suffix: Permissive mood suffixes also occur immediately after the verb root/stem that carries the permissive modality. {-ni} and {-huw} do not follow any other inflection, but {-huw} can precede other grammatical categories such as tense, aspect and other types of mood.

1.2.2.6 Dubitative Mood: {-gun} and k^huma

It expresses the speaker's doubt or uncertainty about the event denoted by the verb. There are two dubitative elements in Bodo; one is a suffix {-gun} and the other is an indeclinable word k^huma.

In general {-gun} occurs with a verb; but in a verbless clause or sentence it may occur with a noun, an adjective or else which substitutes or covers the covert position of the verb in a verb phrase, a clause or a sentence. For examples-

- (16) bi -ju nuwur -niphrai p^hwi -duw -gun
s/he -NOM city -ABL come -PFV -DUB
'S/he may be coming from the city.'

- (17) muswo -wa biguma -k^huo sinai -bai -gun
cow -NOM owner -ACC know -PRF -DUB
'The cow may have recognized the owner.'

- (18) amai -a sɔŋp^hur p^hwi -gun -gun
marenal uncle -NOM day after tomorrow come -FUT -DUB
'Uncle (maternal) may be coming tomorrow.'

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- (19) be -juu muzaŋ -guun
it -NOM good -DUB

'It may be good.'

One can be confused this inflection with the identical future tense inflection {-guun}. So, the dubitative mood inflection can be differentiated from the latter in the different environments of their uses. The latter is always used immediately after the verb root or stem while the dubitative mood suffix is used elsewhere.

Again, to express this type of mood a free word is used in Bodo as a postposition to the verb which takes the mood. For example-

- (20) muswo -wa biguma -k^huo sinai -bai k^huma
cow -NOM owner -ACC recognise -PRF DUB

'The cow may have recognized the owner.'

- (21) dinui ɔk^ha ha -guun k^huma
today rain -FUT DUB

'It may be raining today.'

Position of Dubitative Mood Suffix: The morphologically distinct dubitative mood {-guun} occurs with the verb which carries modality. In general, it occurs as a termination. On the other hand, the syntactically distinct dubitative mood k^huma occurs as a free word immediately after the verb with the assigned modality.

1.2.2.7 Interrogative Mood: {-na}, {na-} or {-da}

The interrogative mood is used for asking questions. Most languages do not have a special mood for asking questions. There are two types of morphological mood in Bodo which occur with the main verbs in interrogative sentences without respective *wh-question particles*. But, their occurrences are optional as interrogation may also be expressed with the action of intonation (and using interrogation point (?) in written form). e.g.-

- (22) nuuŋ p^hui -guun -na/-da
2SG come -FUT -INTR
'Will you come?/Are you coming?'

- (23) be dui -ja gu^tar -na/-da
this water -NOM pure -INTR
'Is this water pure?'

There is another environment in Bodo where {-na} occurs as a prefix. When the covert/overt verb expressing interrogative mood is followed by a question word *ma* ‘what’ it occurs with *ma* as a prefix as in-

- (24) be dui -ja gut^har (nuŋguo) na- ma
 this water -NOM pure (be) INTR- what
 ‘Is this water pure?’

Position of Interrogative Mood Suffix: The interrogative mood affixes {-na} and {-da} occur with the verbs that carry modality as terminations. The former also occurs with the question word *ma* ‘what’ as a prefix.

1.2.2.8 Inferential or Renarrative Mood: {-nu}

The inferential mood is used to report a non-witnessed event without confirming it or to convey information about events, which were not directly observed or were inferred by the speaker.

- (25) ai -a gabuun p^hui -guun -nu
 mother -NOM tomorrow come -FUT -INFR
 ‘(It is know that) My mother will come tomorrow.’
- (26) nuŋ bi -hɔr -nai bizab -a be -nu -nu
 2SG ask -DIST -ADJLZ book -NOM this -PTL -INFR
 ‘(It is know that) The book you asked is this.’

Position of Inferential or Renarrative Mood Suffix: The inferential or renarrative mood suffix {-nu} always co-occurs with tense suffix and often with aspect suffix. It is preceded by the tense and aspect suffixes.

1.2.2.9 Precative Mood: {-zen}

Precative mood is a grammatical mood which signifies requests. For example-

- (27) aŋ k^hɔrɔ ɡɔŋɡlai -juɪ arɔz gab -u nuŋt^haŋ -a aŋ
 I bow -ADVLZ pray -HAB 2SG.HON -NOM I
 -k^huo nimaha hu -ju -zen
 -ACC forgive -HAB -PREC
 ‘I bow and pray so that you forgive me.’

Position of Precative Mood Suffix: The precative mood {-zen} always co-occurs with habitual aspect inflection suffix {-ju}. It also occurs as a termination.

1.2.2.10 Decisive Mood: {-si}

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A decisive mood is the grammatical device which expresses likeliness of occurring the action of a verb in the near future. It is morphologically expressed with the {-si} suffix in Bodo. For example-

- (28) ap^ha -ja gabun sak^hri -nip^hrai azira mun
 my father -NOM tomorrow job -ABL retirement get
 -si -gun
 -DEC -FUT
 'My father is likely retiring from service tomorrow.'

- (29) p^hurungiri -ja dōse un -ao -nuu p^hui -si -gun
 teacher -NOM a while after -LOC -PTL come -DEC -FUT
 'The teacher is coming after a while.'

Position of Decisive Mood Suffix: The decisive mood suffix {-si} occurs immediately after the verb which carries the modality. It can be followed by future tense inflection as exemplified above.

1.3 Conclusion

Moods are the linguistic devices which exhibits the modality of a language. They are more or less similar in all languages; but their similar physical presences are not always there in all the languages. A mood may be in the form of a free or bound morpheme or a word (an auxiliary verb, a indeclinable or else); otherwise covert. But, the present study covers the overt forms of different types of mood used in the Bodo language. In this language, overt moods are found in the forms of bound morphemes (suffixes) and indeclinables. They are called grammatical moods. This language has a very rich mood system as a grammatical category of wide range of word classes, i.e. verbs, nouns, pronouns, adjectives and adverbs.

While scanning the corpus ten types of grammatical moods are found in Bodo, namely, energetic, subjunctive or conjunctive, imperative, optative, Cohortative, permissive, dubitative, interrogative, inferential or renarrative, precativ and decisive mood. Of them, subjunctive, imperative, permissive, optative, interrogative, precativ and presumptive moods are expressed morphologically; dubitative is expressed both morphologically and syntactically whereas dubitative and inferential are expressed syntactically.

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Note:

This study is based on a Bodo corpus consisting of around 60K sentences, prepared and annotated by *Resource Centre for Indian Language Technology Solutions (Phase-II)* team, Department of Computer Science and Engineering, IIT Guwahati.

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Aleendra Brahma, M.A. (Double), M.Phil., Ph. D. Scholar
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati
Kamrup(M) -781 039
Assam
India
aleendra.iitg@gmail.com