Inflectional Processes of Tense and Aspect in Bodo

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Abstract

The Bodos are living in different parts of Assam for centuries. They speak a language called *Bodo* that belongs to the Tibeto-Burman family of languages and it is one of the Associate state languages in Assam. It is a recognized language in the 8th Schedule of Indian constitution.

Tense and Aspects are the grammatical categories, used in the grammatical description of verbs. Tense refers to the absolute location of event or action in time, e.g., past, present or future. And aspect refers to how an action or event is to be viewed with respect to time; it expresses actual location in time. The present paper is an attempt to look into the inflectional processes of the tense and aspect of Bodo. The paper will discuss the use of various types of Tense and Aspect markers found in Bodo.

Bodo uses mainly three type of tenses, viz., Past, Present and Future. Past and future have separate tense markers, but present tense has no separate tense marker in this language.

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The past tense marker is {-mɯn} and the future is {-gɯn}. The present tense is used in the verbs as unmarked. There are four types of aspects found in this language, namely, Habitual, Progressive, Perfective and Perfect. The inflectional processes are 'verb + aspect', 'verb + aspect + tense', 'verb + tense' and 'noun + tense', etc. It is hoped that this analysis of tense and aspect in Bodo will help us in understanding tense and aspect in Bodo.

1. Introduction

Bodo is the name of a language as well as community. It is a major tribe of North-eastern India and it belongs to the Tibeto-Burman language family. According to P. C. Bhattacharya (1977) "the 'Bodo' word is first applied by Hodgson"[1]. The Bodo is known as Bodo or Boro, Kachary, Kirata, Mech, etc., in different places and different times. In course of time they came to be known simply as Bodo or Boro. In the Constitution of India, the language is recognized as Bodo. The Bodo speakers are mainly found in the Kokrajhar, Baksa, Chirang, Udalgury, Kamrup, Goalpara, Karbianglong, and Dhemazi districts of Assam as well as in some adjacent areas of West Bengal, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan.

As per the classification given by Robert Shafer, the Bodo language belongs to the branches of Barish section under the Baric division of the Sino-Tibetan language family (P.C. Bhattacharya 1977). *The Linguistic Survey of India* describes the Bodo language as a member of the Bodo sub-section under the Assam-Burmese group of the **Tibeto**-**Burman** branch of the Sino-Tibeto-Chinese speech family (*Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol-III, Part-II).

2. Objectives

The main objectives of this paper are given below:

1. To find out the different types of tense and aspects in Bodo.
2. To investigate the different types of tense and aspect markers in this language.
3. To find out how the tense and aspects are inflected in the words.

3. Methodology

Data are collected from two main sources, viz., primary and secondary sources. Primary sources are collected from several informants of different age groups through the

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[1] P. C. Bhattacharya, <u>A Descriptive Analysis of the Bodo Language</u> (Gauhati University Publication Department, 2007, Reprint). 1-7.

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schedule and interview method. Secondary sources are collected from renowned books, Internet and Ph.D. theses.

4. Tense

"The term 'tense' is derived from a Latin translation of a Greek word "khronos" which means 'time' (Lyons 1968)[2]. It is inflected to the verbs used to indicate the time of action. According to David Crystal (1980) "a category used in the grammatical description of verbs (along with Aspect and Mood), referring primary to the way the grammar marks the time at which the action denoted by the verb took place. Traditionally, a distinction is made between past, present and future tenses, often with further divisions perfect, pluperfect, etc."[3]

According to the time of Action, there are mainly three types of tense found in Bodo viz., present, past and future tense. Consider the following examples:

Present tense: aŋ ɯŋkʰam zajɯ   "I eat rice."

       aŋ   ɯŋkʰam   za-jɯ

       I   rice   eat-HAB

       aŋ nowao tʰaŋɡasinɯ doŋ   "I am going home."

       aŋ   no-wao   tʰaŋ-ɡasinɯ   doŋ

       I   house-NOM   go-PROG   be

Past tense: aŋ ɯŋkʰam zajɯmɯn   "I used to eat rice."

       aŋ   ɯŋkʰam   za-jɯ-mɯn

       I   rice   eat-HAB-PAST

       aŋ nowao tʰaŋɡasinɯ doŋmɯn   "I was going home."

       aŋ   no-wao   tʰaŋ-ɡasinɯ   doŋ-mɯn

       I   house-NOM   go-PROG   be-PAST

Future tense: aŋ ɯŋkʰam za-ɡɯn   "I shall eat rice."

[2] Widinibou, A Descriptive Analysis of Liangmai (Unpublished Thesis, Assam University, Silchar2011). 179.
[3] David Crystal, A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics (Blackwell, USA, 2000, Reprint). 384.
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aŋ	ɯŋkʰam	za-gɯn
I	rice	eat-FUT

From the above examples, it is clear that Bodo has three types of tenses. These are the present, the past and the future tenses. It is also found that the past and future tenses have separate tense markers, but the present tense has no marker. The past tense marker is {-mɯn} and the future tense marker is {-gɯn}. The {-jɯ} and {-ɡasinɯ} markers are not the present tense markers, whereas the {-jɯ} is a habitual aspect marker and {-ɡasinɯ} is a progressive aspect marker. The present tense is inflected to the verbs without marking in this language.

4.1. Past tense marker: {-mɯn}

There is only one past tense marker found in Bodo, and that is the {-mɯn}. It is added to the verbs to indicate the action of the verbs took place in the past. For example:

1. Ritaja mɯja mɯsadɯŋmɯn   "Rita danced yesterday."

Rita-ja	mɯja	mɯsa-dɯŋ-mɯn
Rita-NOM	yesterday	dance-PFV-PAST

2. aŋ ɡoi zabaimɯn   "I had eaten the betel nut."

aŋ	ɡoi	za-bai-mɯn
I	betel nut	eat-PRF-PAST

4.2. Future tense marker: {-gɯn}, {-sɯi}, {-la}

There are three types of future tense markers found in Bodo, which indicate the action of the verbs in future time. The {-gɯn} marker is used to indicate the indefinite future tense, the {-sɯi} indicates the definite future tense and the {-la} is used to indicate the negative future tense. Consider the following examples:

Indefinite future tense marker: {-gɯn}

1. aŋ tʰaŋgɯn   "I shall go."

aŋ	tʰaŋ-gɯn
I	go-IND.FUT

2. bijɯ pʰɯigɯn   "He/she will come."

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bi-jɯ   p^hɯi-ɡɯn

he/she-NOM   come-IND.FUT

Definite future tense marker: {-sɯi} or {-nɯsɯi}

1. aŋ dɯi lɯŋsɯi   "I am going to drink water."

   aŋ   dɯi   lɯŋ-sɯi

   I   water   drink-DEF.FUT

2. p^hɯrɯŋɡirija p^hɯrɯŋsɯi   "The teacher is going to teach."

   p^hɯrɯŋɡiri-ja   p^hɯrɯŋ-sɯi

   teacher-NOM   teach-DEF.FUT

3. bibara barnɯsɯi   "The flower is going to bloom."

   bibar-a   bar-nɯsɯi

   flower-NOM   bloom-DEF.FUT

Negative future tense marker: {-la} or {-lija}

1. bibarija t^haŋla   "Bibari will not go."

   bibari-ja   t^haŋ-la

   Bibari-NOM   go-NEG.FUT

2. aŋ ɡabɯn p^hɯila   "I shall not come tomorrow."

   aŋ   ɡabɯn   p^hɯi-la

   I   tomorrow   come-NEG.FUT

3. bijɯ p^hɯilija   "He/she will not come."

   bi-jɯ   p^hɯi-lija

   He/she-NOM come-NEG.FUT

5. Aspect

"Aspect is a grammatical category that expresses how an action, event or state, denoted by a verb relates to the flow of time."[4] According to the David Crystal, aspect is "a category used in the grammatical description of verbs (along with tense and mood), referring

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primarily to the way the grammar marks the duration or type of temporal activity denoted by the verb."[5] There are four types of aspects found in Bodo, viz., Habitual, Progressive, Perfective and Perfect aspect. Every aspect is inflected to the verb's own specific markers. These are discussed below:

5.1. Habitual Aspect: {-ɯ} or {-jɯ}

The {-jɯ} is an allomorph of {-ɯ}. When a verb has /a/ and /w/ in its final phoneme, it is changed by {-jɯ}. Consider the following examples:

1. aŋ   sanpʰrɯmbɯ mondir-ao   tʰaŋ-ɯ

   I   everyday   temple-LOC go-HAB

   "I go to temple everyday."

2. bimol-a   rutʰi za-jɯ   natʰai aŋ   ɯŋkʰam   zajɯ

   bimol-NOM roti eat-HAB   but   I   rice   eat-HAB

   "Bimol use to eat roti but I eat rice."

5.2. Progressive Aspect: {-ɡasinɯ}

The progressive aspect marker is {-ɡasinɯ} in Bodo. This marker is used to indicate the continuity of the action of the verb. When this marker is added to the verb then it is immediately followed by the aspectual auxiliary verb {doŋ} in the sentence. Consider the following examples:

1. aŋ   tʰaŋ-ɡasinɯ   doŋ

   I   go-PROG   be

   "I am going."

2. aŋ   ɯŋkʰam   za-ɡasinɯ   doŋ

   I   rice   eat-PROG.   be

   "I am eating rice."

5.3. Perfective Aspect: {-dɯŋ}, {kʰɯi}

Perfective aspect is used to indicate the momentary action or completions of events of the verb. In Bodo, the perfective aspect markers are {-dɯŋ} and {-kʰɯi}. The {-dɯŋ} aspect marker is added to the verb in affirmative sentences. It can occur in present and past tense, but it does not occur in future tense. The {-kʰɯi} is the negative perfective aspect marker of the Bodo. It occurs in the negative sentence. Examples are given below:

Perfective Aspect in Affirmative Sentence: {-dɯŋ}

1. bi-jɯ   dɯi   lɯŋ-dɯŋ

   He/she-NOM water   drink-PFV

   "He/She is drinking water."

2. aŋ   mɯija   silchar-aw   tʰaŋ-dɯŋ-mɯn

   I   yesterday   silchar-LOC   go-PFV-PAST

   "I went to Silchar yesterday."

3. aŋ   da   undu-dɯŋ

   I   now   sleep-PFV

   "I am sleeping now."

Negative Perfective Aspect: {-kʰɯi}

1. aŋ   dɯi   lɯŋ-dɯŋ   natʰai bi-jɯ   lɯŋ-a-kʰɯi

   I   water drink-PFV   but   He-NOM   drink-NEG-NEG.PFV

   "I am drinking water but he is not drinking."

2. bi-jɯ   mɯija   pʰɯi-ja-kʰɯi-mɯn

   He/she-NOM yesterday   come-NEG-NEG.PFV-PAST

   "He/she did not come yesterday."

3. aŋ   da   undu-a-kʰɯi

   I   now   sleep-NEG-NEG.PFV

   "I am not sleeping now."

5.4. Perfect Aspect: {-bai}, {-kʰɯ}, {-kʰɯi}

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The perfect aspect markers are {-bai}, {-kʰɯ} and {-kʰɯi}. These refer to a past situation where the event is seen as having some present relevance in Bodo. The {-bai} marker is inflected to the verb in affirmative sentence. The {-kʰɯ} marker occurs in interrogative sentence and the {-kʰɯi} occurs in negative sentence. The {-kʰɯi} is used as both negative perfect and negative perfective marker in Bodo. Consider the following examples:

Perfect Aspect Marker in Affirmative: {-bai}

1. ram-a   kʰab-se   saha   lɯŋ-bai

   Ram-NOM   cup-one   tea   drink-PRF

   "Ram has drunk a cup of tea."

2. bi-jɯ   delhi-ao   tʰaŋ-baj-mɯn

   He/she-NOM Delhi-LOC   go-PRF-PAST.

   "He/She had gone to Delhi.

Interrogative Perfect Aspect Marker: {-kʰɯ}

1. aŋni   rebɡon-a   boha   tʰaŋ-kʰɯ

   my   pen-NOM   where go-INT.PRF

   "Where has gone my pen?"

2. bi-jɯ   mabla pʰɯi-kʰɯ

   He/she-NOM when   come-INT.PRF

   "When has he come?"

Negative Perfect Aspect Marker: {-kʰɯi}

1. rita-ja   zɯu   lɯŋ-a-kʰɯi-mɯn

   Rita-NOM   wine   drink-NEG-NEG.PRF-PAST

   "Rita did not drink wine."

2. bi-jɯ   mɯija   bizab pʰorai-ja-kʰɯi-mɯn

   she-NOM   yesterday   book   read-NEG-NEG.PRF-PAST

   "She/he had not read the book yesterday."

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6. Inflectional Process of the Tense and Aspects

Tense and aspects are typically suffix and morphologically bound forms in Bodo language. They are inflected to the verbs as inflectional suffixes. The inflectional process of tense and aspects are discussed below:

6.1. Verb + Aspect

The aspect markers are directly inflected to the verb in Bodo. Examples are given below:

1. Verb   +   Habitual Aspect

   unduɯ   +   juɯ   >   undujɯ,

   In sentence form, /aŋ undujɯ/   "I sleep."

2. Verb   +   Progressive Aspect

   mao   +   gasinɯ   >   maogsinɯ "doing"

   tʰaŋ   +   gasinɯ   +   tʰaŋgasinɯ "going"

3. Verb   +   Perfective Aspect

   za   +   dɯŋ   >   zadɯŋ

   In sentence form, /aŋ zadɯŋ/ "I am eating."

4. Verb   +   Perfect Aspect

   bar   +   bai   >   barbai "have/has jump"

   kʰar   +   bai   >   kʰarbai "have/has run"

6.2. Verb + Aspect + Tense

The aspect marker is added to the verb before the tense marker in this language. Following are the examples:

1. Verb   +   Habitual   +   Past

   tʰa   +   juɯ   +   mɯn >   tʰajɯmɯn "used to stay"

   lɯŋ   +   ɯ   +   mɯn >   lɯŋɯmɯn "used to drink"

2. Verb   +   Perfective   +   Past

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za	+	dɯŋ	+	mɯn	>	zadɯŋmɯn "ate"	
tʰaŋ	+	dɯŋ	+	mɯn	>	tʰaŋdɯŋmɯn "went"	

3. Verb   +   Perfect   +   Past

za	+	bai	+	mɯn	>	zabaimɯn "had eaten"
mao	+	bai	+	mɯn	>	maobaimɯn "had done"

6.3. Verb + Tense

The past tense is not directly inflected to the verb. Only the future tense is directly inflected to the verb in Bodo. Consider the following examples:

1. Verb   +   Indefinite Future Tense

za	+	gɯn	>	zagɯn "shall/will eat"
mao	+	gɯn	>	maogɯn "shall/will do"

2. Verb   +   Definite Future Tense

kʰar	+	sɯi	>	kʰarsɯi "going to run"
lir	+	nɯsɯi	>	lirnɯsɯi "going to write"

3. Verb   +   Negative Future Tense

tʰaŋ	+	la	>	tʰaŋla "shall/will not go"
lɯŋ	+	la	>	lɯŋla "shall/will not drink"

6.4. Noun + Tense

The past tense marker is directly inflected to the noun in this language. Following are the examples:

1. Noun   +   Past Tense

bibajari	+	mɯn	>	bibajarimɯn "was (a) begger"
raza	+	mɯn	>	razamɯn "was (a) king"

Examples in sentence:

/bijɯ bibaijarimɯn/   "He was a beggar."

/rabona loŋkʰani razamɯn/   "Rabon was a king of Sri Lanka."

6.5. Noun + Plural + Tense

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Sometime the past tense marker is added to the noun after adding plural marker. For example:

1. Noun   +   Plural   +   Past Tense

   sikʰla   +   pʰɯr   +   mɯn   >   sikʰlapʰɯrmɯn

   seŋgra   +   pʰɯr   +   mɯn   >   seŋgrapʰɯrmɯn

   Examples in sentences:

   /bisɯr sikʰlapʰɯrmɯn/   "These were girls."

   /bisɯr seŋgrapʰɯrmɯn/   "These were boys."

6.6. Adjective + Tense

The past tense marker is directly inflected to the adjective in Bodo. Consider the following examples:

1. Adjective   +   Past Tense

   gɯza   +   mɯn   >   gɯzamɯn "was red"

   bɯlɯgɯra   +   mɯn   >   bɯlɯgɯramɯ "was strong"

7. Conclusion

On the basis of above analysis, it is found that there are three types of tenses in Bodo, namely, present, past and future tenses. Past and future ten theirse have own separate tense markers, but present tense has no separate tense marker. The present tense is inflected to the verb as unmarked. There is only one past tense marker found in Bodo and that is the {-mɯn}. Future tense has three types of markers found in this language, namely, {-gɯn}, {-sɯi} and {-la}.

There are four types of aspects found in this language, namely, habitual, progressive, perfective and perfect aspect. Every aspect has own separate makers. For example, the habitual marker is {-ɯ}, the progressive marker is {-gasinɯ}, the perfective markers are {-dɯŋ}, {-kʰɯi} and the perfect markers are {-bai}, {-kʰɯi} and {-kʰɯ}.

In the inflectional process, all the aspects are directly inflected to the verbs. But all the tense are not directly inflected; only the future tense is directly inflected to the verbs. The inflectional processes of the tense and aspect are 'verb + aspect', 'verb + aspect + tense',

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'verb + tense', 'noun + tense', 'noun + plural + tense' and 'adjective + tense', etc. It is found that Bodos use three types of tenses and four types of aspect. The tense and aspect markers are inflected to the verbs as suffix in Bodo.

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Online Resources:

htpp://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/grammatical_aspect

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