



A Comparative Study of Morphological Structure of Bodo and Nepali Verb

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Abstract: This paper presents a comparative morphological study of verb structures in Bodo and Nepali, two genetically unrelated languages belonging to the Tibeto-Burman and Indo-European language families respectively. The study examines the formation and classification of verbs into simple, complex, and compound types in both languages. It highlights similarities and differences in syllabic structure, prefixation, suffixation, negation, tense, and causative constructions. Simple verbs are primarily monosyllabic, while complex and compound verbs are polysyllabic in nature. The analysis demonstrates how social contact and linguistic typology influence verb formation patterns. The study contributes to a better understanding of verb morphology in a comparative linguistic perspective.

Keyword: Bodo language, Nepali language, verb morphology, simple verb, complex verb, compound verb

Introduction:

Assam, often described as the gateway to North-East India, has been a region of intense linguistic and cultural diversity since time immemorial, with numerous communities coexisting and preserving their distinct linguistic identities and cultural heritages. Among the indigenous communities of Assam, the Bodos constitute the largest tribal group. From a linguistic perspective, the Bodo language belongs to the Bodo–Naga subgroup of the Assam–Burmese branch within the Tibeto-Burman family of the Sino-Tibetan language phylum. In contrast, Nepali is classified under the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family, a language family that historically expanded across Europe and extensive regions of South Asia, including India and Nepal. Nepali speakers are widely dispersed throughout Nepal as well as several states of North-East India. Consequently, Bodo and Nepali do not share a common genetic origin and are not historically derived from the same linguistic source. As a result, considerable lexical differences exist between the two languages. Nevertheless, despite their genetic divergence, certain grammatical similarities and differences can be observed, particularly due to prolonged contact and close social interaction between their speech communities. The morphological structure of the verb assumes central importance in both languages, as verbs play a crucial role in word formation and sentence construction. Although the verb systems of Bodo and Nepali differ in their structural organization, both languages exhibit monosyllabic and polysyllabic verb forms. Generally, basic verb roots are monosyllabic, whereas complex and compound verbs tend to be polysyllabic in nature.

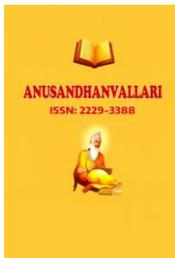
Objectives:

The main objectives of this paper are given below-

- (i) To find out the verb system Bodo and Nepali language.
- (ii) To find out the different types of verb in both languages.
- (iii) To find out the different similarities and dissimilarities of verb both languages.

Methodology:

The present study adopts a descriptive analytical approach to examine and compare the morphological structure of verbs in Bodo and Nepali. The data for this research are drawn from both primary and secondary sources, with



primary reliance placed on secondary data. The methodological framework and analytical tools employed in this study are based on established secondary resources. Secondary data were collected through an extensive review of relevant literature available in various academic repositories, including the Bodoland University Library and the Department of Bodo Library at Bodoland University. In addition, data were gathered from a wide range of published materials such as books, journals, magazines, research articles, and conference papers. These sources provided a reliable foundation for the systematic description and comparative analysis of verb structures in the two languages.

Verbs Structure:

The verb constitutes a central component of sentence structure, as a sentence is syntactically incomplete without a verb. Semantically, a verb denotes action, process, or state. In both Bodo and Nepali, verb structures can be systematically classified into three major categories: simple, complex, and compound verbs. Simple verbs typically consist of a single verbal root and are monosyllabic in nature. In contrast, complex and compound verbs involve multiple morphological elements and are generally polysyllabic. This classification highlights the structural organization of verbs in the two languages and underscores the role of verbal morphology in word formation. Verbs can take various affixes, tense markers, and aspectual markers to encode grammatical and semantic distinctions in the expression of meaning.

(a) Simple Verb

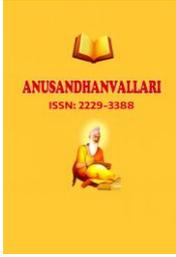
(b) Complex verb

(c) Compound verb

(a) Simple verb: A simple verb consists of a single verbal root in both languages. In general, the majority of basic verb roots are monosyllabic in nature; however, a limited number of polysyllabic verb roots are also attested. Simple verbs function as the core lexical units of the verbal system and serve as the base for further morphological processes such as affixation and compounding.

Bodo	Nepali	Gloss
/hor/	/de/	'to give'
/za/	/kha/	'to eat'
/Khwna/	/sun/	'to hair'
/thaŋ/	/za/	'to go'
/la/	/li/	'to take'
/phwi/	/aw/	'to come'
/maw/	/gar/	'to do'
/nai/	/her/	'to see'

(b) Complex verb: In both Bodo and Nepali, complex verbs are formed through the combination of multiple morphological elements. These verbs typically involve the addition of prefixes and suffixes to a verbal root, resulting in structurally and semantically extended verb forms. Complex verb formation in the two languages includes the use of negative and causative prefixes, as well as negative markers and tense–aspect suffixes. Such morphological processes allow verbs to express distinctions related to negation, causation, modality, tense, and aspect. The presence of these affixes does not alter the fundamental verbal category but enriches the grammatical and semantic interpretation of the verb. This type of verb formation highlights the



agglutinative tendencies of Bodo and the inflectional–derivational interplay observed in Nepali verb morphology.. The Nepali and Bodo negative and causative verb form by adding prefixes are Bodo- {da-} and {na} in Nepali. Examples are given below-

Bodo;

{da} da-V. za > v. daza do not eat
da-V. thang > v. dathang do not go
da-V. phwi> v. daphwi do not come
da-V. mao> v. damao do not do

Nepali; {na}=V. kha> v. nakha do not eat

na-V. zaw> v. nazaw do not go
na-V. aw > v. na aw do not come
na-V. gar> v. nagar do not do

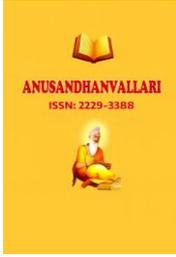
In both Bodo and Nepali, prefixes are attached to the initial position of verb roots to form new lexical items while largely maintaining the core semantic meaning and grammatical category of the verb. In Bodo, a relatively rich set of verbal prefixes is attested, including {*bi-*, *be-*, *phi-*, *phe-*, *phu-*, *si-*, *sw-*, *se-*, and *ho-*}. These prefixes primarily contribute to semantic modification such as intensification, causation, directionality, or aspectual nuance without altering the fundamental verbal class. In contrast, Nepali exhibits a comparatively limited inventory of verbal prefixes, most of which are historically derived from Sanskrit. Commonly attested prefixes in Nepali include {*ati-*, *bi-*, *a-*, *u-*, *ni-*, and *pra-*}. These prefixes similarly function to extend or modify verbal meaning while preserving the essential lexical sense of the root. The contrast in the number and origin of prefixes in Bodo and Nepali reflects typological differences between the two languages, as well as the influence of their respective language families—Tibeto-Burman and Indo-European—on verb morphology.

Bodo:

{bi-}: bi-v. zir> v. bizir (to analyze)
{be-}: be-v. kheo> v. bekhaio (to open widely)
{phi-}: phi-v. si> v. phisi (to wet)
{phe-}: phe-v. seo> v. pheseo (to rotten)
{phu-}: phu-v. sung > v. phusung (to short)
{si-}: si-v. gi> v. sigi (to frighten)
{ho-}: ho-v. gar > v. hogar (to let free)

Nepali:

{ati-}: ati-v. bhaya> v. atibhaya (it became to much)
{bi-}: bi-v. khaanu> v. bikhanu (to sell)
{a-}: a-v. jaanu> v. ajaanu(to come)
{u-}: u-v. bhaunu> v. ubhaunu(to stand up)
{ni-}: ni-v. lunu> v. nilunu (to take down)
{pra-}: pra-v. kas garnu> v. prakasgarnu (to shine to do)



b. ii. Complex verb adding by adding negative and tense – marker:

This type of complex verb formation is sound in Bodo and Nepali. According to the speaker's mood it can be imperative, advice and negative.

Negative formation suffix: In Bodo {-a}, {-za} and Nepali {n-}, {-na} is negative suffix. Examples:

{-a}: v. za-a>v. zaa (do not eat)

{-a}: v. thang-a>v. thangaa (do not go)

{-a}: v. mao-a>v. maoaa (do not do)

{-a}: v. phwi-a>v.phwiaa (do not come)

Nepali:

{na-}: v. kha-a>v. nakha (do not eat)

{na-}: v. za-a>v. naza (do not go)

{na-}: v. gar-a>v. nagar (do not do)

{na-}: v. her-a>v. naher (do not see)

Imperative and advice suffix:

Suffixes like {-dw}, {-thwng} in Bodo and Nepali

Bodo:

{-dw}

{-dw}: v thang-dw> v. thangdw (cause to go)

{-dw}: v za-dw> v. zadw (cause to eat)

{-dw}: v phwi-dw> v. phwidw (cause to come)

{-dw}: v lwng-dw> v. lwngdw (cause to drink)

{-thwng}

{-thwng}: v za-thwng> v. zathwng (cause to eat)

{-thwng}: v mao-thwng> v. maothwng (cause to do)

{-thwng}: v thang-thwng> v. thangthwng (cause to go)

{-thwng}: v phwi-thwng> v. phwithwng (cause to come)

Nepali:

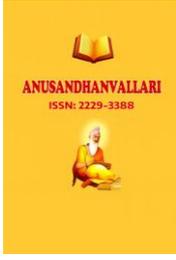
Imperative and advice suffix: {-nu, -a, -hos, -la, -na}

{-nu} v za-nu> v. zanu {cause to go}

{-nu} v pardh-nu> v. pardhnu {cause to read}

{-nu} v gar-nu> v. garnu {cause to do}

{-nu} v mar-nu> v. marnu {cause to die}



{-a} v likh-a> v likha (cause to write)

{-a} v padh-a> v padha (cause to read)

{-hos,} v likh=hos> v likhnohos (cause to write)

{-hos} v padh-hos> v padhnohos (cause to read)

{-la} v likh-la> v likhla (cause to write)

{-la} v padh-la> v padhla (cause to read)

Negative imperative prefix added to before the verb-

{na-} v gar-na>nagar(do not do)

{na-} v za-na>naza(do not go)

Bodo:

{-a, -w}: v za-w> v. zayw (present indefinite tense)

{-dwng}: v za-dwng> v. zadwng (present progressive tense)

{-bai}: v za-bai> v. zabai (Immediate past tense)

{-dwngmwn}: v za-dwngmwn> v. zadwngmwn (Remote past tense)

{-gwn}: v za-gwn> v. zagwn (Indefinite future tense)

Nepali:

{-chu}: v khan-chu> v. khanchu (Present tense 1st Person Singular Number)

{-chao}: v khan-chao> v. khanchu (Present tense 1st/ 2nd Person Singular/Plural Number)

{-chA}: v khan-cha> v. khancha (Present tense 3rd Person Singular Number Masculine)

{-che}: v khan-che> v. khanche (Present tense 3rd Person Singular Number Feminine)

{-chA}: v khan-chA> v. khanchA (Present tense 3rd Person Plural Number)

Past tense:

{-thiye}: v khan-thiye> v. khandhiye (Past tense 1st Person Singular Number)

{-thiyAo}: v khan-thiyAo> v. khandhiyAo (Past tense 1st/ 2nd Person Singular/Plural Number)

{-thiyo}: v khan-thiyo> v. khandhiyo (Past tense 3rd Person Singular Number Masculine)

{-thiyi}: v khan-thiyi> v. khandhiyi (Past tense 3rd Person Singular Number Feminine)

{-thiye}: v khan-thiye> v. khandhiye (Past tense 3rd Person Plural Number)

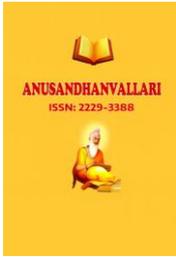
Future tense:

{-chu}: v khan-chu> v. khanchu (future tense 1st Person Singular Number)

{-chao}: v khan-chao> v. khanchu (future tense 1st/ 2nd Person Singular/Plural Number)

{-chA}: v khan-cha>v. khancha (future tense 3rd Person Singular Number Masculine/ Feminine)

{-chAu}: v khan-chu> v. khanchu (future tense 3rd Person Plural Number)



c. Compound Verb:

It consists of more than one verb. It is formed by vr+ vn and vn+vn+vr. Vn+vn compounding is very common in Bodo and Nepali languages.

Examples:

Bodo: vr+ vn

Za+ zab>zazab(to dine together)

kha+ zab>khazab(to bind together)

hab+ phwi>habphwi(to wrap up)

kha+ thab>khathzab(to come and enter)

Nepali: In the Nepali language the compound verb are formed by auxiliaries verb like- {-nu, -I, -dai}

Kha+nu>khanu (to eat)

Za+nu>zanu(to go)

bhani+rahanu>bhanirahanu (to say)

gari+dinu>garidinu (to do)

garnu+khojnu>garnukhojnu (to accomplish something)

garnu+launu>garnlaunu (go and accomplish the work)

garnu+parch>garnuparch (certainly to do)

Bodo: vn+vn+vr

Za+ phwi+zwb>zaphwizwb (come eat completely)

lag+ phwi+zwb>langphwizwb (come take completely)

hw+lang+ phwi>hwlangphwi (come and give)

lang+phwi+zwb>langphwizwb(come keep completely)

Nepali: vn+vn+vr

Kha+i+di+nu>khaidinu (to eat)

Lai+zaw+sabai>laizawsabai (to take completely)

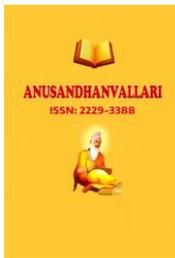
Kha+i+zaw+sabai>khaizawsabai (to eat completely)

Lik+dai+gar+nu>likdaigarnu (to write continually)

Za+dai+gar+nu>zadaigarnu (to go continually)

Conclusion:

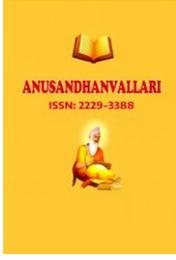
The present study has examined the structural patterns of verb formation in Bodo and Nepali with a focus on simple, complex, and compound verb constructions. The analysis reveals that verb structures in the languages under study can be broadly classified into three types: simple verbs, complex verbs, and compound verbs. Simple verbs are primarily monosyllabic in nature; however, in Nepali, the presence of glottal stops frequently results in the surface realization of disyllabic verb forms. Complex verbs in both languages are formed through processes



of prefixation and suffixation. In Bodo, prefixes such as {*bi-*, *be-*, *phi-*, *pho-*, *phe-*, *si-*, *sw-*, *se-*}, and *ho-* play a significant role in verb formation, while Nepali employs a comparatively limited set of suffixes, including {*-nu*, *-a*, *-hos*, *-la*, and *-na*}. Suffixation in both languages commonly encodes grammatical categories such as negation and tense, often indicating that the action is performed by the subject itself. Furthermore, the study identifies two major compound verb formation patterns in Bodo—**Vr + Vn** and **Vn + Vn + Vr**—through which complex actions are expressed in a compact and semantically condensed form. Overall, the findings highlight both typological contrasts and functional parallels in the verb morphology of Bodo and Nepali, contributing to a broader understanding of verb structure in a comparative linguistic framework.

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