

Case Markers in Bodo and Sanzari Bodo: A Comparative Investigation

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to investigate and compare the case markers of Bodo and Sanzari Bodo - a variety of Bodo. A Tibeto-Burman language, Bodo is primarily spoken in the north eastern state of Assam, India. Because of immense ethno linguistic diversity the region of Bodoland has attracted numerous linguistic studies from across the globe but due to geographical isolation there are pockets which are left with undocumented language varieties. The present research is based on the data obtained from 20 Sanzari Bodo speakers of Nagaon district of Assam. Though the standard Bodo and Sanzari Bodo share the same number of case markers they have some evident differences between them. Case is a grammatical category which expresses the semantic relation between a noun phrase and its predicate. There are at least ten case markers in both Bodo as well as Sanzari Bodo. Close investigation of data establishes that despite sharing similarities, the two varieties have their uniqueness too, for example, the accusative case marker of Bodo {-k^huu} is monophthongised to {-k^hu}, the final /ŋ/ sound of instrumental, comitative and allative cases are removed in Sanzari Bodo and the illative case too has different manifestations in the two varieties.

Keywords: case marking, Bodo, Sanzari Bodo, morphology, Tibeto-Burman

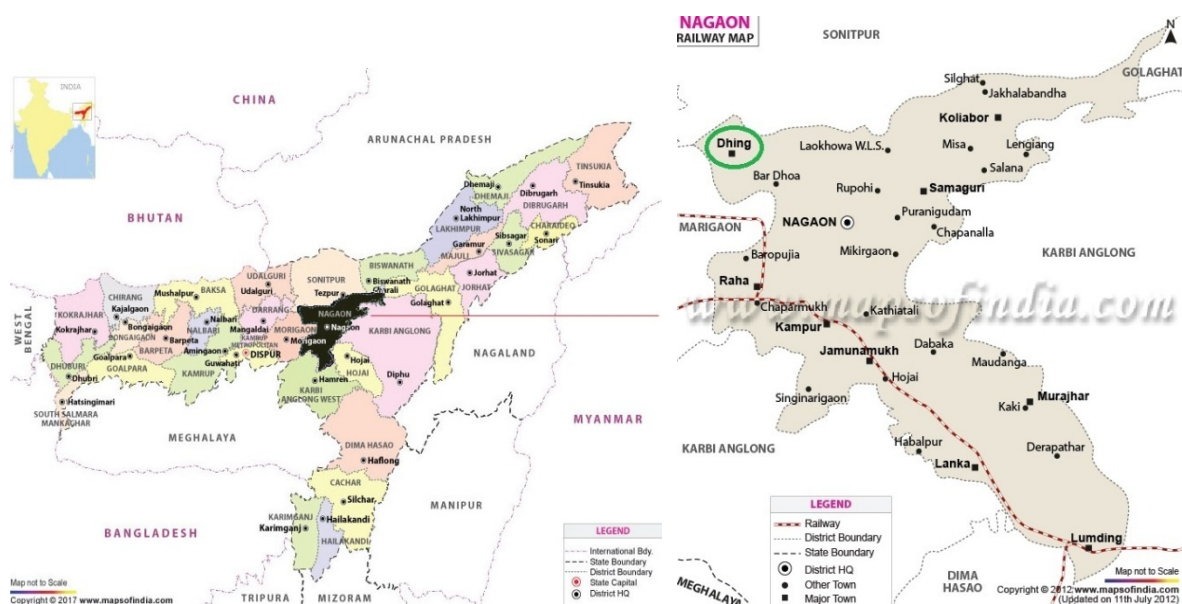
1. Introduction

Bodo [bɔrɔ] is one of the 22 scheduled languages in India. The generic term ‘Bodo’ was first used in Hodgson (1847). According to Endle (1884), Bodos are vaguely known as ‘Kacharis’ but they rarely use this name among themselves. Bhattacharya (2007) stated that the people and their speech are called ‘Kacharis’ by the surrounding Assamese speakers. It is the official language of Bodoland Autonomous region. It is also a co-official language of Assam, a north eastern state of India. Grierson (1903) has classified Bodo under the Tibeto-Burman branch of Sino-Tibetan languages family. Abbi (2001) has mentioned that the Tibeto-Burman languages appeared after the Mon-Khmer language Khasi which is presently spoken in Meghalaya, India. Shafer (1955) stated that Bodo belongs to the Western Branch of Barish Section of Baric Division (Assam). According to Burling (1959), a number of Tibeto-Burman languages and dialects are spoken in Assam and in adjoining Tripura which are collectively referred as the Bodo group. Benedict (1972) has also mentioned that Bodo belongs to Bodo-Garo (Barish) group which is one of the seven primary divisions of Tibeto-Burman language family. Burling (2003) has also classified the Tibeto-Burman languages of North eastern India. He has included Bodo under the subgroup of Bodo-Konyak-Jinghpaw of the Central Area.

Primarily spoken in Assam, the Bodo language has several varieties that are the consequence of contact with other surrounding languages like Assamese, Hindi, Bangla and so on. Bhattacharya (2007) has mentioned four dialect areas of the Bodo language which is restructured by Baro (2007) according to the further division of districts of Assam. Basumatary (2005) has classified the dialects of Bodo into three – The Western Boro Dialect, The Eastern Boro Dialect and The Southern Boro Dialect which are also called as Swnabari, Sanzari and Hazari respectively (Sarma, 2013). Hakasam (2013) has added Magra as another Bodo dialect. Brahma (2014) has also claimed to have Bwrdown, a unique dialect of Bodo. So, summing up the above mentioned dialects by different scholars we can say that there are at least five different dialects of Bodo. But according to Brahma (2015), in ancient times Bodo people used to shift from one place to another for better cultivation. So, he states that sometimes the speakers of different varieties of Bodo are found in a single area.

Baro (2007) stated that dialects of a language loss inter-communication from one another because of distance, time and due to the influence of social, cultural, political and economic factors. Apart from these factors, Sarma, (2013) mentions migration as another important factor of dialect variation.

The present research is based on the Sanzari Bodo speakers living in three remote villages in Dhing Block of Nagaon district in Assam. The following map (Map 1) shows the places where Sanzari Bodo is spoken in Nagaon district of Assam, India. The primary motive of this research is to highlight the differences between the two varieties based on the case markers and the sound changes.



Map 1. The encircled area (Dhing) is the place where Sanzari is spoken in Nagaon
Sources: <https://www.mapsofindia.com> (03:09 PM, 14-02-2018)

1.1 Previous Literature

Hodgson (1847) stated that there are at least nine cases in Bodo and cases are formed entirely by postpositions. Endle (1884) mentioned eight case markers in Kachari (Bodo). His work was based on the Bodo speakers of Darrang district of central Assam. He stated an important observation that there are two genitive markers in Bodo {-ni} and {-ha} but the marker {-ni} is used frequently whereas {-ha} is restricted mainly to nouns that denote animate life. Endle (2007) stated that the Bodo ablative case {-nip^hrai} exists as a compound of {-ni} and {-p^hrai} where the genitive {-ni} precedes its proper sign {p^hrai}. According to LaPolla (1995) the Bodo and Garo languages do not exhibit agentive marking. He has mentioned the important case markers like genitive, instrumental and ablative cases of Bodo-Garo languages. Brahma, P. (2013) has done a similar comparative work on case makers in Bodo, Dimasa, Kok-Borok, Rabha and Mising. She has mentioned seven types of case markers in Bodo. Moreover, Brahma, A. (2013) has also mentioned that there are not less than nine case markers in Bodo. Sarma, C. (2013) has worked on dialect variation of Bodo and associated grapheme to phoneme rules. But till now no work has been done on the comparison of Bodo and Sanzari Bodo variety spoken in Nagaon district of Assam, India. Therefore, this research is an attempt to investigate the case systems in Bodo and Sanzari Bodo highlighting their similarities and dissimilarities.

1.2 Case

According to Blake (2004, p.197), Case is a system of marking dependent nouns for the type of relationship they bear to their heads. The term is originally applied to inflectional systems, but sometimes used of other systems such as systems of postpositions.

The languages in the world do not have same amount of case markings. A language may have different numbers of cases. For instance, Latin and Russian have at least six cases, Hungarian has eighteen and Tsez has Sixty four cases. But commonly found cases are nominative, accusative, dative and genitive.^[1]

1.3 Bodo and Sanzari Bodo Case Markings

Bodo and Sanzari Bodo have at least ten case markers. The ten case markers that have been observed are Nominative, Accusative, Instrumental, Comitative, Dative, Ablative, Genitive, Locative, Allative and Illative cases. These cases are discussed below with examples from both the varieties to highlight the differences in similar constructions. In the following set of examples, the first is a Bodo (B) example followed by Sanzari Bodo (SB) example.

| Sr. | Case | Bodo | Sanzari Bodo |
|-----|--------------|---|---|
| 1 | Nominative | {-a} / {-ja} / {-wa} / {-u} / {-ju} | {-a} / {-ja} / {-wa} / {-u} / {-ju} |
| 2 | Accusative | {-k ^h u} | {-k ^h u} |
| 3 | Instrumental | {-zuŋ} | {-zu} |
| 4 | Comitative | {-zuŋ} | {-zu} |
| 5 | Dative | {-nu} | {-nu} |
| 6 | Ablative | {-nip ^h rai} | {-nip ^h rai} |
| 7 | Genitive | {-ni} / {-ha} | {-ni} / {-ha} |
| 8 | Locative | {-aə} / {-jaə} / {-waə} | {-uu} |
| 9 | Allative | {-t ^h iŋ} / {-nit ^h iŋ} | {-t ^h i} / {-nit ^h i} |
| 10 | Illative | {-sim} | {-halagui} |

Figure 1. Bodo and Sanzari Bodo case markers

1.3.1 Nominative Case

Bodo and Sanzari Bodo have same nominative case marker. The nominative case is {-a} but it is optional if the subject is pronoun. Brahma (2013) has mentioned that Bodo nominative case {-a} has four allomorphs {-ja}, {-wa}, {-u} and {-ju} which are distinct in both the varieties. {-a} is used with nouns ending with consonant and /u/ sound, {-ja} with nouns ending with front vowel, {-wa} with nouns ending with back vowel, {-u} with consonant ending pronouns and {-ju} with vowel ending pronouns. For example:

a. (B) aŋ guwahati-jaə t^ha-ju
 1SG.NOM Guwahati-LOC stay-HAB

‘I live in Guwahati.’

(SB) aŋ guwahati-uu t^ha-ju
 1SG.NOM Guwahati-LOC stay-HAB

‘I live in Guwahati.’

b. (B) maəzi-ja na za-ju
 cat-NOM fish eat-HAB

‘Cat eats fish.’

(SB) maɔzi-ja na za-juu
 cat-NOM fish eat-HAB

‘Cat eats fish.’

c. (B) ruddum-a sa-se muɔzaŋ mansi
 Rwdwm-NOM CL-one good man

‘Rwdwm is a good man.’

(SB) ruddum-a k^ha-se muɔzaŋ mansui
 Rwdwm-NOM CL-one good man

‘Rwdwm is a good man.’

d. (B) bi-juu gami-ni gaŋbura
 s/he-NOM village-GEN village head.M

‘He is the head of the village.’

(SB) bi-juu gami-ni gaŋbura
 s/he-NOM village-GEN village head.M

‘He is the head of the village.’

e. (B) aŋ-u bi-k^huu muɔzaŋ muun-a
 1SG-NOM s/he-ACC good get-NEG

‘I don’t like (love) him/her.’

(SB) aŋ-u bi-k^hu muɔzaŋ muun-a
 1SG-NOM s/he-ACC good get-NEG

‘I don’t like (love) him/her.’

1.3.2 Accusative Case

The role of accusative case is to mark the direct object of a verb. The accusative marker in Bodo is {-k^huu} but in Sanzari Bodo the final /u/ is deleted and the accusative case becomes {-k^hu} in Sanzari. For example:

a. (B) riŋk^haŋ-a radai-k^huu bu-duŋ-muun
 Ringkhang-NOM Radai-ACC beat-PFV-PST

‘Ringkhang beat Radai.’

(SB) riŋk^haŋ-a radai-k^hu bu-du-muun

Ringkhang-NOM Radai-ACC beat-PFV-PST

‘Ringkhang beat Radai.’

b. (B) aŋ-k^huu bi muija nu-duuŋ-mwn

1SG-ACC s/he yesterday see-PFV-PST

‘S/he saw me yesterday.’

(SB) aŋ-k^hu bi mija nu-du-mwn

1SG-ACC s/he yesterday see-PFV-PST

‘S/he saw me yesterday.’

1.3.3 Instrumental Case

Instrumental case is used to mark the element of a syntactic construction which works as an instrument of the action of the verb within the construction. The instrumental case marker in Bodo is {-zuŋ} but the instrumental case in Sanzari Bodo is {-zu}. It is formed after deleting the final /ŋ/ sound of {-zuŋ}. For example:

a. (B) bi-juu gɔn-zuŋ enzɔr-k^huu but^har-bai

s/he-NOM stick-INST rat-ACC kill-PRF

‘S/he has killed the rat.’

(SB) bi-juu gɔn-zu enzɔr-k^hu but^har-bai

s/he-NOM stick-INST rat-ACC kill-PRF

‘S/he has killed the rat.’

b. (B) sɔmaina-ja rebgɔn-zuŋ lir-gasinu dɔŋ

Somaina-NOM pen-INST write-PROG be

‘Somaina is writing with pen.’

(SB) sɔmaina-ja rebgɔn-zu lir-gasenu dɔŋ

Somaina-NOM pen-INST write-PROG be

‘Somaina is writing with pen.’

1.3.4 Comitative Case

The comitative case is a grammatical case that denotes accompaniment. The comitative case in Bodo is {-zuŋ} whereas {-zu} denotes the comitative marker in Sanzari. For example:

a. (B) aŋ gɔblɔ-zuŋ p^hɔraisali-jaɔ t^haŋ-u

1SG Goblo-COMIT school-LOC go-HAB

‘I go to school with Goblo.’

(SB) aŋ gɔblo-zuu p^hɔraisali-uu t^haŋ-uu

1SG Goblo-COMIT school-LOC go-HAB

‘I go to school with Goblo.’

b. (B) suima-ja aŋ-zuuŋ p^hui-p^ha-duuŋ-muun

dog-NOM 1SG-COMIT come-along-PFV-PST

‘The dog was coming with me.’

(SB) suima-ja aŋ-zuu p^hai-p^ha-duu-muun

dog-NOM 1SG-COMIT come-along-PFV-PST

‘The dog was coming with me.’

1.3.5 Dative Case

The dative case is used to indicate the noun to which something is given. The marker {-nu} is the dative case marker in both Bodo and Sanzari Bodo.

a. (B) rap^hud-a aŋ-nuu nuizi raŋ hu-duu-muun

Rafwd-NOM 1SG-DAT twenty rupees give-PFV-PST

‘Rafwd gave me twenty rupees.’

(SB) rap^hud-a aŋ-nuu nuizi raŋ hu-duu-muun

Rafwd-NOM 1SG-DAT twenty rupees give-PFV-PST

‘Rafwd gave me twenty rupees.’

b. (B) aŋ-nuu gɔsla gaŋ-se labuu

1SG-DAT shirt CL-one bring

‘Bring me a shirt.’

(SB) aŋ-nuu gɔsɔla gaŋ-se labuu

1SG-DAT shirt CL-one bring

‘Bring me a shirt.’

1.3.6 Ablative Case

It is used to indicate movement away from some location, especially time and place locations. In both the dialects {-nip^hrai} denotes the ablative case marker. For example:

a. (B) adui-ja gami-nip^hrai p^hui-gasinuu dɔŋ

uncle-NOM village-ABL come-PROG be

‘Uncle is coming from village.’

(SB) adui-ja gami-nip^hrai p^hai-gasenu dɔŋ

aunty-NOM village-ABL come-PROG be

‘Aunty is coming from village.’

- b. (B) dinui-nifrai aŋ-nip^hrai zangar-aɔ t^ha
 today-ABL 1SG-ABL far-LOC stay

‘From today, stay away from me.’

(SB) d^hini-nifrai aŋ-nip^hrai gazan-uɯ t^ha

today-ABL 1SG-ABL far-LOC stay

‘From today, stay away from me.’

1.3.7 Genitive Case

This case is used with the nouns or pronouns or noun phrases which are dependents of their predicates or other nouns. Both Bodo and Sanzari Bodo have two genitive markers {-ni} and {-ha}. For example:

- a. (B) ruimali-ni huuwa-ja armi maɔ-juɯ
 Rwimali-GEN husband-NOM Army work-HAB

‘Rwimali’s husband works at Army.’

(SB) ruimali-ni huwa-ja armi k^ham-u

Rwimali-GEN husband-NOM Army work-HAB

‘Rwimali’s husband works at Army.’

- b. (B) radai-ha mun-se gidir p^huk^hri dɔŋ
 Radai-GEN CL-one big pond be

‘Radai has a big pond.’

(SB) radai-ha mun-se guɖur pagar dɔŋ

Radai-GEN CL-one big pond be

‘Radai has a big pond.’

- c. (B) radai-mun-ha sa-se bɔk^hali dɔŋ
 Radai-PL-GEN CL-one babysitter be

‘Radai’s family has a babysitter.’

(SB) radai-ma.ha k^ha-se bəkali dəŋ
 Radai-PL.GEN CL-one babysitter be
 ‘Radai’s family has a babysitter.’

The plural suffix that is added with a name or relation term in Sanzari is {-mu}. When it has to be combined with the genitive suffix {-ha} then the plural morpheme {-mu} changes to {-ma} and becomes {-maha}.

1.3.8 Locative Case

Locative case expresses location at the referent of the noun it marks. Bodo locative case marker is {-aə}. It changes to {-jaə} or {-waə} in certain environment. If the noun ends with /u/ sound or with a consonant then locative marker {-aə} is added. But {-jaə} is added with noun that ends with front vowel and {-waə} is attached with nouns that ends with back vowel.

On the other hand, {-uu} is the only locative case marker in Sanzari Bodo. But sometimes it is observed changing if the final sound is vowel and if the speaker speaks very fast, i.e. Guwahati+/-uu/= guwahatiu, Barpeta+/-uu/=bərpetau, Diphu+/-uu/=dip^həu. For example:

a. (B) mainaə-wa nəgaŋ-aə t^ha-juu
 Mainao-NOM Nagaon-LOC stay-HAB
 ‘Mainao lives in Nagaon.’

(SB) mainaə-wa nəgaŋ-uu t^ha-juu
 Mainao-NOM Nagaon-LOC stay-HAB
 ‘Mainao lives in Nagaon.’

b. (B) aŋ gabun p^huŋbili-jaə p^hui-guun
 1SG tomorrow early morning-LOC come-FUT
 ‘Tomorrow I shall come in the early morning.’

(SB) aŋ gabun p^huŋt^har-uu p^hai-guun
 1SG tomorrow early morning-LOC come-FUT
 ‘Tomorrow I shall come in the early morning.’

c. (B) sidum-a dip^hu-waə t^ha-juu
 Sidwm-NOM diphu-LOC stay-HAB
 ‘Sidwm lives in Diphu.’

(SB) sidum-a dip^hu-uu t^ha-juu
 Sidwm-NOM diphu-LOC stay-HAB

‘Sidwm lives in Diphu.’

Most of the times, Bodo genitive {-ni} and locative {-aə} get assimilated and transform into {-naə}. Similarly, Sanzari genitive {-ni} and locative {-uu} get assimilated to yield {-niu}. For example:

d. (B) birbai-naə ma-nui əma dəŋ
 Birbai-GEN.LOC CL-two pig be

‘Birbai has two pigs.’

(SB) birbai-niu ma-nui əma dəŋ
 Birbai-GEN.LOC CL-two pig be

‘Birbai has two pigs.’

1.3.9 Allative Case

Allative case expresses motion to or towards the referent of the noun it marks. The allative case markers in Bodo are {-t^{hiŋ}} and {-nit^{hiŋ}} but in Sanzari Bodo the final /ŋ/ is deleted and become {-t^{hi}} and {-nit^{hi}}. But sometimes when someone emphasizes on the direction then a final /ŋ/ is added with {-t^{hi}} and {-nit^{hi}} in Sanzari Bodo. Generally, {-nit^{hi}} is used with nouns expressing humans and animals while {-t^{hi}} is used with nouns expressing natural object. For example:

a. (B) dubru-wa aŋ-nit^{hiŋ} nai-na mini-duŋ-mun
 dubru-NOM 1SG-ALL look-CONJP laugh-PFV-PST

‘Dubru laughed looking at me.’

(SB) dubru-wa aŋ-nit^{hi} nai-na mini-du-mun
 dubru-NOM 1SG-ALL look-CONJP laugh-PFV-PST

‘Dubru laughed looking at me.’

b. (B) bi aŋ-ni gola-t^{hiŋ} nai-k^huma-duŋ-mun
 s/he 1SG-GEN shop-ALL look-secretly-PFV-PST

‘S/he secretly looked at my shop.’

(SB) bi aŋ-ni dukan-t^{hi} nai-k^hama-du-mun
 s/he 1SG-GEN shop-ALL look-secretly-PFV-PST

‘S/he secretly looked at my shop.’

1.3.10 Illative Case

Illative case expresses motion into the referent of the noun it marks. The illative case marker in Bodo is {-sim} but {-halagui} is the illative case marker in Sanzari Bodo. For example:

a. (B) rozonɣ-a nɔ-nip^hrai d^hiŋ-sim t^haŋ-gasinu dɔŋ
 Rozong-NOM house-ABL Dhing-ILL go-PROG be
 ‘Rozong is going from home upto Dhing.’

(SB) rozonɣ-a nɔ-nip^hrai d^hiŋ-halagui t^haŋ-gasinu dɔŋ
 Rozong-NOM house-ABL Dhing-ILL go-PROG be
 ‘Rozong is going from home upto Dhing.’

2. Discussion

From the above discussion and examples it is evident that despite having the same numbers of case markers, most of the case markers are different in Bodo and Sanzari Bodo. The illustrations in the previous section clearly indicate that in both the varieties the nominative case {-a} changes its form according to the final sound to {-ja}, {-ua}, {-u} or {ju}. Accusative marker {-k^huu} is monophthongised and transforms to {-k^hu} in Sanzari Bodo. The final /ŋ/ in instrumental and comitative case {-zuŋ} is deleted and yielding {-zu} in Sanzari Bodo. The dative, ablative and genitive case markers remain the same in both the varieties. The locative case marker in Bodo is {-aɔ} and its allomorphs are [-jaɔ] and [-waɔ]. Depending on the word final sound the case marker changes to {-jaɔ} or {-waɔ}. Sanzari Bodo has a single case marker for location which is {-uu}. The allative case markers {-t^hiŋ} and {-nit^hiŋ} transform to {-t^hi} and {-nit^hi} respectively. The final /ŋ/ is deleted in Sanzari Bodo. It has also been found that the morpheme {-sim} is the illative marker in Bodo whereas {-halagui} is the illative case marker in Sanzari Bodo.

3. Conclusion

Language varieties have various similarities and dissimilarities at different linguistic levels. The dissimilarities might not appear to be very significant initially but it is important that they get documented so that the gaps in linguistic typological studies can be addressed. The phonological changes in the case markers of Bodo and Sanzari Bodo make the two varieties unique in themselves opening further scope to compare more of such varieties of Bodo.

Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|---------------------------------|
| 1SG | 1 st person singular |
| ABL | Ablative |
| ACC | Accusative |
| CL | Classifier |
| COMIT | Comitative |
| DAT | Dative |

| | |
|------|-------------------|
| FUT | Future |
| GEN | Genitive |
| HAB | Habitual Aspect |
| INST | Instrumental |
| LOC | Locative |
| M | Masculine |
| NEG | Negative |
| NOM | Nominative |
| PFV | Perfective Aspect |
| PL | Plural |
| PRF | Perfect Aspect |
| PROG | Progressive |
| PST | Past |

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