

WORD TYPOLOGY: CONCERNING THE RABHA LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

Here the aim of the paper is to analyze the **word typology of Rabha** language. The basic vocabulary of this language is mostly monosyllabic in nature. It consists of a single morpheme, i.e. root. More than one monosyllabic word (that is free morpheme in nature) may be tagged together to form a compound word. Agglutinating characteristic is a typological phenomenon in the structure of word. In this process an inflectional or derivational word may be formed by adding prefix or suffix (-es). Suffixes may be added in a linear sequence to get different extended meaning(s). These are the common salient features as occurred in word formation in this language.

KEYWORDS: Agglutinating, Compound Word, Derivational, Free Morpheme, Inflectional, Typology

INTRODUCTION

The Rabha, having 1, 30,875 populations as per 2001 Census Report of Assam, is a Tibeto-Burman language belonging to the Sino-Tibetan family of languages. The concentration of this linguistic community is found in the North eastern regions of India, particularly in the state of Assam and in some parts of North Bengal, Meghalaya and bordering areas of Assam-Arunachal Pradesh. But the majority of the speakers are thickly spreading in the southern areas of Brahmaputra valley of Assam and in some parts of North Bengal. In present day perspective, this language is a little known un-saved language in India. Though enthusiastic personalities of this community is doing and taking some sincere initiatives for enhancement of literary works that becomes like a preliminary foundation.

AREA OF DISCUSSIONS

To discuss the topic following areas have been taken into account with some special references of words. These are:

- Word consisting of single free morpheme, i.e. root
- Complex type of words (i.e. formed by prefixation or suffixation)
- Compounding of words
- Word formation by reduplication etc.

Word of Single Free Morpheme

In this language, some of the words of the class of noun, pronoun, verb or verb root and adjective are composed of single morpheme. Most of them are monosyllabic in structure. Structurally these words are simple in construction.

Noun Class of Words Having Single Morpheme

Example-1

/par/-flower, /p^har/-night, /tɔʔ/-bird, /dam/-mat, /chak/-leaf

/kai/-man, /na/-fish, /munʔ/-name, /ha-soil, /the/-fruit

/mi/-curry, /su/-thorn, /ram/-way/road, /so/-mosquito etc.

These words are monosyllabic in nature having independent meaning of its own. To express the meaning of different ideas or sometimes for expansion of meanings of different context the plural suffix (-es) or case-marker (-es) are added with them.

Example 1

(addition of plural suffix)

/to- bizan/-birds

↓ ↓

bird Pl.suff.

/kai-taŋ/-men

↓ ↓

man Pl.suff. etc.

Example 2

(addition of case-marker)

/nen-pake/-with the cloth

↓ ↓

cloth inst. case-marker

/to- ni/-of bird

↓ ↓

bird Gen.case-marker etc.

Personal Pronouns Having Single Morpheme

Some words comprising the class of pronoun are also monosyllabic and independent in structure. The first personal pronoun /aŋ/- (I) does not take plural suffix but capable of adding case-marker accordingly. Thus case-marker may be added with /naŋ/- (you) and /ɔ/- (He/She). The Rabha uses three types of personal pronouns having connotation of singular. /aŋ/-I, /naŋ/-you, /ɔ/-He/She. Here one of the worth mentioning points is that the personal pronoun /chiŋ/- (We) is an independent first personal plural. No plural suffixes need to be joined together except the addition of case-marker.

Verb Root/ Verb Having Single Morpheme

Verb roots or some verb class of words are also monosyllabic and independent in structure. Typologically these are free morpheme and capable of containing prefix (-es) or suffix (-es) which are added to form a new class of words or to get an inflected meaning. For example: /reŋ/-(go), /tan-(cut)/, /saʻ/-(eat), /si/-(to die), /kha/-(bind), /neʻ/-(wait), /ruŋ/-(drink), /triŋ/-(learn), /pri-(buy), /rɔŋ/-(distribute) etc.

Primary Adjectives Having Single Morpheme

Primary adjectives are simple, independent and consist of monosyllabic word. For instances: /tim/-(plenty), /daŋ/-(clear), /buqt/-(silent) etc.

Complex Type of Words

Rabha language consists of complex type of words which are derivable by adding affix that precedes or follows the root word. The complex type of words may be classified into different categories depending upon uses of affixes in positional condition. Some of the patterns of such kind of words are:

- Prefix+root word
- Root word+suffix

Prefix+Root Word

The first category of words is made of at least two morphological units. This typology has three kinds of categories; e.g: Causative formation, Formation of adjective and Noun formation i.e. nominalization.

Causative Formation

Example

- k^huŋ- t^har>k^huŋt^har, (to make purify)

↓ ↓

Pref. Vr.(purify)

- t^huŋ-k^hap>t^huŋk^hap (to cause to cry)

↓ ↓

Pref. Vr. (cry)

- tuŋ-ran>tuŋran (to cause to dray)

↓ ↓

Pref. Vr. (dry)

- tu-muŋn>tumuŋn (cause to be ripen)

↓ ↓

Pref. Vr. (ripe)

- guṭ-zuṣm>guṭzuṣm (to crush into pieces)

↓ ↓

Pref. Vr. (crush) etc.

- ku-tuṇ>kutuṇ (to cause to warm)

↓ ↓

Pref. Vr. (be warm)

In the above cited examples the derived words are formed by adding different prefixes. In terms of structure and meaning they are causative formation.

Formation of Adjective

In this typology prefixes are added with the verb root and then it derives an adjective.

Example

- pi- dan>pidan (new)

↓ ↓

Pref. Vr. (be new)

- pi- t^har>pit^har (clean, pure)

↓ ↓

Pref. Vr. (make clean)

- pi- lu>pilu (many, more)

↓ ↓

Pref. increase

Nominalization of Words

There are a few such words which are formed by adding prefix {pi-} with the verb root. Example:

- pi- k^ha>pik^ha (heart/bile)

↓ ↓

Pref. Vr. (to be bitter)

- pi- sak>pisak (red cock)

↓ ↓

Pref. Vr. (to be red)

Root+Suffix

Structurally most of the Rabha words are formed by this process which results different class of words, e.g. causative verb, noun, adjective. Here some examples may be mentionable.

Causative Formation

To form causative verb some particular types of suffix are added after the verb root. E.g:

- nuk- tak>nuktak (cause to look)

↓ ↓

Vr. (look) Suf.

- reŋ- tak>reŋtak (cause to go)

↓ ↓

Vr.(go) Suf.

- sa- tak>satak (cause to eat)

↓ ↓

Vr. (eat) Suf.

Noun Formation

Nouns are also formed by addition of suffix just after the immediate position of verb root and noun base.

Verb Root+Suffix=Noun

Example

- sa- kai>sakai (act of eating)

↓ ↓

Vr.(eat) Suf.

- si- kai>sikai (death)

↓ ↓

Vr.(to die) Suf.

- triŋ- gir>triŋgir(student)

↓ ↓

Vr.(learn) Suf.

- rəŋ- bra>rəŋbra(distributor)

↓ ↓

Vr.(distribute) Suf.

Noun Base+Suffix

- kai- giri>kaigiri(owner)

↓ ↓

man Suf.

- pan- grim>pangrim(jungle)

↓ ↓

tree Suf.

- bək- t^hai>bəkt^hai(naval)

↓ ↓

belly Suf.

Adjective Formation

Adjectives are also formed by addition of suffix. Verb/Verb root plus suffix and finally derives an adjective is the process of this kind of word. If the suffix {-kai} is added with the verb/verb root as a suffix it derives a word of an adjective class. Example:

- nema- kai>nemkai (good)

↓ ↓

Vr.(be good) Suf.

- t^har- kai>t^harkai (pure, sacred)

↓ ↓

Vr.(be sacred) Suf.

- paŋ- kai>paŋkai (much. More)

↓ ↓

Vr.(be more) Suf.

- k^ha- kai>k^hakai (bitter)

↓ ↓

Vr.(be bitter) Suf.

COMPOUNDING OF WORDS

To form a compounded word more than one word is tagged together for expressing extended meaning or distinction of meaning in different context.

Regarding the compounding of words there are some processes; i.e. compounding of noun words, compounding of noun and verb root, compounding of verb/verb roots. Thus compounding of words has **four types**, e.g.

One free noun is tagged with a free noun (**free noun+free noun**) to form a noun word.

Example

- tɔ-maba>tomaba (cock)

↓ ↓

bird he bird

- tɔ-mazu>tɔmazu(hen)

↓ ↓

bird she cock

- ha- sɔŋ>hasɔŋ (country)

↓ ↓

soil village

To form a noun class of word sometimes one verb root is added with a noun (**Noun+Verb root**). Example:

- ha- k^hɔr>hak^hɔr(hole)

↓ ↓

soil to make hole

- ha- su>hasu(hill)

↓ ↓

soil be high

One free noun is tagged with a bound noun (**free noun+bound noun**). In this process both the words are monosyllabic in structure and tagged together directly. For example:

- bár-dam>bárdam(fire place)

↓ ↓

fire place

- há-dam>hádm(place)

↓ ↓

soil place

- nək- dam>nəkdam (plot of land on which house is constructed)

↓ ↓

house place

Thus some examples may also be mentionable: mai-zam>maizam(granary), mai-dəŋ>maidəŋ(ear of corn) etc. Here the first morphological unit is a noun class of word having monosyllable i.e. free morpheme. The second morphological unit is a class of bound noun having monosyllable.

Compound nouns are also formed by the addition of two bound nouns (**bound noun+bound noun**). Some of these are:

Example-1: re-t^he>ret^he(banana)

Example-2: am-t^he>amt^he(guava)

Example-3: sum-t^he>sumt^he(cucumber)

In these formations, the first morphological units are used strictly to refer to the particular kinds of fruits and the rest indicates the meaning of fruit.

WORD FORMATION BY REDUPLICATION

Reduplication is also a morphological process of word formation regarding reduplicative compound words found in Rabha language in which the root or base of a word is repeated directly or with a minor change. The process is well accepted among the native speakers and used for the sake of figurative expression. The reduplicative words are found into three types, e.g. duplicative pattern, alliterative pattern and rhyming.

Simple Duplicative

Simple duplicative types of compound words are made by repeating the word, a syllable, or a morpheme. If it is repeated, it refers to a new class of words i.e. adverbial class of word. For example:

- trak trak(very)

Adv. [pəchəʻ trak trak k^hia]-mangi is very sour (very sour mango)

- hər hər(in a continuous stream)

Adv. [masu hər hər dəŋzə]-many cows entered

- gar gar(soon without delay)

Adv.[naŋi gar gar reŋa]-you go soon without delay

- bel bel(very soft and watery)

Adv. [mai bel bel muŋna]-rice is cooked very softly

- ruŋ ruŋ(continuously)

Adv.[ruŋ ruŋ k^hara]-do continuously

Thus some of the duplicative words are- gur gur(with rolling noise), guḷuḷ guḷuḷ(do fast), gir gir(plenty), br̥ŋ br̥ŋ(entered directly), tap tap(fast), truḷk truḷk(silently), tip tip k^huṇa(pick up completely), rau rau(noisily), lek lek minia(laugh continuously), sari sari(in orderly manner) etc.

Alliterative Type of Reduplication

Alliteration is a figurative notion. If a word or a morpheme is repeated with a slight change of the phoneme, it creates rhythmic word. For example:

Chepa chupa (adj. crumbled), dək^hom pak^hom (N. stool and like this for sitting), chakri bakri(N. employment), chakla chukla(Adj. round faced), chakor nokor(N. servant), bōduṃ k^haduṃ(N. stomach), mairuṇ mait^huṇ (N. polished rice) and so no.

Reduplication of Echo Words

Some of the reduplicative echo words are formed by repeating of an echo word. This is made of based on imitation of sound of things, objects or voice of the animals or creatures what they have instinct behavior. For example:

- **In Case of Male Cow:** hambō hambō
- **In Case of Calf:** be be
- **In Case of Water Flowing of a Spring:** kulu kulu
- **In Case of Barking of a Dog:** hau hau
- **In Case of Forceful Blowing of Wind:** hu hu
- **In Case of Ringing of Bell:** t^hiṇ t^hiṇ

CONCLUDING REMARKS

It is very much clear to make an opinion that Rabha word typology is comparable to the structure of other cognate languages like Boro, Garo, Dimasa, Kokborok etc. The derived words belong to the nominal and the verbal category are formed by addition of prefix or suffix (-es). Thus compound words are formed with the addition of two or more morphological segments having free or bound base (-es).

ABBREVIATIONS & SYMBOLS

N. Noun

Adj. Adjective

Adv. Adverb

Vr. Verb root

Suf. Suffix

Pref. Prefix

/u/ -high-back unrounded vowel phoneme

/ŋ/-denotes nasal phoneme

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