



# A COMPARATIVE STUDY ON SYLLABLE OF BODO AND KARBI

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## **Abstract:**

This study aimed to investigate the syllable structure of Bodo and Karbi languages, the two Tibeto-Burman languages of North-East India. The purpose of research paper is to discuss the types and structure with respect to comparative study of in both the languages. The present paper gives a details analysis on different types of syllables and structure of syllable in both languages. The analysis shows that under structure of syllable the complete similarities in both languages.

**Keywords:** Monosyllabic, Disyllabic, Trisyllabic and Polysyllabic, Types of syllable, Structure of syllabic

## **1.1 Introduction Bodo and Karbi:**

This study aims to provide a comparative study on Syllable of the Bodo and Karbi, of which the speakers are under Tibeto-Burman language of the Sino-Tibetan language family. The Bodos are one of ethnic and linguistic communities and early settlers of Assam in North-East India. The word Bodo denotes both the languages as well as the community. They have their own language, culture, and religion. The Bodo language comes under Tibeto-Burman group of Sino-Tibetan language family having several dialects. Racially they belong to Mongloid stock of the Indo-Mongloids or Indo-Tibetans. Many years later they came to settle near the banks of rivers Huang Ho and Yang Tsze-Kiang in China. After having lived in Huang Ho and Yang Tsze-Kiang in China, they travelled to North East part of India through the mountain region. Then they began to settle in the Brahmaputra valley. Some also spread to North Bengal and East Bengal (now Bangladesh). The Bodos are the earliest known settlers of the Brahmaputra Valley in North East India. The Bodo speakers are found mainly in Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (B.T.R) and more

or less in almost all districts of Assam. Except Assam, the Bodos are found in Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Cachar, Hailakhandi, Karimganj, Nepal, Tripura, Bhutan border and Bangladesh etc.<sup>1</sup> Besides also found in Nagaland, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, West Bengal and Nepal. Living in West Bengal are known by the “Mech” and in Nepal as “Meche”.

To introduce both Bodo and Karbi language it may be quoted G.A. Grierson’s Linguistic Survey of India (1903). He has shown both the languages in the tabular representation of Sino-Tibetan language family. The family has been divided into two (i) Sino-Tibetan Proper and (ii) Probably early modification of Sino-Tibetan. Again, the Sino-Tibetan proper has been divided into four sub groups like (i) Tibetan (ii) Himalayan (iii) North-Assam and (iv) Assam Burmese. The Assam Burmese again has been divided into two vide (i) Bodo-Naga and (ii) Burmese-Kuki-Chin Kachin Lolo. He divided the Bodo-Naga into two like (i) Bodo and (ii) Naga. Interestingly the Karbi language has been fallen under the Burmese-Kuki-Chin Kachin Lolo sub group. He has mentioned that the Karbi language has some common linguistic features of both Bodo-Naga and Burmese-Kuki-Chin Kachin Lolo, but the language name has been different, he mentioned the Karbi Language as Mikir. We find both the language has some interesting common features. Therefore, in view of the features, it is aimed to discuss on the very interesting topic.

Karbis are one of the most numerous and homogeneous tribes in Assam. The speakers of this language are living mainly in majority tribe in the sixth Schedule area of Karbi Ang long district, which was formerly a part of one district known as North Cachar and Mikir Hills district<sup>2</sup> as well as Kamrup, Sonitpur, North Kachar Hills, Nagaon, Golaghat of Assam. Moreover, they are found in Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland.<sup>3</sup>

This paper based on the standard dialect of the Bodo spoken in B.T.R. area in Assam and the Karbi language, based on the standard Rongkhang variety as spoken in Diphu area of Assam.

**1.2 Aims and objective:** Some of the objectives highlighted in this discussion are:

- a) To find out the use of the structure of syllable in both languages.
- b) To find out the types of syllables in both languages.
- c) To find out the use of vowel and consonant cluster in both languages.

**1.3 Methodology:** The study aimed to carry out on the topic mentioned above topic has been conducted based on comparative method of study.

**1.4 Data Collection:** Any research level cannot be completed without data. Data is very important part of any research work. Hence, for this research work, required data have been collected into two ways. They are: (i) Primary source (ii) Secondary source. The Primary source is mainly based on the native speakers

<sup>1</sup> Baro, Madhu Ram: A History of Bodo Literature, 1988: Page- Introduction

<sup>2</sup> District Gazetteers: Government notification No. TDA/R-31/503209, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov./1950.

<sup>3</sup> Hanse, Khoyasing: Karbi Lamtasam, 2020, p.: 1

of the Bodo and Karbi spoken region in Bodoland Territorial Region area and Karbi-Ang-Long districts of Assam. The said data have been collected in the form of interaction, interviews, conversation, questionnaires and direct observation.

The secondary data have been collected from the available written materials in the form of books, journals, textbooks, magazines, newspapers, articles, dictionaries and different language-based writings in books etc. Along with internet, websites, Wikipedia and some social media like Facebook, YouTube have been also used.

### 1.5 Importance of the Study:

On the topic a comparative study of Syllable of the Bodo and Karbi so far, no notable research has been done on the study on in the both language from a comparative point of view. Hence, the importance lies in the fact that this will be the work. Throughout this study, the Comparative of the both languages will be understood. Therefore, the main objective is to bring to light that there is a close relationship between the syllable system of both the languages as well as the difference. In this study undertaken on both languages will be taken into consideration.

**1.6 Discussion:** The unit or sections into which words are divided while pronouncing them, are called syllables. The Syllable is a unit of pronunciation consisting of a vowel alone or of a vowel with one or more consonants. **Devid Crystal** said his book **A First Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics** (1978) that “A UNIT of pronunciation typically larger than a single sound and smaller than a WORD.”<sup>4</sup> Vowels are a most important role in distributing syllable into words. The points of syllable separation are sometimes made evident in transcriptions by the positions of stress-marks.... Hypens are convenient for this purpose.

Depending on the number of syllables, the words are divided into three types in the Bodo language and there are four types in Karbi language. Those are-

1.6.1 Monosyllabic

1.6.2 Disyllabic

1.6.3 Trisyllabic

1.6.4 Polysyllabic

<sup>4</sup> Crystal, Devid: A first Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics, 1978,

### 1.6.1 Monosyllabic:

The root words, whether nouns, adjectives, pronouns or verbs are generally monosyllabic. For examples-

**Bodo:** dau (bird), or (fire), bar (wind), dui (water), ha (land), mau (do), gan (wear) etc.

**Karbi:** ε (plant), ai (to be sad), er (be red), ok (fish), mo (after), t<sup>hi</sup> (die) etc.

### 1.6.2 Disyllabic:

A word with two sounds or syllables is called disyllabic. It is two root words combination. Generally, words are monosyllabic which can be separated from the main stem. For examples-

#### Bodo:

- 
- (i) o :                   o-ma > oma (pig)  
o-k<sup>h</sup>a > ok<sup>h</sup>a (rain)
- (ii) a :                   a-da > ada (elder brother)  
a-p<sup>h</sup>ad > ap<sup>h</sup>ad (union)
- (iii) dui :           dui-ma > duima (river)
- (iv) nuŋ :           nuŋ -sur > nuŋsur (you are)
- (v) dau :           dau-k<sup>h</sup>a > dauk<sup>h</sup>a (crow) etc.

#### Karbi:

- (i) ar :           ar-leŋ > arleŋ (man)  
ar-nam > arnam (god)  
ar-ləŋ > arləŋ (stone)
- (ii) iŋ :           iŋ-nek > iŋnek (laugh)  
iŋ-t<sup>h</sup>i > iŋt<sup>h</sup>i (comb)  
iŋ-ləŋ > iŋləŋ (hill)
- (iii) te :           te-məŋ > teməŋ (crocodile)  
te-pləŋ > tepləŋ (mound)
- (iv) tə :           tə-dap > tədap (this morning)  
tə-vaŋ > təvaŋ (road)
- (v) ke :           ke-me > keme (good)  
ke-re > kere (clever)
- (vi) ki :           ki-ri > kiri (searching)
- (vii)ka :           ka-prek > kaprek (different) etc.

### 1.6.3 Trisyllabic:

A word may have three sounds or three syllables with different length. For examples-

#### Bodo:

- (i) ɔ-k<sup>h</sup>a-p<sup>h</sup>ur > ɔk<sup>h</sup>ap<sup>h</sup>ur (moon)
- (ii) sɔ-mai-na > sɔmaina (beautiful)
- (iii) dan-k<sup>h</sup>um-si > dank<sup>h</sup>unsi (moonless night)
- (iv) ha-t<sup>h</sup>ɔ-p<sup>h</sup>la > hat<sup>h</sup>ɔp<sup>h</sup>la (ash)
- (v) bi-si-gi > bisigi (best friend)
- (vi) a-si-gur > asigur (finger nail) etc.

#### Karbi:

- (i) niŋ-kreŋ-pi > niŋkreŋpi (mid-winter)
- (ii) pa-tu-mi > patumi (yesterday)
- (iii) pe-nap-dik > penapdik (day after tomorrow) etc.

### 1.6.4 Polysyllabic:

It is a multi-root words combination. In compound roots, formed by combining monosyllabic elements, the force of each individual syllable is still felt. For examples-

#### Bodo:

- (i) san-p<sup>h</sup>rum-buu-ni > sanp<sup>h</sup>rumbuuni (always)
- (ii) bai-di-si-na > baidisina (varity)
- (iii) a-bad-t<sup>h</sup>i-li > abadt<sup>h</sup>ili (crop field)
- (iv) du-k<sup>h</sup>u-t<sup>h</sup>i-a > duk<sup>h</sup>ut<sup>h</sup>ia (grief)
- (v) a-p<sup>h</sup>a-dau-dui > ap<sup>h</sup>adaudui (heel)
- (vi) ɔ-bɔŋ-lau-ri > ɔbɔŋlauri (god)

#### Karbi:

- (i) ka-pa-chi-ni > kapachini (information)
- (ii) ka-chɔ-niŋ-ri > kachɔniŋri (request)
- (iii) ar-nam-me-t<sup>h</sup>ɛŋ-tɔm > arnammet<sup>h</sup>ɛŋtɔm (a meteor)
- (iv) chɔ-iŋ-p<sup>h</sup>añ-ɔk-at-ɔver > chuŋphaŋɔkatɔver (galaxy) etc.

## 1.7 The structure of syllabic:

A vowel is the nucleus and consonant a marginal element in the syllable, that is a consonant either at the beginning or at the end of a syllable. A consonant at the end of a syllable is called an arresting consonant, and at the beginning of a syllable is called releasing consonant. The marginal element is not obligatory. These may occur either before the nucleus or after the nucleus, or some before and after the nucleus. From this point of view, the words can be divided into two types- (i) Open syllabic and (ii) Close syllabic depending on the end of a vowel and consonant. The following are some examples of the structure of syllabic in the both languages. e.g.

(i) **Open syllabic:** A syllable ending with a vowel is called open syllable.

Following are a few examples of open syllable. Examples-

Bodo:

Structure of the syllable	The Exemplification of the Structure	Vowel	Consonant	Onset	The Nucleus	Coda
V	o e u i	o e u i	-----	----	----	----
VV	ai (mother) ou (yes)	ai ou	-----	----	----	----
CV	na (fish) za (eat) zu (kick) bu (beat)	a a u u	n z z b	----	----	----
CVV	p <sup>h</sup> ui (come)	ui	p <sup>h</sup>	----	----	----
CCV	sro (clear) sri (silent)	o i	s, r s, r	----	----	----
VCV	asi (finger) ok <sup>h</sup> a (rain)	a, i o, a	s k <sup>h</sup>	----	----	----
CVCV	p <sup>h</sup> isa (child) gumu (yellow)	i, a u, u	p <sup>h</sup> , s g, m	----	----	----
CVCVV	bilai (leaf)	i,a,i	b,l	----	----	----
CVVCV	dauk <sup>h</sup> a (crow)	a, u, a	d,k <sup>h</sup>	----	----	----
CVCCV	gazri (bed)	a, i	g,z,r	----	----	----
CVCVCV	bisigi (best friend)	i,i,i	b,s,g	----	----	----
CVCVCCV	hat <sup>h</sup> op <sup>h</sup> la (ash)	a, o,a	h,p <sup>h</sup> ,l	----	----	----
CVCVVCV	somaina (beautiful)	o,a,i,a	s,m,n	----	----	----
CVCCVCV	gandoula (dragon)	a, ou,a	g,n,d,l	----	----	----
VCVCCVCV	abadt <sup>h</sup> ili (paddy field)	a,a,i,i	b,d,l,t <sup>h</sup>	----	----	----

CVCVCVCV	lazigusu (shy)	a,i,u,u	l,z,g,s	----	----	----
VCVCVVCVV	ap <sup>h</sup> adaudui (heel)	a,a,a,u u,i	p <sup>h</sup> ,d,d,	----	----	----

Karbi:

Structure of the syllable	The Exemplification of the Structure	Vowel	Consonant	Onset	The Nucleus	Coda
V	ε (plant) ai (to be sad)	ε ai	-----	----	----	----
VV	aiɔ (very sad)	aiɔ	-----	----	----	----
CV	pi (to give) pɔ (fire) bi (goat)	i ɔ i	p p b	----	----	----
CVV	kai (to suspect) mui (life) chai (cultivation)	a i u i ā i	a m ch			
CCV	p <sup>h</sup> li (four) pri (cane)	l i	p <sup>h</sup> pr			
CVCV	patu (to hide) cini (to know)	a, u i, i	p, t c, n	----	----	----
CVCCV	narne (cup of bamboo)	a, e	n,r, n	----	----	----
CVCCVV	pap <sup>h</sup> rai (to wipeout) zannei (jute)	a, a,i a,e,i	p, p <sup>h</sup> , r z, n, n	----	----	----

(ii) **Close syllabic:** A syllable ending with a consonant is called closed syllable.

a few examples are given below. Examples-

Bodo:

Structure of the syllable	The Exemplification of the Structure	Vowel	Consonant	Onset	The Nucleus	Coda
VC	ɔn (to love) aŋ (i) ɔr (bite)	ɔ a ɔ	n ŋ r	----	----	----
CVC	bar (jump) sur (who) t <sup>h</sup> aŋ (go)	----	----	b s t <sup>h</sup>	a u a	A r ŋ
CVCVC	duruŋ (rope) bibar (flower) begɔr (seed)	----	----	d b b	u, u i, a e	r, ŋ b, r g, r
CVCCVC	najgir (to search) gaham (good)	----	----	n g	a, i a, a	j, g, r h, m

Karbi:

Structure of the syllable	The Exemplification of the Structure	Vowel	Consonant	Onset	The Nucleus	Coda
VC	ɔk (fish)	ɔ	k	----	----	-----
Vcvc	atan (lowered)	a	----	t	a	n
CVC	chap (a few) tak (corner)	----	----	k t	a a	k k
CCVC	klan (focus) klem (to do)	----	----	k, l k, l	a a	n m
CVCVC	devak (rubber tree) baduk(to give trouble)	----	----	d b	e, a a, u	v, k d, k
vccvc	arkɔk (space loss)	a	----	r	ɔ	k, k
cvccvc	dandan (ladder)	a		d, n	a	d, n

### 1.8 Similarities and dissimilarities:

The word of syllable of both languages has seen some similarities and dissimilarities shown, such as-

- I. In Bodo and Karbi languages syllable types are same viz- open and closed.
- II. The structure of the use of vowel and consonant in both languages are almost similarities.
- III. In both languages, the structure of syllable of the words combined in monosyllabic, disyllabic, trisyllabic and polysyllabic is the same.

**1.9 Findings:** The above discussion shows that Syllable are the unit or sections into which words are divided while pronouncing them. These are words formed by combination from the word. It is a vowel is the nucleus and consonant a marginal element in the syllable. The above discussion shows that the use of open syllable ending with a vowel and close syllable ending with a consonant in both languages. Therefore, it can be said that the structure of syllable in both languages is almost equal. ##

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