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CLASSIFIERS IN BORO

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Short Profile

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ABSTRACT:

In this paper an attempt will be made to discuss on classifiers from different perspectives. Classifiers are always used as prefix and attached to numerals in Boro language. Classifiers are found either in bound or free form in this language. Bound form classifiers are mostly monosyllabic. On the other hand, free form classifiers are either monosyllabic or disyllabic and are the classifiers having independent meanings which are either noun or verb. A noun when used as classifier can directly take a numeral but a verb working as classifier can never take a numeral directly.

KEYWORDS

classifier, deverbal noun, echo classifier, general classifier, monosyllabic.

INTRODUCTION:

Classifiers specify both the nature and the size of the unit being counted (Burling 2004:247). In Boro language, classifiers always accompany the numerals taking the position of a prefix and the combination of both can either precede or follow the noun keeping the meaning intact in both varieties. This language is a highly classifier based language like other Tibeto-Burman languages concentrated in North-Eastern part of India. However, it is very difficult to establish the correct number of numerals available in this language because in most of the time nouns and verbs also function as classifiers. The other important point to be mention here is that a single noun can take different classifiers to represent different meanings in this language.

CLASSIFIER

Classifier of Boro language can be divided as general classifier and echo classifier based on their uses. In general classifier, classifier and noun are different to each other. On the other hand, in echo classifier, classifier repeats the second syllable of a noun. As classifier echoes only a syllable of a disyllabic noun and not a full noun, it may also be termed as partial echo classifier instead of echo classifier.

GENERAL CLASSIFIER

The number of general classifier is more in comparison to echo classifier. These classifiers are mostly monosyllabic and represent animate humans and non-humans as well as the shapes and forms of different things or objects.

Table 1 General classifiers used in Boro language

CLASSIFIERS	CATEGORIES
sa-	humans, god
ma-	animate non-humans (birds, animals, insects, fish) , ghosts and spirits
ga -	flat and thin objects (leaf, cloth, book)
g? -	things and objects (house, household utensils, agricultural implements and others which can be handled and counted properly)
pha?-	trees, plants, shrubs
ph? -	speech, talk
d? ?-	small long things (road, thread , hair, rope) , song
th? ?-	legs
phar-	hands, ears
thai-	fruits, eyes
th?-	stick, bamboo, posts

A few of the above suffixes are given in the example below:

i.mansi sa-se   a man
man   CLASS-one
         or
sa-se   mansi   a man
CLASS-one   man
ii.dau   ma-n? i   two birds
bird   CLASS-two
iii.b? igri pha -se   one jujube tree
jujube CLASS-one
iv.khundu? d? ?-se   a thread
thread   CLASS-one
v.athi?   th? ?-se   a leg
leg   CLASS-one
vi.meg?n thai-se   one eye
eye   CLASS-one

Table 2 Echo classifiers used in Boro language

CLASSIFIERS	CATEGORIES
d? i-	eggs
g?r-	seeds
d?r-	meet
pha -	tree
bar-	flowers

In Boro language, the number of general classifier is more in comparison to echo classifier that has already been mentioned above. It is also mentioned above that echo classifiers are not the full echoing of the noun but only the echoing of second syllable of a noun and such nouns are always disyllabic and are either the combination of one noun and one verb or independent nouns or the nouns derived from verbs i.e. deverbal nouns . Examples of such echo classifiers are given below.

vii.dau-d? i   d? i-se   an egg
bird-lay egg CLASS-one
viii.bi-d? i   d? i-n? i   two eggs
PRE-lay egg CLASS-two
ix.be-g?r g?r-se   one seed
seed   CLASS-one
x.bi-pha   pha?-se   a tree
tree   CLASS-one
xi.bi-bar   bar-ba five flowers

PRE-bloom   CLASS-five

In the examples of echo classifier above it is always the echoing of second syllable of the noun whether it is basic or derived but echoing of first syllable is never found or possible in this language. The other important point to be mention here is that the classifier pha?- has been included in the category of general classifier as well as echo classifier based on its use with nouns respectively in example nos. iii and x, where in number iii no echoing is taking place but in number x the second syllable of the noun has been echoed. It is the reason that it has been included in both the categories.

The above mentions are the uses of numeral classifiers accompanied by nouns in the language. In the introduction part above taking of different classifiers to represent different meanings by a single noun has been mentioned. This is going to be show with proper example bellow. But this condition is not applicable to each and every noun of this language, it is restricted to a limited number of noun and the noun taking here as specimen is thaiz? u (mango) representing jointly the mango fruit and the tree in general. This very word will represent different meaning of mango based on the classifiers used along with it. These classifiers are pha?-, thai-, s? i- and these can be show as bellow:

xii.   thaiz? u pha?-se   a mango tree
mango CLASS-one
xiii.   thaiz? u thai-se   a mango fruit
mango CLASS-one
xiv.   thaiz? u s? i-se   a slice of mango
mango CLASS-one

In the above three examples used to represent mango when classifier pha?- is used it will definitely mean the mango tree and not others. The classifier thai- always represents fruit and s? i- always the small slice of fruit. Here, as mango has been included in the example it is representing only mango and not others.

NOUNS USED AS CLASSIFIER

Generally, the classifiers used in Boro language are the bound morphemes but sometimes noun is also used as classifier prefixing with the numerals, in such case it cannot show any fix quantity. Such type of nouns are available in Boro language and like other classifiers mentioned above can either precede or follow the noun.

xv.   dalai-se   bilai   a branch full of leaves
branch-one leave
       or
xvi.   bilai   dalai-se   a branch full of leaves
leave   branch-one
xvii.   n?-se   mansi   a house full of peoples
house-one   people
xviii.   bakhri-se   mai   a granary full of paddy
granary-one   paddy

In the examples mentioned above numeral one has been added with all three nouns dalai (branch), n? (home/house) and bakhri (granary). In adding with numeral se (one) all the nouns are showing the meaning of full and if one is replaced with two, three or other numerals then also it will represent the

same meaning of full, only the quantity will be increased along with the increasing of numerals. However, in adding of numerals with noun no fix quantity is reflected as the word branch mentioned above is giving no clear idea of how big or how small is the branch or how dense or how thin are the leaves.

In some figurative representation, numeral is seen using with the nouns but in that case it can't be called a classifier because it meaning is not like the classifer, e.g.

xix.   g? s? -se g? s?   mutual understanding/same mind

mind-one mind

VERBS USED AS CLASSIFIER

In the introduction itself it has been mentioned that in Boro language verb also function as classifier and like other general or echo classifier it either precede or follow the noun. However, a verb used as classifier can never take the numerals directly. In between the verb and numeral, suffix ga- is always used and the combination show the time of occurrences of function of the noun e.g.

xx.   ?   kham   za-ga-se   one time eating of rice

rice   eat-SUFF-NUM

        or

xxi.   za-ga-se   ? ?kham   one time eating of rice

eat-SUFF-NUM   rice

xxii.   tha?-ga-se   lama   one time going road

go-SUFF-NUM   road/way/path

Though English rendering has been included here it is not to be claim as appropriate rendering because the meaning of nos. xx and xxi is representing the amount of rice that can be completed in a single sitting and on the other hand the appropriate English rendering of no. xxii is the coverage of distance of the road in a single walking i.e. without any stop.

Though numeral classifiers' use is always to be with the noun as per theory, in Boro language it is also seen using with the verb to show the time of occurrences of function of the verb and its use cannot be claim as rare. Let us see the example below:

xxiii.   khar-ga-se-n?   lab?   bring in a single going

run-SUFF-NUM-DEFN bring

xxiv.   nar-ga-se-n?   garhor throw in a single pressing

press-SUFF-NUM-DEFN throw

All the verbs used as classifier above are showing a definite sense either of the noun or the verb and so may be included under the category of classifier based on their functional use.

CONCLUSION

The above discussion on Boro classifiers can be concluded as bellow:
i.   No exact number of classifiers can be given in Boro language;
ii.   General as well as echo, both types of classifiers are available in the language;
iii.   General classifiers supersede echo classifiers in number;
iv.   A noun can be used with more than one classifier to represent different meaning;
v.   Besides bound form classifiers noun can also be used as classifier in the language;
vi.   Verb also act as classifier in the language but it can never take numeral in a direct way;

vii.   Verb acting as classifier can either precede or follow the noun;

viii.   Verb acting as classifier can also be used with the verb.

ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

CLASS   classifier
DEFN   definitive
NUM   numeral
SUFF   suffix
/? /   high back unrounded vowel phoneme

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