



Functional Representation of Nominal Affixes in Rabha Language

Phukan Chandra Basumatary

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ABSTRACT:- This paper aims at focusing functional representation of nominal affixes used in Rabha language, a language of North East India belonging to the Tibeto-Burman stock. Chiefly nominal affixes of Rabha language are applicable in deriving adjective and noun class of words, and on the one hand used to form verbal noun. Some of them are used to signify sense of plurality; and terms of reference in case of kinship terms.

Keywords:- Derivation, Functional Representation, Inflectional, Kinship Suffix, Nominal Affixes, Sense of Plurality

I. INTRODUCTION

In India chiefly in the North-Eastern states the Rabha language is spoken among the small number of speakers. The total number of population is estimated at 130875, as per Census Report of Assam. It is obviously true that Rabha is a little known language among the researchers of the Tibeto-Burman studies. A scanty of research works have been done by a few scholars of TB area from the North Eastern India, particularly in the area of lexicography and typological study. Rebatimohan Saha, U.V.Jose, Upen Rabha Hakasam and I myself have tried at level best research, though a few western scholars have made scientific investigation to some extent.

In India majority of the Rabha linguistic community are found scattering in the state of Assam and northern areas of West Bengal. Besides, the Rabhas are found in the state of Meghalaya and in the bordering countries like Nepal and Bangladesh with a less numbers of speakers.

From a typological view point it is observed that Rabha language do posses agglutinating and inflectional features than isolating of Proto-Tibeto-Burman origin. It is observed that both derivational and inflectional affixes have remarkable functional attribution in formation of words. It can change the class of words; or it maintains class of words which assist to form nominal class of word chiefly noun and adjective class of words. Derivational process is an interesting typological feature in Rabha language. Most of the derived words are structured with addition of affix (-es) to the verb root or sometimes compounding of monosyllabic words. How affixes of this language have functional attribution in formation of nominal group of words is the aim of analysis. In this paper the term NOMINAL AFFIX is used to represent function and attribution of affixes that are applicable in formation of nominal category of words.

II. AREA OF DISCUSSION

Here principal aim of discussion will be on the role and functional representation of affixes that assist and involve in construction of nominal group of words. It has been taken into account for an analysis that how affixes used in this language have functional representations in the process of nominalization. Affixes used in this language have two kinds of typological features. One of them has class changing representation and the other has class maintaining functional representation. The presentation may be systematized as stated below:

- (i) Nominal affix used with verb root for construction of adjective
- (ii) Nominal affix used with noun for construction of adjective
- (iii) Suffix used in deriving words of nominalization
- (iv) Functional attribution of kinship suffix
- (v) Functional representation of plural suffix used in the sense of more than one in number

III. NOMINAL AFFIX USED WITH VERB ROOT FOR CONSTRUCTION OF ADJECTIVE

Adjectives may be derived by using nominal prefix and suffix. In this regard some prefixes are added before the verb root and in some cases suffixes are added after the verb root respectively. They have functional representation as depending upon place of distribution and typological features. Prefix and suffix can play vital role in deriving new category of words.

3.1 Two-fold function of prefix {pi-}

In this language the prefix {pi-} has two-fold functional representation which is applicable in construction of derivative adjective and word of noun class; and is used before the verb root. In this case it can change the class of verb root; and consequently derives a new category of words.

(i) Derivation of adjective:

Example-1:

Vr. dan (be new)

pi-dan> pidan (new)

In sentences,

(i) 'aŋ- i pidan nɔk' - (My new house)

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

I genitive
case-marker new house

(ii) naŋ-kataŋ pidan pidan kausa tɔa' - (You have new books etc.)

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

You possessive new new book have
case-marker

Example-2:

Vr. t^hara (be clean/be pure)

pi-t^har (sacred/ pure)

In sentence,

'aŋ-nake k^hɔn-sa pit^har nen raba' - (Bring me a clean cloth.)

↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓

I dative num. a/one clean cloth bring
case-marker suffix

Some words like pi-ri'a (be mature)>piri' (tender), pi-t^hiŋ (be alive)>pit^hiŋ (raw, fresh), pi-mu'ŋa (stay behind)>pimu'ŋ (situated in the inside) etc. are also fall in category of adjective.

(ii) Function of prefix {-pi} in derivation of Noun class of word:

It is an interesting point to note that the prefix {pi-} has functional representation in changing semantic of word in some cases. Let us take an example: In Rabha the lexical meaning of the word 'k^ha-a' is 'be bitter', but it bears a grammatical meaning while prefix {pi-} is added before the verb root 'k^ha'. A new word is generated by this process i.e. 'pi-k^ha' and consequently it denotes meaning of 'liver' and 'chest'. Noteworthy is that the monosyllabic word 'k^ha' is probably a proto-type of Tibeto-Burman origin as mentioned by P.K.Benedict in Sino-Tibetan A Conspectus (*ka, 1972:18). Having similar semantic representation this kind of word is found in some Bodo-Garo languages of North-East India. In Boro, bi-k^ha>bik^ha (liver/chest) and in Kokborok "bɔ-k^ha" etc.

Some more example regarding derivation of noun class of words are - pi-chi'(lay egg)>pichi' (egg), pi-raka (be hard)>pirak (gall-bladder) etc. In these words the initial syllable is absolutely a prefix and the second syllable is by class of word verb root. The prefix can changes the semantic level of verb root; and ultimately derives nominal class of words.

IV. FUNCTION OF SUFFIX IN STIPULATIONS OF DERIVATIVE ADJECTIVE

Some of the suffixes are applicable in deriving adjectives. Of them {-klaŋ} and {-kai} have regular use in derivative adjective. The suffix {-klaŋ} is added after the noun while {-kai} is added after the verb root. Let's see the example:

(i) {-klay}: The suffix is essentially used to after the noun to form derivative adjective. E.g: N. chika (water)-klay>Adj. chikaklay (watery). In other cases the suffix is used independently to represent the similar meaning. As example, klay klay mi (curry is no tasty; it means watery).

(ii) {-kai}: The suffix {-kai} has two-fold functional representation. One of them plays fundamental role while it is used after the verb root; and the typology is resultant of attributive adjective. The adjective may be constructed in this way:

Vr. nema (be good)-kai>Adj. nemkai (good/nice/pleasant/fair), Vr. tun (become hot)-kai>Adj. tunkai (warm/hot), Vr. sak (be red)-kai>Adj. sakkai (red), Vr. nat^ho (be melody)-kai>Adj. nat^hokkai (melodious), Vr. chuṇa (grow)-kai>Adj. chuṇkai (big), Vr. chua (be tall, be high)-kai>Adj. chukai (high, tall), Vr. k^haa (be bitter)-kai>Adj. k^hakai (bitter) etc.

On the one hand the suffix {-kai} has functional representation in terms of generating verbal noun. The following examples are of this kind.

Example:

Vr. tan (cut)-kai>tankai (act of cutting), Vr. ran (dry)-kai>rankai (act of drying), Vr. bu (draw)-kai>bukai (act of drawing), Vr. sa (eat)-kai>sakai (act of eating), Vr. mini (smile)-kai>minikai (act of smiling), Vr. ne (wait)-kai>nekai (act of waiting), Vr. dibi (break)-kai>dibikai (act of breaking), Vr. riba come)-kai>ribakai (act of coming), Vr. p^hara (sell)-kai>p^harkai (act of selling), Vr. t^hona (rollup)-kai>t^honkai (act of rolling), Vr. tuṇa (lead)-kai>tun^hkai (leading) etc. Here the suffix is involved in formation of verbal noun.

V. SUFFIX USED IN DERIVING WORDS OF NOMINALIZATION

In this language there are a couple of suffixes which are used to signify nominal class of words. Suffixes like {-gir}, {-brɔk}, {-k^hrak}, {-dam}, {-grim}, {-p^haṇ} etc. have grammatical functions and representation in deriving words of noun category. Simultaneously some of these are attached with verb roots and the noun class of words. In nature these kinds of suffixes have grammatical feature, to speak of bound base which are not applicable independently at all. But these are applicable with other independent meaningful unit or unchanged root to form a new kind of semantic word.

Added with verb root: Some of the suffixes used in Rabha language have functional attribution, in some case these are treated as word of nominalization. The followings have this kind of functions:

(i) {-gir}:

This is used to denote the sense of master/owner etc. For example, Vb. triṇ (teach)-gir>triṇgir (teacher), Vb. rɔṇ (fight)-gir>rɔṇgir (warrior/fighter), Vr. nat^ham (to listen)-gir>nat^hamgir (listener. Audience),

(ii){-brɔk}:

This is used for indicating the sense of agent, e.g: Vr. pri (buy)-brɔk>N. pribrɔk (customer), Vr. chi (look)-brɔk>N. chibrɔk (one who looks at), Vr. p^har (sell)-brɔk>N. p^harbrɔk (seller) etc.

(iii){-k^hrɔk}:

This is used in the sense of competence or expert. If it is added after the verb root it derives word of noun class, e.g: Vr. ne (wait)-k^hrɔk>N. nek^hrɔk (waiter), Vr. t^hogai (cheat)-k^hrɔk>N. t^hogaik^hrɔk (cheater), Vr. nam (beg)-k^hrɔk>N. namk^hrɔk (beggar) etc.

(iii){-dam}:

This is place indicating suffix which is used for representing noun class of word; e.g: Vr. k^hara (do)-dam>N. k^hardam (office, place of work), Vr. p^hara (sell)-dam>N. p^hardam (shop), Vr. triṇ (learn)-dam>N. triṇdam (place of learning, school, academic institution) etc.

(v) {-raṇa}: Used to qualify attribution or feature of things etc. While it is used after verb root it derives a new semantic word; e.g. Vr. nema (be good)-raṇa>Adj. nemraṇa (very good/well), Vr. nat^ho (be melodious)-raṇa>Adj. nat^horaṇa (melodious/very pleasant)

Added with noun class of words: The suffixes discussed above are also applicable with the word of noun class; and finally results a new semantic word remaining the same class. These are applicable in nominalization.

(i) {-gir}: N. chai (song)-gir>N. chaigir (song writer), kay (man)-gir>kaygir (a man of skillful)

(ii) {-grim}: N. pan (tree)-grim>N. pangrim (jungle), N. sam(grass)-grim>N. samgrim (grass field)

(iii){-p^haṇ}: N. chai (song)-p^haṇ>N. chaip^haṇ (singer), N. bai (deity)-p^haṇ>N. baip^haṇ (assistant to priest)

(iv){-dam}: N. bar (fire)-dam>N. bardam (fire place/hearth), N. mai (paddy)-dam>maidam (paddy field)

VI. FUNCTIONAL ATTRIBUTION OF KINSHIP SUFFIX {-bra}

Formation of **Rabha kinship terminology** is quite different in comparison to other cognate languages. In case of terms of references, the kinship suffix {-bra} is compounded with terms of address to signify different type of kinship terminologies. For examples: the address term 'dada' is used to represent the meaning of elder brother. In case of reference, the kinship suffix {-bra} is added with this term; e.g. dada-bra>dadabra (one's elder brother).

Thus functional attribution and application may be taken in this regard: bibi (elder sister)-bra>bibra (one's elder sister), mama (maternal uncle)-bra>mamabra (one's maternal uncle), p^hɔzɔŋ (younger brother)-bra>p^hɔzɔŋbra (one's younger brother), mɔmɔ (younger sister)-bra>mɔmɔbra (one's younger sister), gimi (brother in-law)-bra>gimibra (one's brother in-law), baba (father)-bra>bababra (one's father), zuzu (grandfather)-bra> zuzubra (one's grandfather), budi/bidi (grandmother)-bra>budibra (one's grandmother), buzi (elder sister in-law)-bra>buzibra (one's elder sister in-law).

VII. FUNCTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF PLURAL SUFFIX

Suffixes used in denoting sense of plurality is generally to be termed as nominal suffix; since they are involved with nominal class of words to denote collective or pluralizing meaning. In this language there are a few of such kind of suffixes used with animate being, inanimate things and objects, personal pronouns and adjectives in case of pluralizing function. The functional representation of suffix is to refer to sense of more than one in number that inflects the sense of numbers of things or beings. Generally there are three types of suffixes which are functionally represented by {-taŋ, -rɔŋ, bizan}. Out of them {-taŋ} is strictly used in case of words related to human being; e.g:

kai (man)-taŋ>kaitaŋ (men)
gabur (young boy)-taŋ>gaburtaŋ (young boys)
misa sabra (girl)-taŋ>misasabrataŋ (girls)
kaipiri (baby)-taŋ>kaipiritaŋ (babies) etc.

Thus {-rɔŋ} is strictly occurred in case of kinship terms; e.g:

aia (mother)-rɔŋ>aiarɔŋ (mother and her accompany)
bibi (elder sister)-rɔŋ>bibirɔŋ (elder sister and her accompany)
baba (father)-rɔŋ>babarɔŋ (father and his accompany)

zuzu (grandmother)-rɔŋ>zuzurɔŋ (grandmother and her accompany)

On the one hand for denoting sense of plurality the suffix {-bizan} is used with animate beings, and with inanimate things and objects. Let's see the functional attribution of suffixes:

masu (cow)-bizan>masubizan (cows)
tɔ' (bird)-bizan>tɔ'bizan (birds)
prɔŋ (goat)-bizan>prɔŋbizan (goats)
ki' (dog)-bizan>ki'bizan (dogs)
t^he' (fruit)-bizan>t^he'bizan (fruits)
par (flower)-bizan>parbizan (flowers)
kausa (book)-bizan>kausabizan (books)
ta'sik^hu (finger)-bizan>ta'sik^hubizan (fingers) etc.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The suffixes that serve for signifying functional representation in various context and situations are very striking in nature. Being a Tibeto-Burman language it preserves its typological features at all levels besides some sort of reconstructions are found in structural level. Affixes used with different morphological components or roots have functional representation in deriving different semantic words or new class of words. In this paper an overview on functional application of nominal affixes used in Rabha has been done with a microscopic observation. From a discussion it is found that a huge number of affixes are involved in construction of words of nominal class; of these some affixes are added with verb roots or some of them are used with noun words.

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