RESEARCH ARTICLE

PROTHESIS AND ELISION FOUND IN MECH (BODO) DIALECT OF NORTH BENGAL

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Manuscript Info	*Abstract*

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Mech (Bodo) is one of the regional Bodo dialects and it falls under the group of Western Bodo Dialect. The dialect is mainly spoken in Darjeeling, AlipurDooars, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts of North Bengal of West Bengal (India). As a dialect, it has been maintaining some linguistic variety in different levels of linguistics. This variety can be displayed by comparing with standard form of Bodo spoken in Kokrajhar district and its adjacent areas of Assam, India. There are some examples in Mech, where extra sounds are found inserted in the beginning of words without changing the structure of word and the meaning. For example, the word 'ɔkʰa' (rain) of standard Bodo is termed as 'nɔkʰa' (rain) in Mech. Here, an extra sound nasal alveolar voiced consonant /n/ has been inserted in the beginning of word in Mech. Likewise, some examples of elision are also present in this dialect. For example, the word 'barsin' (jump upon) used in standard Bodo is termed as 'basin' (jump upon) in Mech. In this example, trill alveolar voiced consonant phoneme /r/ has been found deleted from the medial position of word. The main purpose of this paper is to observe and show up the prothesis and Elision present in Mech Dialect.

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Introduction:-
The Bodos are one of the largest communities in the Brahmaputra valley of Assam and Tista valley of the North Bengal of West Bengal of India.(Debnath, 2010) The term 'Bodo' signifies the name of the community as well as language. They are the people of mongoloid origin and their language is a language of Tibeto-Burman division of Sino-Tibetan language family. Bodo is one of the constitutionally safeguarded or eight scheduled language of India included in 2003. The language has close affinities with some Tibeto-Burman languages like Garo, Rabha, Dimasa, Tiwa, Kokborok etc. spoken in the Northeast India. So, these are termed as sister languages.

Due course of time, Bodos are identified with different name in different regions. Thus, in the vast areas of northern and southern of the Brahmaputra valley of Assam, they are well known as Bodo or Boro; in AlipurDooars, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and Cooch Behar districts of North Bengal of West Bengal as Mech and in the Japha district of Nepal as Meche. In Assam, they are also familiar with the name Kachari. But the Bodos of Assam do not introduce themselves as Kachari. This term is only called by the neighbours from the historic period.

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Many scholars remarks about the derivation of the term 'Mech' or 'Meche' in different ways. Scholars like J. D. Anderson in the preface of Rev. Sidney Endle's 'The Kacharis' (1911) mentioned about the derivation of the term 'Mech' from Sanskrit word 'Mlecha' which means outcaste. On the contrary, scholars like C.C. Sanyal (1973), Kameswar Brahma (2008) commented that the term 'Mech' or 'Meche' is originated from the name of the river Mechi, which is flowing through the Nepal and India border. According to G.A. Grierson, the Bodos concentrated in the west part of the Kamrup (undivided) are called Mech by the Hindu neighbors. Thus he says-"the Bara folk who live to the west of the Kamrup district are called Mech by their Hindu neighbors. This word is probably a corruption of the Sanskrit 'Mlechha', which corresponds to the original meaning of our word 'Welsh,' i.e. foreigner, stranger" (Grierson, 1903). Modern scholars agree the derivation of the term 'Mech' or 'Mlecha' from the river Mechi.

Bodo Dialect Group:
Bodo has many dialectal areas. A lot of scholars classified Bodo dialectal area in different ways. Promod Chandra Bhattacharya (1977) classified Bodo Dialect into four dialectal areas. These are- (1) North-West Dialect area (2) South-West Dialect area (3) North-Central Assam Dialect area (4) Southern Assam Dialect area.

Scholars like Phukan Ch. Basumatary (2005), SwarnaPrabhaChainary (2005), BirhashGiriBasumatary (2006) grouped the Bodo dialect into three dialectal areas. These are- (1) Western Boro Dialect (WBD) (2) Eastern Boro Dialect and (EBD) (3) Southern Boro Dialect (SBD).

Japanese scholar Kazuyuki Kiryu (2007), particularly made a study on regional Bodo variety of North Bengal and Nepal and classified Bodo dialect into two. These are- (1) Western Dialects (Meche) and (2) Eastern Dialects (Bodo). Under Western Dialects (Meche), he displayed Jalpaiguri Dialect and Japha Dialect and under Eastern Dialects (Bodo), displayed three regional dialects- Western Assam Dialect (Kokrajhar), Central Assam Dialect and Eastern Assam Dialect.

The linguistic variety spoken by the Bodos (Mech) of North Bengal of West Bengal comprise as one of the regional dialects of the western Bodo dialectal area. It is also mentionable that, the linguistic variety of North Bengal and Japha district of Nepal is almost same.

Prothesis in Mech Dialect:
Prothesis is "a term used in phonetics and phonology to refer to a type of intrusion, where an extra sound has been inserted initially in a word." (Crystal, 2008) During addition of an extra sound or a syllable in the starting of a word the internal structure and the meaning of word do not change. A number of examples of such kind of words or prothesis have been found in Mech dialect which can be showed by comparing with Bodo standard.

Some words beginning with central back rounded vowel /ɔ/ in standard Bodo starts with nasal alveolar voiced consonant /n/ in Mech dialect. In the instances given in the following it is seen that all words are starting with central back rounded vowel phoneme /ɔ/ in standard Bodo and prothesis nasal alveolar voiced consonant phoneme /n/ is occurring before beginning of all the words in Mech.

Bodo Standard	Mech Dialect	Gloss
ɔkʰa	nɔkʰa	rain
ɔkʰapʰur	nɔkʰapʰɔr	moon
ɔkʰraŋ	nɔkʰraŋ	sky
ɔ-kʰa-nai-si	nɔ-kʰa-nai-si	early morning

There are also some examples available where the words starting with low mid unrounded vowel /a/ in standard Bodo, begins with nasal alveolar voiced consonant /n/ in Mech dialect. Such kind of examples are mostly seen in case of body parts connected to hand. A few examples are given below.

Bodo Standard	Mech Dialect	Gloss
akʰai	nakʰai	hand
asi	nasi	finger
agda	nagda	right hand
agsi	nagsi	left hand
akʰantʰi	nakʰantʰi	arm

Again, words beginning with central back rounded vowel phoneme /ɔ/ in standard Bodo starts with trill alveolar voiced consonant phoneme /r/ in Mech dialect. Such kind of example is very limited. Example-

Bodo Standard	Mech Dialect	Gloss
ɔza	rɔza	priest

Elision in Mech Dialect:
According to David Crystal elision-"is a term used in phonetics and phonology to refer to the omission of sounds in connected speech. Both consonants and vowels may be effected, and sometimes whole syllable may be elided (Crystal, 2008)

A handful examples of elision are also available in Mech Dialect spoken in North Bengal. Thus, trill alveolar voiced consonant phoneme /r/ is found deleted from the medial place of word. It is observable that in standard Bodo, consonant phoneme /r/ is obtained before the fricative alveolar voiceless consonant phoneme /s/. Some examples are given below.

Bodo Standard	Mech Dialect	Gloss
barsin	basin	jump upon
gurlɯi	gɯlɯi	small
harsiŋ	hasiŋ	alon

There are also a few examples where the last vowel phoneme of a word in standard Bodo is found deleted in Mech. In the following two examples, high back unrounded vowel phoneme /ɯ/ is seen deleted from the last position of word in Mech.

Bodo Standard	Mech Dialect	Gloss
arɯ	ar	and
zesenɯ	zedsen	more

Omission of back mid rounded vowel phoneme /ɔ/ in Mech is also rarely obtained. For example-

Bodo Standard	Mech Dialect	Gloss
k^hɔrɔ	k^hɔr	head

Apart from the deletion of phonemes, deletion of a syllable in the last location of a word is also found infrequently in Mech dialect. In the following example, diphthong /ɯi/ has been seen deleted.

Bodo Standard	Mech Dialect	Gloss
dak^{h}alɯi	dak^{h}al	the day beforeyesterday

Conclusion:-
Mech as a regional dialect of Western Bodo Dialect has been maintaining some linguistic variety. This variety can be showed by comparing with standard form of Bodo spoken in Kokrajhar district and its adjacent areas of Assam, India. From the above discussion, it is clear that Mech has a lots of examples of words of prothesis and elision. In prothesis, especially addition of extra sound nasal alveolar voiced consonant /n/ has been seen in case of body parts related to hand. Apart from this, addition of alveolar voiced consonant phoneme /r/ is also rarely found in Mech. In case of elision, deletion of phoneme sound from the medial and last position of word and deletion of a syllable from the last position of word has been found rarely in Mech. Likewise, deletion of alveolar voiced consonant phoneme /r/ from medial position of word, high back unrounded vowel phoneme /ɯ/ from the last position of the word, back mid rounded vowel phoneme /ɔ/ from the last position of word and deletion of syllable /ɯi/ from the last position of a word has been found in Mech dialect.

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