

Morphology with special reference to Assamese Language

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ABSTRACT: Among the various elements of a language, such as, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax and Semantics, the most important among them is Morphology from the point of view of comparative as well as historical studies. Morphology is such a part of linguistic which analyses construction of words or discusses formation of words and arrangement in forming words or part of words. Among the various modern Indo-Aryan languages, Assamese language has developed as a significant one in the eastern part of India. Though this Assamese language has evolved over the years through its various branches in a peculiar geographical environment, but its origin starts from Indo-European language family. Therefore, in the discussion of linguistic studies, significant similarities are noticed among various languages pertaining to this language family. In this paper we are analyzing the Morphology under linguistic studies in respect of Assamese language.

KEYWORDS:- Morphology, Morpheme, Classification of Morpheme, Root Morpheme, Allomorph, Assamese Language.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Morphology is an important subject of linguistic studies. The term ‘Morphology’ is derived from Greek language and is equivalent to German word *Formenlehre* (the study of forms). [Encyclopedia Britannica 334]. Morpheme is the basis of Morphology. In Morphology, there is a study of Morphemes used in language as well as construction of words or part of words. However, long before the use of the term ‘Morphology’ in linguistic studies, the same term was used in Zoology to describe formation of biological cells. But subsequently the term ‘Morphology’ has been used in linguistic studies to denote studies of formation of words. As per Oxford Advance Learner’s Dictionary, ‘Morphology’ is the ‘Study of the morpheme of a language and how they are combined to make words.’ (Cowie 806).

As per Leonard Bloomfield, “By the morphology of language, we mean the constructions in which bound forms appear among the constituents. By definition resultant the forms are either bound forms or words never phrases. According to E.A. Nida, ‘Morphology is the study of morphemes and their arrangement in forming words or part of words.’ (6).

II. METHODOLOGY

The research methodology used for the present study is descriptive and analytical. The sources of this research paper is based on books, journals, internet etc. While preparing this research paper, MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Paper (Seventh Edition, 2009) prepared by the Modern Language Association of America is followed.

III. DISCUSSION

Whereas phoneme is the basis of Phonology, Morphemes are basis of Morphology. In the study of Morphology, the construction of Morphemes or parts of words as well as all interrelations of the various constituents each carrying distinct meaning are enumerated. However, while discussing on the Morphemes in Morphology, two other terms namely ‘Morph’ and ‘Allomorph’ are also discussed.

3.1 Definition and characteristic of Morpheme:- In linguistic the smallest part of a meaningful letter or constituents of letters are termed as Morpheme. Morpheme is a new entrant in the discussion of linguistic studies. About 40-50 years ago, the very basis of Morphology happened to be the Word and therefore the grammar authored during those days was based on ‘Word based Grammar’. But when Morphemes in a language were analyzed, certain elements were found which could not be included under the term ‘word’. For example, in Assamese language if we analyze the word ‘Aomoron’ and ‘Bedakhal’, then two components are found each in them i.e., ‘Aao’ + ‘Moron’ and ‘Be’ + ‘Dakhal’. Out of these, ‘Moron’ and ‘Dakhal’ are two meaningful words. But the expression ‘Aao’ and ‘Be’ associated with these words cannot be termed as words. Therefore, with the passage of time and to understand all the ingredients of words, the linguists, in the middle of 20th century, coined an altogether different term to denote the same and this is called Morpheme.

According to E.A. Nida, Morphemes are the minimal meaningful units, which may constitute words or parts of words. (6). As per H.A. Gleason, Morphemes can be usually described as the smallest meaningful units in the structure of the language. (51).

While discussing about the Morphemes in the study of Morphology, David Crystal has stated about its three characteristics. (194).

(i) Morphemes are physical unit because it has its own phonetically structure.

(ii) Morphemes are always meaningful.

(iii) Morphemes have its syntactic role in construction of larger grammatical units.

How these characteristics are expressed through Morphemes can be seen as follows. Let us take a sentence from Assamese Language –

“Moi Kaam Karo.”

In this sentence ‘Moi’ and ‘Kaam’ are two distinct meaningful words and both are having self sufficient elements. These two words cannot be subdivided any further. But in ‘Karo’ two nos. of morphemes are associated i.e., ‘Kar’ + ‘O’. If ‘O’ is disassociated from ‘Kar’ then a distinct meaningful ‘Morpheme’ is found, i.e., ‘Kar’ which is called root. But in ‘O’ associated with this ‘Kar’ is related with first person of pronoun ‘Aami’ (We). Therefore, Morphemes are the smallest meaningful unit which also performs its role in construction of syntactic structure.

3.2 Classification of Morphemes:- The modern linguists have classified the Morphemes used in linguistic into various parts. As per its composition, Ronald W. Langacker has divided ‘Morphemes’ into two parts (86). i.e.,

(i) Lexical Morphemes and

(ii) Grammatical Morphemes.

On the other hand, from the point of view of its usage, E.A. Nida has divided ‘Morphemes’ into ten parts. (81)

(i) bound vs free morpheme

(ii) root vs non roots

(iii) roots vs stems

(iv) nuclei vs non nuclei

(v) nuclei vs peripheral

(vi) same order vs different orders

(vii) mutually exclusive

(viii) mutually obligatory

(ix) obligatory vs non-obligatory

(x) closing vs non-closing.

Notably, the Morphemes used in language have their own distinct characteristics. In term of characteristics and usage of descriptive linguistics Morphemes are basically divided into two parts. In the discussion of classification of Morphemes, these two divisions can be termed as simplest and major division. These are ‘Free Morpheme’ and ‘Bound Morpheme’.

3.2.1 Free Morpheme:- Free Morphemes are those morphemes which are capable of carrying its self sufficient meaning. In Assamese language, Phul (Flower), Gos (Tree) etc. are few examples of free Morphemes. According to Laurie Bauer, Morpheme is – ‘A Morph which can occur in isolation is termed as Free Morph.’ (17).

3.2.2 Bound Morpheme:- Bound Morphemes are those morphemes which are incapable of carrying its own self sufficient meaning. Such Morphemes get its own meaning when they associate with Free Morpheme. For example, in the word ‘Weakness’, the ‘Weak’ is Free Morpheme as because it has its own self sufficient meaning. But the other Morpheme ‘Ness’ is Bound Morpheme as it is incapable of carrying its own self sufficient meaning.

Generally Bound Morphemes are termed as Affix. As per position and quality of Affix or Bound Morpheme, it can be divided into two parts.

3.2.2.1 Classification of Bound Morpheme according to their position:- According to their position, bound morphemes can be divided into three parts.

(a) Prefix

(b) Suffix and

© Infix.

(a) Prefix : Those bound morphemes which creates words by sitting in front of free morphemes are termed as prefix. In English language, dis (dishonest), un (Unlike), in (indirectly) etc. are some examples of prefix. In

Assamese language also so many prefix are seemed to be used. For example Ana (Anaasomiya), Aao (Aaomoron), Be (Bedakhal) etc.

- (b) **Suffix** : Those bound morphemes which creates words by sitting behind the free morphemes are termed as suffix. In English language, -er(Reader), -ly(Lovely), -let(Booklet) etc. are some examples of suffix. Normally in almost every language, the use of suffix is seemed to be more than prefix. In Assamese language also, the use of suffix is higher than the use of prefix. For example, Manuh+tu = Manuhtu, Dhan+Ani = Dhanoni.
- (c) **Infix** : Those bound morphemes which inserts into the free morphemes by demolishing the same and thereby change the earlier meaning are termed as infix. Regarding infix, Gleason opined – “An infix is a morpheme which inserted into the stem with which it is associated.” (67). The use of infix is not found in Assamese language.

3.2.2.2 Classification of Bound Morpheme according to their quality:- According to their qualities in construction of language Bound morphemes can be divided into two parts.

- (a) Derivative Affix
(b) Inflective Affix

(a) **Derivative Affix** : Those affix which creates new words by sitting behind root morpheme are called as derivative affix. Derivative affix can be sub-divided into two parts.

- (i) Secondary Affix
(ii) Primary Affix

Secondary affix are those affix which are added with substantive. For example, Phul+ani = Phuloni, Nao+oriya = Naoriya etc.

Primary affix are those affix which are added with verbal. For example, Kar+oa=Karoa, Randh+ani=Randhani etc.

(b) **Inflective Affix**: Those affix which by sitting behind the root morpheme change the meaning and structure of a word and also establish relationship between the words in a sentence is called as inflective affix. For example, Manuh+e = Manuhe, Manuh+ak = Manuhak, Manuh+aloi = Manuhaloi etc.

3.3 Root Morpheme:- Almost in all the languages of the world, there are such morpheme which by centering the same added other different types of morphemes and thereby create new structure of words, such centering morphemes are termed as Root Morpheme. The Root Morphemes of English words, viz; Friendly, Unuseful, Bookish are Friend, Use and Book. These words have its independent capacity to express their own meaning.

In Assamese language, on the basis of morphological characteristics, root morphemes can be divided into four parts.

- (i) Substantive Root
(ii) Verbal Root
(iii) Absolute or Indeclinable Root
(iv) Nominal Verbal Root.

Substantive roots are those roots from where only noun forms are created. For example, Gos (Tree), Ghar (House), Dhan (Paddy)

Verbal roots are those roots from where only verb forms are created. For example, Ja (Go), Dhar (Take), Parh (Read) etc.

Absolute or indeclinable roots are those roots from where only absolute forms are created. For example, Aaru (And), Jodi (If), Ba (Or) etc.

In Assamese language, there are such types of roots from which both noun and verb can be created, such type of roots are called as Nominal Verbal Roots. For example,

Used as a noun :- Chin eta di thoi aaha.

Used as a verb :- Teuk moi chinisu.

3.4 Allomorph:- Allomorph is one most important part in the study of morphology. In Morphology, Allomorph is used in a similar meaning as Allophone is used in Phonology. According to Lauriebauer, “An allomorph is a phonetically, lexically or grammatically conditioned member of a set of morphemes representing a particular morpheme.” (88). According to H.A. Gleason, “An Allomorph is a variant of a Morpheme which occurs in certain definable environment. (61). The allomorph is also seemed to be used in Assamese language too.

IV. CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, it can be stated that for a threadbare analysis of a language, Morphology is a great role to play. In this research paper various facets of Morphology of Assamese language such as

Morpheme, Classification of Morpheme, Root Morpheme, Allomorph are discussed which will definitely contribute in making a discussion on other different languages.

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