

# NEGATION IN ASSAMESE AND KARBI: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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Assamese is spoken in Assam and its neighbouring states such as Meghalaya, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh. Karbi language is the language of Karbi-Anglong district of Assam. It belongs to the Tibeto-Burman group of the Sino-Tibetan family of language. It is mainly spoken in Karbi-Anglong such as Mikir Hills and some other areas of plains. Historically, Assamese and Karbi originated from different sources, but because of their co-existence, both have influenced each other.

Negation is an important aspect of verb-systems. All languages have a system of negation and a system of affirmation. The peculiarity of Assamese negative formation is preserved throughout the history of the language. Assamese negative verb-formation is of two types: imperative and non-imperative, which are similar. A non-imperative verb is formed with na-particle, which generally attaches to the verb as a prefix such as:

na-kare = nakare 'does not do'

na-dhare = nadhare 'does not hold'

An imperative negative verb is found with na-particle which is added to the verb-formation of future tense as a prefix, and the vowel of a negative particle is assimilated in the line of the initial vowel of the verb-root such as:

na-ahiba = nahiba 'do not come'

na-jaba = najaba 'do not go'

na-kariba = nakariba 'do not do'

Sometimes na-particle is used before the verb of imperative when the subject belongs to the third person as follows:

na-marak = namarak 'do not let (him) to die'

na-haok = nahoak 'do not let (it) be done'

The negative particle not only precedes the verb-root, but a predicable morphophonemic change also occurs, that is, the assimilation of the vowel in the negative particle 'na'. The process of prefixing of the vowel in the negative particle with the vowel of the initial syllable of the verb root is observed throughout the history of Assamese language. Some examples of Assamese negative verbs are shown below:

na-kare = nakare '(he) does not do'

na-khao = nakhao '(I) do not eat'

na-diba = nidiba '(you) do not give'

na-khele = nakhele '(he) does not play'

'nai' 'naikiya', these two words - also indicate negative in Assamese as follows:

si gharat nai 'he is not at home'

bajarat mach naikiya 'there is no fish in the market'

Assamese negative shows a peculiar formation in case of assimilation, for example, na + pare = noware '(he) does not do'. Assamese negative verb formation as negative particle + verb-root + tense marker + personal marker.

The verb-system of Karbi is simple and very interesting. It is an essential feature of this language. Karbi negative verb is formed with two words - 'awe' and 'kali'. 'awe' is the suppletive form of the verb 'do', 'be', 'stay', 'have' and they are used to express negatives in existential and possessive sentences as follows:

hadak ok da 'there is fish'

hadak ok awe 'there is no fish'

ne rede paisa da 'I have money'

ne rede paisa awe 'I have no money'

'kali' is used to form a negative in equational and descriptive sentences and is added after the nominal predicates and descriptive adjectives respectively. It also occurs after verbal nouns functioning as a predicate.

For example:

|                    |                           |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| ne kam keklem      | 'I am working'            |
| ne kam keklem kali | 'I am not working'        |
| la ne nuden        | 'this is my umbrella'     |
| la ne nuden kali   | 'this is not my umbrella' |

### **Negation by the morphological process of reduplication:**

The suffix -e is added to the verb-root to express a negative in active sentences. When negative form is added to a monosyllabic verb-root, the first consonant is duplicated before -e and when it is added to polysyllabic verb-root, the first consonant of the last syllable is repeated. If the syllable begins with a vowel, -e itself indicates negation. The tense marker follows the negative as shown below:

|                   |                            |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| ne tumi klemle    | 'I worked yesterday'       |
| ne tumi klemklelo | 'I did not work yesterday' |
| ne non cobomlo    | 'I am eating now'          |
| non ne cobombelam | 'I am not eating now'      |

This type of negative verb-formation in Karbi is peculiar. Some more examples are given below:

|               |          |                      |
|---------------|----------|----------------------|
| dam 'to go'   | dam-d-e> | damde 'do not come'  |
| ca 'to eat'   | ca-c-e>  | cace 'do not eat'    |
| wan 'to come' | wan-w-e> | wan we 'do not come' |

Sometimes a negative verb is also formed by repeating the medial consonant of the verb at the end of it and -e is added to form negation as follows:

|                |                     |
|----------------|---------------------|
| lan incham     | 'water is cool'     |
| lan incham che | 'water is not cool' |

### Negative by the morphological process of suffixation:

When the verb-root begins with a vowel then negative is formed by suffixing -e to the verb.

For example:

|    |                  |      |                      |
|----|------------------|------|----------------------|
| i  | 'wear',          | i -e | 'do not wear'        |
| e  | 'to plant'       | e e  | 'do not plant'       |
| en | 'to make'        | ene  | 'do not make'        |
| ur | 'to dry on fire' | ure  | 'do not dry on fire' |

Sometimes-ri suffix is essential to express negation in Karbi. It is used in imperative sentences (to the verb base) as follows:

|          |                          |
|----------|--------------------------|
| damri    | '(you) should not go'    |
| klemri   | '(you) should not do'    |
| damritha | '(you) should not go'    |
| wanritha | '(you) should not bring' |
| zunri    | '(you) should not drink' |

Another important feature of negation in Karbi is double negative formation. The double negative marker is '-e' and it is formed like the same way as the negative -e. The verb is reduplicated. This type of negation in Karbi is rare.

Example: wan 'to bring', wan wan we we 'do not bring again and again'.

Some other Tibeto-Burman languages of Assam like Boro, Rabha and Mishing show similarity with Karbi negation. Karbi negation preserves one peculiarity, that is, reduplication or repetition of consonants which are generally absent in other Tibeto-Burman languages of Assam. Some negative formations of Tibeto-Burman languages of Assam and its neighbouring places are mentioned below:

|               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| Boro: da-than | 'do not go'   |
| Garó: da-stu  | 'do not spit' |

Ao Naga: ta-sasm 'do not drink'  
 Deuri-Chutia: da-ha 'do not eat'  
 (Tai) Ahom: ma-ru>muru 'do not know'  
 Rabha: tareg 'do not go'  
 Mishing: na-kabyaka 'do not cry'

Both imperative and non-imperative of negative verb-formations are observed both in Assamese and Karbi. In Assamese, the two types of negative formation are almost the same with the na-particle being used before the verb-root and assimilated with the initial vowel of the root as mentioned above. On the other hand, Karbi negative verb-formation is different from Assamese. It takes two words 'awe' and 'kali' to indicate negation. Moreover -e suffix (negative marker) is essential which is added to the verb-root. This type of negation is absent in Assamese. Reduplication or repetition is also not seen in Assamese like Karbi.

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