

Difficulties in Learning and Using Bodo L₂ by Assamese MT Speakers: A Phono-Morphosyntactic Contrastive Analysis

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.54392/ijll2624>

Received: 07-12-2025; Revised: 23-05-2026; Accepted: 01-06-2026; Published: 12-06-2026



Abstract: Learning Bodo second language (L₂) is a challenge for Assamese native speakers as the former has been a minor language in terms of the number of speakers. Though Assamese and Bodo have been two neighbouring languages in Assam, the very fact is that around 90% of bilingual Bodo use Assamese as an L₂ whenever and wherever necessary; whereas, Assamese mother tongue speakers usually do not use Bodo as an L₂. This is because Assamese is the primary lingua franca of Assam. On the other hand, Bodo- the major tribal language of Assam and the entire north-east is a Tibeto-Burman language whereas Assamese is an Indo-Aryan language. Therefore, although the speakers of these two languages have been living together for ages, there are differences between these languages in different levels including orthography. For example- in phonology level, the Bodo native sound /w/ (represented orthographically with ঔ), high vowel devoicing and distinctive tone features; in grammar level, the interferences between case markers, definiteness markers and classifier affixes cause the errors; whereas, in orthography level, the differences in using the vowel letters of Devanagari script in Hindi and Bodo cause the errors. Moreover, Bodo is a tonal and highly agglutinating language, which causes Bodo L₂ learners to encounter errors in learning and using the language. This study addresses the difficulties Assamese MT speakers face when learning and using Bodo L₂, particularly at the orthographical, phonological, morphological, and syntactic levels. It also proposes pedagogical strategies for addressing learner errors.

Keywords: Contrastive Analysis, Bodo, Assamese, Language Error.

1. Introduction

Bodo is a Tibeto-Burman language whereas Assamese is an Indo-Aryan language. Apart from their linguistic distinctions these two language communities are also different racially i.e. the former are mongoloid whereas the latter are Indo-Aryan. Still, these two communities, regardless of their different cultures, backgrounds, and languages, have lived in harmony for ages. Bodo is spoken by 1,482,929 whereas Assamese is spoken by 15,311,351 in India ([Language Data, 2018, p. 6: Census of India, 2011](#)). Assamese is mostly spoken in Assam whereas Bodo is spoken in Assam, West Bengal, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh states of India and south-eastern part of Nepal. Assamese is one of the fourteen Indian languages that are first recognized in 1950 as the scheduled languages of India in the list of languages in the "Schedule VIII" of The Constitution of India, whereas Bodo is one of the most recently (2004) included four languages in the list.

These two languages have different sets of vowels and consonants. The Assamese phonemic inventory consists of eight vowels, namely /i, e, ε, a, ɔ, o, ɔ̄, u/; nine diphthongs, namely /iu, /ei, eo, ai, ao, ɔi, oɔ, ui, ua/; and, twenty-three consonants- /p, p^h, b, b^h, t, t^h, d, d^h, k, k^h, g, g^h, m, n, ɳ, s, z, h, ɦ, ɹ, l, j, w/. Whereas, the Bodo phonemic inventory consists of six vowels, namely /i, e, a, ɔ, u, w/; eight diphthongs- /iu, eo, ai, ao, ɔi, ui, wo, wi/; and, sixteen consonants- /p(p^h), b, t(t^h), d, k(k^h), g, m, n, ɳ, s, z, h, r, l, j, w/.

The high back unrounded secondary vowel /w/ is non-native to Assamese MT speakers, which causes errors in pronouncing it and the corresponding diphthongs /wo/ and /wi/. Again, in case of consonant sounds, except the



little difference between the Assamese alveolar approximant /ɹ/ and Bodo alveolar tap /r/, Bodo does not have any consonant that is non-native to Assamese.

In grammar level, Bodo differs from Assamese in many different aspects such as case-definitive-classifier (CDC) marking, subject vs agent marking, causative prefixation, adverbial suffixation, passivation, conjunctive particle (non-finite verb suffix) vs progressive verb suffixation, etc. that are discussed in §5.3.

Other kinds of dissimilarities that cause errors in learning and using Bodo as an L₂ may be found in vocabulary (§5.2) and orthography (§5.5 & §5.6) levels also.

2. Background and Literature

The main emphasis in L₂ studies on pedagogical issues emerged in the 1950s and 1960s decades. It has been immediately followed by the conceptualization and significance of language errors by (Corder, 1967). A language error is 'an unintended deviation from the immanent rules of a language made by a second language learner' (Ellis, 1994: p. 700). Such errors result from the learner's lack of knowledge of the correct rules of the target language variety. However, the lack of knowledge of the rules of the target language is not the sole cause of language errors. In most cases, the non-native linguistic elements and features in the target language cause the learners to encounter language errors which result from the negative transfer of the native language to the target language (Brown, 2006: p. 220). This cause of interlingual errors has been investigated in the present study. One can compare between acquiring and learning a language in terms of language competence and performance of the language users. In other words, the amount of both knowledge and experience in using the concerned language matters i.e. language competence and language performance should go hand in hand. On the other hand, lack of knowledge causes mistakes whereas lack of experience causes errors. While studying about language errors encountered by the language learners, it is very important to differentiate errors from mistakes.

A mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a "slip," in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly. All people make mistakes, in both native and second language situations. Native speakers are normally capable of recognizing and correcting such "lapses" or mistakes, which are not the result of a deficiency in competence but the result of some sort of temporary breakdown or imperfection in the process of producing speech (Brown, 2006: p. 226).

Such mistakes may include slips of the tongue, random ungrammatical formations, typos, metatheses in reading, etc. However, errors are systematic in that they occur repeatedly and are not recognizable by the learner.

The speaker who makes a mistake is able to recognize it as a mistake and correct it if necessary. An error, on the other hand, is systematic. That is, it is likely to occur repeatedly and is not recognized by the learner as an error (Gass & Selinker, 2008: p. 102).

'An error cannot be self-corrected; while mistakes can be self-corrected if the deviation is pointed out to the speakers' (Dewi, 2012: p. 307). Thus, a significant distinction is generally made between errors (systematic deviations) and mistakes (speech performance errors) which are not treated the same from a linguistic point of view. The language errors encountered and committed by the L₂ learners have been studied as one of the most studied areas by linguists in the history of research on L₂ learning. Here, the focus is on finding out language errors rather than mistakes.

Literature on Indian Second Language Learning (SLL) primarily focuses on ESL (English as a Second Language) within a bilingual or multilingual context, addressing pedagogical practices in mixed-ability classrooms, the development of Indian English, and the impact of socio-emotional factors. Key studies emphasize learner motivation, the role of native language transfer, and task-based approaches to improve literacy and communicative competence. However, this study focuses on an Indian Language as a Second Language (ILSL). This research addresses a gap in the literature regarding the challenges Assamese native speakers encounter while learning Bodo as a second language.



3. Aim and Scope

This study investigates the language errors made by adult Assamese speakers learning Bodo as an L₂ in classroom environments, as well as in natural conversational settings. However, this so-called speech situation is rarely observed because Bodo-Assamese bilinguals who have Assamese as their mother tongue are very few in number. The objective of this study is to examine the challenges of learning and using Bodo L₂ by Assamese mother tongue speakers across diverse contexts. It seeks to provide actionable insights for troubleshooting, thereby helping learners and users overcome these linguistic hurdles.

4. Methodology

The study of learner errors has historically been a central area of investigation in second-language acquisition research (Ellis, 1994: p. 43). However, specifically regarding Assamese native speakers using Bodo as an L₂, there is a scarcity of literature. Therefore, this study observes and analyzes these specific errors from an applied linguistics point of view, based on data collected on how and where these errors occur.

The language errors discussed here are mostly observed during teaching Bodo L₂ to Assamese native speakers from 2011 to 2014 at North-Eastern Regional Language Centre (NERLC), Guwahati. The total number of participants is 54 (17 from 2011-2012 batch; 15 from 2012-2013 batch & 22 from 2013-2014 batch). All of them were absolute novices.

This study attempts to identify challenges in Bodo language learning and usage, realized as errors in receptive (hearing & reading) and productive (speaking & writing) skills; therefore, these skills were systematically observed. Furthermore, ordinary speech acts in household and public settings were observed to identify errors in non-academic language environments.

"Data, mostly collected through observation, were noted down and categorized based on different language skills and levels of linguistic study—specifically orthographic, phonological, lexical, and grammatical errors.

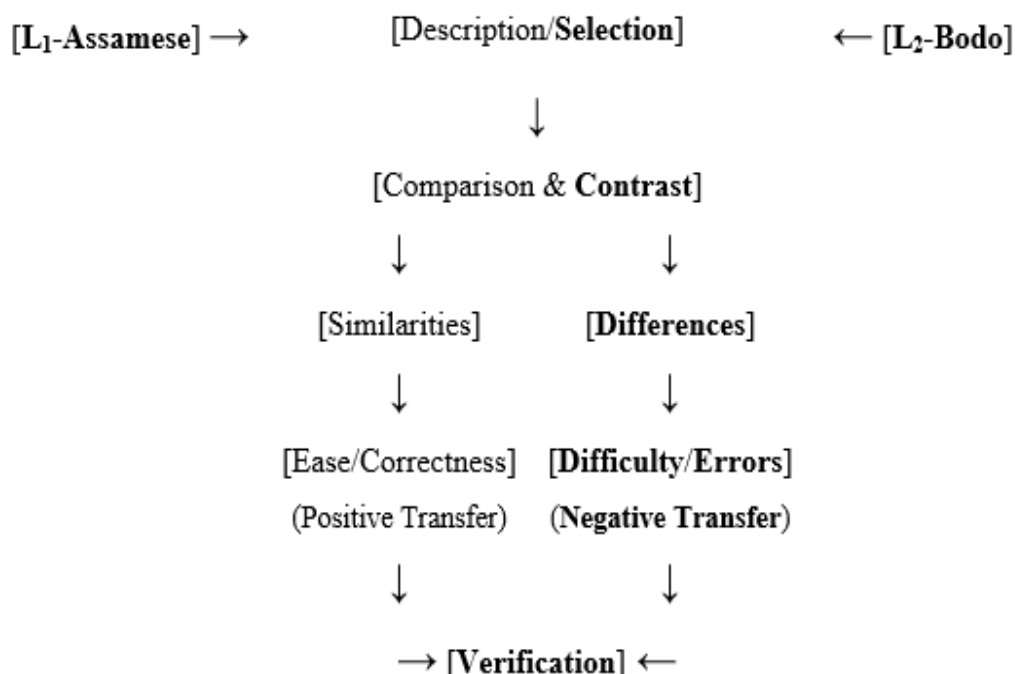


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the Study (adopted from Lado, 1957)

The data are presented using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), Devanagari script (for Bodo), and Eastern Nagari script (for Assamese) to accurately represent pronunciation and graphemic features, facilitating discussion.



The overall methodology includes a contrastive analysis of Bodo and Assamese to identify interlingual errors made by native Assamese speakers learning Bodo as an L₂. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the contrastive analysis model used to identify the interlingual errors discussed in this study.

5. Results and Discussion

The collected language errors are categorized based on linguistic taxonomy into errors in pronunciation, lexicon, grammar, and orthography. They are also analyzed in terms of different language skills.

5.1 Pronunciation

Certain segmental phonemes in Bodo, when pronounced by native Assamese speakers, show specific variations in certain environments. Specifically, the Bodo phoneme sounds that are not used in Assamese are closely examined as they are pronounced by the Bodo L₂ learners. Apart from the segmental phonemes, the use of a few suprasegmental features—such as high and low tone types and high vowel devoicing—has been observed and discussed here.

5.1.1 Pronunciation of /u/

The high back unrounded secondary vowel frequently occurs in Bodo words. Apart from occurring as a monophthong, it also forms two diphthongs /ui/ and /uo/ which also frequently occur in the language. For example- [gùsù] 'mind', [núŋ] 'you (SG)', [zùŋ] 'we', [bjú] 's/he-NOM', [p^hui] 'come', [lùŋ] 'drink', [ùŋk^hám] 'rice', [dwi] 'water', [-u] 'NOM; HAB', [-k^huo] 'ACC' and [-nu] 'DAT; INF'. When the learners pronounce these words, they replace the /u/ sound through negative transfer, with the most similar sound available in their mother tongue i.e. /o/ thereby pronouncing them as [goso], [noŋ], [zoŋ], [bijo], [p^hoi], [loŋ], [oŋk^ham], [doi], [-o], [-k^hoʊ] and [-no] respectively. /u/ has got the pronunciation of /o/ through writing system also. 'ওঁ' is the Devanagari counterpart of Eastern Nagari 'ঔ'; but 'ওঁ' in Bodo is pronounced as /u/ whereas 'ঔ' in Assamese is pronounced as /o/. This vowel is almost absent in Indo-Aryan languages. So a negative phonological transfer interferes in case of /u/ and other non-native sounds due to the articulatory constraints influencing the learner's pronunciation.

5.1.2 High Vowel Devoicing

The two high vowels in Bodo, namely /i/ and /u/ when put between voiceless consonants lose their voicing quality and hence pronounced as [i̥] and [u̥] respectively as their allophones. This effect is called vowel devoicing. For example- [k^hi̥t^hér] 'revenge', [k^hi̥p^hí] 'fart', [s^hik^hár] 'get up', [k^hùp^húŋ] 'difficulty; disturb', [s^hùp^húŋ] 'solve; fill up' and [s^hùt^hùr] 'enemy' are pronounced as [k^hi̥t^her], [k^hi̥p^hi], [sik^har], [k^hup^huŋ], [sup^huŋ] and [sut^hur] respectively. This kind of error is committed due to the absence of any high vowel devoicing phenomenon in Assamese.

5.1.3 Tone Features

Bodo is a tone language where two types of registered tones- high and low are found. For example- [k^hà] 'tie' and [k^há] 'pluck', [bà] 'become bored' and [bá] 'five; carry on back', [sà] 'ache, pain (v); trap (v); tea' and [sá] 'above; north', [sù] 'measure' and [sú] 'wash; thorn; inject; stab; become cold', [bàr] 'wind, air; day' and [bár] 'jump', [baò] 'forget' and [baó] 'dedicate', [hàt^hai] 'tooth' and [hàt^hai] 'market', [sàlai] 'drive' and [sàlai] 'tongue', so on.

Sometimes, the learners get confused with homonyms like [sú]. It also leads to the manipulation of tone frequency when learners attempt to use different fundamental frequencies (F₀), which causes errors. On the other hand, disagreement among linguists about the number of tone-types in Bodo—three according to (Burtone-Page, 1955), two according to (Halvorsrud, 1959), four according to (Bhattacharya, 1977), two according to (Joseph & Burlings 2001), two according to (Sarmah & Brahma 2012)—also confuses learners. However, it also depends on whom the language teacher follows. The most crucial thing about the tone features in Bodo is that they are not represented in the writing system and hence it is always understood from the language context. However, understanding context and using appropriate tones poses a significant challenge for learners.



5.1.4 Intervocalic Glides

The two semi-vowels /j/ and /w/ are used as glides in some certain environments in Bodo. The former is produced at the base and suffix juncture if the base ends in a front unrounded vowel and the suffix starts in unrounded vowel. e.g. [àphà] 'my father' + [-a] = [àphàjà] 'my father-NOM', [gì] 'fear' + [-i] = [giji] 'fearless (fear-NEG.ADJL)', [gèlé] 'play' + [-a] = [gèléjá] 'play-NEG'. Whereas, the later is produced at the base and suffix juncture if the base ends in a back rounded vowel and the suffix starts in front unrounded vowels. e.g. [bòrō] 'Bodo' + [-a] = [bòrōwā] 'Bodo people/language-NOM', [daóthú] 'dove' + [-a] = [daóthúwā] 'dove-NOM'. Another environment for /j/ is the juncture between the base ending in a rounded back vowel and the suffix starting in unrounded back (secondary) vowel i.e. /w/. e.g. [nú] + [-w] = [nújú] 'see-HAB', [sùkhù] 'happiness' + [-wɪ] = [sùkhùjuwì] 'happily; the state of being unhappy'.

These gliding rules are phonetic in nature and hence systematic. However, this does not mean they cannot be considered a cause of error; rather, they are systematic factors that influence speech sound patterns. Additionally, these rules are not common in all such environments in all languages. Again, these rules are highly systematic yet complex for users. Furthermore, a survey on Bodo language learning indicates that these contexts cause both interference and developmental (intralingual) errors. Furthermore, these gliding environments cause frequent spelling errors, which are highly visible on trending social media.

5.2 Vocabulary

This research identifies confusion within the learner's existing intuition about specific lexemes, a factor leading to errors. This study considers the similarities and differences between vocabulary items in the two languages. "Similarity to and difference from the native language in form, meaning, and distribution will result in ease or difficulty in acquiring the vocabulary of a foreign language" (Lado, 1957: p. 82).

5.2.1 Selection of Lexemes

When selecting a word to complete a sentence, language learners often get confused between a few interrelated categories. For example- using the word [àlù] 'potato' to refer to 'sweet potato' as [gùdwií àlù] which should be [thá]. Another reason which causes this kind of error is that the phrase [gùdwií àlù] is a calque of the Assamese [mitha alu] 'sweet potato'.

5.2.2 Loan Words

Loan words are usually nativized in target languages and it interferes in L₂ learning as the loan words in the L₂ and the L₂ learner's mother tongue i.e. L₁ becomes different. And, it leads to language error in the process of L₂ learning. For example- [sɛmpɔ] 'shampoo' in Assamese vs. [sɛmpʰu] in Bodo. However, this kind of error is often ignored as a language error.

5.3 Grammar

As Bodo and Assamese are from two different linguistic origins, they usually exhibit many differences in the grammar level, which cause errors in learning one another's languages. On the other hand, these two languages have been influenced by one another's through errors as they are neighbouring languages and the speakers are using one another's languages as an L₂. Because most native Bodo speakers use Assamese as their primary L₂ and integrate native tongue elements into it, the Assamese language—particularly its Kamrupi variety—has gradually adopted and adapted significant Bodo linguistic elements.

5.3.1 Case-Definitive-Classifier (CDC) Markers

Case markers, definiteness markers and classifier affixes are different grammatical categories that indicate the syntactic relationship between any two constituents, the definiteness of an NP and class of a group of similar nouns, respectively. However, Bodo and Assamese languages together have a kind of complex CDC system that puts



the learners of these languages in trouble that leads to committing errors. In Assamese, classifiers also function as definitives if they co-occur with the classified nouns. It leads to committing errors in Bodo as the learners use classifier affixes as definitive markers in it too. But, in Bodo the core case markers i.e. nominative and accusative case markers also function as definitive markers for the subject NP and the direct object NP respectively. For example-

Table 1. Wrong and correct use of CDC markers

	Assamese construction	Bodo counterpart (with error)	Bodo counterpart (correct)	Meaning
(1 a)	[manuhzɔn] b ^h al	*[mansisa mozaŋ]	[mànsíjǎ mùzàŋ]	'The person is good.'
(1 b)	[mɔɪ gɔɪutɕ dek ^h isilɕ]	*[àŋ mùswōma nūdúŋmún]	[àŋ mùswōk ^h wō nūdúŋmún]	'I saw the cow.'

In Table 1 (1a) above, the Bodo counterpart of the Assamese classifier [-zɔn] is [sa-]. Here, the Assamese classifier has been used as a definitive marker for the subject NP [manuh] 'person' and the same phenomenon has been applied in Bodo which is not appropriate; rather, the nominative case marker [-a] is used as the definitive marker of the NP in subject position [mànsí] 'person'. Again, in (1b), the mammal classifier [ma-] is inappropriately used to indicate the definiteness feature of the object NP [mùswō] 'cow' as [-tɕ] in Assamese object NP [gɔɪ] 'cow'. But, the Bodo definiteness marker for an NP in direct object position is [-k^hwō].

5.3.2 Subject vs Agent Marking

Based on the argument marking system, Bodo is nominative-accusative type of language whereas Assamese is both nominative-accusative and ergative-absolutive. This difference causes errors as Assamese native speakers try to apply the ergative-absolutive system to Bodo while learning and using it. For example- using clauses like *[ràm muìjǎ p^huì-dùŋ-mún] (Ram yesterday come-PFV-PST) 'Ram came yesterday.' As the verb [p^huì] 'come' is an intransitive verb, the subject [ràm] is unmarked here following the ergative-absolutive system. But, as Bodo is a nominative-accusative type of language, usually, proper names used as subjects in the clause initial position take the nominative case marker as agents do. Thus, the correct form would have been [ràm-à muìjǎ p^huì-dùŋ-mún].

5.3.3 Use of Causative Prefixes

Bodo like other languages in Bodo-Garo group of languages, has many causative prefixes. There are as much as eighteen causative prefixes in the allomorphic forms of [sV-] ([si-], [se-], [sa-], [sɔ-], [su-], [sw-]), [p^hV-] ([p^hi-], [p^he-], [p^ha-], [p^hɔ-], [p^hu-], [p^hw-]) and [bV-] ([bi-], [be-], [ba-], [bɔ-], [bu-], [bw-]) in Bodo which occur with a number of intransitive verbs to derive their causative counterparts. The complementary distribution rules of these allomorphs are too complex to understand. [sV-], [p^hV-] and [bV-] may be categorized as directive (primary) causative prefix, manipulative (secondary) causative prefix and PULL (tertiary) causative prefix respectively. The primary prefix [sV-] indicates a direct and sole causal action of the agent on the patient whereas the secondary prefix [p^hV-] indicates involvement of an external agent in the causal action of the agent on the patient e.g. in [p^hùrǎn] 'put to dry' of [àŋ zí p^hù-rǎn-dùŋ] (1SG cloth CAUS-dry_{vi}-PFV) 'I am drying cloths' there is an external agent which is 'heat'. Again, the tertiary prefix [bV-] delexicalized form of the verb [bù] 'pull' indicates 'separate by pulling' e.g. [bùk^hā] 'detach' from [gā] 'become separate' regardless of directive and manipulative features. This kind of causativization through prefixation is not employed in Assamese and hence the Assamese MT speakers often miss this feature while learning and using Bodo L₂. However, there is an alternative but accepted way to express the causative feature in Bodo which is discussed in §6D.

5.3.4 Use of Adverbial Suffixes

The agglutinating nature of Bodo is seen through different inflectional and derivational processes. A prominent agglutinating process in Bodo is the occurrence of multiple adverbial suffixes with verbs. For example- [t^hàŋ-p^há-phín-már-gúŋ] (go-COM-RE-REAL-FUT) 'will go back with (someone) for sure' – here, the three adverbial suffixes have occurred together with a single verb. But, this kind of suffixation is not present in Assamese. Thus, the



construction for 'come back' in Bodo is [p^huì-p^hìn] (come-RE) and in Assamese is [g^hu-i ah] (turn-NF come). This typological structure of the Bodo word [p^huìp^hìn] is not familiar in Assamese and hence frequent errors in forming and using such words are encountered by the Bodo L2 learners.

5.3.5 Use of Passive Suffixes

The passive voice constructing process in Bodo includes suffixing of the passive voice marker with the main verb. For example- [bí-jú àŋ-zùŋ hóm-zá-báí] (s/he-NOM 1SG-INS catch-PASS-PRF) 'S/he has been caught by me.' As Assamese uses a periphrastic passive construction (auxiliary verb) rather than a verbal passive suffix, learners often struggle to use it correctly.

5.3.6 Conjunctive Particle vs Progressive Verb Suffixes

One of the errors encountered in learning and using Bodo L2 due to grammar translation method is using the conjunctive particle [-nanuɪ] instead of the progressive verb suffix [-gasiɪu] in clauses in continuous aspect. This is due the absence of a progressive aspect marker in Assamese which is expressed through the conjunctive particle verb suffix [-i]. For example-

- (2) *núŋ má k^hálám-nánui dòŋ
 2SG what do-CP BE
 (What are you doing?)

The correct counterpart of this sentence is:

- (3) núŋ má k^hálám-gàsiɪú dòŋ
 2SG what do-PROG BE
 'What are you doing?'

Based on this type of error, Brown (2006) defines a linguistic error as 'a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the competence of the learner.'

5.3.7 Confusion in Using Classifier Prefixes

Bodo has very rich noun categorization devices; one of them is classifier. Undoubtedly, it is also used in Assamese. However, the difference is that Bodo classifiers co-occur as prefixes with numerals only that quantify the classified nouns; whereas, Assamese classifiers may co-occur as suffixes with both quantifying numerals and classified nouns (§5.3.1). However, as they are used as suffixes in their mother tongue, the Assamese speakers often use the Bodo classifiers also as suffixes. Again, as the number of classifiers is comparatively higher in Bodo, it is often observed that learners use inappropriate and a limited number and inappropriate choice of classifiers. For example- *[mún-sé k^húruí] (absCLF-one bowl) 'one bowl' instead of [gòŋ-sé k^húruí] (CLF-one bowl), *[mún-sé duìmà] (absCLF-one river) 'one river' instead of [dùŋ-sé duìmà] (CLF-one river). Thus, it is observed that there is one thing common in both language acquisition and language learning in terms of use of classifiers that the learners initially use the abstract classifier(s) which classifies abstract nouns. Therefore, an abstract classifier is also called a classless classifier.

5.3.8 Negative Formation

Morphologically, Bodo employs prefixation with verbs for prohibitive negative and suffixation for negative statement verbs whereas Assamese employs prefixation for both. For example- [Bodo prohibitive negative]; [Bodo negative statement]; [Assamese prohibitive negative]; [Assamese negative statement]. The transfer of negative prefixation in Assamese into Bodo L2 is found to be applied in Bodo in both prohibitive negative and negative statement as in *[aŋ dat^haŋdoŋ] and [noŋ dat^haŋ].

5.4 Sociolinguistic Feature

A couple of sociolinguistic aspects are frequently but optionally used in Bodo. One is the T-V distinctions i.e. different forms of the second personal pronoun based on the familiarity and honorificity while the other is the use of gender suffixes especially in the colloquial form of the language.



5.4.1 Use of Gender Discourse Suffixes [-lwi], [-bra] and [-hai]

The prominent sociolinguistic elements used in Bodo are three gender discourse suffixes that are used in Bodo as terminations usually at the end of normal syntactic constructions. For example- [bòhá tháŋ-nú-brá/-lwi] (where go-NF-PTL.M) 'Where are (you) going?' and [bòhá tháŋ-nú-hai] (where go-NF-PTL.F) 'Where are (you) going?'

[-lwi] and [-bra] are used in male speeches whereas [-hai] is used in female speeches. They do not have any lexical or grammatical value; they have purely sociolinguistic values.

Though these suffixes are optional, they are extensively used in colloquial Bodo. In formal situations they are not used. Nevertheless, they interfere in learning Bodo L₂. This is a rare example of how sociolinguistic norms affect first language acquisition (FLA) and SLL. There is a derogatory term in Bodo [hínzàð sùrì] which is equivalent to effeminate is used for the males using the suffix [-hai]; whereas females using the suffixes [-brá/-lwi] are called [huòwālálá] that is equivalent to tomboy. In case of a baby boy growing in a situation where Bodo female colloquial speech is dominant, the boy predictably becomes a effeminate. This sociolinguistic norm can affect SLL as well. However, the optionality of using such gender discourse suffixes makes it a little chance to affect learning the formal variety of a language.

5.4.2 Use of T-V Distinction

There is a kind of confusion in using the second personal pronouns [núŋ] and [núŋtháŋ] which are more like informal and formal counterparts, respectively, of one another than non-honorific and honorific. Usually, they do not have familiar and non-familiar distinction. However, the synchronic use of these pronouns shows that they are also used as non-honorific and honorific respectively. But, in Assamese another second personal pronoun [tumi] is also there which indicates familiarity. So, when an Assamese MT speaker learns Bodo L₂, they gets confused between these [núŋ] and [núŋtháŋ] and seldom commits errors in the selection of corresponding equivalent counterparts.

5.5 Writing

Bodo is written in simplified Devanagari script whereas Assamese is written in Eastern Nagari. Though both the scripts are of Nagari origin, there are graphemic differences. Again, the corresponding pronunciations of some certain letters are arbitrary in nature e.g. 'स' = /s/ but 'स' = /h/ where 'स' is the Devanagari counterpart of the Eastern Nagari 'স'.

5.5.1 Selection of Letters

The recently standardized Bodo spelling system is very simple in case of selection of letters. e.g. 'इ' (not 'ई') is used for /i/, 'उ' (not 'ऊ') is used for /u/, 'स'(not 'च', 'छ', 'श' or 'ष') is used for /s/ while writing native words. Thus, between the allographic letters like 'थ' and 'ठ' the former is used. In this way, between 'द' and 'ड'; 'त' and 'ट'; 'च' and 'छ'; 'ध' and 'ढ'; and 'र', 'ड़' & 'ढ़', the first ones are used in writing native words. Nevertheless, errors in using the accepted letters are seldom observed in the learner's writing.

5.5.2 Letter Clusters

There are 63 two-letter clusters and 6 three-letter clusters used in Bodo (Brahma & Basumatary 2019: p. 91-160) whereas 168 two-letter clusters and 23 three-letter clusters are used in Assamese (Brahma *et al.*, 2019: p. 113-313). Though the number is less in Bodo, a couple of typical consonant clusters like 'दल' and 'जल' are used in Bodo which are often omitted in writing of the L₂ learners.

5.5.3 Drawing Overline while Writing

Both the Assamese and the Bodo scripts are abugida that use overlines (shirorekha) above almost every letter. However, the overline is used in Assamese in print, not preferably in handwriting whereas it is used in both print and writing in Bodo to avoid the sameness of a few graphically similar letters. For example- the letters 'म' and



'भ'; 'घ' and 'ध'; 'य' and 'थ'. The Assamese MT speakers usually do not use overlines above letters while writing Assamese and this practice is copied to writing Bodo in Devanagari, which leads to committing errors.

5.6 Reading

Learners frequently display errors when reading Bodo as a second language (L₂), many of which are caused by the interference of the Hindi script. However, there are also errors caused by the contrastive features between the Assamese script and the Bodo script.

5.6.1 Influences of Hindi

It is strange but true that the Bodo language is influenced by Hindi. Bodo and Hindi are two completely different languages from different ancestors. However, a common script, i.e., Devanagari, is used to write both the languages. So, if a Bodo L₂ learner already knows how to read Hindi in Devanagari, they will commit errors in reading Bodo in Devanagari. The most common instance is pronouncing words like 'म' and 'भ'; 'घ' and 'ध'; 'य' and 'थ', etc. The wrong pronunciations of these words are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Wrong and correct pronunciations of Bodo words

(4)	Bodo word in Devanagari	Wrong pronunciation by L ₂ learners	Correct pronunciation	Meaning
(a)	मन'	[mən]	[mónón]	'swallow'
(b)	मोन	[mon]	[múun]	'find'
(c)	नखर	[nəkʰər]	[nòkʰór]	'family'
(d)	नोगोर	[nogor]	[nùgùr]	'city'
(e)	बल	[bəl]	[bòl]	'ball'
(f)	बोलो	[bolo]	[bùlù]	'force'

5.6.2 Visual Metathesis

Both the Devanagari and Eastern Nagari scripts used for Bodo and Assamese respectively are Abugida. However, the most common error in reading Bodo in Devanagari is the secondary form of 'ड'; it occurs above another letter and hence, it is supposed to be occurring before the letter as the secondary form of Devanagari 'र' as in 'बर्ग' [bòrgò] 'square' and Eastern Nagari 'ब' as in 'बर्ग' [swòrgò] 'heaven'. Again, the secondary form 'ं' of Eastern Nagari 'ँ' occurs to the right of the co-occurring letter, which creates confusion in reading the secondary form of 'ड' occurring above a letter. Thus, the words with secondary form of 'ड' like 'गुदु' [gùdù] 'hot' is pronounced as *[gunđu] 'गुदु'. It impacts both the reading and writing proficiencies of the learners.

5.6.3 Reading Tone Features

Pronouncing words with distinctive tone features is difficult for those whose mother tongue lacks tonal distinction or is monotonous. And, it definitely causes errors in language learning and using. e.g. the constructions [má zàdù] and [mà zádú] are different due to the tone distinction between [zà] 'happen; become' and [zá] 'eat'. Thus, the former means 'What is happening/happened?' whereas the latter means 'What are (you) eating?'

5.6.4 Schema about Certain Words and Their Pronunciations

Some certain words like 'हाग्रामा' [hàgrāmā] 'forest' is pronounced differently as [hangama] - this kind of error can be termed as 'visual error' because due to the close visual resemblances of it with the Hindi word 'हंगामा' [hangama] 'ruckus'. This usually happens with the learners who already know how to read and write Hindi before learning Bodo as an L₂. This error is encountered because the word 'हाग्रामा' is already visualized as 'हंगामा' in the image schema of the learners. This is one of the well tested words with the Assamese L₂ learners and users.



5.6.5 /n/ after a Vowel is Often Pronounced as /ŋ/

The coda /n/ in the CVC syllable-type followed by another syllable(s) having its onset is often pronounced as /ŋ/ by Assamese learners of Bodo L₂. e.g. সানসুমা [sànsūmā] 'philosopher' is pronounced as [sənsūmā], খানজ [kʰànzɔŋ] 'comb (n)' is pronounced as [kʰənzɔŋ], ফাৰ্জা [phàŋthəɔ] 'brinjal' is pronounced as [phəŋthəɔ], etc.

6. How to Overcome the Errors: A few Teaching Strategies

It is not always easy for language learners to use a single, common technique to overcome errors. However, a few techniques can be very effective. Some of these techniques for overcoming language errors are discussed below:

It is sometimes strange to encounter unfamiliar typological features in an L₂, such as when an Assamese speaker encounters new linguistic structures while learning Bodo. e.g. presence of a secondary (high back unrounded) vowel, high vowel devoicing, lexical tones, gender discourse markers, adverbial suffixes, causative prefixes, passive suffix, etc. Those features add beauty to learning the language. Even after so much practice and experience, the learners still commit frequent errors in pronouncing tone features and the high back unrounded vowel, using appropriate causative prefixes and adverbial suffixes, and reading the secondary form of 'ত' /ŋ/; etc. Corrective feedback can help learners improve language accuracy and fluency.

- A. The teaching-learning process about these features is made easy through several techniques. If one has to pronounce the back high unrounded vowel /u/, they can follow the technique of pronouncing one of the most common and easily pronounced vowels /u/ with their lips just spread.
- B. To correct the error in pronouncing devoiced high vowels, the learners can adopt the whispering technique of pronouncing the syllable where a devoiced high vowel occurs. For example- to pronounce the word [sɪkʰár] 'get up' appropriately, the learner can pronounce the first syllable /sɪ/ in whispering mode then releasing the second syllable normally.
- C. While learning to pronounce high and low tones in the target language properly, learners can pick up any simple, i.e., monosyllabic, word from their mother tongue, e.g. the Assamese learners of Bodo L₂ can practice pronouncing the word [ma] 'mother' assigning both low and high tone features to it alternatively as [mà] and [má]. This approach enables the learner to comprehend the distinction between corresponding tone features, which they can then apply to the target language.
- D. Another difficulty in learning Bodo is knowing how to use the causative prefixes appropriately. If the learner has to appropriately use it, of course, there is a way out to it; there is a causative suffix in Bodo [-hu] which can almost appropriately replace any of the three causative prefixes [sV-], [pʰV-] and [bV-]. e.g. [rán] 'dry_{vi}' > [pʰúrán] 'dry_{vt}' ≈ [ránhú] 'dry_{vt}'.
- E. It is observed that the learners also try to find out some techniques themselves, sometimes to avoid their errors; e.g. the use of the abstract classifier [mun-] as the common classifier for all classes or categories of nouns.

7. Conclusion

Encountering errors when learning a language, or even when acquiring one, is completely natural. It is pleasant to hear the early attempts of a child acquiring language or an adult learning a new language. This pleasantness is caused by the various errors the speaker encounters. However, common language errors are not always made by all second language learners. Nevertheless, the possibility of committing such errors remains, even if an L₂ user has high proficiency in the language. The errors presented here are very clearly observed in both academic and non-academic speech situations. This study highlights a significant number of errors encountered in the acquisition and use of Bodo L₂, particularly among Assamese mother-tongue (MT) speakers. However, this area requires further investigation. For instance, the specific error in §5.6.5 needs to be defined and its causes determined. Among the most challenging parts of learning Bodo as an L₂ for Assamese speakers include: finding out the differences between the rates of devoicing of front high vowels and back high vowels; using the appropriate tone-types; using appropriate causative and classifier prefixes; and applying overlines while writing. Thus, most errors



are found at the grammatical level, whereas there is a considerable variety of errors in pronunciation and orthography. On the other hand, the most interesting errors are found in assigning appropriate tone-types, which makes Bodo L₂ learning and use fun. By examining errors in Bodo (L₂) usage by native Assamese speakers, this study identifies significant differences between the two languages, facilitating a contrastive analysis of Assamese and Bodo. It also contributes to the study of cross-linguistic transfer from Assamese to Bodo.

Abbreviations

1	First Person
2	Second Person
absCLF	Abstract Noun Classifier
ACC	Accusative Case
ADJL	Adjectivizer
C	Consonant
CLF	Classifier
COM	Comitative
CP	Conjunctive Particle
DAT	Dative Case
F	Feminine Gender
FUT	Future Tense
HAB	Habitual Aspect
INF	Infinitive
INS	Instrumental Case
L2	Second Language
M	Masculine Gender
MT	Mother Tongue
n	Noun
NEG	Negative
NOM	Nominative Case
NP	Noun Phrase
PASS	Passive Suffix
PFV	Perfective Aspect
PRF	Perfect Aspect
PROG	Progressive Aspect
PST	Past Tense
PTL	Particle
RE	-re
REAL	Realis Mood
SG	Singular Number
T-V	tu and vos (Latin pronouns)
v	Verb
V	Vowel
vi	Intransitive Verb
vt	Transitive Verb

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Conflict of interest

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