# Kokborok: A Study of Kokborok Grammar

## Surjita Debbarma

College of Teacher Education, Kumarghat, India

**Abstract**

Language is the principal method of human communication that uses arbitrary signals such as voice sound, gesture, or written symbol. It is one of the most wonderful creations of human. It may be considered as a tool, instrument or machine of social control.

The Borok people is a second largest and aboriginal tribe of Tripura. They are also known as Tiprasa by local language. They are with an approximately 11 lakh (2011 census) in Tripura. Borok people have been living in Tripura state in the last thousand years. The major language of Borok people is called KOKBOROK. Kokborok belong to Bodo-Garo group of Tibeto-Burman branches of Sino-Tibetan family.

**Keywords:** Tripura, Kokborok, Grammar.

**Introduction**

Kokborok is a language of Borok people who are geographically known as Borok/Tripuris/Tiprasa. It is one of the State languages of Tripura notified on 19th January, 1979. The autonomous district council namely Tripura Tribel Areas Autonomous District Council has declared the Kokborok as official language on 20th April, 1999. Tripuri/Borok are inhabited not only in Tripura state but also in North-East states of Indian and neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan with an approximately 15 lakhs in numbers. Tripuri/Borok are the branch of Boro people of Assam belonging to Sino-Tibetan linguistic group racially Mongoloids. This borok people comprises of nine (9) major tribal communities having similar culture and life style. There tribal communities are **Tripura, Reang, Jamatia, Noatia, Uchoi, Murasing, Koloi and Rupini.** All this tribal communities have a similar common language is known as Kokborok. The word Kokborok derived from the word 'kok' meaning 'language/verbal' and 'borok' meaning 'human/people'. So, the combination of Kokborok is 'language of human being'.

The study aims at focusing the process of word formation and its structural feature of Kokborok language. The method of analysis is structural. Analysis is having been done from a structural point of view. Primary data have been collected from the informants and the secondary data have also been collected from the other sources and different books.

Kokborok has nine (9) major dialects and each of these dialects has been named on the basis of a particular tribe. These dialects are 1. Debbarma, 2. Reang (Bru), 3. Jamatia, 4. Noatia, 5. Murasing, 6. Uchoi, 7. Kalai, 8. Rupini, and 9. Tripura. There is different opinion regarding the number of sub-dialects of the above mentioned eight dialects of Kokborok. The sub-dialect may be more familiar as clan and number of clans of each dialect have a distinct identity.

Kokborok has six vowel sounds in the language and these are **a, e, i, o, u, w**. Sometimes vowel 'i' and vowel 'e' are used interchangeably as **imang** and **emang** which means 'dream'. The vowel 'w' of Kokborok is sometimes used in medial position in the word, e.g- twi (water), bagwi (for), kwchar (centre), Gwrwng (character) etc.

On the other hand, Kokborok has 21 consonant sound and these are: **k, kh, g, ng, c, ch, j, t, th, d, n, p, ph, b, m, y, r, l, w, s, h**. An important features of Kokborok language is the use of conjoint letter, e.g-

**kh-** khum (Flower)

**ng-** aming (Cat)

**ch-** chahmung (food)

**th-** thansa (unity)

**ph-** phai (Come)

Kokborok has a sound that cannot be pronounced with a single letter. As representative of that sound a new letter has to be create like 'ua' (Rabindra Kishore Debbarma and Dr. Nitai Acharya). E.g-

**Wansukma** (idea)

**Wanamasingsa** (critical)

**watwi** (rain)

The conjunct consonant is used in the Kokborok language. Some time they appear to behave as single sound as in br, kr etc. the two articulations being simultaneous as eg-

**br**- brwi (four)

**kr**- kra (father-in-law)

Kokborok language is a tonal language. The tones are phonemic. There are two different tones in Kokborok language, normal tone and high tone. For high tone sound sometimes 'h' is used. Eg-

| Normal tone | High tone |
|---|---|
| 'lai' (easy) | 'laih' (crossed) |
| 'phai' (come) | 'phaih' (to break' |
| 'hor' (night) | 'hohrh' (to send) |

Use of i. Sometimes Kokborok language 'i' is used for normal tone. E.g-

| | |
|---|---|
| 'pai' (to purchase) | 'phaih' (finish) |
| 'twi; (water) | 'twih' (to sweet) |
| 'bwtwi' (broth) | 'bwtwih' (egg) |

Use of 'n' and 'ng'. Kokborok language 'n' is used for normal tone and 'ng' is used for high tone. E.g-

| | |
|---|---|
| 'nukhun' (roof) | 'nukhung' (family) |
| 'than' (to go) | 'thang' (to live) |

Like other Tibeto-Burman Language Kokborok also has three different tense viz Present, Past and Future. Kokborok language uses suffixes **o/di** to indicate Present, **kha** for past and **nai** for Future. E.g-

| Root Verb | Present | Past | Future |
|---|---|---|---|
| Phai (to come) | Phaio/Phaidi Phaikha | | Phainai |
| Dagar (to push) | Dagao/Dagardi | Dagarkha | Dagarnai |
| Tubu (to bring) | Tubuo/Tubudi Tubukha | | Tubunai |

Every Kokborok tense have two aspects.1. Indefinite and 2. Continuous. For Indefinite aspect **o/di, kha, nai** is used at the end of the verb as tense marker and **oitong** is used between the verb. E.g-

Indefinite: - And chao (I eat)

Continuous: - Ang chaoitongo (I am eating)

In Kokborok we find two numbers viz Singular and Plural. The plural marker is used at the end of the noun/pronoun. E.g-

| Singular | Plural |
|---|---|
| Yasi (Finger) | Yasirog |
| Yak (Hand) | Yakrog |
| Mokol (Eye) | Mokolrog |

For specific quantification the specific number is used and no plural suffixes are added. E.g-

Kolom kongsa

(Pen)   (one)

Gari  khungsa

(Car)  (one)

The word order sentence of Kokborok is Subject, Object and Verb i.e SOV. E.g-

**Ang    mai    chao.**

(I)      (Rice)  (Eat)- Present

**Bo      nogo    thangkha**

(He)    (Home)  (gone)- Past

**Ram   khuna        Phainai**

(Ram)  (Tommorow)   (Coming)- Future

The word order of the interrogative sentence is **genitive/possessive, subject and question.** E.g-

Nini    mwng  tamo?

(Your) (Name)         (What)- What is your name?

The word order of the imperative sentence is **subject, verb command. E.g-**

Nwng  faidi

(You)  (come)

Nwng  Thangdi

(You)  (go)

Kokborok language generally uses **'ya'** as negation in the end to form a negative sentence. The formation of negative sentence is **S+O+V+Negative.** E.g-

Ang mai chaya

(i)(rice) (eat not)- I does not eat rice.

## Conclusion

From a structural analysis it is observed that Kokborok language is quite similar to the other language of North-East like Boro, Garo, Dimasa etc. Most of the mono syllabic word take prefix and suffix to form different class of word or to attribute different grammatical functions, also to signify semantic representation. Usually, adjective is derived from root verb by addition prefixes or suffixes.

## References

1. Debbarma, Rabindra Kishore (2002). "KOKBOROK KOKMA KWTAL" -Tribal Research and Cultural Institute – Tribal Welfare Department, Govt. Of Tripura
2. Acharya, Dr. Nitai (2011). "KOK TEI KOKRWBAI FWRWNGMANI RAIDAROG"- A book of Methodology of Teaching Language and Literature-Yakhwrai Publication.
3. Debbarma, Naresh Chandra (2010). "KOKBOROK BHASHA SAHITYER KRAMABIKASH"- Naba Chandra Prakashni.

4. Subbarao, Karumuri V, Malhotra Shiti & Barua, Suranjana. The Structure of the Kokborok Language. Interdisciplinary Journal of Linguistics 3, pare 1-43, Kashmir University.
5. Language Wing (2008), Under Education Department of TTAADC, Khumulwng West Tripura.