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THE BODO LANGUAGE IN IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION: ELUCIDATING THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL, GRAMMATICAL, AND ETHNIC IDENTITIES OF BODO TRIBE IN ASSAM, INDIA

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Abstract

Language plays multiple roles in constructing identities of ethnic communities through facilitating cultural expressions, evolving grammatical rules, and enabling acquired self-knowledge. This study investigates the Bodo language's roles in creating Bodo cultural, grammatical, and ethnic identities of the Bodo tribe of Assam. In order to explore multiple roles of the Bodo language, the study examines writings on Bodo language, grammar, culture, and ethnicity. It has been found that the Bodo language played significant roles in constructing Bodos' identities. The analysis has revealed that the Bodo language assisted the Bodos in fashioning Bathouism, Bagurumba, Saori Janai, and Karsonai as cultural identities by helping to name these customs. Similarly, it has been brought to light that the Bodo language assisted the Bodos to construct grammatical identity by conceptualising grammatical rules. Further, the Bodo language helped the Bodos create an ethnic identity through history and genealogical knowledge. These findings can help one to understand Bodos.

Keywords: Bodos, Bodo Language, Identity Construction, Ethnicity, Tribe.

Introduction

Linguists have been extensively studying language and its functions because it helps comprehend the formation of identities through language. Language performs various functions. It helps communicate information, thoughts and ideas (Newyemer, 1998). In the same way, language assists individuals with shared language and culture construct identities that separate them from other individuals with different languages and cultural traditions (Simpson, 2007). Going by this line of reasoning, we can further state that language plays a significant role in constructing cultural, grammatical, and ethnic identities. There are many studies concerning the roles of language in constructing identities. In their article, Bucholtz and Hall (2004) point out the significant role of language in creating cultural subjectivities. In the following study, Rovira (2008) explains language as an essential characteristic of cultural identity that facilitates articulation and communication of the culture and its essences. In another study, Wodak (2012) states the 'Language choice, and language itself, are part of identity construction' (p. 216).

Furthermore, in their seminal work, Meinhof and Galasinski (2005) show pronunciation playing an essential role in constructing identity. In addition, Dorian (1999) describes language as an indicator of a speaker's ethnic identity. Although these studies help us understand the significant roles of language in constructing identities, there is no evidence suggesting that these roles apply to all the linguistic groups' forming identities.

Therefore, this paper studies the roles of the Bodo language in constructing the Bodo cultural, grammatical, and ethnic identities of the Bodo tribe of Assam. It argues that the Bodo language helped the Bodos create cultural, grammatical, and ethnic identities by naming and expressing cultural practices, framing grammatical rules, and understanding the history and ethnicity. This study employed analytical and explanatory methods to examine and illustrate the textual writings on the Bodo grammar, culture, ethnicity, and religion. Further, these methods helped explain how the Bodo language assisted the Bodos in constructing the cultural, grammatical, and ethnic identities. This study shows that the Bodo language helped the Bodos construct Bathouism, Bagurumba, Hal Jankra, Saori Janai, Ghar-Jiya Thanai, Karsonai, and Bonanoi Lanai Haba as the different forms of cultural identities. Similarly, the present study demonstrates that the Bodo language assisted the Bodos in creating the Bodo grammar as their grammatical identity. Further, this study exhibits that the Bodo language helped the Bodos construct an ethnic identity based on racial origin, racial characteristics, and history.

Considering the significance of the Bodo language in constructing the Bodos' cultural, grammatical, and ethnic identities, the role of the Bodo language is required to be studied and explained. This study contains five sections. The first section briefly describes the Bodos, emphasising the names associated with the Bodos. The second section studies and illustrates how the Bodo language facilitated the Bodos in constructing the different types of cultural identity. The third section examines how the Bodo language helped the Bodos create the grammatical identity by constructing grammatical rules. The fourth section investigates and describes that the



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Bodo language assisted the Bodos in constructing an ethnic identity by enabling them to understand their racial origin, physical characteristics, history, and connections with other tribes. The fifth section gives a glance at the progress of the Bodo language. This study can aid us in getting a deeper understanding of the Bodo tribe residing in Assam. It will change our perception about the Bodos, that is, looking at them through the prism of Bodo violent movement.

Who are the Bodos?

The contemporary Bodos are one of the earliest tribes who had taken up residence in the Brahmaputra valley (Gait, 1906). However, they are concentrated in the Brahmaputra valley and settled across several states in North-East India and the districts in North-East Bengal (Endle, 1911). Hence, they are known by different names in different states and regions. In the Brahmaputra valley, the Bodos call themselves the Bodos or the Boros (Waddell, 1901). In upper Assam and some parts of the erstwhile Eastern Frontier, the Bodos are called the Kacharis (Dalton, 1872). Moreover, in the North Kachar Hills and North-East Bengal, the Bodos are described as the Dimasas and the Meches (Gait, 1906). These names refer to the Bodos, who are alike and inhabit different geographical areas, and they do not denote the people of different ethnic origins (Rhodes & Rhodes, 1986). These multiple names that are associated with the Bodos are likely to baffle us when used at the same time. Therefore, this paper uses the name Bodo and its plural form the Bodos throughout the study; and it does not use the other terms.

The Bodo language is central to the Bodo tribe. It has emerged as a unifying force and ‘an important identity marker’.¹ As an identity marker, it has helped the Bodos shape their cultural, grammatical, and ethnic identities. These Bodo identities have developed to some degree, based on colonial writings that served as a foundation for contemporary works on the Bodos language and identities. These are illustrated under the following sub-headings.

The Bodo Language and the Bodo Cultural Identity Formation

Cultural identity is a manner of living peculiar to the population with a shared language and culture. It evolves over the years and passes on from one generation to the next. This manner of living acquires a definite shape and transmits through a language spoken and written by culturally alike individuals (Rovira, 2008). Aligning with this line of thinking, we can state that culturally identical individuals construct cultural identity through language, consisting of words, sounds, and symbols, which facilitate describing cultural practices and expressing their deep-seated meanings. In another way, language helps individuals communicate their innermost feelings in dance, music and song that give birth to cultural identity. Over and above, language assists individuals in creating cultural identity through defining and naming their experiences, customs, and traditions (Rovira, 2008). Therefore, cultural identity is an outcome of language influencing artistic expressions in unique ways, different environments, and several purposes.

This way of forming the cultural identity also applies to the Bodos’ constructing cultural identity. The unique Bodo cultural identity came about through the Bodo language, which influenced the Bodos’ cultural expressions in different situations. The traditional religion of the Bodos is one cultural aspect that became a distinct Bodo cultural identity due to the Bodo language impacting the expression of religious beliefs. The Bodo language helped the Bodos name their traditional religion as the Bathou. Its essential feature is the worship of the Siju tree (*Euphorbia splendens*). The Bodos believe the Bathou dwells among the people and in the families. His presence is symbolised by the Siju trees planted adjacent to the Bodos’ houses (Endle, 1911). The Bodo language too assisted the Bodos to conceptualise the meaning of Bathou. The first two alphabets Ba signify five, and the subsequent alphabets Thou denote 'deep spiritual things' (Atreya, 2007). As the deep spirituality, the Bodos base the Bathou religion’s philosophy on the five elements of nature: air, water, fire, earth, and sky, attributed with moral interpretations. In another way, the Bodo language enriched the Bathou religion by enabling the believers to conceptualise a venerating word: the Bathou Bwrai. This word signifies reverentially addressing the Bathou as the supreme god (Boro, 2015). After some time, the Bathou worship acquired different forms, collectively known as the Bathouism. In the Bathousim, the Bodos converse with the Bathou Bwrai through prayer, Kherai music and dance (Brahma, 2006), and offering and sacrificing certain birds, animals, and nuts and leaves (Endle, 1911). The Bodo language facilitates them. These forms of communication, names, meanings, and types of worship, which the Bathou religion attained over the years through the Bodo language, gave the Bodos a religious-based cultural identity in the catchphrase of Bathousim. This religious-based cultural identity might be the possible reason the Bathouism gets to identify with the Bodos and the Bodos with the Bathouism. Therefore, we can state that Bathouism is an index of the Bodos’ cultural identity.

Similar to Bathouism, the Bagurumba dance, which is one of the vital elements of the Bodo culture, became a unique Bodo folk dance owing to the Bodo language. The Bodo language helped the Bagurumba dance to develop into a unique form of dance by facilitating the Bodos to dance this dance to a festive song, movements, and symbols. However, this dance is not merely an entertainment dance. It is an expression of the Bodos’ innermost happiness. For this reason, the Bodos always perform the Bagurumba dance to a joyous Bagurumba song with the accompaniment of musical instruments like Sifung (flute), Serja (a type of Violin), and



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Kham (drum), which play the rhythmic section of the song. The performance of the Bagurumba dance to a jubilant Bagurumba song includes dance moves, symbolising butterflies,. The movements of the Bagurumba dance inform us about an immense love, which the Bodos possess in the core of their hearts for nature. While this dance and song can be performed and sung in any happy occasion and season of the year, the Bagurumba dance is primarily danced during the spring season, after the hard work of cultivation (Narzary, 2018). As mentioned earlier, the staging of the Bagurumba dance has given the Bodos a cultural identity centred on the beautiful and colourful Bagurumba dance. Moreover, as a cultural identity of the Bodos, the Bagurumba dance informs us that the Bodos are a unique cultural group, differing from others who are culturally unlike.

In addition to the aforementioned cultural practices, certain Bodo customs and social practices became unique Bodo cultural identities because the Bodo language helped the Bodos name them. One of the social practices that turned out to be the Bodos' cultural identity is the Bodo man and woman helping their neighbour plant or harvest paddy in the fields. This practice of rendering a next-door family's help is termed the Saori Janai in the Bodo language (Endle, 1911). Just as this, the Bodos have the custom of celebrating on the last day of cultivating paddy. It is called the Hal Jangkra. The Bodo names of these practices, reflecting the different aspects of agricultural operations that the Bodos adopt, endowed the Bodos with cultural identities. It tells us that the Bodos always keep the agricultural profession close to their hearts, and they are supportive of each other. Likewise, the Bodos have been practising different forms of marriage customs, which they observe in getting a marriageable man and woman married. Some of these are marriage by payment of bride fee, arranged marriage, marriage by man's staying in girl's parent's house, and marriage by capturing a girl. Indeed, the Bodos no longer practise marriage by capturing a girl. Nevertheless, the Bodo marriages have been described and named, such as the Ghar-Jiya Thanai, the Karsonai, and the Bonanoi Lanai Haba. ² These names and types of Bodo marriages give us information regarding the marriage practices and inform us who the Bodos are. Due to these social practices, the Bodos have progressed as a separate cultural community, apart from people from different cultures and following customs and traditions that are not alike.

This section examined the Bodo language's various roles in fashioning the Bodo cultural identity. The study has found that the Bodo language played a significant role in constructing the different aspects of Bodo cultural identities. For instance, the Bodo language helped the Bodos conceptualise and give names to their religious, agricultural, and social practices. From these names, the Bodo cultural identities emerged. These Bodo cultural identities are the Bathouism, the Bagurumba dance, the Hal Jangkra, and Saori Janai. Similarly, the Bodo language facilitated the Bodos in describing the Bodo marriage custom, religious worship, traditional dance, and agricultural practice. These further contributed towards evolving and enriching the Bodo cultural identities. As a result, the Bodos emerged as a culturally unique community, differing from the other cultural groups. For this reason, we may be right in stating that what the Bodos are culturally known today is because of the Bodo language.

The Bodo Language and the Bodo Grammatical Identity Construction

Similar to facilitating the development of Bodo cultural identity, the Bodo language played a significant role in constructing the Bodo grammatical identity. The Bodo grammatical identity progressed from the Bodos' adhering to the Bodo grammatical norms in speaking and writing. The Bodo grammatical rules are guidelines for forming and using the Bodo words and pronunciations. Following these rules of the Bodo language, the Bodos pronounce the Bodo words and form the adjectives, nouns, pronouns, and gender words in unique ways.³ As a result, the correct pronunciation and accurate composition of words are essential in the Bodo language to convey meaningful messages in different situations. For, the meaning of the Bodo word or the word itself changes depending on the grammatical rules applied to each word.

As a result, the Bodo language possesses many words, which convey different meanings and become new words depending on the grammatical norms applied to each of these words in writing and speaking. Some of the Bodo words corroborate it, which imply different meanings according to the stressed syllables. For example, when placing the stress on the last syllable, the Bodo word gathau denotes an English word for deep. However, this word expresses a different meaning when the stress is on the second syllable; and it signifies an English word for sweet rather than indicating deep (Endle, 1884). Similarly, as the word meaning changes according to the stress on the syllables, the Bodo words' connotations also alter in keeping with the modifications in vowel sounds. Like ara, it is a Bodo word; and it means do not bite. Moreover, aru is another Bodo word formed by changing the vowel sound in ara (Endle, 1884). It stands for a bite. In this manner, the Bodo words change and express different meanings, corresponding to the context of a conversation taking place at the point in time. These suggest that the changes in the syllables and the vowel sounds are essential characteristics of the Bodo language and grammar.

Unlike the modifications in the meanings of the Bodo words through changes in syllables and vowel sounds, the Bodo language has adjectives, nouns, pronouns, and gender words that have been formed either by qualifying words at the end of or by



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placing words before the nouns. In this regard, the gender words in the Bodo language are formed by adding qualifying words at the end of nouns. These are observed in the formation of the Bodo words for both males and females. The Bodo word for male is ho, which is the combination of ho and a. Similarly, the Bodo word for a female is hingzhau, and it is formed by joining zhau to hing. Just as these words, plural Bodo words are formed, adding either fra or fur at the end of the words. Going along this line of forming the plural form of the Bodo words, the singular form of the Bodo word for man is mansi, and it changes into plural form by adding either fra or fur, i.e., mansifra and mansifur (Endle, 1911). The formation of new Bodo words through qualifying a word and adding a word to another constitutes the essential element of Bodo grammar. This way of forming words distinguishes the Bodo grammatical elements from the grammatical features of other languages.

Forming the Bodo gender and plural forms of words is not the only grammatical element indispensable to the Bodo language. Besides this, some adjectives form the fundamental characteristics of the Bodo language. The adjectives have played significant roles in enhancing the richness of the Bodo language. The adjectives can be placed either before or after the nouns in the Bodo language. However, either way, the meanings of the sentences remain the same. One more important characteristic of adjectives in the Bodo language is no separate adjective related to gender words. Therefore, an adjective qualifies either of the gender words. This manner of qualifying words suggests that adjectives in the Bodo language do not require agreeing to gender and noun words (Endle, 1884). In this respect, the Bodo language stands in stark contrast to other languages; and this difference forms one of the unique grammatical elements of the Bodo language.

In addition to the aforementioned grammatical elements, the Bodo language also helped Bodos construct the five classes of pronouns. These pronouns are personal pronouns, relative pronouns, demonstrative pronouns, adjective pronouns, and interrogative pronouns (Hodson, 1847). The Bodo personal pronouns correspond to the English personal pronouns like ang for I, nang for you, and bi for he, she, and it. The plural forms of these personal pronouns are formed by adding far, sar, and sur, such as zangfar for the English personal pronoun we, nangsar for the personal pronoun you, and bisur for personal pronoun they. However, the Bodo personal pronouns possess a strange characteristic; it does not have a separate term for the pronouns of the third person, indicating gender. The use of bi indicates all the third person pronouns. Unlike the personal pronouns, there is no specific relative pronoun in the Bodo language; nevertheless, it is formed by adding zi and zai before or after nouns. On the contrary, the Bodo language has interrogative pronouns. The Bodo interrogative pronouns are like sur for who, ma or mafur for what, and babe for which. Besides these pronouns, there are demonstrative pronouns in the Bodo language. The demonstrative pronouns are be/besur for this/these, boi/boisur for that/those, and bi for that (Endle, 1884). These Bodo pronouns, enriching the Bodo language, gave the Bodos a distinct grammatical identity.

This section discussed the Bodo language's roles in constructing the Bodos' grammatical identity. The study has shown that the Bodo language played a vital role in constructing the Bodos' grammatical identity. The Bodo language helped the Bodos convey different meanings by stressing different syllables and changing the vowel sounds. The Bodo language helped the Bodos form new words by qualifying words and adding prefixes and suffixes. Further, the Bodo language facilitated placing adjectives both before and after nouns. It has also made a single adjective applicable to both genders. In addition, the Bodo language helped construct the five classes of Bodo pronouns, corresponding to the English pronouns. These grammatical features formed Bodos' grammatical identity. The grammatical identity reflects the Bodos' mental capacities and informs us of their identity and hailing place. In the same way, it suggests that the Bodos are an ethnic group whose members are widespread across several states, speaking and writing the Bodo language with a unique style of speaking and writing. Going a little further from this conjecture, it may be correct to state that the Bodos' grammatical identity is fundamental to understanding the Bodos and representing them as a community welded together through the idiom of the Bodo language.

The Bodo Language and the Bodo Ethnic Identity Development

Identity is self-knowledge, and it is always tied to a particular group in society. Moreover, ethnic identity, a part of identity, is a sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group (Epstein & Heizler, 2015). The members of an ethnic group acquire self-knowledge and develop a sense of belonging through the spoken and written forms of language (Hall, 1997). As an identity marker, the language informs the members of an ethnic community about their history, racial origin, and racial characteristics. On account of this, the members of an ethnic community can identify with other members, possessing shared cultural values and historical traditions.⁴ This is apparent in the words of Chavez and Guido-DiBrito (1999). They state that 'Ethnic identity development consists of an individual's movement towards a highly conscious identification with their cultural values, behaviours, beliefs, and traditions' (p. 41). This statement about the development of ethnic identity does not confine to one ethnic group. It is the case with all the ethnic groups, including the Bodos in this study. Despite residing in geographically segmented regions, the Bodos have emerged as a distinct ethnic group through the Bodo language. The Bodo language has assisted the Bodos to attain self-knowledge about their racial features,



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history, and relations with other groups of the Bodo tribe. After acquiring self-knowledge, the Bodos have understood that they are mongoloids by racial origin.

Moreover, the Bodos possess physical characteristics, resembling the other Mongoloids in many respects (Waddell, 1901). Their skin texture is one among the scores of physical features that testifies to the Bodos' possessing the Mongoloids physical characteristics. Like those of Mongoloids, the Bodos have a yellow skin texture.⁵ Over and above, the Bodo language facilitated Bodos in comprehending their customs and traditions, such as religious beliefs and the celebration of festivals (Endle, 1911). After learning about their racial origin, physical characteristics, and cultural practices through the Bodo language, the Bodos have developed a bond of acceptance among themselves. A further result is that the Bodos have emerged as a single ethnic community despite inhabiting different districts and states, separating them from the other ethnic groups. The emergence of Bodos as an ethnic community suggests that the Bodo language played an essential part in Bodos' recognising ethnic markers such as physical characteristics and cultural practices.⁶

Just as obtaining knowledge about their racial characteristics, the Bodos also learned about their history of growth, development, and migration through the Bodo language. The Bodo language helped the Bodos to comprehend that they are the descendants of the Kiratas and the Utkachas of the Epic period, who emerged as one ethnic group due to the latter's acceptance of the customs and practices of the former as their own (Vasu, 1983). Similarly, they too learnt about their established kingdom, the system of governance that was in place, the characteristics of the rulers who ruled, the factors that helped their kingdom flourish, the issues that brought its downfall, and the socio-economic conditions of the then Bodos (Soppitt, 1885). Accordingly, the Bodos got acquainted with the nature of life that their ancestors had lived in the past. This awareness further created a fellow feeling among the Bodos despite dwelling in the geographically divided regions.

Understanding history, the Bodos recognised their connections with the other tribes such as the Koch, the Mech, and the Dhimal. The Bodos grasped that they are all alike, descending from the same ancestors. Vasu (1983) illustrates this understanding in his work entitled *The Social History of Kamrup*. Quoting western ethnologists, he wrote that 'the Koch, the Mech, the Kachari [Bodos], and the Dhimal are all one and the same people having sprang from one common stock' (p. 96). To this common descent, the Bodos recognised from the Bodo words' similarities with the languages spoken by the tribes mentioned above. For example, the English word father is *apha* in the Bodo language, *appa* in the Mech language, *aba* in the Dhimal language, and *awa* in the Koch language. Likewise, the English word mother is *aya* in the Bodo, *amma* in the Dhimal, *aie* in the Mech, and *ame* in the Koch (Dalton, 1872).

Besides these words, many other words are alike in these languages. Just as these, Bodos also understood possessing cultural and religious commonalities between them, the Mech and the Dhimal. The Bodos and the Dhimal would not touch flesh without offering to their gods first (Latham, 1866). Furthermore, the Bodos and the Mech have shared religious beliefs. They both worship *Euphorbia splendens* as the living symbol of the supreme god (Dalton, 1872). Over and above, these tribes have marriage practices that resemble each other's ones. From the similarities illustrated, Bodos and the other groups of the Bodo tribe became conscious about their ethnic oneness in the past. They, too, comprehended that they emerged as the different ethnic groups because they took up residence at distant places searching for greener pastures. As a result of realisation, there developed a mutual feeling of closeness between the Bodos, Dhimal, Koch, and Mech. However, apart from this growth of closeness, Bodos and tribes mentioned above have not progressed further to emerge as one tribal community.

This section explained the roles of the Bodo language in constructing the Bodo ethnic identity. It has illustrated that the Bodo language played an important role in constructing the Bodo ethnic identity. The Bodo language helped the Bodos gain self-knowledge about their history, racial origin, and physical characteristics. As a result, the Bodos developed a bond of acceptance among themselves. The Bodos too came to know about their ancestors, the establishment of the kingdom and the nature of governance. This knowledge, too, generated a fellow feeling among the Bodos. Besides, the Bodos became aware of their connections with the Dhimal, the Koch, and the Mech. Due to these understandings, the Bodos developed a sense of sameness among themselves. Indeed, this sense of sameness created an artificial boundary between the Bodos and others with different cultures and languages. Although all individuals frowned upon this, it helped the Bodos emerge as one ethnic group, despite residing in different regions and states. Hence, we can be right in stating that the Bodo ethnic identity is a gift of the Bodo language to the Bodos.

A Glance at the Progress of the Bodo Language

A chunk of the Bodo population assimilated into the Assamese community (Nath, 2003), adopting the Assamese language with proselytisation (Prabhakar, 1974). This assimilation created awareness among the Bodos. Similarly, with Assamisation, the Bodos



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realised that they would not preserve ‘their language and identity’(Bhattacharyya, 2005). After this realisation, the Bodos started a powerful agitation for adopting the Bodo language and introducing the Bodo language as ‘a language of literature and culture and instruction in the schools and the colleges’ in Assam (Chatterji, 1951). As a result of this agitation, the Bodo language became ‘a medium of instruction at the primary and secondary school levels’(Das,1994). Despite getting recognition, the Bodo language did not possess script, and the Bodos wrote their language in Assamese script. However, with the sense of economic exploitation dawning on them, the Bodos rejected the Assamese script and demanded a different script for the Bodo language (Prabhakar, 1974). They demanded adopting the Roman script for the Bodo language and giving due recognition to the Bodo language (Das, 1994). After two long years of agitation, the Bodos accepted the Devnagari script instead of the Roman script due to the Central government’s influence (Bhattacharyya, 2005).

However, this was not the end of Bodos’ agitation. The Bodos again demanded constitutional protection for the Bodo language by including it in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. As a result, the Bodo language got constitutional protection through its inclusion in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution (Bhattacharyya, 2005). Further, the Bodo language and literature have been offered as a postgraduate study program and one of the modern Indian languages papers in several universities.

The Bodos, too, have made several achievements at the regional, national, and as well as in international levels. One of these achievements is that the Bodos have formed political parties at the regional level. Second, the Bodo dancers receive invitations to perform in international seminars. These achievements indicate that the Bodos are gradually getting recognition.

Conclusion

This study aimed to examine the multiple roles of the Bodo language in constructing the Bodos' cultural, grammatical, and ethnic identities. The study used analytical and explanatory methods to explore and explain how the Bodo language helped the Bodos construct unique identities. It has been found that the Bodo language played varied and significant roles in creating the Bodos' identities. The Bodo language helped the Bodos construct the religious-based cultural identity as Bathouism by enabling them to name, worship and illustrate the philosophy of traditional religion. Similarly, the Bodo language assisted the Bodos in creating the Bagurumba dance as a cultural identity through dancing to Bodo Bagurumba song and music.

Further, the Bodo language facilitated the Bodos in producing the grammatical identity by framing rules about forming words, nouns, pronouns, adjectives, pronunciations, and gender words. Besides, the Bodo language aided the Bodos in developing their ethnic identity by enlightening their racial origin, physical features, history, and connections with the Mech, the Koch, and the Dhimal. These findings align with Lawler’s notion of identity,⁷ and corroborating language helps construct identities by fashioning individuals into sameness and difference. The study gives insight into the different roles of the Bodo language in constructing the Bodos’ identities. Although the present study throws much light on the various roles of the Bodo language in constructing the Bodos’ cultural, grammatical, and ethnic identities, the influences of these identities on the individual and group behaviour of the Bodos require investigation. Therefore, the future study should focus on studying the resulting behaviour of the Bodos from the cultural, grammatical, and ethnic identities that have developed. This study will help Bodos understand both the positive and negative effects of identity construction. The Bodos will further learn to preserve and enrich their grammatical, cultural, and ethnic identities.

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3. This line of reasoning is taken from Meinhof and Galasinski (2005), ‘The Grammar of Identity’, pp. 50-51.
4. For further detailed illustrations regarding the role of language in ethnic identity formation, see Obeng and Adegbiya (1999), ‘Sub-Saharan African’, in Joshua A. Fishman (Ed.), *Handbook of language and Ethnic Identity*, p. 353.
5. This reasoning is derived from the illustrations of Kirata’s skin texture as yellow. For details, see Chatterji(1951), *Kirata-Jana-Krti the Indo-Mongoloids: Their Contribution to the History and Culture of India*, p. 31
6. This idea is borrowed from Borah, Deka, and Bhuyan (2022), ‘Ethnicity and fragmented identity: Diverse forms of Identity formation among the Misings of Assam’, *Asian Ethnicity*, 23(1), p. 67.
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