

# Asian Resonance

## Verbal Suffix –Lai in Boro

### Abstract

The main focus of this paper is to draw a light on the verbal suffix –lai which has two fold functions in Boro language based on its tone. –lai when articulated using low tone represents reciprocal meaning and when articulated in high tone represents both. Based on the intonation of the speaker this suffix may also represent negative and interrogative meaning in the language. So, an attempt has been made to reflect this variety of uses this suffix –lai have in the language.

**Keywords:** affix based, again, derivational, inflectional, verbal construction

### Introduction

Tone occupies an important place in differentiating the meaning of both as the language is a highly tonal language and presently it is continuing with two distinct tones representing high and low. When used as *reciprocal* it is articulated in *low tone* represented by the symbol <sup>2</sup> either at the beginning or end of a syllable where the prominence falls and when used as *again/repeat* it is articulated in *high tone* represented by the symbol <sup>1</sup> and both have very frequent uses in the language. This suffix is added to all types of verbs in this language.

a) *nyŋ-syr be-k<sup>h</sup>yu za-<sup>2</sup>lai.*

2-PL this-ACCU eat-RECP.

'you (pl) eat it together.'

b) *nyŋ-syr be-k<sup>h</sup>yu za-<sup>1</sup>lai.*

2-PL this-ACCU eat-AGA.

'you (pl) eat it again.'

Here, based on tone two different meanings from the same sentence as mentioned in example no. 1 (a & b) above have been found and both have equally been used with the verb za 'eat'. Despite almost similar types of uses mentioned above it can be explained that again denoting suffix –lai can be used both with singular and plural number of personal pronouns but reciprocal denoting suffix is used only with plural forms of personal pronouns as this always represent relationship/contrast of one with the other.

a) *nyŋ be-k<sup>h</sup>yu ma-<sup>h</sup>ɔ-<sup>1</sup>lai.*

2SG this-ACCU do-MOM-AGA

'you do it again for few moments.'

The same sentence can be changed to plural by using plural suffix –syr with the pronoun nyŋ 'you' where both again and reciprocal denoting suffix can be used, e.g.

b) *nyŋ-syr be-k<sup>h</sup>yu ma-<sup>h</sup>ɔ-<sup>1</sup>lai.*

2-PL this-ACCU do-MOM-AGA

'you (pl) do it again for few moments.'

c) *nyŋ-syr be-k<sup>h</sup>yu ma-<sup>h</sup>ɔ-<sup>2</sup>lai.*

2-PL this-ACCU do-MOM-RECP

'you (pl) do it together for few moments.'

a) *nyŋ-syr za-zyb-<sup>1</sup>lai.*

2-PL eat-complete-AGA

'you (pl.) eat up completely again.'

b) *nyŋ-syr za-zyb-<sup>2</sup>lai.*

2-PL eat-complete-RECP

'you (pl.) mutually/together eat up completely'

c) *bi-syr nɔ-a buŋ-p<sup>h</sup>yi-<sup>1</sup>lai-duŋ.*



**Swarna Prabha Chainary**

Associate Professor,  
Deptt. of Bodo  
Gauhati University,  
Assam, India

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3-PL home-LOC speak-come-AGA -CONT  
'they have come to home and speaking again.'

**b) *bi-sʏr nɔ-aɔ buŋ-pʰɯi-<sup>2</sup>lai-dʏŋ.***

3-PL home-LOC speak-come-RECP -CONT  
'they have come to home and speaking together.'

The sentence number 4.b) is not only representing the meaning as mentioned above but based on the situation of its use it may also represent the meaning of showing dislike to those persons or speakers who have come to him/her and speaking something.

In the above sentences from 1-3 the verbal suffix -lai have been used with simple verb in no.1 sentence; with complex in no. 2 and with compound in no. 3. This shows that -lai can be used with each and every category of verbs in the language.

One of the most important features to be mentioned in case of Boro suffixes is that when there is a string of two or more suffixes with a word then the suffixes can interchange their places without bringing any changes to the meaning of the word or sentence. On the other hand when a suffix is used with two compound words basically the verbs then instead of using after the verbs it can be used in between two verbs keeping the meaning intact. To prove the above two comments let me bring back some examples mentioned above. In example no. 2.c) two suffixes -<sup>1</sup>ɔ-<sup>2</sup>lai have been used after the verb *maɔ*. These two suffixes can be replaced to each other without changing the meaning of the sentence, e.g.

**a) *nʏŋ-sʏr be-kʰɯu maɔ-<sup>2</sup>lai-<sup>1</sup>ɔ.***

2-PL this-ACCU do-RECP-MOM

'you (pl) do it together for few moments.'

The one more example which is going to be discussed here is example no. 4.b) mentioned above. In this example also the reciprocal -lai has been used after two verb roots *buŋ* and *pʰɯi*. But the place of this suffix can be replaced and it can be brought in between two verb roots without bringing any changes to the meaning of the sentence, e.g.

**b) *bi-sʏr nɔ-aɔ buŋ-<sup>2</sup>lai-pʰɯi-dʏŋ***

3-PL home-LOC speak-RECP-come -CONT

'they have come to home and speaking together.'

The taking place of the suffixes either at the rear of words or in between the words and not changing the meaning either of the suffix or the words is considered to be a very peculiar feature of this language which we can get from the examples given above.

In the above mentioned sentences addition of the verbal suffix -lai is representing positive meanings. But sometimes a sentence having all positive denoting words and suffix -lai with verb may represent negative meaning based on the intonation used by the speaker, e.g.

**a) *nʏŋ bi-sʏr-ni-aɔ tʰaŋ-<sup>1</sup>lai.***

2SG 3-PL-GEN-LOC go-AGA

1. 'you again visit to them.'

2. 'you don't visit to them again.'

The English rendering in (i) above is a simple declarative sentence having positive meaning due to combination of all positive denoting words and the

intonation used by the speaker being straight and only declarative either requesting or commanding the person to visit someone again. On the other hand in no. (ii) rendering it is representing a negative meaning because the speaker is not liking your visit to them and so is changing the intonation of his/her bringing a negative meaning to the sentence which is full of positive words. The case is same in the sentence no. 6.b) given below.

**b) *nʏŋ be-kʰɯu-nʏ buŋ-<sup>1</sup>lai.***

2SG this-ACCU-DEFN speak-AGA

1. 'you definitely speak about it again.'

2. 'you definitely don't speak about it again.'

The example no. 6.(b) can be changed to reciprocal positive and negative denoting sentences by changing the second person singular number to plural.

**c) *nʏŋ-sʏr be-kʰɯu-nʏ buŋ-<sup>2</sup>lai.***

2-PL this-ACCU-DEFN speak-RECP

1. 'you speak about it to each other.'

2. 'you don't speak about it to each other.'

The same sentence can again be used with 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> person plurals to represent reciprocal interrogative meaning based again on mood and intonation used by the speaker. When it is to be used as reciprocal interrogative one more suffix is to be added after the suffix -lai, e.g.

**d) *nʏŋ-sʏr be-kʰɯu-nʏ buŋ-<sup>2</sup>lai-dʏŋ***

2-PL this-ACCU-DEFN speak-RECP-CONT

1. 'you are speaking about it to each other.'

2. 'are you speaking about it to each other?'

**e) *bi-sʏr be-kʰɯu-nʏ buŋ-<sup>2</sup>lai-dʏŋ.***

3-PL this-ACCU-DEFN speak-RECP-CONT

1. 'they are speaking about it to each other.'

2. 'are they speaking about it to each other?'

Two reciprocals or two again denoting suffixes may be used with a single verb at a time. When two reciprocals are added one after the other they represent the meaning of more emphasis given to the action of the verb. It has very frequent uses in the language. One reciprocal and one again denoting suffix may also be stringed together with a verb but the reverse is not possible.

**a) *nʏŋ-sʏr <sup>1</sup>lai-<sup>2</sup>lai-<sup>2</sup>lai.***

2-PL bring-RECP-RECP

'you (pl) bring together with each other.'

**b) *nʏŋ-sʏr <sup>1</sup>lai-<sup>1</sup>lai-<sup>1</sup>lai***

2-PL bring-AGA-AGA

'you (pl) bring again and again.'

**c) *nʏŋ-sʏr <sup>1</sup>lai-<sup>2</sup>lai-<sup>1</sup>lai***

2-PL bring-RECP-AGA

'you (pl) bring together again.'

When used with the second person the reciprocal or again denoting suffix may be used as terminating suffix but when used with the third person plural it always takes one more suffix as terminating, e.g.

**d) *bi-sʏr <sup>1</sup>lai-<sup>2</sup>lai-<sup>2</sup>lai-dʏŋ.***

3-PL bring-RECP-RECP-CONT

'they are bringing together with each other.'

**e) *bi-sʏr <sup>1</sup>lai-<sup>2</sup>lai-<sup>1</sup>lai-<sup>1</sup>ɯŋ.***

3-PL bring-RECP-RECP/AGA-DEFN

1. 'let them bring together with each other.'

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2. 'let them bring together again.'

In the above given examples of verbal suffix -lai used as reciprocals only you (pl) and they have been used but no exact number of participants have been included. In reverse to that in the following examples the exact number of persons involved in reciprocal is going to be included.

**a) Hari Gautom aru Gymbur-a bu-<sup>2</sup>lai-duŋ.**

Hari Gautom CONJ Gymbur-NOM fight-RECP-CONT

'Hari Gautom and Gymbur are fighting to each other.'

**b) Hari aru Gautom-a Gymbur-zuŋ bu-<sup>2</sup>lai-duŋ.**

Hari CONJ Gautom-NOM Gwymbur-INST strike-RECP-CONT

'Hari and Gautom are fighting with Gymbur.'

Here, in the example 8(a) Hari, Gautom and Gymbur all three are fighting to each other without any concrete result of who actually is winning or losing and each of the three is fighting with each of the three. Who is participating in what kind is not clear in the example and it is only understood that all of them are fighting to each other. In example number 8(b) Hari and Gautom are included in one group and Gymbur is included in the other group and both Hari and Gautom are fighting with Gymbur and Gymbur is fighting to both of them in return. In both the sentences the types of reciprocal are different.

Besides verbs the suffix -lai may also be used with deverbal and non-deverbal adjectives in Boro language. This language has a lot of deverbal adjectives formed either by using prefix or suffix. When used with deverbal adjectives it neither represents reciprocal nor again meaning but represents the meaning of doubt or surprise and the sentence always represents interrogative meaning, e.g.

**a) be p<sup>h</sup>it<sup>h</sup>ai-a guɖuŋi-lai ma-t<sup>h</sup>u?**

this fruit-NOM sweet-DOUB/SURP what-EMPH

'see this fruit is sweet?'

**b) be mua-a muɖzaŋ-lai ma-t<sup>h</sup>u?**

this thing-NOM good-DOUB/SURP what-EMPH

'see this thing is good?'

Here, *guɖuŋi* is deverbal adjective and *muɖzaŋ* is non-deverbal i.e. pure adjective. In sentence no. 9(a) the speaker thought that the fruit is not good. S/he had some doubt on fruit. But when it was detected that the fruit is good then s/he was in surprise that the result is coming opposite of what s/he has thought. The condition is same to the sentence no. 7(b). Suffix -lai when used with adjective in a sentence the sentence always turns to interrogative and the suffix -lai represents the meaning of doubt or surprise.

The suffix -lai is also used with some particles and when used with particles it represents the meaning of 'again', e.g. aru (and)-lai> arulai 'and again'. But as it does not come within the boundary verbal so is not bringing it under present discussion.

The above examples show that the verbal suffix -lai has a variety of uses in Boro language. Though it is

basically known as reciprocal it may also be used as again denoting suffix and also as doubt/surprise denoting suffix when used with deverbal adjectives. Based on mood of the speaker and intonation it may also represent negative and interrogative sense besides positive. So, this suffix is occupying a very prominent place either in the verbal or non-verbal construction of the language.

## List of Abbreviations

2-2 <sup>nd</sup> person	3-3 <sup>rd</sup> person
accu-accusative	aga-again
conj-conjunction	cont-continuous
defn-definitive	doub-doubt
emph-emphatic	gen-genitive
inst -instrumental	loc-locative
mom-moment	nom-nominative
pl-plural	recp-reciprocal
sg-singular	surp-surprise

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