

# Introduction

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## Background of the Study

This thesis, titled ‘Conceptual and Grammatical Linking of Clauses in Assamese and Mising: A Comparative Study’, is a study on the grammar and meaning of clause-linking in Assamese and Mising.

Language is the principal tool with which we talk about the world around us. A sentence is, thus, a grammatical unit that talks about a situation in the world, where generally we have nouns as grammatical counterparts of things involved in the situation and a verb as a grammatical counterpart of the relation involved between them. Hence, the sentence, ‘The man-eater killed a man in the village last night’, refers to a situation where a thing (i.e., a tiger) came into contact with another thing (i.e., a man) in a particular way (i.e., killing). The particular relation took place in a particular location in space (i.e., the village), and at a particular point of time (i.e., yesterday). Then, we have the tense marker *–ed* attached to the verb, and also the temporal elements ‘yesterday’ to indicate the time of the action.

A clause is the name of a grammatical device that talks about a situation in the world. Every sentence is made of at least one clause. But every clause may not be a sentence.

Hence, any simple sentence is also a clause. This in turn also means that a clause basically expresses a situation. For example, the sentence, ‘She baked a cake to send it to her mother’, denotes two situations. In other words, the sentence is made of two clauses indicating two situations: (a) She baked a cake by herself; (b) to send it to her mother. While (a) is grounded in past time, (b) is not grounded in time. Thus, (a) is a tensed, temporal clause, technically called a ‘finite clause’; (b) is a non-tensed, atemporal clause, technically called a ‘non-finite clause’. Basically, clauses are, thus, of two types: finite and non-finite. Furthermore, the second clause ‘to send it to her mother’ modifies the first clause indicating its purpose. Therefore, every clause has its distinct meaning. The sentence, ‘She baked a cake to send it to her mother’, is an integration of two clauses, one finite, the other non-finite, forming a coherent thought.

In life, actions often have a specific purpose or goal. Thus, situations in the world are interconnected and have meaningful relationships with one another. This explains why clause-linking is essential.

The current thesis is a study of how clauses are grammatically combined in Assamese and Mising, based on meaning making. As observed, in the sentence, ‘She baked a cake to send it to her mother’, the meaning implies that something is done to do something else. The grammatical way of expressing this meaning is combining one finite clause with a non-finite clause using *to*. But in a sentence like, ‘If she comes to the party, I would like to join’, the meaning is conditional. That is, only if the conditional action happens, the other action will happen. In this case, the clauses are combined in a different grammatical way with the conditional subordinator *if*.

This thesis adopts the framework of Cognitive Linguistics, developed by Ronald Langacker, Leonard Talmy, George Lakoff, Gilles Fauconnier, John R. Taylor, and others. The framework offers a compelling alternative to Chomskyan linguistics which dominated the field for decades. Chomskyan linguistics hold that grammar is an autonomous construct from above. In sharp contrast, Cognitive Linguistics holds that grammar is a human construct shaped by our perception and understanding of the world.

The present work investigates how Assamese and Mising structure clause-linking based on chosen construal, conceptual links between the situations, and underlying semantics and conceptualizations.

## **Linguistic Profiles of Assamese and Mising languages**

### ***Assamese***

Assamese is the primary language of Assam, a northeastern province of India. It is also the lingua franca of the broader region called the Northeast. According to Census of India (2011), Assamese has over 15 million native speakers. Both ‘Assam’ and ‘Assamese’ are anglicized versions of the native terms, respectively, *axom* and *axomija*. The derivational suffix *-ija* in *axom-ija* means possession so that *axom-ija* translates to ‘the people to whom *axom* or Assam belongs.’ A metonymically extended meaning of *axomija* is the people who speak the main language of *axom*, i.e., the Assamese language. Assamese was granted classical language status, on October 3, 2024, by the Union Cabinet, Govt. of India.

Assamese is an Indo-Aryan language of the Indo-European language family. Although its origin and growth are not immediately clear, it is believed to have originated from an Old Indo-Aryan dialect, more specifically, from the Kamrupa Apabhramsa of the Magadhi Prakrit in the east (Goswami, 1982, p. 3). Assamese has its script called the Assamese script, which evolved from the Sanskrit script in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. According to Patgiri (2022), Assamese has three main regional dialects: Sibsagaria, Kamrupi, and Goalparia. The Sibsagaria dialect is regarded as the standard dialect of Assamese and used in formal domains. In contrast, the Kamrupi and the Goalparia dialects are regarded as non-standard and are spoken in the Kamrup and the Goalparia districts of Assam, respectively.

Assam and Northeast India have been a linguistic hotspot, hosting more than 200 languages belonging to four language families, namely, Indo-Aryan (Assamese, Bengali, Hindi, Sylheti, etc.), Austro-Asiatic (Khasi, Munda, etc.), Tibeto-Burman (Bodo, Mising, Tiwa, Rabha, Karbi, Singpho, etc.), Tai-Kadai (Tai-Khamti, Tai-Turung, etc.). These languages, have hugely influenced Assamese. Hence, due to such an influence, Modern Assamese has emerged with many non-Aryan attributes and presents huge alterations in all aspects of grammar, viz. phonology, morphology, syntax, and vocabulary.

### **Some non-Aryan influences in *Assamese***

**Phonology:** A complete disappearance of the Indo-Aryan dental and retroflex sounds and the emergence of a series of alveolar stops, not found in any Indo-Aryan language, in its stead.

The voiceless velar fricative /x/ in Assamese (similar to German ‘ch’) is not found in any other Indo-Aryan language and has likely replaced all original Indo-Aryan sibilants in the language.

**Morphology:** Modern Assamese retained only some its inflections which is a characteristic feature of Old Indo-Aryan language from which Assamese is believed to have evolved. The language, as is spoken today, is more isolating and agglutinating with no grammatical markers for number and gender, unlike Hindi or even its source language Sanskrit, which have retained all the grammatical number and gender inflections.

**Vocabulary:** Assamese has a unique class of nouns of relationships, that vary depending on the relative age or seniority of the person involved. Hence, we have in Assamese the following (among others): *ma* ‘mother’, *deuta* ‘father’, *baideu* ‘elder sister’, *b<sup>h</sup>inihi* ‘elder sister’s husband’, *b<sup>h</sup>oni* ‘younger sister’, *b<sup>h</sup>oni-zuwai* ‘younger sister’s husband’, *kokaideu* ‘elder brother’, *nobou* ‘elder brother’s wife’, *b<sup>h</sup>aiti* ‘younger brother’, *b<sup>h</sup>ai-buwari* ‘younger brother’s wife’. These nouns of relationships is primarily a Munda (Austro-Asiatic branch) influence in Assamese. (see Kakati, 1941; Goswami & Tamuli, 2003)

### **Early Assamese literature**

Assamese possess a rich and distinguished literary tradition. The earliest evidence of Assamese writing date back to the thirteenth century, when Hema Saraswati, the first known Assamese poet, composed the lengthy poem *Prahlad Sarit*. This poem marks the beginning of the identifiable literary work in Assamese literature. However, the most renowned poet of this period was Madhav Kandali, who translated the entire *Ramayana* into Assamese.

The second half of the early literary period in Assamese was primarily centered around Sankardev, a prominent social reformer and literary genius who introduced neo-Vaishnavism in Assam. The literary centers shifted from royal courts to the Sattras (monasteries) and the theme of the literary works became predominantly religious. During this period, Sankardev introduced new styles and forms, including one-act plays called *ankiya naat* in Assamese. He also created the Brajawali language, which was used in Bhaona (plays) and Borgeet (devotional songs).

A significant turning point in Modern Assamese literature was the publication of the first Assamese periodical called *Arunoday* in 1846 by the American Baptist Missionaries. After two decades, Miles Bronson compiled the first Assamese-English dictionary in 1867 (See Goswami, 1982, p. 18).

### **Linguistic Studies on Assamese**

The first linguistic work on modern Assamese language was Anandaram Dhekial Phukan's *A few remarks on the Assamese language* (1836), in which he claimed that Assamese is not a dialect but a sister language to Bengali.

William Robinson, who served as an Inspector of Schools during the British rule in Assam, authored the first grammar of the Assamese language, titled, *A Grammar of the Assamese Language* in 1839. The second grammar of the language was brought out by Nathan Brown in 1848, entitled *Grammatical Notices of the Assamese Language*. It was Rev. Brown's work which extended the first objective study of the language and established the fact that Assamese is not a language derived from Bengali but an independent language in its own right. He also highlighted the differences between Assamese and its source language, Sanskrit, and proposed that Assamese might have been formed through a combination of Sanskrit and an extinct native non-Aryan language. Rev. Brown also compiled the first Assamese dictionary, which was published in 1867.

Hemchandra Barua was the first native speaker to write a grammar of the Assamese language, titled *Asomiya Bhasar Byakaran* (The grammar of Assamese) published in 1860. Barua also compiled *Hemkosh*, the first comprehensive dictionary of Assamese, which continues to be highly regarded despite the passage of time.

Another significant grammatical work of the Assamese language was written by Satyanath Borah in 1925, titled *Bahal Byakaran* (A Comprehensive Grammar).

Borah's work was followed by Kaliram Medhi's 1936 grammar of the Assamese language, titled *Asamiya Bhaxatatwa aru Byakaran* (Assamese Linguistics and Grammar) which is one of the most significant grammatical works in Assamese.

Dr. Banikanta Kakati's *Assamese: Its Formation and Development* (originally his PhD dissertation submitted to Calcutta University in 1935) is a monumental work on the history and development of the Assamese language. It was one of the first linguistic works on Assamese to receive a wide scholarly attention and recognition. Noted Linguist and Indologist E.B. Emeneau described Dr. Kakati's (1941) work as "groundbreaking". Dr. Kakati was the first to linguistically establish the identity of the Assamese language and discussed its non-Aryan attributes.

The next significant work on Assamese is G. C. Goswami's *The Structure of Assamese* (1982). It is the first synchronic study of standard Assamese, encompassing its phonology, morphology, and syntax. Goswami's other important works include *An Introduction to Assamese Phonology* (1966), and *Asamiya bhaxar maulik bisar* (A New Treatment of the Assamese Language) published in 1994, and *Asamiya Golok-Byakaran* (Assamese Golok-Grammar. The author's first name was Golok) published in 1972.

Dr. Upendra Nath Goswami's *A Study of Kamrupi: A dialect of Assamese* (1970) is another significant work on the non-standard Kamrupi dialect of Assamese (see Goswami, 1982, p. 25).

A more recent important work by Golok C. Goswami and Jyotiprakash Tamuli is "Asamiya" published in George Cardona and Dhanesh Jain edited *The Indo-Aryan Languages* (2003, pp. 429-484).

A modern perspective on Assamese grammar is Jagat C. Kalita's *Adhunik Asamiya Byakaran* (Modern Assamese Grammar) published in 2019. Runima Chowdhury published *The Assamese verb* in 2022.

### Some major grammatical features of Assamese

Assamese is a numeral classifier language with no grammatical mass-count distinction, as established by Borah (2008). The basic word order in Assamese is SOV, although the word order is flexible due to the use of case markers.

An agglutinative language, nouns in Assamese are inflected for number, classifiers and case. The case system is ergative-absolutive. Assamese is a pro-drop language and exhibits person agreement markers. It is characterized by postpositions. As pointed out by Borah (2010), Assamese employs two tense markers: past *-isil* as in (1a), and future *-m* for first person as in (1b), and *-bo* for second and third person as in (1c) below.

(1a) *moi kali bozaroloi goisilu*

moi	kali	bozar-oloi	go-isil-u
I	yesterday	market-ALL	go-PST-1

‘I went to the market yesterday.’

(1b) *moi bozaroloi zam*

moi	bozar-oloi	za-m
I	market-ALL	go-FUT

‘I will go to the market.’

(1c) *xi bozaroloi zabo*

xi	bozar-oloi	za-bo
he	market-ALL	go-FUT

‘He will go to the market.’

The present tense is unmarked in Assamese. It also utilizes three grammatical aspects: ingressive progressive (as proposed by Borah (2016a)) marked by *-is* as in (1d), progressive marked by *-i.as* as in (1f), and perfect marked by *-il* as in (1g) below.

(1d) *boroxun dise*

boroxun	de-is-e
rain	give-ING.PROG-3

‘It’s beginning to rain.’

(1f) *boroxun di ase*  
 boroxun        de-i.as-e  
 rain            give-PROG-3  
 ‘It is raining.’

(1g) *moi b<sup>h</sup>at k<sup>h</sup>alu*  
 moi    b<sup>h</sup>at    k<sup>h</sup>a-l-u  
 I        rice    eat-PRF-1  
 ‘I have eaten.’

According to Patgiri’s unpublished PhD thesis (2022), Assamese has twenty-three consonants, eight vowels, and fourteen diphthongs. It is a non-tonal language.

### ***Mising***

Mising is the language of the Mising people (previously referred to as ‘Miri’) in Assam, a northeastern state of India. It belongs to the Eastern Tani group of the Tibeto-Burman branch of the Sino-Tibetan language family. According to the Census of India (2011), Mising has approximately 629,954 speakers.

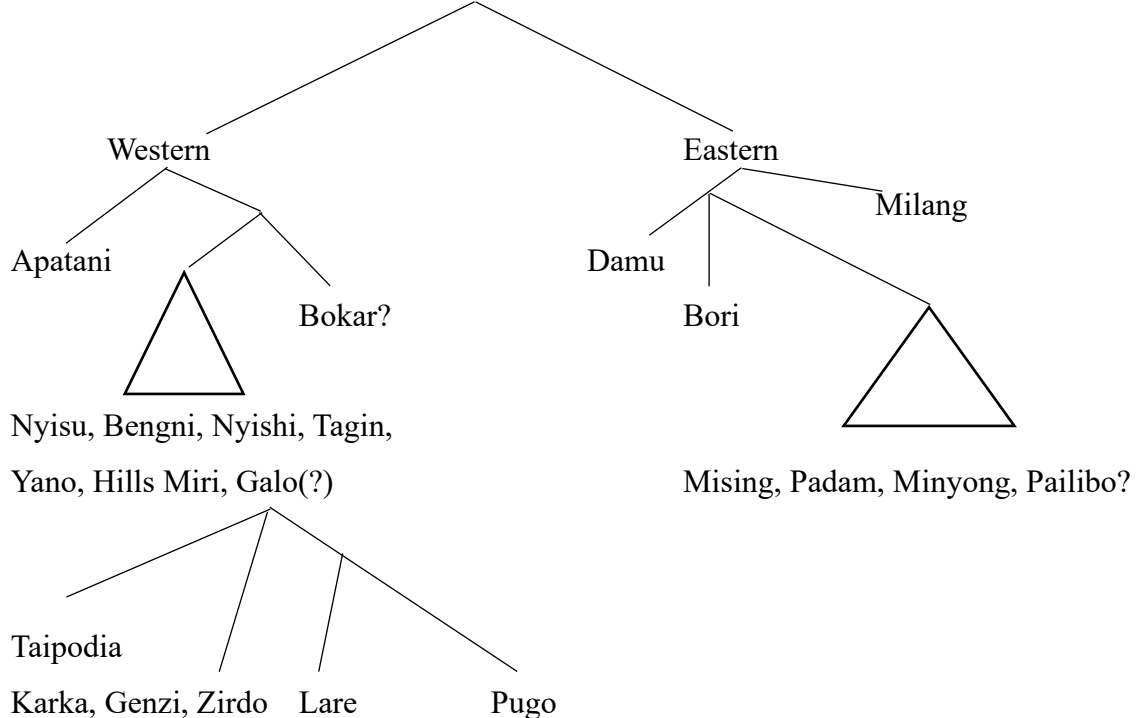
George Grierson in his *Linguistic Survey of India* (1909) calls Mising a part of a cluster of languages belonging to the “North Assam Group” of the Tibeto-Burman language family. However, the name “North Assam Group” was given by Grierson purely based on the geographical area these languages were spoken and not based on any linguistic criteria as accepted by Grierson himself. Bal Ram Prasad in his *Mising Grammar* (1985) calls these languages as “tani languages” as the speakers of these languages call themselves *tani* meaning ‘man’ and their language *taniagom* meaning ‘language of man’. The word *agom* in Mising means ‘speech’. According to Taid (1992, 1995) as well, these languages are grouped under the label of Tani languages i.e., a group of people who trace their history as descendants of Abotani or Abutani meaning ‘father-man’.

Jackson Sun, is a Taiwanese linguist renowned for his pioneering work in Tani Languages has proposed the following provisional Tani Stammbaum (see the figure that follows) in his Ph.D. thesis *A Historical Comparative Study of the Tani (Mirish) Branch in Tibeto-*



*Burman* (1993). Another notable scholar in Tani languages is Mark W. Post, whose PhD thesis *A Grammar of Galo* is a valuable addition to the study of Tani languages.

Sino-Tibetan > Tibeto-Burman > Tani



### Provisional Tani Stammbaum (based on Sun, 1993)

Mising has significant linguistic affinities with many languages in central Arunachal Pradesh, especially the cluster of Adi languages. However, divided by political borders, Mising and Adi are now treated as separate languages. In his Ph.D. thesis, Pegu (2010) establishes that the *mo:jiŋ* and the *sa:jaŋ* dialects of Mising are closer to the Adi language, as they share more cognate dialects.

Mising is primarily spoken in eight districts of Assam: Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, Jorhat, Golaghat, Sivasagar and Sonitpur. Taid (1992, 1995) identifies seven dialects of Mising: *pagro*, *d3lu*, *dambug*, *ojan*, *sa:jaŋ*, *mo:jiŋ* and *samua*. Pegu (2010) lists eight traditionally recognized dialects of Mising: *pagro*, *d3lu*, *ojan*, *dambug*, *sa:jaŋ*, *mo:jiŋ*, *somua* and *samuguria*. While, Doley & Post (2012) identify nine dialects of Mising: *pagro*, *d3lu*, *dambug*, *ojan*, *sa:jaŋ*, *mo:jiŋ*, *samuguria*, *tamargoja* and *boŋkual*.

The earliest study on the Mising language can be attributed to the British officer William Robinson's work, titled "Notes on the languages spoken by various tribes inhabiting the valley of Assam and its mountain confines" published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society* in 1849.

However, the British officer Prof. J.F. Needham was the first to write a basic grammar of the Mising language, titled *Outline Grammar of the Shaiyang Miri Language* published in 1886. This work marked the first printed use of the term "Mising" to refer to the Mising people. A missionary named Jackman published a primer in the language titled *Mishi Padam Agome* (1908) with the intention of teaching the language. Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India* (1909) also dedicates a few pages to the Mising or Miri languages. British officer J. Herbert Lorrain's *A dictionary of the Abor-Miri Language* (1910) is the first ever lexicographic work in the language.

Sonaram Pangyang was the first native speaker to write on the language. In 1915, he published a thin Assamese-Mising wordbook, titled *Miri-duwan*. In 1935, he wrote *Miri Jaatir Buranji* (A History of the Mising people). However, Pangyang wrote in Assamese and used the Assamese script for the Mising data as well. Unfortunately, the Assamese script could not adequately represent all the phonemic features of the Mising language. Consequently, a systematic attempt began in 1968 to adopt a script that could accurately capture its unique characteristics. Until then Mising had no written tradition of its own and consequently no script of its own. In 1972, Mising Agom Kebang (The Mising Language Society), the apex organization of the Misings, was formed to preserve and develop the Mising language. The Mising Agom Kebang pioneered the adoption of the Roman script for the Mising language in 1978.

Noted scholars, Nahendra Padun and Tabu Ram Taid are two prominent literary figures in Mising. They were the founding members of Mising Agom Kebang, with Padun serving as the founder general secretary and Taid as the founder president of the organization. In 2007, Mising Agom Kebang conferred the title of "Agom Migang" on Taid. In 2010, the Sahitya Akademi awarded him the prestigious "Bhasa Samman Award" in recognition of his valuable contributions to the Mising language.

Nahendra Padun's most significant work is *Mising Asomiya Path*, published in 1981 by Asom Sahitya Sabha. It is a concise grammar book designed for pedagogical purposes. In 1989, Padun published *Mising Gomlam* (Mising Language Grammar), primarily intended for school students. His two other important works include *Mising Bhasar Aavash* published in 2004, and *Mising Bhasa Shikhya* in 2016.

Tabu Ram Taid's important works include *A Dictionary of the Mising Language* published by ABILAC in 1995. Taid later expanded his 1995 dictionary and published *Mising Gompir Kumsung* (A Granary of Mising words), a voluminous trilingual dictionary in the Mising, Assamese and English languages. It was published by ABILAC in 2010. This expanded version included not only the meanings of the words in Mising but also an introductory section to the phonology, morphology, and syntax of the Mising language. The grammar part of this lexicographic work was subsequently revised and published in the author's *An Introduction to Mising Phonology and Grammar* (2016), published by ABILAC. His article "A Short Note on Mising Phonology" was published in the journal *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* in 1987. Another important work by Taid is *Mising Gomlam Potin* published in 2015.

Bal Ram Prasad's *Mising Grammar* (1991) is the first grammar written by a linguist. It was published by the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore. This grammar is an outline of the language for pedagogical purposes.

Ghanashyam Taye published another lexicographic work in the language in 2016, titled *Sankhipta Mising-Asomia Sabdakosh* (A Compact Mising-Assamese Dictionary).

In 2018, Nahendra Padun published a dictionary titled *Asomia Miching Sabdakosh* (Assamese-Mising Bilingual Dictionary) by Mising Agom Kebang.

Some other important works on the Mising language include: Nahendra Padun's edited book *Bhasar Tatwa-katha* (2004) contains a chapter titled "Mising bhaxat sabda-bibhakti" by Dr. Basanta Kumar Doley; Tabu Taid's article "Mising Bhasa Sahitya" published in his book *Akuki Nirbondho* (2007). Upen Rabha Hakacham's *Asomor Bhasa Upobhaxa* (2001) also contains a chapter on the Mising language. Dr. Basanta Kumar Doley's article "Mising Bhasar Rup" published in Biswajit Das and Phukan Chandra

Basumatary's edited volume *Asomia aru Asomor Bhasa* is a notable work on the language. Jatin Payeng's *Mising Bhasa Sahityar Samu Samikhya* (2011) is another notable work. Some other important linguistic works on the language are: Dr. Basanta Kumar Doley's unpublished Ph.D. thesis, *A Morphological Study of the Mising Language* (1996), and his essays "Formation of Nominal Stems in Mising" and "Adoption of Alien Words in Mising: An Overview". Dr. Sarat Kumar Doley & Mark W. Post's essay "Classifiers in Mising" (2012) is an important piece of work from a modern linguistics perspective.

However, till today, the total number of linguistic works on the Mising language is very limited. Despite being a stable language spoken as a first language by all members of the ethnic community, Mising is still largely understudied and underdescribed.

### **Some major grammatical features of Mising**

Mising has twenty-nine phonemes of which fourteen are vowels and fifteen are consonants. It is a non-tonal language. The basic word order of Mising is SOV. The case system of Mising is nominative-accusative.

Unlike Taid's (2016, p. 200) assertion that Mising possesses distinct markers for present, past and future tenses, the present tense is in fact un-marked in Mising. For example, in *ŋo apin doduŋ* 'I rice eat-PROG' = 'I am eating rice,' the root verb *do* 'eat' is only marked for the progressive aspect by the suffix *-duŋ*, and not by any present tense marker.

Mising has two habitual markers *-do* (for first person only), as in example (2a), and *-dag* (for both second and third person), as in (2b). *-dag* when suffixed to adjectival roots denotes continuous existence of states, as in (2c).

(2a) *ŋo apin dodo*

ŋo	apin	do-do
I	rice	eat-HAB
'I eat rice.'		

(2b) *bɪ apin dodag*

bɪ	apin	do-dag
he	rice	eat-HAB
'He eats rice.'		

- (2c) *koneŋd3 kaŋkandag*  
 koneŋ-d3      kaŋkan-dag  
 girl-DEF      beautiful-HAB  
 ‘Beautiful girl.’

The present progressive aspect is marked by the suffix *-duŋ* as in (2d) below. *-duŋ*, being the progressive marker, can also denote ‘to be/ to exist’ (see (2e)). (2e) denotes that his existence in the shop is continuing. The habitual marker *-dag* can also convey progressive aspect, indicating the continuous and indefinite progression of an action, as in (2f).

The simple past tense is either by the suffix *-ka* or *-kaŋ* as in (2g) below. While the suffix *-ai* added to the habitual *-dag* is used for habitual past action, as in (2h).

- (2d) *ŋo apin doduŋ*  
 ŋo      apin      do-duŋ  
 I      rice      eat-PROG  
 ‘I am eating rice.’

- (2e) *bi dukando duŋ*  
 bi      dukan-do      duŋ  
 he      shop-LOC      PROG  
 ‘He is in the shop.’

- (2f) *bi nom gogdag*  
 bi      no-m      gog-dag  
 he      you-ACC      call-HAB  
 ‘He is calling you.’

- (2g) *bi m3lo bozarp3 gika*  
 bi      m3lo      bozar-p3      gi-ka  
 he      yesterday      market-ALL      go-PST  
 ‘He went to the market yesterday.’

- (2h) *bi tezpurlu du: daglo: p3 ŋoluk ukump3 gitildudagai*  
 bi      Tezpurlu      du:-daglo:-p3      ŋo-luk      ukum-p3      gi-til-du-dagai  
 He      Tezpurlu-LOC      stay-NF-ALL      I-PL      house-ALL      come-move-stay-PST  
 ‘When he lived in Tezpurlu, he used to visit her house.’

The present perfect is denoted by adding the suffix *-tobo*, as in (2i), or the suffixes *-tag* and *tun*, as in (2j) below.

- (2i) *ŋo apin dotobo*  
 ŋo apin do-tobo  
 I rice eat-PRF  
 ‘I have eaten rice.’

- (2j) *bɪ gari r3tag*  
 bɪ gari r3-tag  
 he car buy-PRF  
 ‘He has bought a new car.’

The past progressive aspect, on the other hand, is marked by adding the suffix *-ai* to *duŋ* as in (2k). The past perfect is marked by adding *-ai* to *-tag* or *-tun*, as in (2l) below. And, the simple future tense is marked in Mising by the suffix *-j3*, as in (2m) below.

- (2k) *bɪ gɪdagdo ŋo apin dol duŋai*  
 bɪ gɪ-dagdo ŋo apin do-l duŋai  
 he come-NF I rice eat-NF PST.PROG  
 ‘When he came, I was eating rice.’

- (2l) *paper pola du:dagdo agomd3m pa:tagai*  
 paper po-la du:-dagdo agom-d3-m pa:-tagai  
 paper read-NF stay-NF news-DEF-ACC get-PST.PRF  
 ‘While reading the newspaper, I got the news.’

- (2m) *ŋo apin doj3*  
 ŋo apin do-j3  
 I rice eat-FUT  
 ‘I will eat rice.’

Mising is a highly suffixing and agglutinating language. Nominal roots in Mising can take two to three suffixes (e.g., *tani:-kidi:-d3-m* ‘man-PL-DEF-ACC’), while verbal roots can take up to six to seven suffixes (e.g., *gi-pi-lan-ku-l* ‘come-PRF-as soon as-back’).

Nouns in Mising are inflected for number and case. Verbs are inflected for tense, aspect, and mood. Verbs are not inflected for number, gender, and person.

Verbal nouns in Mising are derived by adding the suffix *-nam* to the verbal root (e.g., *jub-nam* ‘sleeping’; *lu-nam* ‘saying’; *gi-nam* ‘going’, etc.) Some verbs in Mising share common roots with adjectives of quality and adverbs of manner in the language. Adjectives of quality are derived by adding the suffix *-nɜ* to the verbal root (e.g., *ai-nɜ* ‘good’, where *ai* means ‘to be good/well’). A predicative adjective in Mising can be considered a sub-class of a verb as it can take tense markers, as in (2n) below.

- (2n) *apɔŋ ti:-nɟi-dag*  
apɔŋ ti:-nɟi-dag  
alcohol drink-bad-HAB  
‘Drinking alcohol is bad.’

An adverb of manner is derived by adding the suffix *-pɜ* to the verbal root (e.g., *ai-pɜ* ‘nicely’, where *-ai* means ‘to be good/well’).

## Review of Literature

Clause-linking is a crucial aspect of grammar so there is a substantial amount of literature, both classic and recent, especially on clause integration in English. Classic works on the topic include, among others, Rosenbaum (1967), Bresnan (1972), Menzel (1975), Ransom (1986), Mair (1990) and Duffley (1992). Recent works on the topic include, among others, Smith & Escobendo (2001), Duffley (2006), Egan (2008), and Mair (2009). Reference grammars of English include Quirk et al (1985), Biber et al (1999), and Huddleston & Pullum (2002).

Clause-linking has also been a well-addressed topic in Cognitive Linguistics. Important works from a conceptual and semantic point of view include, among others, Langacker (1987, 2007, 2008); Wierzbicka (1988); Dirven (1989); Achard (1998, 2007); Croft (1991, 2002); Taylor (2002); Haspelmath (2004); Hamawand (2003, 2005, 2015); Radden & Dirven (2007); Mauri (2008a, 2013a); Egan (2008); Aikhenvald & Dixon (2009); Diessel (2005, 2013); and Kumashiro (2016).

Studies on clause-linking in Assamese have been quite limited and fragmentary. Works that deserve mention here are Nath (2013), an unpublished Ph.D. thesis, on the nature of non-finite complementation in Assamese, however, from a purely Chomskyan perspective; Barbora (2012, pp. 339-352) analyzes the nominalized clause in Assamese from the same perspective, although her focus is not directly on clause-linking. Barbora (2016, pp. 133-152) is yet another treatment on the particle *ze* from a generativist perspective.

Kalita's (2019, pp. 221-276) work, drawing on traditional perspectives, provides valuable insights into clause-linking in Assamese. However, it could benefit from a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis of various clause types and their linking devices. While Kalita identifies primary types of clause-linking, a deeper exploration of each type, including their semantic properties and nuances, would offer a richer understanding. For instance, while Kalita briefly touches upon finite-subordinate clauses such as *ze*-clauses, *buli*-clauses, and *zodi*-clauses, the current thesis explores these constructions in greater detail, examining their syntactic and semantic properties. Additionally, the thesis extends the analysis to other subordinate clauses, including those introduced by subordinators like *agot*, *pasot*, and *zen*.

A notable omission in Kalita's valuable work is the absence of a discussion on non-finite relative clauses. These clauses are a significant feature of Assamese (as well as TB) grammar, and this thesis aims to fill this gap by examining both finite and non-finite relative clause constructions, as well as the broader semantic implications of clause-linking, a key focus of this thesis.

Two other notable accounts from a traditional perspective on the non-finite forms of verbs in Assamese, which are relevant to this thesis, are Choudhury (2022, pp. 40-48) and Bez (2022, pp. 1-50). They have explored the form and function of non-finite markers in Assamese, which play a crucial role in linking non-finite clauses and also serve as subordinators in the language. While these accounts offer valuable insights, they do not exclusively focus on clause-linking, which is the primary concern of this thesis.

While Choudhury (2022) examines the semantic properties of clauses associated with non-finite markers, a more detailed exploration of the markers themselves, particularly



their internal composition and inherent meanings, could provide further insights. For instance, Choudhury analyzes *-a* and *-at* as distinct non-finite markers, a view also shared by Nath (2013). However, we propose that *-at* is a combination of the non-finite marker *-a* and the locative *-t*. Bez (ibid) identifies *-e* as a locative marker in Old Assamese that combines with *-ut*, which she suggests is a non-finite marker. While this observation is insightful, a closer examination suggests that *-te* is the locative marker in *-ute* and *-u* is the non-finite marker. Our research demonstrates that *-t* serves as a locative marker for nouns or fully nominalized verbs (e.g., *soki-t* ‘on the chair’; *Mary aha-t* ‘upon Mary’s arrival’), whereas *-e* specifically marks the locative case for non-finite verbs (e.g., *Mary ah-ut-e* ‘when Mary came’).

Coming to Mising, Prasad (1991) offers a concise overview of Mising grammar, devoting a few paragraphs to clause-linking. Taid (2010, 2016) provides a more detailed examination of Mising clause-linking types from a traditional perspective. While Taid discusses various Mising clause types, the analysis remains somewhat fragmented. For instance, under complex finite clauses, Taid briefly discusses finite complement clauses without delving into their nuances. Similarly, under non-finite subordinate clauses, Taid limits the discussion to temporal clauses with *-ge:la* ‘after’, conditional clauses with *-milo* ‘if’, and finite relative clauses, incorrectly categorizing them as non-finite. Taid writes, “Like conditional clauses, relative clauses too are non-finite in Mising, whereas they are usually finite in English” (2016, p. 325), citing examples of finite relative clauses with the relative-correlative structure. This oversight excludes non-finite or nominalized relative clauses, a key feature of many Tibeto-Burman languages in the region. Additionally, Taid incorrectly identifies the relativizing suffix *-zi* as a non-finite marker, stating, “It is the affixation of *-zi* that renders the verb non-finite in form and function” (2016, p. 326).

We argue that Mising employs both finite relative-correlative structures and non-finite nominalized structures for relative clauses. The *-zi* suffix, which marks the relative clause in a relative-correlative structure, serves solely as a relative clause marker and does not have any other grammatical function within the clause. It is important to note that *-zi* also functions as a dubitative marker in the language, as acknowledged by Taid himself.

Barbora's (2002, pp. 198-218) paper offers a valuable contribution to the study of non-finite markers in Mising, though from a Chomskyan generative perspective. She discusses *-p3* as a non-finite marker in Mising, occurring in purpose clauses. Taid (2016, p. 200) identifies *-kap3* as a non-finite marker in purpose clauses. However, a closer examination reveals that *-ka*, meaning 'desire' is the actual non-finite marker, and the allative suffix *-p3* attaches to it, forming *-kap3*, which together conveys a sense of purpose to the subordinate clause. In (3), for instance, the non-finite *-ka* renders the root verb *ma* 'catch' non-finite, and the allative *-p3* subsequently attaches to the non-finite verb.

- (3) *bi oŋo makap3 gi-kaŋ*  
       bi      oŋo    ma-ka-p3    gi-kaŋ  
       he      fish    catch-NF-ALL go-PST  
       'He went to catch fish.'

Therefore, this work contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of clause-linking in these two languages, informed by a Cognitive Linguistics perspective.

## Research Objectives

As discussed in the previous sections, there has been substantial linguistic research on both Assamese and Mising. However, a comprehensive treatment of clause-linking as a topic has not yet been conducted for either language. We select these two languages for our study because they belong to different language families (Assamese is an Indo-Aryan language, while Mising is a Tibeto-Burman language). Our goal is to investigate similarities in the area of grammar, particularly due to convergence over centuries.

Thus, our primary objectives are to:

- i. Conduct a comprehensive analysis of clause-linking in Assamese and Mising;
- ii. Compare and contrast the clause-linking structures in these two languages, particularly given their distinct linguistic backgrounds;
- iii. Identify any shared grammatical features in the area of clause-linking;
- iv. Apply insights from Cognitive Linguistics to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying cognitive processes involved in clause-linking in these languages.

## Research Methodology

The Assamese data for the proposed research is provided by the author herself, a native speaker of Assamese. When necessary, the data is cross-checked with other native speakers of the language. Written Assamese texts are also used as a secondary source of data for the Assamese language.

Regarding Mising, the data presented in the thesis comes from the Pagro dialect of Mising. The data is based on a series of sentence lists and questionnaires collected during several fieldwork trips to the Dhemaji district of Assam, the primary region where Pagro is spoken, spanning from 2021 to 2024. A total of seven to eight language consultants were consulted, with Mr. Nelson Doley (from Silapathar, Dhemaji), Mr. Deniel Bori (from Jonai, Dhemaji), and Ms. Pulobika Pegu (from Telam, Dhemaji) serving as the principal language consultants. All of the data has been carefully checked and re-checked with native speakers to ensure accuracy and eliminate any potential errors in analysis.

## Structure of the thesis

The **Introduction** presents a comprehensive linguistic profile of both the Assamese and Mising languages. It also includes a literature review on both languages. Additionally, the Introduction outlines the Research Methodology employed in the study and its objectives, as well as the chapter plan of the dissertation.

In **Chapter 1**, we present a comprehensive overview of the theoretical framework, i.e., Cognitive Linguistics upon which the current thesis is based. We briefly discuss the cognitive concepts of figure-ground; iconicity; sequential order; profiling and a profiled relationship; perspectiveness, vantage point and viewing arrangement; all of which play a crucial role in the conceptual and grammatical linking of clauses in grammar.

In **Chapter 2**, we present our discussion on the grammar and meaning of juxtaposition and coordination as two clause-linking devices or construals in language. We analyze the conceptual links between situations that Assamese and Mising convey through juxtaposition. We identify the coordinators that the two languages employ to perform this function and discussed their meanings in detail, i.e., how they establish conceptual links that juxtaposition may not be able to convey. Coordination is used when juxtaposition

alone cannot convey the intended meaning, requiring an additional element in the form of a coordinator to establish the connection between the two situations involved.

In **Chapter 3**, we explore adverbial subordination as a way of clause-linking device in language together with its grammar and semantics. We discuss the conceptual links between situations in adverbial subordination and identify the adverbial subordinators that Assamese and Mising employ to perform this function. We take this position forward by conducting a detailed analysis of what each of these subordinators convey and their specific meaning.

In **Chapter 4**, we delve into relative clauses in Assamese and Mising, examining their diverse grammatical structures, semantic functions, and flexibility. We analyze finite and non-finite forms, restrictive and non-restrictive clauses, and relative-correlative constructions. Additionally, we investigate how relative clauses can identify, restrict, and describe nominal referents. We show that both Assamese and Mising utilize relative clauses to modify nouns. While Assamese seems to offer more variation in relativizers and finite/non-finite forms, Mising primarily employs non-finite clauses and juxtaposition. Both languages feature formal and informal relative clause constructions.

In **Chapter 5**, we extend a discussion on complementation as a clause-linking device in Assamese and Mising. Both Assamese and Mising employ two main strategies for complementation: finite and non-finite. We identify the finite and the non-finite complementizers in Assamese and Mising and show how the semantics of these complementizers influence the semantics of the clause they are linked to. By analyzing the grammar and semantics of finite and non-finite complementation in Assamese and Mising, we hope to have shed light on how the language reflects our cognitive processes and how we conceptualize the world around us.

Chapter 5 is followed by a **Conclusion** with our concluding remarks.

## **Relevance**

This study contributes to the linguistic description of Assamese and Mising by focusing on clause-linking from a cognitive linguistics standpoint. The cognitive approach is

grounded on a theoretical framework that has come into scholarly prominence only in the recent decades. It has not been applied yet to examine these grammatical structures in these two languages, i.e., Assamese and Mising, or in any other non-European languages with much enthusiasm and rigor. In this, the thesis recognizes a significant research gap and the need for an intervention that may lead to future research possibilities.

Cognitive linguistics emphasizes the interplay of grammar, meaning and conceptualization, enabling in the process a deeper understanding of language behavior and its underlying conceptual motivations. Such a perspective holds the possibility of understanding the ways in which language operates in tandem with human conceptualization and perception of the world. From this point of view, the cognitive approach to language maybe argued to be a new approach in the construction of grammar and human cognition, focusing on meaning making practices. This thesis takes its motivating spirit from such an understanding. It attempts to address the existing research gaps in the literature from a cognitive standpoint, by providing a more nuanced understanding of clause-linking in Assamese and Mising in particular. In so doing, it hopes to offer a deeper comprehension of Assamese and Mising grammars, their semantic and formal properties.