

GENDER IN LAIRAMLO

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ABSTRACT

The present paper attempts to describe gender marking systems in Lairamlo. Gender is not marked grammatically in the Lairamlo, rather it has natural gender i.e.; gender is determined by the recognition of natural sex. The gender of animate nouns is marked morphologically except for some kinship terms which are absolute forms. All the inanimate nouns are considered as neuter gender, which is morphologically unmarked. The data are collected from Ringpam village of Tengnoupal District of Manipur, through questionnaires and interview methods.

Keyword: Gender, Lairamlo, Tangkhul, Tengnoupal, Manipur.

1. Introduction

Lairamlo is adialect of Tangkhul. Tangkhul is one of the recognized scheduled tribes of Manipur. Linguistically, Tangkhul belongs to the Kuki-Chin-Naga sub-group of Tibeto-Burman family (Grierson's LSI, 1903). Tangkhul has a large number of dialects that are mutually unintelligible to each other. Arokianathan (1987) noted that there are 219 Tangkhul villages and it is found that each village has its own dialect or speech form named after the village. The intelligibility among the village varies according to the distance between them; that is farther the village, more the unintelligibility. The Lairamlo, is also one of the dialects of Tangkhul which is spoken by the Ringpam people in Ringpam village or Momlo/M. Ringpam village in the Machi sub-division of Tengnoupal District of Manipur, which is about 40 kilometers away from Imphal. Lairamlo is also spoken by other two villages in Manipur i.e., Merry Land in Chandel District and LairamKhullen in Ukhrul district of Manipur. According to the census of 2011, Lairamlo has 97 households with the total of 440 people, out of which 211 are male and 229 are female Ringpam village. Like many other Tibeto-Burman languages, Lairamlo do not have their own indigenous script. At present, they started adopting Roman script to write their dialect with some modifications. Similarly, the dialect is not being taught in the school as a medium of subject.

2. Objective of the study

The main objective of the study is to describe the gender marking systems in Lairamlo, a Kuki-Chin-Naga language mainly spoken in Ringpam village of Tengnoupal district of Manipur.

3. Methodology

The method for collecting data for the study includes both primary and secondary sources. The primary data is mainly based on the speech of the community. The data collection was done through personal contact with informants of different sexes, professionals and age groups. The

data is cross-checked with the other speakers of the same dialect for authenticity and consistency of the same. The secondary method includes the available written materials like books, journals, articles etc.

4. Typological Feature

Typologically, Lairamlo is a tonal language and also shares areal features of South Asian languages like-Subject Object Verve (SOV) order, reduplication, etc. Like many other Tibeto-Burman languages, negation in Lairamlo is expressed by means of affixation particularly prefixation. Lairamlo has inclusive-exclusive distinction only in case of first-person plural pronoun i.e. /a-hənte/ 'we' (inclusive) vs. /i-hənte/ 'we' (exclusive). Compounding is one of the productive word formation processes in the dialect.

5. Gender

Gender is a process of grammatically analyzing the category of wordclasses signifying to the masculine/feminine/neuter and animate/inanimate. Generally, gender focus to distinguish between natural gender and grammatical gender. Natural gender refers to the biological or sex of the real world, whereas grammatical gender refers to the relationship of words in sentences that do not have any relationship of biological or sex (David Crystal, 1991). Therefore Corbett (1991) rightly pointed out, "in some languages gender is central and pervasive, while in others it is totally absent". Stanley (1977) explains the distinction between the two kinds of gender in linguistics i.e., grammatical and natural. Grammatical gender refers to the three main noun classes, as recognized in Greek and Latin, namely, "feminine", "neuter" and "masculine." Classification of nouns into three genders accounts for pronominal reference and adjectival concord. Theoretically, it is independent of sex. Natural gender, in contrast, refers to the classification of nouns on the basis of biological sex as female or male, or animate and inanimate (Stanley, 1977). It is worth mentioning that most of the Tibeto-Burman languages do not follow grammatical gender rather they have natural gender.

6. Gender in Lairamlo

Gender in Lairamlo does not have the function of the grammatical relationship between the nouns and other classes in sentences except in the case of noun and nominal modifiers. In other words, Lairamlo has no grammatical gender. It has only natural gender i.e.; gender is determined by the recognition of natural sex. All male comes under the masculine and all female comes under the feminine. But as mentioned previously that in the Lairamlo noun phrase, there is a grammatical relationship between the noun and nominal modifiers as found in Manipuri (Yashawanta, 2001), Anal (Thajamanbi, 2015) and other Tibeto-Burman languages. The gender of animate nouns in Lairamlo is marked morphologically except for some kinship terms which are absolute forms. All the inanimate nouns are considered as neuter gender, which is

morphologically unmarked. As in many other Tibeto-Burman languages, gender in Lairamlo is expressed by postposing a word or suffix to a noun stem. Furthermore, Lairamlo possesses the lexical opposition features used to express gender. The suffix /-pe/, /-nuŋ/, /-pu/, /pi/ are used to indicate male and female irrespective of human or non-human. Like English, the third person personal pronoun in Lairamlo is differentiated for gender. Lairamlo gender-marking system differentiates for male and female in human and non-human beings including animals, birds, plants are shown below:

6.1. Gender marking with human class

In Lairamlo, different strategies are used to express gender distinction in the case of human nouns as shown below:

6.1.1. By postposition -pe and -nuŋ

In the language, gender marking for humans is made by postposing two bound morphemes -*pe* 'male' and -*nuŋ* 'female' as shown in the following examples.

Masculine

ape 'father'

inipe 'son'

kəsiyep 'old man'

Feminine

anuŋ 'mother'

ininuŋ 'daughter'

kəsiyenuŋ 'old woman'

In the case of the man and woman, the gender markers -*pe* for male and -*pu* for female are added to noun stems respectively as illustrated in the following examples.

im-pe-niye 'man'

im-pu-niye 'woman'

6.1.2. By changing -pu and -pi

In the case of grandfather and grandmother, the gender markers -*pu* and -*pi* are used to indicate the male and female gender respectively as illustrated in the following example.

apu 'grandfather'

api 'grandmother'

6.1.3. By using contrasting lexical item

Some lexical items are attested in Lairamlo which are naturally denoting masculine and feminine gender. In other words, distinct lexical items are used to indicate masculine and feminine gender as demonstrated below.

Masculine

ap^haŋ 'uncle'

apu 'father-in-law'

ama 'brother (e)'

Feminine

ano 'aunt'

ani 'mother-in-law'

acwennuŋ 'sister' (e)

6.2. Professional terms

In the case of the professional terms as well, the male and female gender are also indicated by adding the suffix 'pe' and 'nuŋ' as illustrated below.

<i>kumakaso-pe</i>	'male dancer'	<i>kumakaso-nuŋ</i>	'female dancer'
<i>həŋhu-pe</i>	'male robber'	<i>həŋhu-nuŋ</i>	'female robber'
<i>lekase-pe</i>	'male singer'	<i>lekase-nuŋ</i>	'female singer'

6.2. Gender marking with non-human class

Non-human class in this context refers to only of animals, birds etc. The gender marker *-pe*, *-ipe* is a common marker used for both human and non-human to indicate 'male'. However, the marker *-pɥ*, *ipɥipu/iliis* used to indicate female for non-human nouns as discussed in the following examples.

6.2.1. By using *-pe* and *-pɥ*

In the case of animals, the two suffixes */-pe/* and */-pɥ/* are used to show male and female as exemplified below:

Generic term	Masculine	Feminine
<i>sei</i> 'cow'	<i>sei-pe</i> 'bull'	<i>sei-pɥ</i> 'cow'
<i>yo</i> 'sheep'	<i>yo-pe</i> 'lamb'	<i>yo-pɥ</i> 'ewe'
<i>ɯ</i> 'dog'	<i>ɯ-pe</i> 'male dog'	<i>ɯ-pɥ</i> 'female dog'
<i>tumin</i> 'cat'	<i>tumin-pe</i> 'male cat'	<i>tumin-pɥ</i> 'female cat'
<i>seičiye</i> 'deer'	<i>seičiye-pe</i> 'male deer'	<i>seičiye-pɥ</i> 'female deer'
<i>məyom</i> 'monkey'	<i>məyoŋ-pe</i> 'male monkey'	<i>məyoŋ-nuŋ</i> 'female monkey'

In the case of snake, the */ipe/* and */ipɥ/* are used to indicate male and female as shown in the following example:

Generic term	Masculine	Feminine
<i>p^hərui</i> 'snake'	<i>p^hərui-ipe</i> 'male snake'	<i>p^hərui-ipɥ</i> 'female snake'

In case of birds, the suffixes */-pe/* and */-pɥ/* are used to indicate male and female as exemplified below:

Generic term	Masculine	Feminine
<i>odoŋ</i> 'peacock'	<i>odoŋ-pe</i> 'peacock'	<i>odoŋ-pɥ</i> 'peahen'
<i>kump^hek</i> 'duck'	<i>kump^hek-pe</i> 'drake'	<i>kump^hek-pɥ</i> 'duck'

However, in the case of hen and cock, different lexical items are used to express male and female, they are shown in the following examples.

Masculine	Feminine
<i>opre</i> 'cock'	<i>opiyu</i> 'hen'

6.2.2. By using *-ipe* and *-ipu/ili*

Another significant feature prevalent to Lairamlo is that the plants which are bearing fruits are treated as feminine gender indicated by the morpheme *-ipu/ili* whereas the plants which are not bear fruits are treated as masculine gender by adding morpheme *-ipe* to the generic name of the plants. A similar case is found in Tibeto-Burman languages like Manipuri (Yashawanta, 2001), Anal (Thajmanbi, 2015, Chothe(Brojen, 2008). and Kokborok (Samir, 2013) etc.

	Masculine	Feminine
<i>əwat^həbit^hiŋ</i> ‘papaya tree’	<i>əwathəbit^hiŋ-ipe</i>	<i>əvwat^həbit^hiŋ-ipu/ili</i>
<i>t^hənot^hat^hiŋ</i> ‘mango tree’	<i>t^hənot^hathiŋ-ipe</i>	<i>t^hənot^hat^hiŋ-ipu/ili</i>
<i>t^həpoŋt^hat^hiŋ</i> ‘jackfruit tree’	<i>t^həpoŋt^hat^hiŋ-ipe</i>	<i>t^həpoŋt^hat^hiŋ-ipu/ili</i>
<i>bumheit^hat^hiŋ</i> ‘Guava tree’	<i>bumheit^hat^hiŋ-ipu</i>	<i>bumheit^hat^hiŋ-ipu/il</i>

6.3. Common Gender

Some of the animate nouns that are no different for males and females are grouped under the common gender.

Lairamlo	Gloss
<i>pəlule</i>	‘snail’
<i>siŋŋe</i>	‘fish’
<i>məhot</i>	‘leech’
<i>kəhu</i>	‘frog’
<i>k^hwè</i>	‘bee’
<i>hečiyəŋ</i>	‘mosquito’

6.4. Neuter gender

All the inanimate nouns are considered as neuter gender. In other words, the neuter gender does not contain a gender marker for males and females. The lack of gender distinction for inanimate nouns is very common for the Tibeto-Burman languages of South Asia. Consider the following examples.

<i>ʃim</i>	‘house’
<i>intu</i>	‘water’
<i>k^heiniye</i>	‘knife’
<i>ʃimp^hiu</i>	‘broom’
<i>p^hi</i>	‘cloth’
<i>p^hei</i>	‘thread’
<i>k^humhop</i>	‘shoe’

7. Gender in pronouns

In the Lairamlo, no gender difference is made in the case of first-person and second-person personal pronouns but gender difference is made in the case of only third-person singular pronouns. The gender distinction in case of third-person personal pronoun is one of the typical

features of Lairamlo. However, the gender distinction in personal pronouns is not a common feature in most of the Tibeto-Burman languages. Consider the following example.

Table: Gender in pronoun

Person	Singular	Plural
First person	/a/ 'I'	/ahənte, 'we'(inclu) ihənte/ 'we'(exclu)
Second person	/nəŋ/ 'you'	/nəhənte/ 'you'
Third person	/imiŋ/ 'he'/inuŋ/ 'she'	/ihente/ 'they'

8. Noun-nominal modifier agreement in noun phrase

In the dialect, both the human and non-human have shown agreement in gender with nominal modifiers in a Noun Phrase as in (1)-(3). Moreover, it is found that Lairamlo modifiers follow the noun as shown in the following examples:

- (1a) *ŋəliyəŋkəp^hre-pe-we inču-əm-e*
man beautiful-M-DET sit-PROG-DECL
The handsome man is sitting.'
- (1b) **ŋəliyəŋkəp^hrenuŋ-we inču-əm-e*
man beautiful-DET sit-PROG-DECL
The handsome man is sitting.'
- (2a) *ŋəle kəp^hre-nuŋ-we inču-əm-e*
girl beautiful-F-DET sit-PROG-DECL
The Beautiful girl is sitting
- (2b) **ŋəle kəp^hrepe-we inču-əm-e*
girl beautiful-DET sit-PROG-DECL
The Beautiful girl is sitting
- (3a) *upe kəcik-pe-we čan-əm-e*
male dog black-M-DET bark-PROG-DECL
'The black dog (male) is barking.'
- (3b) **upe kəciknuŋ-we čan-əm-e*
male dog black-DET bark-PROG-DECL
'The black dog (male) is barking.'
- (4a) *unuŋ kəcik-nuŋ-we čan-əm-e*
female dog black-FM-DET bark-PROG-DECL

‘The black dog (female) is barking.’

- (4a) **unuŋ* *kəcikpe-we* *čan-əm-e*
 female dog black-DET bark-PROG-DECL
 ‘The black dog (female) is barking.’

In the above examples, the noun *ŋəliyəŋ* ‘boy’ agrees with the modifier *kəp^hre-pe* ‘beautiful’ particularly with the male marker *pe* and the noun *ŋəle* ‘girl’ agrees with modifier *kəp^hre-nuŋ* particularly with the female marker *nuŋ*. Likewise, noun in animal is same as in human i.e., *upe* ‘male dog’ agrees with modifier *kəcik-pe* particularly with the male marker *pe* and the noun *unuŋ* ‘female dog’ agrees with modifier *kəcik-nuŋ* particularly with the female marker *nuŋ*. Therefore, the interchange of modifiers causes ungrammatical as in (1b), (2b), (3b) and (4b).

9. Conclusion

From the above analysis, it can conclude that typically Lairamlohas no grammatical gender. It has only natural gender. Though, gender agreement is preserved in the case of human and non-human nouns and nominal modifiers. However inanimate noun does not contain gender marker for male and female. In the dialect, there is no gender distinction found in the 1st person and 2nd person pronoun but gender distinction is made in the case of only third personal singular pronouns such as *imiŋ* ‘he’ and *inuŋ* ‘she’.

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