Allomorphs of Numeral ONE in Lotha

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Abstract

This present paper is an attempt to explore the concept of the numeral system highlighting numeral ONE of Lotha. Lotha is one of the tribal languages of Nagaland. Lotha claims that they have allomorphs for numeral ONE. Lotha is one of the indigenous languages of Nagaland and is majorly spoken in the Wokha district of Nagaland. Lotha has a fixed pattern for the numeral system. In Lotha, Noun is always followed by the Numeral value. This present paper investigates allomorphs of numeral ONE in detail. It also discusses the condition as well as the pattern of all the allomorphs of numeral ONE in Lotha.

Introduction

Lotha is one of the indigenous groups of Nagaland. This group speaks the Lotha language. Lotha language branches under the Tibeto-Burman language family and speakers of the Lotha language are known as Lotha. This Naga tribe has its language (Lotha), Culture, and rituals. According to the 2011 census, Lotha is listed as one of the non-schedule languages out of 99 languages of India. According to Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India (1903), it belongs to Central Naga- group. Lotha language is spoken by the lotha tribe of the wokha district of Nagaland. Wokha district is predominated by the Lotha tribe. Lotha tribe has its heritage, culture, and language. Like other Tibeto-Burman languages such as Hmar (Singh, 2014), Uipo (Khaling, 2021), Thadou (Haokip, 2016), and Zeme (Chanu, 2016), this language also enjoys this feature of the Numeral system. Most languages have this feature but it varies from language to language.

The numeral system plays important role in a language. Although the Numeral system in a language plays a very eminent role not every language needs to have a numeral system. Few languages like the Australian do not have a numeral system (Dixon, 1980). In the numeral system, cardinal numbers are important and it begins with one. Number one has shown different forms in a language. There are languages in which number one has some variations in its forms. Like in case of Kurukh (Mamta, 2018).

Every language has its pattern to indicate the position of numerals. There is no universal pattern for this category. There are some languages in which a numeral is followed by the noun like; English, Hindi, Punjabi, Hungarian, Arabic, and many more but there are few languages in which a noun is followed by the numeral like; Thadou (Haokip, 2016), Zeme (Chanu, 2016), Uipo (Khaling, 2021). This present paper helps us to know the category of the Lotha language concerning the structure of numerals. So, the possible pattern of the numeral system of Lotha is shown in (i).   moni   motsünga cat.N.sg   one.Num.sg
"One cat"

In (i), Noun 'moni' means 'cat' is followed by the numeral 'motsünga' means 'one'. So, the pattern would be 'Noun + Numeral'. This type of structure is shared with other languages like Thadou (Haokip, 2016), Zeme (Chanu, 2016), Uipo (Khaling, 2021), and many more. If we have an adjective in the present phrase then the possible structure would be as shown in (ii).

    i.   moni   enyiku   motsünga
          cat.N.sg   black.Adj.sg one.Num.sg
                "One black cat"

In (ii), Noun 'moni' means 'cat' is followed by the adjective 'enyiku' means 'black', which is followed by the numeral 'motsünga' means 'one'. So, the pattern would be 'Noun + Adjective + Numeral'.

As this present paper explores only a single numeral i.e., ONE in Lotha. Numeral ONE is very important in any language as it has variations in the forms of numeral ONE. There are shreds of evidence that support this claim as shown below (iii-v).

(iii).   eloeroro nchyua
                 One girl

(iv).   malanthi motsünga
                 One apple

(v).   füro motsünga
                 One dog

Above mentioned examples (iii-v), have shown variation in the forms of numeral ONE in Lotha. Based on these examples, we claim that Lotha is one of the languages, which has allomorphs of numeral ONE. These allomorphs have different environments or conditions for their presence. Now, we will discuss allomorphs of numeral ONE of Lotha.

Allomorphs of numeral 'one'
In lotha, there are three forms for the numeral 'one'. All forms vary according to their conditions. Those three forms are as shown below:
1. Ekha
2. -a
3. Motsünga

1. Ekha: In Lotha, 'ekha' means one. 'ekha' form is used as one for only counting as shown below (1.1)

Example 1.1.

Lotha	'Gloss'
Ekha	One
Eni	Two
Ethüm	Three
Mezhü	Four

Here, (1.1) have shown the pieces of evidence that 'ekha' is used for counting purpose only. This is theonly condition where the 'ekha' form is used as a basic cardinal numeral.

2. 'a': In lotha, 'a' also means one. It is another form of numeral ONE. This form is used only with a noun(s) in a phrase as shown below (2.1-2.2)

   2.1.   eloeroro nchyu-a
                      one girl

   2.2.   amo   nchyu-a
                      one uncle

Here (2.1-2.2), have shown second form or variety i.e., '-a' of numeral ONE. This is used with a human-featured noun(s) in a phrase.

3. 'motsünga': In Lotha, 'motsünga' also means 'one'. It is the third form or variety of numeralONE. This form is also used with a noun(s) in a phrase as shown below (3.1-3.2).

   3.1.   Füro motsünga
                      One dog

   3.2.   Malanthi motsünga
                      One apple

Here (3.1-3.2), have shown a third form or variety i.e., 'motsünga' of numeral ONE. This form of numeral ONE is used with a non-human featured noun(s) in a phrase.

Above mentioned examples provided evidence to support the claim that Lotha has three allomorphs of numeral ONE. All these three allomorphs have different conditions. This type of variation is possible in any other language as well. This claim is supported by Mamta's (2018) work on the 'Kurukh' language.

According to Mamta (2018), the Kurukh language belongs to the Northern Dravidian language familyand is spoken in some parts of Jharkhand, Bihar, and many more. This language also has three allomorphs for numeral ONE. In Kurukh, one form i.e., 'onḍ ' is used as a cardinal number. The second form i.e., 'oroṭ' is used with a human noun, and the third form i.e., 'onṭe' is used with a non-human noun. This feature is quite similar to the Lotha language.

Conditions of Allomorphs of Numeral ONE in Lotha:

In Lotha, numeral ONE behaves uniquely as compared to other numeral values i.e., 2, 3, 4, and so on.

Example of the first form i.e., 'ekha' of Numeral ONE.

4.   'ekha'
        One.sg.Num
            One

In 4, 'ekha' is used for the basic cardinal numeral ONE. It is used only for counting purposes and it is always used in isolation, not in a phrase. It does not modify any noun.

Example of the second form i.e., '-a' of Numeral ONE.

5.a.   eboiroro   nchyu-   a
          Boy.1.sg.m   CL.   One.sg.Num.
                    One boy

5.b.   ano   nchyu-   a
          Aunty.1.sg.f.   CL.   One.sg.Num.
                    One aunty

5.c.   tsolo   nchyu-   a
          Daughter.1.sg.f.   CL.   One.sg.Num.
                    One daughter

In example 5(a-c), Num denotes Numeral and CL denotes classifier. Here, 'nchyu' is always used as a classifier. This ('-a') form of numeral ONE is always used with this classifier. This is the only form of numeral ONE, which uses a classifier. This form is used as an adjective that modifies the noun in a phrase. This noun is always having a human feature. Even it has an animacy feature too.

Example of the third form i.e., 'motsünga' of Numeral ONE.

6.a.   moni   motsünga
          Cat.1.sg.m   one.sg.Num.
                One cat

6.b.   Khokhen   motsünga
          Chair.1.sg.   one.sg.Num.
                One chair

6.c.   Shanlan   motsünga
          Hour.sg.   one.sg.Num.
                One hour

In example 6(a-c), the 'motsünga' form of numeral ONE is always used as an adjective that modifies the noun in a phrase. This noun is always having a non-human feature. Even it includes both animate as well as inanimate features. This form never uses any classifier in a phrase like the second form i.e., '-a' of numeral ONE.

Pattern derived for these 3 Allomorphs of Lotha:

1. **'ekha' :**

    Numeral ONE

            'ekha'

    • **It is always used in isolation for basic cardinal numeral ONE.**

2. **'-a' :**

    Noun + **Classifier** + **numeral ONE**
    +human   'nchyu'   '-a'
    +animacy

3. **'motsünga' :**

    Noun + **numeral ONE**
    -human   'motsünga'
    -/+ animacy

These patterns are derived from the above-mentioned examples (4-6). In Lotha, the second and third forms of numeral ONE is having the human sensitive feature. The second form i.e., 'a' is used for human featured nouns in a phrase whereas the third form i.e., 'motsünga' is used for non-human featured nouns. These non-human featured nouns either be an animate or inanimate noun (s).

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Argument Structures in Gaddi

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Abstract

Gaddi is spoken by a previously nomadic tribe that settled in Himachal Pradesh as shepherds over time, with about half a million speakers at present (www.gabdika.com). Diglossia is a common phenomenon, where Gaddi is limited to domains of personal interaction. Hindi, Pahadi, and Punjabi are mostly used in all other domains. It is an SOV-type language with a local tongue called "ithu-tithu" spoken by everyone, which is essentially a code mix of all the languages in the area. Therefore, it is common to find loan words in Gaddi from English, Persian, and Arabic. However, there are many cognates between Gaddi, Hindi, and Urdu while Gaddi showcases distinct morphemic and syntactic patterns.

This paper has selected ten types of verb classes following Beth Levin's analysis (1993) and looked at the distribution of their argument structures. The basis of distribution is transitivity, where all the four types (intransitive, transitive, ditransitive, and causative) of constructions have been investigated. Gaddi shows scope for the first three but the causative is realized through the use of an ablative phrase and not an argument of the verb. The paper will also show how there are pseudo-passives in Gaddi exhibiting pro-drop but no morphemic or syntactic processes act on the verbalization. Apart from the external and internal argument structures, this paper will also present a basic observation of case marking on these arguments.

Keywords: Gaddi, verb morphology, argument distribution, transitivity, syntax.

I.   Literature Review

Verb Classes

As it is said, a verb can be the most important part of a language. Without verbs, we may not be able to have a language. In any given language, the verbs may be divided into several classes depending upon their semantic domains. Hindi has been the test language throughout my fieldwork for Gaddi. The following are the Hindi verb classes selected from an extensive list of verb classes (Levin, 1993):

Verbs of Emission: bəɟnɑ

Verbs of Change of State: kʰilnɑ, murɟʰɑnɑ

Verbs of Motion: urnɑ, dɔːɽnɑ, gʰumnɑ, chadʰnɑ

Verbs of Spatial Configuration: ləʈəknɑ, ɟʰuknɑ

Verbs of Existence, Appearance, and Disappearance:

rɛhnɑVerbs Contact/Attachment: cipəknɑ

Verbs bodily process: t̪ʰuknɑ

Verbs of Consumption: kʰɑnɑ

Verbs of Perception: sonɑ

Verbs Image Perception: pəɖʰnɑ

In Hindi, each of these verbs acts separately when it comes to transitivity. Some of them have causative realizations while some of them do not. They may also have unergative or unaccusative realizations.

Depending on the language, the verbs are then selected for their arguments. They assign theta roles to each argument and select them as either internal or external arguments.

External Arguments

These arguments are popularly the ones that are of Agent theta roles. They appear as a subject at the surface structure. For example, in a sentence like *a boy is sleeping*, the subject is an external argument that is selected by the verb as an Agent. In Hindi, *laɽka pəɖʰ rəha hɛ*, the agent *laɽka* is the external argument of the verb *pəɖʰna*. Moreover, constructions like *ram ɖɔːɽa* or *siʈa so gəji*, the subjects are known as unergatives as theycannot be marked for the ergative case under any circumstance. These subjects are essentiallyexternal arguments selected by the verb.

Internal Arguments

These arguments are generally every argument that does not appear as the subject in a sentence. For example, in a sentence like *a boy ate an apple*, the object *an apple* gets the role of a theme. It gets its case as an Accusative in the complement position of a verb. This is an internal argument. In a ditransitive construction such as *the boy gave an apple* to his mother or *the boy gave his mother an apple*, both the themes are internal arguments of the verb. Although each one gets separate cases, they are both selected by the verb as internal arguments. Similarly in Hindi, *ləɽka sev kʰaṭa hɛ* or *ləɽka ma-ko sev ḍ eṭa hɛ*, both *sev,* and *ma-ko* gets selected as internal arguments although they are marked for different cases. However, in construction like *the boat sank* or *bərəf ɟəm əji*, the subject of the sentencesis selected by the verb as an internal argument as they get the theme theta role. They only move to the subject position at the surface structure to satisfy EPP and Case. These arguments are known as Unaccusatives as these verbs in such constructions cannot further choose an argument that can get the Accusative case. On the other hand, there are constructions with Dative Subjects, which are also internal arguments. Structures such as *hema-ko bʰuk ləgi hɛ*, the subject *hema* is although marked by the dative case, has the thematic role of a subject but the theta role of the theme. Therefore, we may postulate that in Hindi, dative subjects are internal arguments of the verb.

Arguments may be tested for internal or external by the semantic domains of the verb (Levin & Hovav, 2005). These semantic domains assign theta roles to verbs which can be taken as proof of their being internal or external. This paper is aimed to ascertain these facts about the Gaddi language in keeping with the theories mentioned above.

II.   Verb Classes in Gaddi
i.   *Verbs of Emission*

(1) gʰənṭi   bəɟi   hɑ

    bell   ring.INTR   IND

   The bell has rung.

(2) run-ɛ   gʰənṭi   bəɟai   hɑ

    runa-ERG   bell   ring.TR IND

   Runa has rung the bell.

(3) runɛ   nəvnitt-o   hɑu   gʰənṭi   bəɟai   hɑ

    runa-ERG   navneet-DAT   ABL   bell   ring.TR   IND

   (Lit.) Runa through Navneet has rung the bell.

Emission verbs in gaddi behave both as intransitive and as transitive. However, it is seen that although the ablative phrase does attach to the sentence to give it the structure ofa causative but fails to appear on the verb. The fact that this ablative phrase is optional in this structure shows that it is not an argument of the verb.

ii.   Verbs of State of Change

(4)   es   pʰullɑ ʌkki   diŋa   məŋɹ   kʰili   gaŋa

this   flower one   day   in.LOC bloom.INTR   happen

This flower bloomed in a day.

(5)   es   pʰullɑ ʌkki   diŋa   kʰili   gaŋa

this   flower one   day   bloom.INTR   happen

This flower bloomed for a day.

(6)   məŋi-ε   pʰullɑ-ɹo   kʰulɑu   ha

mani-ERG   flower-ACC   bloom.TR   IND

(Lit.) Mani bloomed this flower.

(7)   *pəllavi-ε   is   pɔːɖʰe   məŋɹ   pʰul   kʰulɑu

pallavi-ERG   this   plant   in.LOC flower bloom.TR

(Lit.) Pallavi bloomed a flower in this plant.

Again, we see that verbs of change of state have both intransitive and transitive structures but there is no scope for causatives in the language; such constructions yield incorrect statements.

iii.   Verbs of Motion

(8) cəkkɑ   gʰumu   kərɖɑ

wheel   turn.INTR   do.AUX

Wheel turns.

(9) somi   cəkkɑ   gʰumɑu   kərɖɑ

somi   wheel   turn.TR   do.AUX

Somi turns the wheel.

(10) somi   ruŋa   hɑu   cəkkɑ   gʰumɑu   kərɖɑ

somi   runa   with.ABL   wheel   turn.TR   do.AUX

(Lit.) Somi turns the wheel through Runa.

Even with the verb for motion, the result remains the same. There are both intransitive and transitive but no causative.

iv.   Verbs of Spatial Configuration

(11) banɖər-ε   ɖaɭi   ɹʰalai   ha

monkey-ERG   branch   bend.TR   IND

The monkey bent the branch.

(12) mili-ɛ   runa   hau   ɖaɭi   ɟʰalai   ha

mili-ERG   runa   with.ABL   branch   bend.TR   IND

Mili with the help of Runa bent the branch.

It is clear from the data that in this language verbs of spatial configuration only exist in the transitive structure. Although it can take an ablative phrase, it is not an argument of the verb.

v.   *Verbs of Existence, Appearance, and Disappearance*

(13) so   is   gʰəra   mənɟ   rɛnḏ a   t̪ʰu

him/her   this   house   in.LOC   live. INTR   PAST

S/he lives in this house.

(14) ?runa-ɛ   mili-ɟo   is   gʰəra   mənɟ   əpnɛ sat̪ʰ   rəhau   ha

Runa-ERG   mili-ACC this house   in.LOC   oneself with   stay.TR   IND

Runa made Mili stay at her house.

This type of verb in this language only has an intransitive form. It takes only one external argument. In a transitive structure, the native speaker's intuition marks it as doubtful showing that there is no scope for more than one argument to be selected by the verb.

vi.   *Verbs of Contact/Attachment*

(15) bəhiḏ -ɛ   pʰoʈo   cipkəu   ha

waheed-ERG   photo   paste.TR   IND

Waheed pasted the photo.

(16) bəhiḏ -ɛ   runa   hau   pʰoʈo   cipkəu   ha

waheed-ERG runa   with.ABL   photo   paste.TR   IND

Waheed with the help of Runa pasted the photo.

Verbs of attachment only have a transitive structure in Gaddi so it takes one internal and one external argument. Although it has an ablative phrase, it remains optional. Moreover, when speakers are given the above sentence and asked to interpret it, according to them both Waheed and Runa can be agents who are pasting the photo whereas in a causative structure the agent argument should have been only Runa. This shows that only transitive structure exists in this verb class.

vii. *Verbs of Bodily Process*

(17) məhir-ɛ   t̪ʰukku   ha

mihir-ERG   spit.INTR   IND

Mihir spits.

(18) *məhir   rinɑ   hɑu   t̪ʰəkənd̪ ɑ   hɑ

      mihir   rinɑ   with.ABL   spit.TR   IND

      Mihir makes Rina spit.

Verbs of the bodily process only exist in the intransitive structure taking one external argument.The transitive structure is incorrect according to native speaker intuition.

viii.   *Verbs of Consumption*

(19) mummi-ɛ   bəcce-o   pʰəlɑ   kʰilɑji   hin

      mother-ERG   child-DAT   fruits   feed.DITR   IND.PL

      The mother feeds her child fruits.

(20) mummi-ɛ   se:bəkɑ   hɑu   bəcce-o   pʰəlɑ   kʰilɑji   hin

      mother-ERG   servant   with.ABL   child-DAT   fruits   feed.DITR   IND.PL

      Mother with the help of the servant feeds her child fruits.

Verbs of consumption act as both an intransitive and a ditransitive structure in the language. These verbs can either take one external argument or one external argument and two internal arguments compulsorily. It does not have a transitive structure nor does it have causatives.

ix.   *Verbs of Perception*

(21) min-ɟo   gi:t   huɳɳa   pəsənd   hɑ

      i-DAT   song   listen   like   IND

      I like listening to songs.

(22) d̪ id̪ d̪ i   somi-o   gi:t   həɾəndɪ hɑ

      sister   somi-DAT   song   listen.DITR   IND

      (Lit.) Sister listened to a song to Somi.

(23) d̪ id̪ d̪ i   mili   hɑu   somi-o   gi:t   həɾəndɪ   hɑ

      sister   mili   with.ABL   somi-ACC   song   listen.DITR   IND

      (Lit.) Sister with the help of Mili listened a song to Somi.

Verbs of perception only has two forms: intransitive and ditransitive. There are no transitive or causative structures of these verbs in Gaddi. Therefore, the argument structures follow that of verbs of consumption.

x.   *Verbs of Image Perception*

(24) ɟosb-ɛ   somi-o   ɟo   hind̪ i   pəɾɑi   hɑ

      Joshua-ERG   somi-DAT   DAT?   Hindi   study.DITR   IND

      Joshua taught Hindi to Somi.

(25) ɟosb-ɛ	mɑstəɾa hɑu	somi-o	hind̪ i	pəɽɑi	hɑ
Joshua	master with.ABL	somi-ACC	hindi	study.DITR	IND

Joshua with the help of his master taught Hindi to Somi.

The language has all three transitivity types in this verb class. However, it does not have a causative structure.

III.   Argument Structures in Gaddi

External Arguments

All subjects in basic Intransitive, Transitive and Ditransitive structures are External arguments also in Gaddi as we have seen with the verb classes. Upon investigating transitive passives, we see that the subject is optionally dropped in the structure but the agreement on the verb remains.

(26) mɛ	pʰul	t̪oru
me-ERG	flower	pluck.TR.1

I plucked the flower.

(27) pʰul	t̪oru
flower	pluck.1

The flower was plucked.

As this is a highly inflectional language, the inflection on the verb show agreement with the subject which makes us believe that it is a case of pro-drop instead of argument deletion. This supports the analysis that there is no passive, instead, it can be considered a pseudo-passive. Hence the question of internal or external argument does not occur here.

As discussed above, unergatives are external arguments of the verb. A few examples of unergative data shall drive the point home. Following the Hindi example of ***ram d̪ɔːɽa***, we find the subject argument selected by the unergative verb be assigned the agent theta role. As we know, agents in any language are external arguments. Therefore, Gaddi too has external arguments as subjects of unergative verbs.

(28) rɑɟiːb	d̪ɔːɽɑ	ləgurɑ	t̪ʰu
Rajeev	run.UNERG	PROG	PAST

Rajeev was running.

Internal Arguments

As seen with the verb classes, all objects in Gaddi are internal arguments whether they get the Accusative case or Dative. Both these cases are marked with *ɟo* showing that they may be treated equally, although that requires more research. However, the phrase marked for the ablative case is optional throughout the language showing that it cannot be an argument selected by the verb.

Unaccusatives are inherently internal as they get the theme theta role by the verb. It is only to satisfy the case and EPP that it ends up at the subject position. All the examples are shown below only further the fact that even in this language, unaccusative subjects are indeed internal.

(29) sʰisɑ   ʈruʈi   gɑnɑ

glass   break   go

The glass has broken.

(30) pəʈʈər   pɛi   gu

leaves   fall   go

Leaves fell.

(31) ɟɑhɑɟ   pɑɳi   mənɟ   pei   gu   hɑ

ship   water   in.LOC   fall   go   IND

The ship sank into the water.

Dative Subjects are also internal to the verb as they get the theme theta role and get marked for the dative case. All the examples here show that dative subjects are nothing but internal arguments of the verb that gets assigned the theme theta role and gets marked for accusative case. It is only to satisfy EPP then it moves to the subject position. Based on the Hindi *hema-ko bʰuk ləgi hɛ* example, we find the following Gaddi sentence.

(32) himɑ-ɟo   bʰruk   ləguri   hɑ

hema-DAT   hunger   PROG   IND

Hema is hungry.

IV.   Case Markers in Gaddi

In Gaddi, the nominative case is marked with the Ø-morpheme, and both the Accusative and the Dative are marked with either [o] or [ɟo]. In the case of a ditransitive verb, the Dative is marked and the Accusative is unmarked.

(33) *ɑu   rɑmm-ɑ-o/ɟo   kəʈab-o/ɟo   d̪iɳi   hɑ

I   ram-OBL-DAT   book-ACC   give.DITR   IND

I will give a book to Ram.

The ergative marker is [ɛ] and the ablative morpheme is [ʈʰɑu] or [hɑu] and the oblique is marked with [ɑ] while the genitive takes the bound morpheme [ri]. In the case of the ablative or the dative and accusative, the variations in the case markers might be attested through phonological constraints, however, it is a matter of further research.

Conclusion

Gaddi is a highly inflectional language where arguments are easily identified based on their inflection patterns. My analysis points to the following conclusions.

1. The language has scope for intransitive, transitive, and ditransitive constructions; not all verbs cater to all the three transitivity types.
2. There are no causatives in Gaddi. Although there is scope for ablative phrases to be added, they essentially remain optional and their adding does not add any syntactic domain to the verb.
3. There are only pseudo-passives in Gaddi. Being an Indo-Aryan language, it can imitate the passive structure of Hindi looking falsely at a passive structure. However, it seems that it is nothing but pro-drop that allows such constructions. The agreement on the verb remains showing that it is only a pro-drop and not a passive structure.
4. External arguments are as predicted essentially nominative subjects and unergative subjects.
5. Internal arguments are all both accusative and dative objects. Even dative subjects are internal arguments and so are unaccusative subjects.
6. The oblique case is assigned across the language to the subjects of a future clause. The future tense does not get marked on the verb, instead, the verb takes its infinitive form and marks the subject with an oblique case. The interesting part of this is that the oblique case is marked on all kinds of subjects, no matter the transitivity. Even the subject of an unergative verb and an unaccusative gets marked by the oblique case in the future. The dative subjects too.

These generalizations shed light on the novelty of the language. The verb classes and their unique behavior show that it is indeed a separate language and not just some variety or an amalgamation of all the neighboring languages.

List of Abbreviations (Leipzig Glossing Rules, 2015)

1	first person
ABL	ablative
AUX	auxiliary
DAT	dative
DITR	ditransitive
ERG	ergative
IND	indicative
INTR	intransitive
LOC	locative
OBL	oblique
PAST	past
PL	plural

PROG   progressive
TR   transitive
UNERG   unergative

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Tai Ahom: A Critically Endangered Language of Assam

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Abstract

The Ahom language is one of the languages of the Tai groups belonging to the Tai-Kadai family of languages (Siamese-Chinese family of the Indo-Chinese forms of speech). The word Tai is used by all the branches of Shams except Siamese; which is unknown. Originally Ahoms were called the Moung-Dun-Shun-Kham which means a 'country full of golden gardens' referring to the many golden paddy fields of Assam. Tai Ahom people live in upper Assam and are mainly spoken in Patsaku, Parijat, Bokota i.e., Deodhai villages and Hati Barua gaon, Aakhaya of Sivsagar district; they also live in Guwahati, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Jorhat, Dibrugarh and Nagaon of Assam. The Tai Ahom language is closely related to other groups of Tai languages namely Tai Phake, Tai Turung, Tai Khamyang, Tai Khamti, etc. According to the Tai Ahom Development Council of 2012-14, the total population of Tai Ahom was 25 Lakhs.

According to UNESCO (1999), Tai Ahom is a dead language, however, after an exhaustive survey of the Tai Ahom, it is learned that few Tai Ahom speakers (likely 70 to 90 years old) are found in the Patsaku and Parijat villages of Sivsagar. Unfortunately, the young generation of Tai Ahom could not speak their language. Tai Ahom language is critically endangered due to the influence of the dominant language i.e., Assamese. Nevertheless, there are many manuscripts on the Tai Ahom language which is mainly used by a priestly class in prayers or religious practices. The present paper is an attempt to address the issues of language endangerment in Northeast India with special reference to Tai Ahom language, an undocumented endangered language of Assam.

Keywords: Ahom, Assam, Tai, Endangered language.

1. Introduction

Language endangerment usually refers to the rapidly decreasing number of speakers of languages of the world. A language is in danger when the native speaker of a language discontinues using the language as their L1 or has shifted to another language as their L1 due to the influence of the dominant language or maybe for some political issues. Accordingly, if the continuation of language shifting by the native speaker goes on then the language will become extinct, as no speaker will be left for the language to survive. 'Not only can ideas and memes go extinct, but entire conceptualizations of reality are also wiped off the map when languages go extinct' (George Van Driem, 2007). 'A language is endangered if it is not being passed on to the younger generation (Joshua Fishman, 1991).

2. The object of the study

The present paper will focus on the issues of language endangerment in Northeast India with special reference to the Tai Ahom language based on UNESCO'S framework on Language Vitality and Endangerment (2003).

3. Methodology

The methodology adopted for the present study incorporated both primary and secondary sources of data. The secondary source includes documents, articles, books, journals, the internet, etc. The primary source was carried out with the help of the interview method with the Tai Ahom speakers from the Sivsagar district of Assam and the data collecting was mainly based on the fieldwork. The data was recorded and digitalized with the help of an audio recorder (SONY ICD-UX560F digital recorder) and a digital camera (Nikon D5600).

4. Language Endangerment

According to UNESCO'S Atlas of the world's languages in danger (2011), 'A language may be the vehicle of an economic underclass whose breadwinners are forced to go elsewhere to seek work- and when they do move into a larger speech community, they may not be able to retain everyday use of their language'. According to the framework of UNESCO'S Language vitality and endangerment (2003) 'A language is endangered when its speaker ceases to use it, uses it in an increasingly reduced number of communicative domains, and ceases to pass it on from one generation to the next..'. Languages do not literally 'die' or go

'extinct' since they are not living organisms. They are crowded out by the bigger languages (K David Harrison, 2007). When a language of a community dies, they also lose their identity, culture, knowledge, etc. A person or a community is identified by the language they speak. Factors determining a language to be endangered by speaker's attitudes towards their language, education policy, political issues, etc. Speakers of Tai Ahom language possess negative attitudes may be due to identity crisis, lack of prestige or lack of knowledge about the language as the community speakers have already shifted to the dominant language i.e., Assamese, an Indo-Aryan language. So it is necessary to document and preserve a language before we lose the last native speaker of the language of a community.

5. Tai Ahom: An overview

The Ahom language is one of the languages of Tai groups belonging to the Tai-Kadai family of languages/Siamese-Chinese family of the Indo-Chinese forms of speech (Grierson, 1903) Ahom were the first Tai group in Assam led by Sukapha a Tai prince from Muang Mao. The Ahoms were gradually shifting to the majority Hindu population, after the sixteenth century (Morey, 2005). The Ahoms use the Assamese language in their daily life, although the Ahom language is used in religious chants and literary materials[1] . The word *Tai* is used by all the branches of Shams except Siamese; which is unknown. Originally Ahoms were called the "Moung-Dun-Shun-Kham" which means a "country full of golden gardens" referring to the many golden paddy fields of Assam (Boruah and Deodhai, 1964). Tai Ahom people live in upper Assam and the language is mainly spoken in Patsaku, Parijat, Bokota i.e. Deodhai villages, and Hati Barua gaon, Aakhaya of Sivsagar district; they also live in other parts of Brahmaputra valley such as Guwahati, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Jorhat, Dibrugarh and Nagaon of Assam. The Tai Ahom language is closely related to other Tai groups of languages namely Tai Aiton, Tai Phake, Tai Turung, Tai Khamyang, Tai Khamti, etc. Approximately, eight lakhs (800000) Assamese speakers claim to be of Ahom descent (A. Diller, 1990).

According to UNESCO (1999), Tai Ahom is an extinct language, however, after an exhaustive survey of the language and people, it is learned that a few Tai Ahom speakers (likely 70 to 90 years old) are found in the Patsaku and Parijat villages of Sivsagar. The young generation of Tai Ahom cannot speak the language. However, some young people of Tai Ahom are learning their language through the Diploma Course in Tai Ahom language from Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh. Tai Ahom people are mostly found to be monolingual speakers of the Assamese language which is an Indo Aryan Language and the remaining speaker, therefore, shifted to the Assamese language and identify themselves as Asamiya. So it is clear that Tai Ahom is a critically endangered language due to the influence of the dominant language Assamese.

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[1]Not spoken in daily life, used in religious chants and literary materials- 'Ethnologue language of the world'.
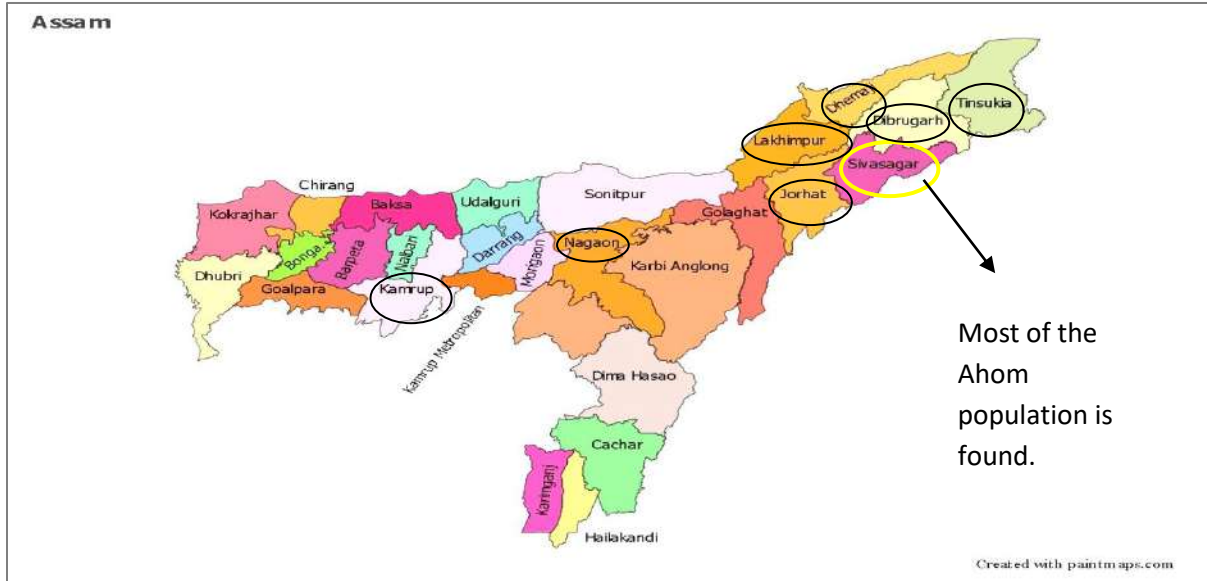
Map showing Tai Ahom Population in Assam

6. Major evaluative factors of language vitality

As mentioned in the UNESCO'S framework on Language Vitality and Endangerment there are six factors major to assessing language vitality. They are shown below:

1. Intergenerational Language Transmission;
2. The absolute number of speakers;
3. The proportion of speakers within the total population;
4. Trends in existing new domains;
5. Response to new domains and media; and
6. Materials for language education and literacy.
7. Governmental and institutional language attitudes and policies,
8. Community member's attitudes toward their language,
9. Amount and quantity of documentation.

The above-mentioned factors are aims to focus on the present study to identify the level and degree of endangerment in Tai Ahom.

6.1. Intergenerational Language Transmission

Tai Ahom speakers are mostly found in Patsaku, Parijat, Bokota, etc. i.e., Deodhai villages, Hati Barua Gaon, and Aakhaya of the Sivsagar district. The Ahom language is not spoken by all the generations and the transmission of the language to the next generation is hardly found. So, the language is found to be threatened. The Ahom language is not spoken in all the contexts but is used only in chanting prayers by the priest. As almost all the speakers of Tai Ahom have already shifted to the dominant language of the region namely Assamese.

Although, a few younger generations are actively learning the language in schools. So, the language is not spoken by all generations, and therefore, the Ahom language is unsafe and said to be a critically endangered language.

Age Group	Language Use
60-Above	Assamese, Tai Ahom
40-60	Assamese, Tai Ahom
20-40	Assamese, Tai Ahom
Children	Assamese

Table No. 1: Age group and the language used by the Ahom population.

6.2. Absolute Number of Speakers

The total population of Tai Ahom is estimated as twenty-five lakhs (25,00,000; Tai Ahom Development Council, 2012-14). The Ahom population is said to be estimated at 1,48,000 in 1872 and approximately 1,00,000 population in 1989, 33% of the Ahom population is found in the Brahmaputra valley mainly in the districts of upper Assam (Jorhat, Sivsagar, Dibrugarh) are identified as Ahom (Terwiel, 1996; 277). The exact absolute number of Ahom speakers is not known. Although, we can assume that an approximate number of Ahom speakers is two thousand (2,000)[2] ; which includes the priests and the learners of the younger generation. Approximately, eight lakhs (800000) Assamese speakers claim to be of Ahom descent (A. Diller, 1990).

6.3. Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population:

The population of the Ahom speakers is found in Nagaon, Jorhat, Lakhimpur, Dhemaji, Tinsukia, Dibrugarh, and Sivsagar. Most of the speakers are found in the Sivsagar district viz. Patsaku, Parijat, Hati Barua gaon, Bokota, etc. The speakers of the Ahom language are monolingual in the Assamese language. The people of Ahom have shifted their language into the dominant language like Assamese and the indigenous Ahom language is used only by a handful of people belonging to the priestly class and a limited number of younger generations. So, the language can be determined as a critically endangered language after looking into the proportion of speakers within its overall population in Assam i.e., 31, 169, 272 (According to the 2011 census).

6.4. Trends in Existing Language Domains

A language is said to be alive when the speakers get the opportunity to interact in their language at least in their home domain or with their community members. But due to the lack

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[2] According to my informants Chau Medini Mohan' and 'Chau Tileswar Mohan' during my field investigation in Sivsagar, 2019.

of prestige, the less prestigious language members shift their language for crabbing socio-economic opportunities and as a result of the continuous process, the members of the language get assimilated with the dominant language as well as their cultures. The Tai Ahom speakers also shifted their language into the dominant language Assamese. The remaining older members or speaker does not get the opportunity to speak even in their home domain as the majority of the speaker has already shifted to the Assamese language and the language is used only in chanting prayer or during the religious occasion. But a few numbers of younger generations are trying to learn and revive the language.

Domains	Language Use
Home	Assamese
Education	English, Hindi, Assamese, Tai Ahom
Market	Assamese
Religious Activities	Tai Ahom
Village Meetings	Assamese

Table No. 2: Showing language used in domains.

6.5. Response to New Domains and Media

The Tai Ahom population does not have any responsibility towards new domains or media; as the language has a very few speakers with a limited domain i.e., in the religious customs for chanting prayers and is also used in some limited private or semi-government schools. The majority of the speakers of Tai Ahom is Assamese speaker. Although, it is found in the limited source of media like the Patkai News channel, YouTube channel, and some Facebook pages.

6.6. Materials for Language Education and Literacy

Education in the language plays a major role in language vitality. There are language communities that maintain strong oral traditions, and some do not wish their language to be written. In other communities, literacy in their language is a source of pride. In general, however, literacy is directly linked with social and economic development. Tai Ahom language has its scripts and writings and so some materials and text are available in Tai Ahom Language and are taught mainly by the priest in an informal manner. Although, at present days the Ahom language is learned through the Diploma Course in Tai Ahom language from Dibrugarh University, Dibrugarh since 30th November 2015, Institute of Tai Studies and Research, Moranhat (25th September 2011) and Central Tai Academy, Patsaku, Sivsagar (1964).

6.7. Government and Institutional Language Attitudes and policies

Government and institutions have explicit policies and/ or implicit attitudes toward the dominant and subordinate languages. Tai Ahom language is a non-official language of the State of Assam. The language is found mainly in literary material i.e., manuscripts and during the chanting of religious prayers. So, Tai Ahom is an unprotected language for the community as they get very limited domains to use the language which results in getting more assimilated with the dominant language, Assamese which is an official language of Assam. The Ahom language needs serious attention to save the language.

6.8. Community Members' Attitudes toward Their language

Members of a speech community are not usually neutral towards their language. A language is safe when the members' have positive attitudes towards their language. Tai Ahom population has negative attitudes towards their language. Almost all of the Ahom population has shifted to their dominant language as a result they are ashamed of learning the language because they think speaking or writing the non-dominant language will not be encouraged by society. The older generations (70-90, 50-70) of the priestly class are actively using their language (religious prayers). And a few members of the young generations (20- 40+) are trying to learn and revive their language.

6.9. Amount and Quality of Documentation

Language documentation is very necessary before it becomes extinct. In Tai Ahom a few amounts of documentation are found in the form of text, dictionaries, and primers which are originally based on Tai Manuscripts. And few linguistics works are done which are mainly based on the socio-cultural or religious profile of the language. So, the language needs urgent proper documentation for the language to survive.

To determine the degree and level of endangerment in terms of the Tai Ahom language can be illustrated in the following table:

Intergenerational Language Transmission	1	Critically Endangered
Absolute Number of Speakers		Approximately 2,000
The proportion of Speakers within the Total Population	1	Critically Endangered
Trends in existing language domains	1	Highly Limited Domains
Response to New Domains and Media	1	Minimal
Materials for Language Education and Literacy	2	Written materials exist, but they may only be useful for some members of the community; and for others, they may

		have a symbolic significance. Literacy education in the language is not a part of the school curriculum.
Governmental and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies	2	Active Assimilation
Community Members' Attitudes toward Their Language	1	A few members support language maintenance; others are indifferent or may even support language loss.
Amount and Quality of Documentation	1	Only a few grammatical sketches, short word lists, and fragmentary texts. Audio and video recordings do not exist, are of unusable quality, or are completely un-annotated.

7. Factors responsible for the endangerment of Tai Ahom

The factors responsible for language endangerment vary from language to language in certain socio-linguistic settings. The following are the factors are responsible for the endangerment of the Tai Ahom language:

1. The Ahom language is highly influenced by the regional or dominant language Assamese.
2. Discontinuance of their age-old customs as well as cultural practices in the form of folk songs, folk dances, proverbs, medication, hunting, games, etc.
3. Lack of written literature as well the oral practices.
4. Lack of formal education in their language
5. Negative attitude towards their language.
6. Use of language in a very limited domain.
7. Intergenerational language transmission is hardly found.
8. Few numbers of speakers are maintaining their language.
9. Due to lack of prestige, parents force their children to learn the international language, English, the national language, Hindi, and the dominant language, Assamese to get opportunities.
10. Scattered in nature.
11. Tai Ahom has their script for writing but they use the script of the dominant Assamese language due to language shifts.

8. Proposed steps for protection and preservation

1. Parents should encourage their children to learn and speak the Ahom language among themselves in and outside the home domain.

2. The positive attitude of the speaker toward the language should be developed by organizing awareness programs, and academic activities like the recitation of folk rhymes, and folk tales that have been used in oral form from generation to generation.

3. The old-age customs and cultural practices should be recalled by the Ahom people to preserve the language.

4. Audio and video recordings of folk songs, folk dance, and some cultural practices should be done.

5. Tai Ahom language should be a part of formal education regardless of its potentiality and population size.

6. Native speakers of the language should be encouraged to form the literary body by conducting the workshop, seminars, etc., to attain and enrich their literature.

7. Native speakers should be encouraged to write stories, poems, proverbs, dramas, and novels in their language.

8. Government should take proper initiatives to protect and promote the language to the next generation and should also make the use of the language in formal education.

9. Conclusion

Tai Ahom is a less explored language in terms of documentation and description. Due to the shift in the majority language, Assamese in large population leads the Ahom language on the verge of extinction. So, there is an urgency and need for extensive research and proper documentation of the Ahom language to be done before we lose the native speaker of the language. Keeping this in mind, the present paper focuses on the struggle for survival of the Ahom language by the Ahom-speaking people of Northeast India to keep their language and culture alive.

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Taste terms in the Sindhi Language: A Cognitive Semantic Analysis

Riddhi Advani

Abstract

The Sindhi is one of the endangered languages in India. The number of speakers is slowly diminishing. Taste terms are words used to describe flavors of food such as sweet, sour, salty, bitter, or bland. These terms are polysemantic and can be used to describe people, objects, and situations. These are also used in several idioms. This paper attempts to study various taste terms in the Sindhi language and their extended usage and meaning through the theory of conceptual metaphors.

Keywords: Sindhi, idioms, taste terms, semantics, metaphor.

Introduction

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory in psychology comprising a five-tier model of human needs. Food lies at the bottom of this pyramid.[1]. It is an incontestable truth that food is a survival need but a human being's relationship with food is more than that. It can have several aspects personal, cultural, historical, and social to name a few. Hence describing food could be a challenging and complex task as one needs to take into account the flavors, textures, and aroma which are often affected by a personal preference and individual palates. Despite the wide array of words that could be a part of an individual's lexicon certain taste terms are widely used such as sweet, salty, spicy, bitter, sour, and bland.

The present paper aims the analysis the perception of taste terms in Sindhi. However, among these seven taste terms, all are not limited to their prototypical usage. In Sindhi, there are a few taste terms such as sweet, spicy, salty, and bitter, which have an extended meaning, when used metaphorically similar to other Indo -Aryan Languages such as Hindi, Punjabi, and Gujarati[2]. Hence, the analysis of the extended meanings of the taste terms derived from the metaphors present in the language, and their conceptualization in various domains are examined in this paper. These extended meanings are derived from the conceptual metaphors available in the language, where the source domain is a taste descriptive adjective while the target domains vary. The target domains are established based on the metaphors observed in the conversational use of the language. There hasn't been much work done in this area, especially, in Indian languages.

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[1]A Theory of Human Motivation,1943 –Maslow

2 Taste-Terms in Gujarati: A Cognitive Semantic Analysis Avani Wakhale and Ajay Sarvaiya

Method and framework

Conceptual metaphor is one of the most important terms in cognitive linguistics, which refers to the process of establishing cognitive links, or mappings, between several concepts (conceptual structures), about different domains. Metaphor is "understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another" [Lakoff, Jonson 1980:5].

Unlike the traditional linguistic approach to metaphor, conceptual metaphor, as G. Lakoff sees it, represents a universal quality of thinking. The conceptual metaphor does not belong to the language only, it can be expressed both by verbal (e.g., *She has come to a crossroads in her lif*e) and non-verbal means – arts, music, gestures, etc. Thus, in terms of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT), metaphor is a cognitive process that is reflected in language structures.

According to Lakoff and Johnson's Theory, conceptual metaphor represents the interaction of two cognitive structures (or domains): the source domain and the target domain. The target domain is structured similarly to the source domain, i.e., Metaphorical correspondences or, in other words, metaphorical mappings are established between them. For instance, in the metaphor LIFE is JOURNEY the target domain (what is described), i.e., Life, is assimilated to the source domain, i.e., Journey.

This paper is divided into three sections. The first section consists of an introduction. The latter section deals with food as identity. The second section is about the conceptualization of the taste terms concerning the cognitive model of prototypicality: taste, cognitive semantics, conceptual metaphors, polysemy, and perception of taste is described, contributing with an insight into how the taste terms are used prototypically. This section also discusses the Cognitive Semantic analysis of the extended meanings, derived from the conceptual metaphors, of all the taste terms available in the Sindhi language. In closing, the third section provides the conclusion.

Food as identity

Sindhis are originally from the state of Sindh, Present-day Pakistan, they were compelled to migrate to India post the Partition of India and Pakistan based on communal lines. The Sindhi – Hindu community decided to hold on to Hinduism which followed an extremely violent exodus. Sindhi do not have their state and speakers of the Sindhi language are slowly dwindling in numbers nonetheless common eating habits continue to be something that binds the community. When the Sindhis moved across the border after Partition, they left their entire culture, except their culinary traditions," says author Aggarwal (2012)[3]. A very profound Sindhi poem by poet **Bharti Sadarangani**,(2016)[4] called" *Zibaan*" speaks not of the Sindhi language, or sayings, but of classic delicacies. "What we remember is the taste of the food, not the language. This is our identity now. It is the only surviving part of our

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[3]. Sindh: Stories From A Vanished Homeland" (2012).-Saaz Agarwal

[4].Retilo Chitu (2016) –Bharti Sadarangani

history," Sadarangani **(2016).** Her collection Sindhi poetry '**Retilo Chitu'** won the Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar ." [5]

Metaphorical meanings of taste –terms

The taste descriptive adjectives, as its name suggests, are commonly used to describe the taste or flavor of the food, as discussed in the section. However, these adjectives obtain a metaphorically extended meaning when they are used to describe something other than the taste or flavors of the food. In this section, we will analyze how the metaphorical application of taste terms reflects their extended usage.

Personality is taste

The first conceptual metaphor of taste – PERSONALITY IS TASTE, emerges when an individual's personality is represented by taste descriptive adjectives. Personality is the set of psychological traits and mechanisms within the individual that are organized and relatively enduring and that influence his or her interactions with, and adaptations to, the intrapsychic, physical, and social environments. Hence, when such traits in an individual, are described by taste terms, the cognitive approach towards the personality is the same as that towards the food and its flavors. Hence, in this conceptual metaphor, PERSONALITY is the TARGET and TASTE is the SOURCE. Central to the way we perceive ourselves, the world, and others.

" **The concepts that govern our thought and action are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning, down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. If we are right in suggesting that our conceptual system is largely metaphorical, then the way we think what we experience, and what we do every day is very much a matter of metaphor."[6],[7]**
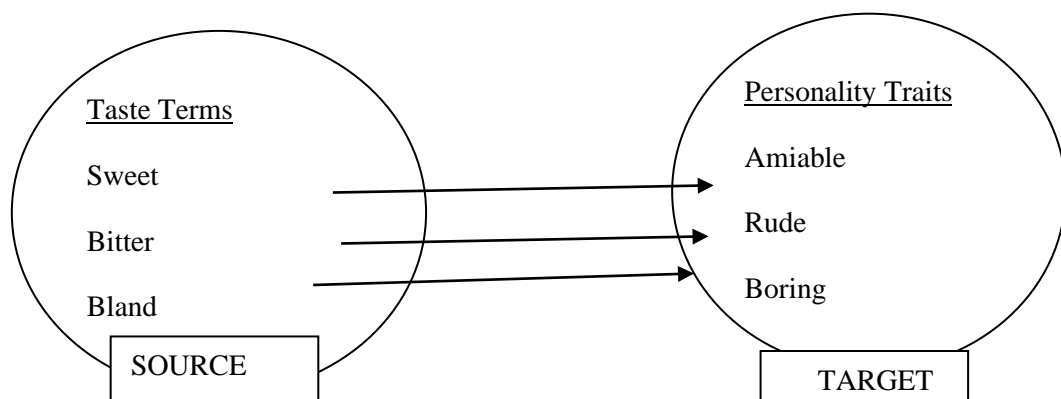
In Sindhi, there is the phrase '*Tikkho Subhav'* the literal translation of this would be ' spicy nature, it refers to a person who is short-tempered and argumentative. There is an excess of annoyance, anger, and irritation, their rash actions, and reckless words almost always

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[5] . https://www.livemint.com/Leisure/Gj2AtHpSIiQh1cKsdBswEN/The-sin-from-Sindh.html

[6] Metaphors We live by Lakoff and Johnson

[7] .http://scodis.com/for-students/glossary/conceptual-metaphor

engender undesirable consequences like fights with friends and family members. Such people may also have emotional outbursts at the workplace which can have serious repercussions. As excessive spicy food can make a person uneasy similarly such a volatile temperament can people uneasy, thus this metaphor has a direct reference to taste terms and personality. The function of the knife contributes to the metaphorical meaning, which is either to cut or to penetrate. A knife can wound or damage someone, causing them physical injury. But here, the metaphorical implication of damage or injury is related to an abstract concept of respect, i.e. The damage caused to the self-respect of an individual by insulting him/her with the use of disrespectful language leading him/her to emotional pain and injury. Hence, the implication of this metaphor is negative.

Salt is a common ingredient in food across the globe. When the proportion of salt is less than required, the food becomes tasteless and hence, we cannot enjoy its flavor. Hence, saltless food or food with less salt loses its flavor. Flavour usually, is considered a key element. This concept is reflected in cognitive modeling of the metaphors - /*Fikkho mathnu* / 'tasteless person ', when the taste descriptive adjectives – tasteless and salt less are used metaphorically to describe a person's temperament. A person who is dull and lackadaisical. People often have vapid conversations with this and don't find a sense of joy or entertainment. Someone who is extremely boring and is often ignored by people his / her nature.

Metaphors on how language determines character

"No society thrives or advances without an intense desire for character development which can mainly be achieved through character education. It has been said that "character education is as old as education itself". The effort to understand and develop character extends into prehistory and has been universally recognized. This effort includes the teaching of individual persons in a manner that will help them develop variously as moral, civic, well mannered, well behaved, non-bulling, healthy, critical, successful, traditional, compliant, socially acceptable beings." [8]

The findings of the study showed that **the use the language will significantly enhance character education**, hence character development; and that the kind of language an individual is exposed to shapes the kind of character that is developed in such an individual. The language we use in the quotidian is a mirror of our personality. In the Sindhi language there are three main metaphors related to food and language; *Mithi zuban, tikkhi zuban, and, kardhvi zuban* (sweet tongue, spicy tongue, and bitter tongue respectively)

Mithi Zubaan or Sweet tongue can have both a positive and negative connotation. In the positive sense, it means someone sweet and amiable. They never say something that would offend someone. This person is often admired by people as he/she has the gift of gab. In the negative sense of the term, it means someone who is excessively sweet or obsequious. A person who beseeches to get his way out of things.

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[8] Link Between Language and Character Development: People's Perception

Tikkhi zubaan or spicy tongue is extremely rude and ill-mannered. *Tikki* also means sharp. Like sharp knives can hurt people, their words can also hurt people. They often insult people and have discourteous behavior. Insolence is their key personality trait.

Kardhvi Zubaan or bitter tongue speaks negative things and has a pessimistic outlook toward life. Negativity is **a tendency to be downbeat, disagreeable, and skeptical**. It's a pessimistic attitude that always expects the worst. Just like bitter food gives an unpleasant sensation these people make the environment gloomy.

Related terms

Apart from the six conventional taste terms: sweet, sour, spicy, bitter, salty, and tasteless. There are several other related terms such as 'cooked properly or panchyal' Another interesting adjective used for food in Sindhi is ' panchyaal' which means adequately cooked. Here the attribute of being cooked is the source domain and maturity of nature is the target domain. In Sindhi cuisine importance is given to slow cooking so that vegetables/ meat can get the best flavors. In the metaphorical sense, a very mature person and sage are called a ' Panchal '. Such, a person is poised and has control over his emotions and has control over his / her emotions. He/she also knows **the savoir-faire** of the society and culture they belong to. As a substance as harsh as fire is a necessary prerequisite for cooking it is the adversity in life that teaches us the best lessons and strengthens our character.

The term '*masaledar*' means full of spices. Spices form an integral part of Sindhi cooking. Using freshly ground spices is encouraged to get good flavors. Similarly, the phrases ' *masaledar batein* 'is a reference to interesting and engaging conversations, it has a positive connotation. There is also an idiom called '*masala jhokan'* which means to exaggerate things and it has a negative connotation. Here being full of spices is the source domain and the adjective 'interesting is the target domain.

Taste terms for description

All taste terms have certain underlying characteristics associated with them. Spicy food has extreme taste terms which can cause unpleasant sensations and even lead to digestive issues for some. This conceptual understanding can be extended to the description of objects and experiences. The phrase '*Tikkhi Dhoop* '(Spicy Sunlight) refers to scorching heat and it gives a burning sensation. *'Tikkhoo Chakoo'*(Spicy Knife) here the word 'tikkhoo ' refers to the sharpness of the knife. On the contrary, '*Tikhhe Ankiyoon* ' (Spicy eyes) is used to describe a positive trait: The beauty of eyes. It is a compliment and is often used for women. Here spicy is the source domain and attribute of intensity or sharpness is the target domain.

Whereas sweet taste is liked by most of the people and has pleasant sensation.' *Mithi galiyoon* ', 'sweet talk' means positive and pleasing words that can have a soothing effect on a person. There is another very interesting idiom in Sindhi *'Mithi churi* '(sweet knife) which refers to a person who is who indirectly makes jibes. This person would not make a negative statement blatantly. Here sweet is the source domain and the attribute of being pleasant is the target domain.

Smell is taste

The term sweet is quite polysemantic. They can also be extended to the notion of smell.' *Mithi sughand* '(sweet smell) means sweet fragrance. It is often used for the fragrance of flowers and perfumes. Here sweet is the source domain and the attribute of being pleasant is the target domain.

Relations are taste

We are all a part of the social fabric. Love and trust are the pillars of any relationship. When there is a difference and tussles between people. It sows the seeds of distrust and animosity. Which results in bitterness in relationships or '*Ristan mein karvahath'*. In relationships, there are many times we are treated unfairly. It is natural to feel anger and disappointment when this happens. What happens when we don't acknowledge our feelings and deal with them in healthy ways is it tends to lead to resentment. And resentments that stay for a longer time turn into bitterness. The bitterness here symbolizes rage and abhorrence. In this example bitterness is the source domain the bleak state of the relationship is the target domain.

Music is taste

The term 'sweet 'is often used for mellifluous voice. A melodious voice or '*Mithi awaz'* or sweet voice can soothe the soul. Here sweet is the source domain and the attribute of being pleasant is the target domain.

Truth is taste

The world is far from utopian: a world where everything is perfect. The reality is crude and truths can often be virulent. Thus, the adage says ' the truth is bitter' or '*Kharvo Sach'*. This exists in several Indo – Aryan languages. Just as bitter food can cause a sensation of disgust, truths can be heart-breaking. Here bitter is the source domain and the attribute of being painful is the source domain.

Conclusion

The purpose of cognitive-semantic analysis of taste terms is to investigate various applications and functionality of taste terms in the Sindhi language. In this paper, we analyzed six main taste terms in the Sindhi language. Initially, we attempted to study how food is an identity, followed by the theory of conceptual metaphor. Later the analysis of their extended meanings via conceptual metaphors. The metaphorical usage of taste terms highlighted the human perception of various tastes and conceptualization of taste terms. Here, we observed that nearly all metaphors with the taste descriptive adjective – sweet, have a positive connotation attached to them because sweet as a taste, is conceptualized as pleasant. In contrast to that, spicy and sour tastes are conceptualized as strong while tastes such as bitter, salty, and tasteless are conceptualized as unpleasant, and hence, generally, these taste terms have negative implications when employed in a metaphorical context. Moreover, the taste-term – sweet is used extensively in metaphors, followed by the taste-term spicy.

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Language Endangerment: A Case Study of Molsom Tribe of Tripura

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Khawlsonkim Suantak

Abstract: Molsom is one of the indigenous minority languages and sub-tribe of the Halam community of Tripura. Molsom, being a minority language, faced a lot of challenges in preserving their language from the influence of the dominant communities of Kokborok and Bengali language groups.

Introduction

Language plays a great part in our life. Language is essentially a means of communication among the members of society. Perhaps because of its familiarity, we rarely observe it, taking it for rather granted, as we breathe or walk. The effects of language are remarkable and include much of what distinguishes man from animal.

The main concern among the linguists is the rapid endangerment and death of many minority languages across the world; which has led to the issues of the cultural identity of many smaller communities and tribes. A language may be endangered due to fewer people who claim that a particular language is their own and neither use it nor pass it on to their children. It may also be endangered because it is being used for fewer daily activities and loses the close association of the language with the activities. By some counts, only 600 of the 6,000 or so languages in the world are 'safe' from the threat of extinction. It is expected that, by the end of the twenty-first century, the world will be dominated by a small number of major and popular languages. Language death or extinction will be affecting the environment like large-scale destruction.

Background

In 1992, linguists attending the International Linguistics Congress in Quebec agreed with the following statement: *"As the disappearance of anyone language constitutes an irretrievable loss to mankind, it is for UNESCO a task of great urgency to respond to this situation by promoting and, if possible, sponsoring programs of linguistic organizations for the

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*http://www.unesco.org/culture/en/endangeredlanguages/atlas

description in the form of grammars, dictionaries and texts, including the recording of oral kinds of literature, of hitherto unstudied or inadequately documented endangered and dying languages." UNESCO responded in November 1993, at the General Assembly, by adopting the Endangered Languages Project and by including the Red Book of Endangered Languages. A few months later UNESCO made a report. It said even though the exact level of threat to the language endangerment is not yet known, it is obvious and certain that languages are on the verge of extinction and are progressing rapidly in many parts of the world. So highest importance should be given regarding language extinction, and those who are in the field of linguistics should realize it and step forward in extensive documentation and research towards the endangered languages."

UNESCO has categorized languages on basis of endangerment as follows: Vulnerable or Unsafe, Definitely Endangered, Severely Endangered, Critically Endangered, and Extinct. According to UNESCO, Vulnerable is when the language is used by some children in all domains and used by all children in limited domains. When the language is used mostly by the parental generation and up, is called Endangered language. The older generation speaks it, and the current generation understands it but does not speak it with their children or among them; is known as Severely Endangered. Critically Endangered is when the youngest speakers are at the age of grandparents or older, and they don't speak fluently and frequently. An extinct language is that it does not have any speakers who can speak that particular language.

Molsom Tribe

Molsom is an indigenous tribe of Tripura, which is recognized by the Government of Tripura. Molsom is one of the seventeen sub-tribes of Halam community which has been recognized as a Scheduled Tribe in the state of Tripura. Molsom along with other tribes of Halam like Hrangkhawl, Kaipeng, Korbong, Ranglong belong to Kuki-Chin group of the language of Tibeto-Burman language family (Bradley, 1997 and Grierson, 2006). There is no record of the exact population of Molsom. The Molsom are only listed under the Halam community in the census. According to the 2011 census report provided by Tribal Research and Cultural Institute, Directorate of IT, Government of Tripura, the total population of Halam community is 57,210. According to the present random survey report, the total number of Molsom speakers in Tripura is estimated at fifteen thousand. The tribe Molsom has been recorded in various documents and census reports of the government as Murchum or Mursum, which is a distorted form of Molsom (Sen, 1996).

There is no recorded evidence to trace the origin of the Molsoms. It is believed that the Molsoms migrated from China and move towards the west of Burma, Mizoram, Chittagong Hill Tracts and ultimately settling down in the erstwhile Tripura kingdom. Even though the exact period of the migration of Molsoms is unknown, it is believed that they entered Tripura before 1000 AD. There are thirteen clans in the Molsom tribe, namely Achep, Dourai, Lengman, Lorak, Lungthung, Mapu, Nawkham, Nawmpawr, Rawnte, Singar, Sungphun, Tuisum, Uisa.

The speakers of Molsom language are known as Molsoms. The Molsoms may be found in all the districts of Tripura but they are mainly concentrated in four districts Tripura, namely Dhalai, Khowai, Sepahijala, and Gomati, and the speakers are mainly concentrated in rural areas. They live in a compact area in which their villages are adjacent to one another, surrounded by other linguistic groups. To communicate with other linguistic groups Kokborok and Bangla are used. So, the Molsom speakers are mainly bilingual.

There has not been much work done by linguists on the Molsom language. Molsom language has been briefly documented by PLSI (People's Linguistic Survey of India), but there are no descriptive studies or proper documentation. "A Comparative Study of the Morphological Processes in Molsom and English with Pedagogical Implications" a Ph.D. thesis by Pradip Molsom gives a brief idea about the segmental phonology and the morphological processes of Molsom. Language Wing of Education Department, TTADC (Tripura Tribal Autonomous District Council) published the book 'Molsom Vocabulary & Terminology' in 2011, authored by Dam Charan Molsom and Pabitra Molsom. The alphabets were made due to the urgency of the requirement, without any professional guide. So even though the work done in this book is noteworthy, it lacks proper classification of sounds and alphabets and detailed study. Also, some studies in the field of Sociology and Economics have been carried out regarding Molsom culture and practices.

Why Molsom Is Endangered?

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Research (UNESCO) in its report on the world's languages in danger did not mention Molsom or any Kuki-Chin languages which are spoken in Tripura, except Hrangkhol. But in reality, the speakers of Molsom and Hrangkhol are almost the same number. The language Molsom compared to the other endangered languages is still comparatively safe from extinction. But due to the language contact with other

dominant languages, Molsom speakers, though speak Molsom, rely on or use heavy words from other languages.

Borrowed Words: The need of using other languages' words arises in Molsom speakers due to the lack of lexicon or words, and also due to the ignorance of the Molsom words. Words like table, chair, fan, etc. are English words, and; 'kosto' (suffering), 'lap' (benefit), 'jati' (tribe), 'someone' (time), etc. are Bangla words, which have become part and parcel of Molsom language. The use of days like Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, etc. in English or Bangla 'somber' (Monday), 'mongolbar' (Tuesday), 'budbar' (Wednesday), etc. and months like January, February, March, etc. in English are used by Molsom speakers in their daily lives. But Molsom has all the names of the days of a week and months of a year; which are usually unknown to the Molsom speakers.

Need for Other Language

The other reason for Molsom speakers using other languages is because of their livelihood. For all the official works Bangla, English, and Kokborok are used; and for the business work, Bangla and Kokborok are used. So, the Molsom speakers have to give more importance to other languages for their livelihood and daily needs. In the schools and educational establishments Bangla, English, and Hindi are the main medium through which lessons are taught. Besides Bangla, English, and Hindi, some schools in Tripura offer Mizo as a Second Language subject. The children, therefore, do not use Molsom in schools or other educational institutions and do not learn the words or lexicons and grammar. The children rely heavily on Bangla or English words which later become their automatic first choice of using words for particular things. So, for learning Molsom, the Molsom children need to have an environment where Molsom is spoken in the family.

Society and Religion

The use of the Molsom language is limited to household and small community gatherings only. Due to mix community in Tripura, in the public gatherings, the dominant language is appreciated and used, even though the audiences are mainly from the Molsom community. In political gatherings, Kokborok or Bangla will be used, even though most of the audiences are Molsom since most of the time the leaders or speakers are not from the Molsom community and do not know how to speak Molsom. And it becomes a practice to use Kokborok or Bangla in public gatherings. The religious belief of Molsoms is mostly Christians though there are

small numbers of exceptions. The Mizoram missionaries have an immense influence on the Molsoms' religious beliefs as well as culture. And due to the influence of Mizo missionaries, the Mizo language has impacted the use and practice of the Molsom language to a certain extent. The Mizo Bible is commonly used together with Bangla Bible by the Molsoms, as most of the Molsoms are comfortable with Bangla and Mizo. In many Molsom churches, the praise and worship are conducted in the Mizo language and Mizo hymns are used. So, in the churches, the Molsom language is impacted by the Mizo and Bangla. And also due to the absence of media in any form regarding the Molsom language, it is safe to say that no one has learned anything about the Molsom language from the media except for some documentary videos which are related to cultural dance.

Domains of Language Use:

It can be seen from the above points that the use of the Molsom language among the Molsoms is limited to the family and the society. Due to the influences of the dominant languages Molsom language is used sparingly by the Molsom speakers. The figure below shows the domains of language used by the Molsoms.
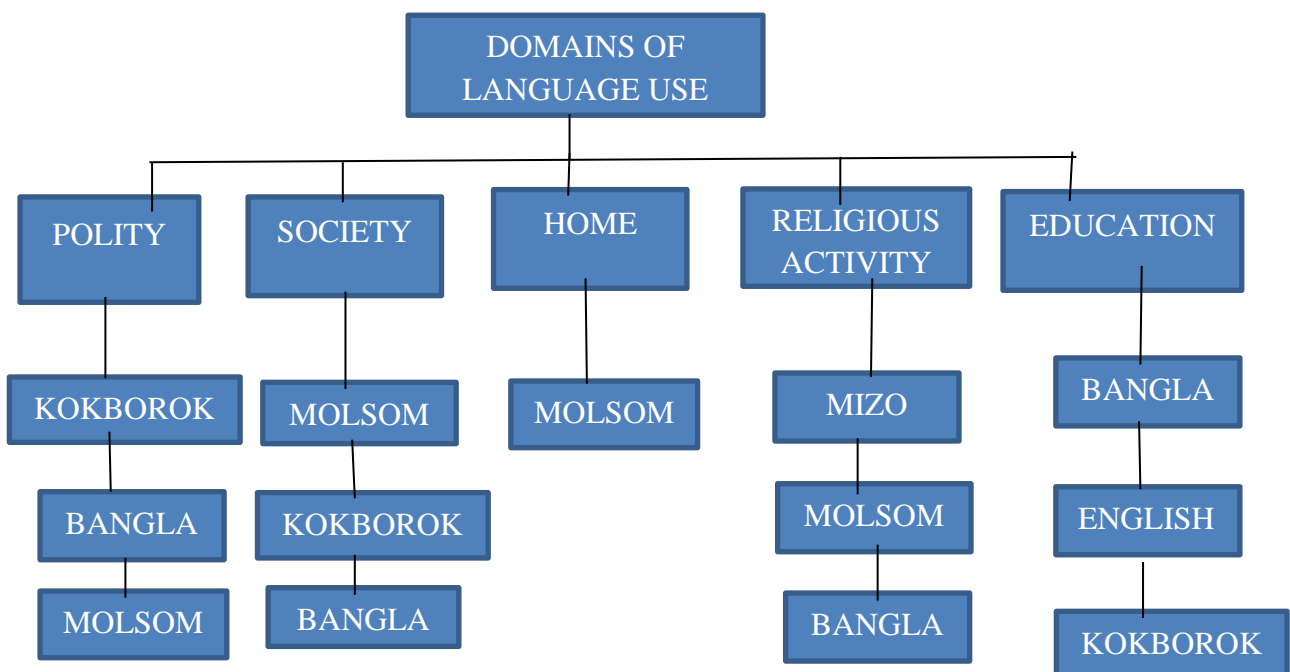
Impact on Molsom Language:

Language is a powerful marker for group identity, and essential for the survival of many communities. In many western countries, a dominant language replaces the other small languages. But in Africa and Asia, the sense of indigenousness and sense of pride in one's community helped the communities in preserving their language and culture. But due to globalization and the rapid growth of technology some communities find it hard to preserve their language, culture, and traditions. The Molsom language has been constantly influenced by more dominant languages such as Bangla, Kokborok, and Mizo. These languages are also the choices available to a Molsom school-going child as a second language subject along with Hindi. The other main reason is an inter-community marriage which affected the Molsom language since the children most of the time mix the languages of the parents and the original language slowly fades away.

Conclusion:

The Molsom language has a small speaking population, yet it remained active despite its use in personal domains. However, the scenario may change due to various reasons at different points in time and space. The immediate step for retention and development of Molsom language is documenting the grammar of the language including unique traits of the language. Molsom language being a potentially endangered language, native speakers of the language must be made aware of the situation of the language. It is pertinent that the younger generation of Molsom speakers should take pride in talking their language. In the recent past, the Molsom youth started a movement in reviving the Molsom language. The demand to include Molsom language as a Second language subject in primary classes was made for the Molsom students. Annual meetings and cultural festivals are revived for the preservation of the culture. Due to the increasing need for the Holy Bible, the BSI (Bible Society of India) has translated the New Testament of the Holy Bible in Molsom using Roman script. And also, in many churches Molsom songs and hymns are sung; and a new Hymnal or Song Book is released for the Molsom speakers and other languages like Hrangkhawl, Kaipeng, Kuki, etc. The Government of Tripura has started contributing and donating during the annual festivals of Molsom, and has shown a better attitude toward preserving the Molsom language and Molsom culture.

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Serial Verb as Complex Predicate Construction in Assamese

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Abstract

Assamese, due to language contact situation, has developed the generally unusual Indo Aryan construction of serial verbs which is a sub-category of the larger class called Complex Predicates. The notion of the complex predicate in South Asian languages includes construction such as compound verb construction, explicator compound verb construction, conjunct verb construction, serial verb construction, participial construction, converbs, small clause construction, and infinitival construction, etc. In this descriptive paper, I would be investigating the event predication and scope of negation in different types of serial verb construction in Assamese.

Keywords- complex predicate, serial verb, event predication, negation.

I. INTRODUCTION

Typologically, the easternmost language of the Indo Aryan language family in the Indian subcontinent Assamese has gained features from neighboring languages of Tibeto-Burman and Mon-Khemer (Austric) origin and has features from its genetic lineage too. The areal diffusion of the language due to such prolonged contact situations with these languages seems to be productive. Development of lexical stress, the emergence of tonogenesis, use of an extensive list of classifiers and relator nouns along with serial verb constructions are some such traits. In contrast, it has shed some typical Indo-Aryan features such as a five-way distinction in the obstruent series, phonemic vowel length and nasality distinction, gender-number agreement on the verb, and the extended paradigm for case forms, etc.

II. SERIAL VERBS

A. Cross-linguistic tendencies

- Serial verbs are believed to be capable of standing alone as the single verb of a single predicate.
- The members of a serial verb construction are not overtly conferred as subordinated to or coordinated with the main verb.

- All the verbal subsets share the same argument structure, the same subject, and the same TAM specification.
- Serial verbs mostly encode a single event and hence, can be regarded as a simple predicate. Sometimes they also mean a tightly bound sequence of temporally or analytically distinct events often entailing causality or result (Post, 2004).
- These constructions usually fall under the same intonation contour at least in the examples from Assamese.
- Like any other South-Asian language, verbs of feeling, achievement, etc can never be expressed through a single verb.

B. *Complex predicates in Assamese*

- The notion of the complex predicate in South Asian languages includes construction such as compound verb construction, conjunct verb construction, serial verb construction, participial construction, coverbs, small clause construction, infinitival construction, etc.
- Serial verbs typically stack several events in a single clause hereby forming a simple predicate. Complex predicates denote a single event.
- In Assamese also, we find complex predicates comprising adjectives and light verbs (with a change in their lexical meaning) as in Hindi.

1) *mor*   *gan-to*   ***bhal***   ***lag-e***
    I.GEN   song.CLA   good   want.Pres
    'I like the song.'

    Or,

2) *moi*   *gan-to*   ***bhal***   ***pao***
    I.NOM   song.CLA   good   get.Pres.1P
    'I like the song.'

III.   Types of serial verbs and event predication in Assamese

Type 1: Serial verbs which mean one single event:

3)   *mɔi*   ***ah-i***   ***golu***
       I.NOM   come.ConjPart   go.PresPerf.1P
       'I have come'
       ('See, I have come/arrived' with the intonation of surprise)

4)   *mɔi*   *ahi-l-u*
       I.NOM   come.PresPerf.1P
       'I have come'

5)   *mɔi*   *am-tu*   **kat-i**   *tʰɔlu*
      I.NOM   mango.CLA   cut.ConjPart   keep.PresPerf.1P
      'I have cut the mango.'

Type 2: Serial verbs meaning two distinctive but inter-related events:

6)   xi   **olai**   **goi**   **dekʰile**   je   baraxun
      he.NOM emerge.ConjPart   go.ConjPart   see.PresPerf.3P   that   rain
      di   **ase**
      give.NF   have.Pres.3P
      'He went out and saw that it is raining.

7)   *ami*   **pori**   **zua**   *lɔra-tu-k*   **agur-i**   **dʱorilu**
      We.NOM fall.ConjPart go.PresPerf   boy.CLA.ACC   surround.ConjPart
      hold.PresPart.1P
      'We have surrounded the fallen boy.'

Again, it may include some kind of verbal nouns too.

8)   *tai*   ***xaji-kasi***   ***ahil***
      she.NOM   dress up.Echo   come.PresPref.3P
      'She has properly dressed-up and come.

9)   kɔtʰa-to   lahe lahe   mur   **bʱal**   **lag-i**   **ahil**
      matter.CLA   slowly   I.GEN good   feel.ConjPart   come.PresPerf
      'I have started liking the matter and the feeling is growing.'

Type 3: Serial verbs which encode simultaneous events:

10)   xi   **douri**   **ahil**
      he.NOM   run.ConjPart   come.PresPerf.3P
      'He came running.'
      (Interpretation - he not only came but had to run while coming.)

11)   bowari-joni-e   **kandi-kandi**   gʱɔtɔna-to   **kole**
      daughter in law.CLA.NOM   cry.conjpart.REDUP   incident.CLA   say.PresPerf.3P
      'The daughter in law cried and narrated the incident.'

Type 4: Complete delexicalization of verbs in usage:

12)   biya-kʰɔn   ahise,   ami   ataye   **utʰ-i**
      marriage.CLA come.PresPerf.3P   we.NOM   all.NOM   getup.ConjPart
      por-i   **lag-i-m**
      fall.ConjPart   stick.Fut.1P
      'The marriage function is approaching; we have to try hard (for arrangements).'

13) moi   ajikali   ghor-o-loi   **ɔha   zoa   kori   tʰɔka**
     nai
     I.NOM nowadays home.to   come.Pres go.Pres do.conjpart stay.Pres
     NEG
     'I am not going home these days.'

Type 5: X+V formations: Mostly the verbs of experiencer subjects. In Assamese, these nouns take auxiliaries like /kora/ stems with grammatical function as auxiliaries at the sentence-final position and take all the inflections, such as /as/ 'have, exist', /tʰak/ 'stay', /lo/ 'take' etc.

Assamese Auxiliary Verbs	Lexical Equivalents in English	Functional Meanings
as	Have, exist	Progressive aspect
tʰak	Stay	Durative aspect
tʰɔ	Keep	Completion
lo	Take	Inward-directedness
di	Give	Outward-directedness
go	Go	Outward motion
ah	Come	Inward motion
pɛla	Throw	Completion
pa	Get	Achievement
sa	See	Trial
lag	Want	Completion
dʱɔr	Grab	Effort

IV. SCOPE OF NEGATION

Monoclausality of serial verb construction as a complex predicate construction is not beyond question, as grammatical operations like negation do not take scope over the whole chain of verbs but are attached only to the final verb. It may be since only the chain-final verb takes all the inflections in Assamese.

14) *mɔi   am-tu   **na-kat-i**   **tʰɔlu**
     I.NOM   mango.CLA   NEG.cut.ConjPart   keep.PresPerf.1P
     'I have not cut the mango.'
But,

15) *moi   am-tu   **kati**   **nɔ-tʰɔlu**
     I.NOM   mango.CLA   cut.ConjPart   NEG.keep.PresPerf.1P
     'I have not cut the mango.'

However, examples (14) & (15) above show the negative clitic. If we consider the same sentence with negative morpheme floating for special intonational contour,

16) *mɔi*　　　*amtu*　　　***kati***　　　***tʰoa***　　　***nai***
　　　I.NOM　　　mango.CLA　　cut.ConjPart　　keep.Pres　　　NEG
　　　'I have not cut the mango.'

17) ***mɔi**　　　*amtu*　　　***nai***　***kati***　　　***tʰoa***
　　　I.NOM　　　mango.CLA　　NEG　　cut.ConjPart　　keep.Pres
　　　'I have not cut the mango.'

18) *mɔi*　　　*amtu*　　　***kati***　　　***nai***　　　***tʰoa***
　　　I.NOM　　　mango.CLA　　cut.ConjPart　　NEG　　　keepPresPerf.1P
　　　'I have not cut the mango.'

Hence, the scope of negation applies only before the chain-final verb that carries all the grammatical information of the sentence or the clause. The other verb generally carries its lexical meaning whereas, the grammatical verb is completely delexicalized in such contexts. This is also a typical feature of explicator compound verb formation.

V. CONCLUSION

- The verbs within a serial verb construction can have only a single subject with no possible embedded overt/covert subject or clause. The basic idea was to see whether Assamese serial verbs can encode several events or not.
- Examining these serial verb constructions, it becomes evident that it typically stacks several events in a single clause while complex predicates may denote a single event only. Analyzing the possible event structure of the serial verb construction in further detail may throw light upon the study of the typology of complex predicates in the South Asian linguistic area at large.

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The Chhetteli Language: Sociolinguistic and Linguistic State of Affairs & Some Strategies for its Sustainable Language Use[1]

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Abstract

Chhetteli is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken by only four speakers (viz., two women and two men, ages ranging from 80 to 95) residing in Jhusku, Salli, and Khatti villages of Apihimal Rural Municipality of Darchula district of Nepal. This language, which has been recently discovered, may be used merely in the limited domains of language use. To date, the language has not been listed in any of the governmental or non-governmental records. However, with the sole effort of one of the speakers, some sociolinguistic and linguistic features (viz. some vocabularies and grammatical features) have been scantily recorded. The language, which is named after the Chhetti village, has been informed to have been exclusively spoken by Bohara in the bygone days. Later, this language was spoken as a common tongue by Bohara, Dhami, Rokaya, Manyal, and Atyal. Nowadays, this language has been considered one of the backbones of the identity of the municipality as well. Sociolinguistically, this is a critically endangered language. Thus, based on this vitality level, some community-based language development strategies need to be developed immediately for sustainable language use. For this, the local government, community, experts, and national and international agencies are required to work in collaboration. Without making any delay, the language documentation program has to be immediately launched by the national or international language documentation agencies to preserve the life crucial knowledge embodied in the language and to set up an inclusive society aspired by the constitution based upon the principles of socialism and equity.

Keywords: multilingual, language vitality, language attitude, basic words, sustainable language use

1. Background

Nepal, a small and independent country in the lap of the Himalayas, is a multilingual and multiethnic country since time immemorial**.** There are more than 125 officially recognized caste and ethnic groups with distinct social and cultural backgrounds and around 123 officially recognized languages belonging to five language families, namely, Indo-Aryan, Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic, Dravidian, Afro-Asiatic and Kusunda, a language isolate (Census, 2011). In Nepal, diverse indigenous communities have been using different languages and their dialects in different times and situations. Due to linguistic assimilation ideology, especially, in the Panchayet regime (1960-1990) many ethnic-linguistic communities have ceased speaking their mother tongues in Nepal. They have been shifted towards Nepali or local dominant languages. However, as no ethno-linguistic survey has been conducted in Nepal, such languages and dialects have not been properly identified. 2009/11

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[1] This is a fully revised version of the paper written in Nepali and uploaded to academia.edu in May 2022. This revised paper in English has been uploaded to academia.edu to appeal to all the individuals and institutions working on the documentation of the critically endangered languages of the world to launch such a documentation project in the Chhetteli language.

National Census was the first attempt to provide information on the number of languages in Nepal. Subsequent censuses have consistently provided information about the number of languages. However, the number of languages and their speakers has constantly remained controversial. In the 2011 census, many languages are spoken in Nepal since time immemorial have not been recorded, while languages of foreign origin such as English, Chinese, French, etc., have been injudiciously listed as mother tongues. Language Commission has been identifying some of such languages in Nepal. By now, the number of languages in Nepal has reached 131 including the eight languages identified by the Language Commission (Language Commission, 2077 BS). Ethnologue, on the other hand, has recorded 124 languages and dialects in Nepal (Eppele et al., 2012). Foreign scholars, like Michael Noonan, had estimated that 140 languages were spoken in Nepal. In Nepal, the number of languages is generally expected to be more than 150. The search for languages and dialects is continuously going on in Nepal. In Jhusku, Salli, and Khatti villages under Apihimal Rural Municipality of Darchula district, only two women and two men above 80 years of age have been found to have some good proficiency in speaking a Tibeto language locally referred to as Chhetteli. It is used only in the area of limited language use. This language is waiting to be recognized by the concerned authorities and preserved by framing community-based language development programs. To date, Chhetteli has not been listed in any governmental or non-governmental records. But a local speaker, Mr. Tula Singh Bohara, in his solo effort, attempted to explore the origin of the Chhetteli language and its condition. He has also collected some basic words and provided an outline of grammar (Bohara, 2073). It has been informed that this language does not seem to be included in the census of 2021. The ethno-linguistic community of Nepal has also taken up the issue of linguistic identity to advance the issue of their ethnic identity by using the rights conferred by the constitution. In this context, this paper attempts to briefly present the sociolinguistic and linguistic state of affairs of the Chhetteli language and suggest some strategies for its sustainable language use.

This paper is organized into six sections. Section 1 has attempted to provide the background information. Section 2 discusses the socio-linguistic state of affairs of the Chhetteli language concerning the linguistic policy of Nepal. Section 3 deals with the linguistic state of affairs of the Chhetteli language. Section 4 discusses the efforts to preserve this language. Section 5 discusses the strategies required for sustainable language use in the language. Section 6 concludes the paper with an appeal to national and international agencies devoted to the documentation of this language to immediately launch a documentation project to preserve this language.

2. Sociolinguistic state of affairs

The Interim Constitution, 2007 for the first time recognized all mother tongues spoken in Nepal as languages of the nation. The Constitution of Nepal, 2015 has identified Nepal as a multi-ethnic, multi-religious, multi-lingual, and multi-cultural country and has resolved to build an egalitarian society based on the principles of socialism, inclusion, and equity. All the mother tongues spoken in Nepal have been strongly reconfirmed as the languages of the nation. Article (32) of the constitution has granted every Nepali community living in Nepal the right to promote and protect their language, script, culture, cultural civilization, and heritage. The constitution seems to be very liberal about linguistic rights. However, due to the lack of framing of a multilingual policy at the national level, Nepal seems to be lagging far behind in ensuring linguistic rights in practice. As a result, many languages and dialects in Nepal are losing their identity. Languages that originated in the soil of Nepal like Chhetteli are turned out to be critically endangered. However, Chhetteli exhibits some sociolinguistically interesting features. They are briefly dealt with as follows:

2.1 Nomenclature

Most of the languages spoken by the indigenous communities in Nepal are named after castes/ethnicities. Languages like Magar, Gurung, Bhujel, Tamang, Thakali, Sherpa, Rajbansi, Dhimal, and Tharu are named after certain ethnicities. The languages spoken by the Rai community in Nepal are also named after the various sub-groups within the Rai. Languages such as Dotyali, Bajhangi, Bajureli, and Darchuleli are found to be named after particular geography instead of a particular caste or ethnicity. The Chhetteli language is named after particular geography, Chhetti. It is the last village of Apihimal Rural Municipality. The village is close to another village called Ghazir. According to Bohora (2073: 2), in the beginning, this village was inhabited by an ethnicity named Letyauli. This ethnicity was considered lower in terms of social stratum. In course of time, some people belonging to Shahi Thakuri (viz., a higher caste presumably speaking Nepali or dialects of Nepali) came to live in this village. They got married to girls from the Letyauli community. As they were married to women of lower caste/ ethnicity, they began to be called Bohara. As time passed, they too began to learn the language spoken by the Latyal. They were ethnically and linguistically assimilated to Latyal. However; they formed a new linguistic community. The language was named after the same village. Due to the regular contact, they have been fully shifted to Darchuleli and Nepali, Indo-Aryan languages. It has been informed that this language has almost stopped being spoken for about fifty-sixty years.

2.2 Alternate names

Chhetteli is a language of multi-ethnicities consisting of Bohara, Dhami, Rokaya, and Atyal. The villages where this language was spoken for a long time as its mother tongue are located in the foothills of the Api Himalaya. They were located in a geographically remote and inhospitable area. Consequently, they could not meet other speakers for a long time. Even now some people including local political leaders have argued that the name of the rural municipality should be identified as Maldesh rural municipality and the Chhetteli language should be natively referred to as the Maldesh language. Hence, the alternative name of this language may be assumed to be the Maldesh language.

2.3 Geolinguistic situation

At present, this language is spoken by the people residing mainly in Ward No. 3 and 4 of Apihimal Rural Municipality in the Darchula district of Nepal. It is roughly located at 29.8154° N and 80.8478° E. The elevation of the villages where the speakers of the Chhetteli language are residing ranges from 1700 to 2400 meters. Map 1.1 presents the core area (within a circle) where Chhetteli is spoken.
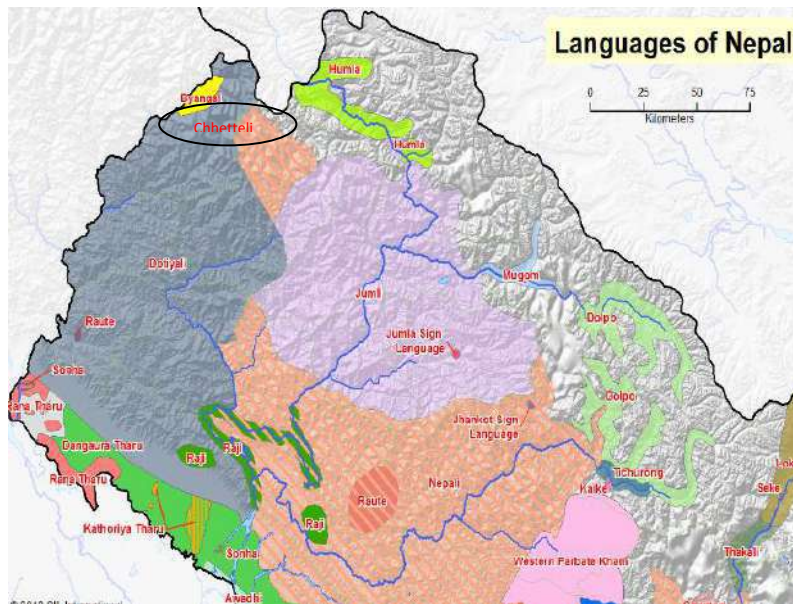
Map 1.1: Mid and Far Western regions of Nepal showing some major languages including a newly plotted Chhetteli language

2.4 Ethnolinguistic situation

There is a deep connection between caste/ethnicity and language. Language is taken as a social object. People exchange ideas through language. Language is also the backbone of ethnic identity. Language is also considered a carrier of culture and civilization. It is also considered a source of power. Language is essential for communication and interaction within the community. In the beginning, the native speakers of the Chhetteli language were Latyauli, but later it became the mother tongue of Bohora, then Dhami, Atyal, and Manyal. In the latter days, it became the language of all the people of this region. Bohora and Dhami, who live in this region with their customs, rituals, traditions, and customs, have been informed following the Hindu culture and tradition. The people are involved in agriculture, business, and trade. They grow corn, wheat, millet, rice, beans, cauliflowers, cabbage, etc. Photograph 1.1 shows the geographical situation of the major villages (viz., Jhusku, Salli, and Khatti) where the language speakers mainly reside.

Photograph 1.1: Geographical situation of the major villages where the language speakers mainly reside

2.4 Genetic classification

Based upon the preliminary comparison with the neighboring languages, Chheteli is genetically close to Byansi and Dhuleli. It is presumably a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Nepal. It is a member of the Western Himalayish subdivision under the Himalayish division. Figure 1.1 presents the genetic classification of the language among other Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal.
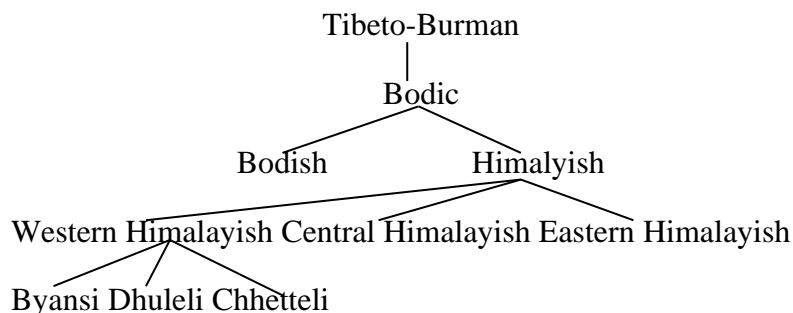

Figure 1.1: Position of Chhetteli among other Tibeto-Burman languages

2.5 Language vitality

Language as a living thing has its ecosystem. Language is born, grows, and thrives in a favorable environment. In adverse conditions, it becomes weak and even dies. In the process of dying or weakening, first, the sentences and then the phrases, words, and sounds disappear. Many languages are on the verge of extinction in Nepal due to migration, inter-marriages, and the linguistic and ethnic assimilation policy of the nation.[2] However, there has not yet been made a detailed analysis of the language vitality of the languages of Nepal. Regmi (2021b) presents a preliminary analysis of the language vitality of the languages of Nepal enumerated in the 2011 Census based on the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale model proposed by Lewis and Simons (2010). Table 1.1 presents an assessment of the vitality of the languages of Nepal.

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[2] Indigenous language communities were deliberately minoritized by the language policy based on monolingual ideology (one nation, one language) taken up before the reinstatement of democracy in 1990.

Table 1.1: Assessment of the vitality of the languages of Nepal

	VITALITY LABEL	DESCRIPTION	NO. OF LANGUAGES	PERCENT
1.	SAFE/VIGOROUS	*The language is used orally by all generations and is being learned by children as their first language*	53	43.09%
2.	VULNERABLE/ THREATENED	*The language is used orally by all generations but only some of the childbearing generation are transmitting it to their children*	51	41.46%
3.	DEFINITELY ENDANGERED/ SHIFTING	*The child-bearing generation knows the language well enough to use it among themselves but none are transmitting it to their children*	11	8.9%
4.	SEVERELY \ ENDANGERED/ MORIBUND	*The only remaining active speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation*	6	4.87%
5.	CRITICALLY ENDANGERED/ NEARLY EXTINCT	*The only remaining speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language*	1	0.8%
6.	DORMANT / EXTINCT	*The language serves as a reminder of heritage identity for an ethnic community. No one has more than symbolic proficiency*	1	0.8%
			123	100%

Source: Ethnologue (Eppele et al. 2012) and UNESCO, 2010

Table 1.1 shows that out of 123 languages of Nepal, about 53 (43.09%) are safe/ vigorous safe, 51 (41.46%) are threatened, 11 (8.94%) are shifting, 6 (4.87%) are severely endangered, 1 (0.8%) is critically endangered and 1 (0.8%) language is extinct (Regmi, 2021b). As mentioned before, there are now only four speakers. They are all over eighty years old. They include Mr. Man Singh Bohara (95), Mr. Tula Singh Bohara (87), Mrs. Laxima Atyal (85), and Manira Dhami (85). They can only communicate with each other in a limited way. Evaluating in terms of vitality label and associated description, this language may be categorized as critically endangered/nearly extinct. Photographs 1.2 present the speakers of the Chhetteli language.

Photograph 1.2: (From left) Laxima Atyal , Manira Dhami, Tula Singh Bohara, and Man Singh Bohara

2.6 Language attitude

Due to the language assimilation policy of the nation, Chhetteli people are speaking the Darchuleli and Nepali language instead of their mother tongue. However, all the people of the community consider the Chhetteli language as the backbone of their identity and have a positive attitude towards this language. The local bodies have also been pressurized to make the language taught in the primary schools. Attempts have also been made to prepare textbooks. Photographs 1.3 show their willingness to welcome the institutions and experts to work on their critically endangered language.

Photograph 1.2: (From left, front) Tula Singh Bohora, Lal Bahadur Bohora, Prof. Dr. Dan Raj Regmi, Ramesh Prasad Bhattarai, Surya Prasad Bhattarai, and Man Singh Bohara. (Behind) four ladies with their traditional dress and ornaments

2.7 Multilingualism

All the people of this community have been speaking the local Darchuli language since their childhood. Everyone speaks Nepali fluently, the standard Nepali used in government work.

Apart from that, they also understand Dotyali and Hindi languages. At schools, children also learn English as a subject.

2.8 Aspiration for language development

The people of this community want to teach the Chhetteli language as a subject in school. There is a demand from the community that this language should be officially recognized. The community aspires to create a dictionary, write grammar and develop the script and bring the language into written form. They demand that their language should be preserved by the local and federal governments. Photographs 1.3 present two old women, Mrs. Laxima Atyal and Manira Dhami in between Mr. Sher Singh Dhami and Mr. Lal Bahadur Bohara.

Photograph 1.3: (From left) Sher Singh Dhami, Laxima Atyal, Manira Dhami, and Lal Bahadur Bohara

3. Linguistic state of affairs

Chhetteli is almost dead; however, it still contains some basic words, phonological, morphological, and syntactic features. They are briefly presented as follows:

3.1 Basic words

About 700 basic words have been collected in Bohora (2073). These words are also divided into different categories.

3.1.1 Kinship terms and organs of the human body

kərəu	'grandfather'	amma	'mother',	posemba	'male',
mitshina	'daughter'	or	'head'	kuŋ	'hand'
kun	'ear'	aŋ	'tooth'	misu	'eye',
li	'stool'	niku	'knee'	nisu'	'forehead'
linaga	'anus',	baphulənuhu'	'testicle'	bətsu	'younger brother'
bhau	'wife of husband's younger brother'	min	'younger sister'		

3.1.2 Food and utensils

bjam	'rice'	ka®	'vegetable'	bətti	'butter milk'
khoɖa	'walnut'	thi	'water'	kəseɳi	'small water jug'

im   'fried food'

3.1.3 Names of crops, grains, and tools

khor	'plough'	rinka	'blade/furrow'	gu	'land'
ik	*banko*	sjam,	'paddy'	tsuŋkhu	*okhal'*,
sek	'sickle'	sjak	'basket'		

3.1.4 Domestic and other livestock

dum	'male lophophore	duməni	'female lophophore	tshəwa	'frog'
ga	'ox'	phu	'cow'	tshamtshjal	'sheep'
se	'domestic deer'	ra	'thar'	dam	'young male calf'
naməna	'snake'	gəmdum	'rabbit'	sen	'mouse'
phaŋ	'wild boar'	gə	'a kind of monkey'	bəhutitho	'bear',
kunəma	'mongoose'	mwamu	'munal'	mamu	' lizard'
sjago	'porcupine'				

3.1.5 Names of grass, firewood, and other woods

sin	'firewood'	tshar	'grass'	dzug	'green grass'
khumwi	'pine'	bara	'nigalo'	kaber	'bamboo'
ghatsena	'tree of peach'	kamudi	'myrica esculenta'	dumnum	'dudila tree'
aŋkhor	*Dante Okhar'*				

3.1.6 Other words

nam	'sun'	ləudi	'moon'	phuŋ	'snow'
bis	'thread'	munthi	'yesterday'	tapari	'topri'
nidzam	'ghost'	su	'god'	tso	'one'
nissə	'two'	sumba	'three'	riwa	'four'
nəuwa	'five'				

3.1.7 Some verbs

sjaga	'to explain'	dzakha	'to eat'	madzau	'not to eat'
wənha	'to dig'	sjaseppha	'to have intercourse'	sela	'to kill'
tshnni	'to wash'	tsanəgənaha	'to weave'	ga	'to cross the river'
buga	'to sit'	dhəwa	'to get up'	tsham pənna	'to spin wool'
hwawa	'to plow'	siŋga	'to cover'	puna	'to spin'
məhək	'to breath'	goho	'to laugh'	phəljuha	'to run'

3.2 Phonology

Chhetteli presents a set of thirty consonant phonemes. It lacks tones. Table 1.2 presents segmental consonant phonemes in Chhetteli 'In the transcription used here, <h> indicates aspiration).

Table 1.2: Segmental consonant phonemes in Chhetteli

	Labial	Dental	Alve-olar	Retro-flex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal

Plosives	p	t		☐		k	
	ph	th		☐h		kh	
	b	d		ḍ		g	
	bh	dh		ḍh		gh	
Nasals	m	n		ṇ		ŋ	
Affricates			ts				
			tsh				
			dz				
			dzh				
Fricatives			s				h
Trills/taps			r				
Laterals			l				
Approximants	w				j		

Chhetteli contains six oral vowels. Table 1.3 presents an inventory of six vowels. It lacks length contrast.

Table 1.3: Inventory of vowels in Chhetteli

	Front	Central	Back
High	i		u
Mid	e	™	o
Low		a	

3.3 Morphology

Chhetteli is an agglutinating language. It is a morphologically ergative language. It displays a consistent ergative-absolutive pattern of marking of case roles in simple clauses. The nouns in a clause in different case roles are marked by different case-role markers. There is no grammatical gender and number in Chhetteli. There are two tenses in this language: past and present. The past tense is marked by *-tsi* in the complex of the verb. In this language, the second person singular is *dziŋ* and the first person singular is *dzi*. The third-person singular is *ahit.*

3.4 Syntax

Chhetteli is an SOV language. It displays a rigid word order. However, the grammatical roles of clause constituents are coded by the nominal morphology. S (subject) O (object) and V (verb) is a common neutral word-order in Chhetteli. It exhibits different types of sentences. Following are the examples:

(1) *Declarative*
  a. *dzi munthi oltsji*
      dzi   munthi   ol-tsi
      1SG   yesterday   come-PST
      'I arrived yesterday.'
  b. *dzi nisse odanu*
      dzi   nisse   oda-nu
      1SG   yesterday   come-NPST
      'I will come tomorrow.'
(2) *Interrogative*
  a. *dziŋ aphə ret*
      dziŋ   aphə   ret
      2SG   who   COP

'Who are you?'
b.   *gilimko   gahu*
     gilimko   gahu
     when   do.PASSIVE
     'When is it done?'

(3)   *Negative*
      thi muni
      thi   mu-ni
      water   NEG-COP
      'There is no water.'

(4)   *Imperative*
      a.   *dhula dusəu*
           dhula   du-səu
           flour   prepare-IMP
           'Prepare the flour.'
      b.   *bhitsolən de mitotshəm*
           bhitso-lən   de   mito-tshəm
           oven-LOC   fire   light-IMP
           'Light the fire in the oven.'

4. Efforts for preservation

4.1 Personal effort

Bohara (2073) explored the origin of the Chhetteli language and its condition in a personal effort and presented a preliminary analysis of words and grammar.

4.2 Institutional efforts

With the incessant request of Mr. Sher Singh Dhami, a teacher and language activist, the field study of this endangered language was organized by Language Commission in March 2022. The study team consisting of Prof. Dr. Dan Raj Regmi (Linguist, Tribhuvan University) and Mr. Lal Bahadur Bohara (Language Researcher) was accompanied by Ramesh Bhattarai (Section Officer, Language Commission), Surya Prasad Bhattarai (Accountant, Language Commission) and Sher Singh Dhami (Chhetteli Language Speaker Coordinator). This team has observed different aspects of the language and started collecting words and cross-checking the words collected in Bohara (2073).

5. Strategies for sustainable language use

There are four levels of sustainable language use: Sustainable literacy, sustainable orality sustainable identity, and sustainable history (Lewis and Simons. 2017). Chhetteli is presumably associated with the third level of sustainable language use, viz., sustainable identity. This language does not have fully proficient speakers; however, the community wants to associate its identity with the language. It is not used for day-to-day communication. Such language may be raised to the upper level, viz., sustainable orality by developing community-based language activities appropriate to their current vitality levels so that their dream of implementing mother tongue education at the primary school level and their desire for imparting to youth the knowledge essential to their lives may be realized. This language cannot be preserved merely by collecting words, compiling a dictionary, writing grammar, and preparing textbooks. By implementing some specific strategies, the critically endangered language like Chhetteli may be revived or brought into active use. Some specific strategies are as follows (Regmi, 2021a).

5.1 Identification and restoration of historical links

Chhetteli is unknown to the outer world. Many young people in the community are not familiar with the existence of this language. Thus, first and foremost, this language has to be recognized by the government (viz., local, provincial and federal) as one of the languages of the nation. This language has not yet been studied linguistically. Except for wordlists collected in Bohara (2073) and traditional stories in oral forms, this language lacks all other aspects of language documentation. However, the speech community may be again linked with their history of language use and the original place. By doing so, the desire to maintain the language may be inculcated in the members of the speech community.

5.2 Top-down and down-up integration

External agencies and communities, such as the Language Commission, Central Department of Linguistics, and other non-governmental organizations working for language preservation in Nepal may involve together in documentation, corpus development, and teacher training in this language. This strategy must be continuously pursued in this language.

5.3 Creating bilingual homes and parent meetings

The community may decide to use the Chhetteli language in their home. According to this strategy, first, children are taught to think about the worldview of their heritage culture. Second, children are encouraged to practice in an artificial environment through language lessons. Third, children are encouraged to use the language of their heritage in the natural environment. Schools involved in the promotion of the local language may hold parent meetings to encourage parents to use their mother tongue in their home. Language cannot be saved without its use.

5.4 Language revitalization

Language revitalization is a very effective strategy for languages like Chhetteli. There are four groups involved in such a strategy: Awareness Group, Records Group, Language Group, and Fund Group. An awareness group is a group that raises awareness in the community about the importance of learning the language to the younger generation. Language groups provide information about languages to help encourage local communities to use local languages at home. After that, the restoration work can be started. These include archiving and grammar construction, alphabet and writing system development, dictionary development, curriculum development, and the establishment of community language learning centers.

5.5 Radio programs and mother/child language programs

Radio programs in such languages can encourage people to use the language of their heritage for face-to-face communication and to pass on their knowledge to younger generations. When caring for children, they should be encouraged to use the local language.

5.6 Establishment of the language learning center

Language learning should be encouraged by establishing a language learning center for the strong use of the words now collected. Teachers should be trained to teach basic-level children in the community.

6. Conclusion

Chhetteli is also the language of the nation. It contains useful knowledge of life. It is a unique means of cultural expression. It represents countless generations of traditional knowledge and ways of knowing that knowledge. The life-crucial knowledge embodied in the language

should be passed on to future generations. Due to the lack of use, this language has turned out to be critically endangered. There are only four old speakers of this language.   The key to language preservation is to encourage the linguistic community to speak. If the language is not spoken, the language dies. The Chhetteli language is now at the vocabulary level. Thus, without making any delay, this language has to be recognized as one of the languages of the nation, and community-based language development programs have to be immediately launched in the community. Besides, a language documentation project has to be immediately launched by international agencies devoted to the documentation of the endangered languages of the world to preserve the life crucial knowledge embodied in the language and to set up an inclusive society aspired by the constitution based upon the principles of socialism and equity. Thus, an appeal to national or international agencies is made to immediately launch a documentation project to preserve this language.

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