

New Social Situation and Domain of Use in Manipuri

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Abstract

The present study contributes to the study of Lexical Development in Social Situation and Domain of use in Manipuri, a Tibeto-Burman language. The word or lexeme or phrase of the old literature (archaic) is changed to new ones due to social situation in modern era. New words are found in vocabulary, morphology, phonology and semantics. New words came in mainly because of social situation and the words are also used according to the domain of use. The language ideology differs in different domains, such as education, administration, market and media. The new words are used according to the domain of use. The paper analyses the changes in the archaic Manipuri words to Modern Manipuri words which enrich Manipuri vocabulary, i.e. lexical development.

Keywords: Manipuri, archaic, modern, social situation, domain, vocabulary and lexical

1. Introduction

Language change is the phenomenon of variation of a language over time whether on phonology, morphology, semantic, syntactic or on other features of language. Linguistic change can also be said to have taken place when a new linguistic element, used by a few speakers within a speech community is adopted by other members of that community and accepted as the norm (Jennifer, 1993; Nettle, 1999; Thomason, 2010).

“Language moves down time in a current of its own making. Nothing is perfectly static. Every word, every grammatical element, every locution, every sound and accent is a slowly changing configuration moulded by the invisible and impersonal drift that is the life of language”, (Sapir, 1921).

“Language, then, like everything else, gradually transforms itself over the centuries. There is nothing surprising in this. In a world where humans grow old, tadpoles change into frogs, and milk turns into cheese, it would be strange if language alone remained unaltered” (Jean Aitchison, 2001).

“Indeed, changes seem to be inherent in nature of language: there is no such thing as a perfectly stable human language” (Milroy, 1992).

According to Labov (2001) ‘changes from below’ explains that there are a lot of changes in which innovations diffuse, not from the highest social class, but from the upper working class or lower middle class, who are considered as having less social impact. It is also observed that there are intricate interdependent relationships between language and culture as well as language and social structure.

According to Croft (2000), language change also takes place through language acquisition. The variations that come from the process of language acquisition are internalized and propagated by the new generation and hence a change may be invited in the language. Language change is mostly in the area of the contact induced. The effects of language contact are varied and dynamic.

As a language is not used in exactly the same way, the unique way that persons speak also fuels language change. The vocabulary and phrases used depend on the where the persons live, their age, level of education, social status. Younger generations use different words and phrases, codes from older generations. Some of these innovations in the speech spread through the population and slowly accepted by other members of the community which, in fact, has become a reason of language change. Language change is caused by a structural aspect of the language (internal factor) or social factor of the speakers (external factor).

Internal factors focus upon structural or psychological motivations that claim linguistic change being motivated by an inherent drive for structural regularity, the removal of marked elements and the analogical spread of regular forms, functional economy or naturalness. Internally motivated change is supported by Martinet (1952).

According to Labov (1972), social factor of language change (external factor) was the variation and change on social context and characteristics (attitudes, affections and aspirations) of the speakers involved in the change.

Language change leads to the enrichment of the language that is the development of lexical items. To facilitate this development, New Social Situations and Domains of Use in Manipuri will be analysed in this paper.

2. New Social Situation and Domains of Use in Manipuri

It is evident from the early literature (archaic) that Manipuri (a Tibeto-Burman language) was spoken in the North-Eastern region of India. It is situated in the extreme North-Eastern border of India and surrounded on the East by Myanmar, on the West by Assam, on the North by Nagaland and on the South by Mizoram and Myanmar) and has changed in vocabulary, morphology, phonology and semantics. The most conspicuous changes in Manipuri are in the area of vocabulary and phonology. In fact, many words disappeared while many new words corresponding to the significant items emerged. In modern Manipuri, words are used as the ways of creating a new word or lexeme, developed by new social situation and domain of use. The extent to which Manipuri has

changed in the last three hundred years can be seen by looking a few passages of the old Manipuri (archaic), (Jhalajit, 1983).

The earliest manuscripts are handwritten in Meitei Mayek (Manipuri script) on agarbak, a paper derived from the bark of a tree. Pens are made out of bamboo. Another technique used was to blacken the paper with charcoal and used a soapstone pencil for writing. There was an organized paper making industry in Manipur by the 1700s (R. J. Singh, 1983). The early manuscripts and inscriptions are yet to be studied by linguists or anthropologists on a large scale. So, I am taking up the difference in Archaic and Modern Manipuri in literature and vocabulary.

The old Manipuri (archaic) words are different from modern Manipuri. The new social situation and domain of use in Manipuri is mainly focused on the archaic (old literature) of Manipuri which is not used in modern Manipuri, but it is used only in the poetic forms and folklore. The vocabulary of the modern Manipuri is quite different from the archaic vocabulary of Manipuri.

There are a number of words in old literature (archaic) in Manipuri. The following data show that lexical change happened in social situations as illustrated in the **Table 1**.

Table 1: Differences between Archaic and Modern Manipuri

Source	Archaic Manipuri	Modern Manipuri	Gloss
Panthoipikhongkul	Ji-nu	Ine	Aunt
	ca-n̄m-t ^h i	n̄m-thib̄-cak	Stinky rice (rotten rice)
	cak- mom- k ^h am-pi	m̄i	Fire
	s̄mu (k ^h ut-t̄)	̄y-gi (k ^h ut-t̄)	on my hand
	k ^h ̄mnuj s̄-wa tan	Siba	Dying
Poireitonkhunthok	̄-ra-p̄-pu	̄-ra-p̄-bu	Bright
	pi-pa	pi-ba	Giving
	̄-si-pu	̄-si-bu	This
	n̄̄-ti	n̄̄-di	You
	n̄-mom-pu	n̄-mom-bu	Your daughter
The manuscript Langpum (a creation myth)	̄aŋ	̄̄aŋ	Child
	Lu	Kok	Head
	t ^h ap	Lap	Far
	Nurabi	Nupi	Woman
The manuscript of pombirol (the knowledge of birds)	Hak	Sa	Body

	Pombi	Ucek	Bird
	Soipai	Yenba	Cock
	soit ^h iŋ	Yenbi	Hen
	Loklao	Isiŋ	Water
Ariba Manipuri Longei by N. K. Singh	cɔŋ	Iŋ	Cold
	tondɔm	ŋɔksɔm	Neck
	kɔceŋ	Thaŋ	Knife
	Hamlen	lɔycin	Cloud
	puren	mɔkok	Head
Manipuri to Manipuri & English dictionary by N.K. Singh	lɔy	lɔybak	Earth
	mɔkiŋ	mɔtu	fur/feather
	lɔm	lɔybak	Land
	konk ^h ei	lɔmdɔm	Place
	Oŋ	Luhon	Marry
The manuscript Chainarol (the art of war)	pɔnt ^h ɔu	mɔpa	Father
	k ^h ambi	Mei	Fire
	Palem	Ima	Mother
	Pari	icanupa	Son
	Haipi	siŋjɔŋ	Axe
Other literary books	ɔtiŋɔ	ɔtiya	Sky
	ɔraŋ	ŋɔraŋ	Yesterday
	unt ^h ɔmt ^h ɔ	int ^h ɔmt ^h ɔ	Winter
	Kay	Ku	Coffin
	k ^h uklu	k ^h uk-u	Knee
	cumit ^h aŋ	cumt ^h aŋ	Rainbow
	moibɔ	maibɔ	Physician, oracle
	lɔmaiciŋ	Nonmaiŋiŋ	Sunday
	k ^h ɔŋsɪnpɔ	k ^h ɔŋjɪnbɔ	Knowing
	t ^h aca	t ^h aja	Moon
	sɔdu	Napi	Grass

Data are drawn from seven selected archaic literature and other literary books. Out of these two are from archaic books, three are from archaic manuscripts and two are from old dictionaries. The seven main sources are taken up for Archaic Manipuri literature and vocabulary. They are described below.

Panthoiphongkul and **Poireitonkhunthok** are old books. These are considered to be written in the last decade of the 17th century (Jhalajit, 1987). **The manuscript Langpum** (a creation myth), **the manuscript of pombirol** (the knowledge of birds), **the manuscript Chainarol** (the art of war) are old manuscripts of Manipur. **Ariba Manipuri Longei** and **Manipuri to Manipuri & English dictionary** are two books of dictionary compiled by N.K. Singh and other literary books. Only a few words have taken up for the study to show the differences in the Archaic and modern Manipuri. It means that there are changes in the words in Archaic and Modern Manipuri. The differences in words enriched Manipuri words and it is used in Manipuri in related domains. By the social situation, the new words are formed. These newly developed words are very useful in the enrichment of vocabulary of Manipuri.

The differences in the phonemes between the Archaic Manipuri and Modern Manipuri forms are shown in the above table. The sound **i** of Modern Manipuri is consistently written as **ji** in Archaic Manipuri. The sound **i** in the initial position of Manipuri words is, perhaps, pronounced as **ji** in the Archaic Manipuri. Other examples, in the table above, show the changes of the sounds **p, t, k** to their voiced counterparts in the environment of voiced sounds, that is, **b, d, g**. For example, the word **∂si-pu** is pronounced as **∂si-bu** in Modern Manipuri. It means that sound **p** changed to **b** in the modern Manipuri.

In the list of the Archaic and Modern Manipuri words there is little difference in the basic words. The most prominent differences in the Archaic and Modern Manipuri words are the changes in phonology due to social situation. The pronunciation of Archaic Manipuri is very different from the pronunciation of Modern Manipuri. Early phonology of Manipuri had only fifteen consonants, six vowels and six diphthongs whereas Modern Manipuri phonology has twenty-four consonants, and the number of vowels and diphthongs remains the same. The development of the sounds /r, b, d, g, z, b^h, d^h, g^h, z^h/ has brought a turning point in the phonology of Manipuri that makes the modern Manipuri from out of the Archaic Manipuri.

The Archaic words are still used in traditional oral literature and poetic forms, not in the modern Manipuri.

3. Vocabulary and Texts in the Manuscripts in Manipuri

Vocabulary and texts in the Manuscripts are used only in poetic or sacred texts in Modern Manipuri. In the majority of cases, the Archaic compounds of Manipuri and the Modern Manipuri words are not phonetically similar and cannot be related to sound change. In cases where the Archaic and modern words are similar, the modern form is a shortened version of the archaic compound. There are a number of compound words in the archaic Manipuri. The data are illustrated in the following **Table 2**.

Table 2: Shortening of Archaic Manipuri Compound words in Modern Manipuri

Archaic Manipuri	Modern Manipuri	Etymology	Gloss
Punujhðyru	hðyru	punuj 'shirt'	Button
wait ^h ujp ^h ðm	t ^h ujp ^h ðm	wai 'where about' t ^h uj 'reach' p ^h ðm 'place'	Destination
Lolu	lu	lon 'weave' lu 'trap'	fishing trap
lup ^h ui	Lu	p ^h ui 'bear/ give birth' lu 'trap'	fishing trap
lol yim	Yum	yim/ yum 'house'	House
paw kðwba	kðwba	paw 'news' kðw 'call'	Calling
soŋkibð	kibð	soŋ 'dense' ki 'fear'	Fearing
p ^h ðmp ^h ðm	p ^h ðmbð	p ^h ðm 'sit'	Sitting
lðŋoymoysðyð	sðmmumðya	lðŋoy 'elephant' lðŋoy 'elephant' moy-sð-yð means moy 'their' sð 'body' yð 'tooth' mð 'third person' ya 'tooth'	Tusk
pa-haŋ	Pa-k ^h ðŋ	pa-haŋ pair- empty	bachelor

The above table 2 shows the Archaic compounds of Manipuri and the Modern Manipuri words which are not phonetically similar and they are a shortened version of the archaic compound.

4. Conclusion

The data from Manipuri literature has greatly contributed to the historical development, mainly lexical development of Manipuri language, the Tibeto-Burman family in general. The comparison of Archaic Modern Manipuri will contribute to the development of theories of language change, cultural and political history. The language structure itself influences and effects language change.

The changing of words enriched the vocabulary in Manipuri. This is due to the social situations and domain of use. Thus, new words are used for the lexical development in Manipuri.

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