

## INTERROGATIVE STRUCTURE OF HMAR

Elangbam Sharatkumar Singh

*skyelangbam@gmail.com*

### Abstract

Hmar, a recognized indigenous tribe of Manipur, is a Tibeto-Burman language mainly spoken in and around Churachandpur District of Manipur. There is no homogenous settlement of Hmar speakers alone. Apart from Churachandpur District, Hmars are also settled in the Jiribam Sub division of Imphal East District of Manipur. Hmar villages can also be found scattered over a vast area of northern Mizoram, Cachar District of Assam and Chitangong hill tracts of Bangladesh as well. Hmar is regarded as one of the nucleus of the central Chin sub-group of Kuki-Chin group of Tibeto-Burman family (Grierson, LSI Vol. III part III 1904, pp.139). *Robert Shafer (1974) described that Hmar belong to the Lushai unit in Central Branch under Kukish section of Burmic Division of Sino-Tibetan family. Benedict (1972) did not mention properly the language under Lushai, however put it as a sub-type of Central Kuki, a proper of Kuki-Naga division of Sino-Tibetan group of languages. It is an agglutinative as well as tonal language. The word-order of Hmar language is subject-object-verb (SOV). The total population of Hmar tribe is 42,933 in Manipur. Jhum cultivation is their main occupation and the literacy rate is 79.8% (Census Report, 2001).*

**Key words:** *Yes-no questions, Wh-questions, Alternative questions and Tag questions.*

### 1. Interrogative Sentence

A sentence that asks for information or question is called an interrogative sentence. "The mood category is associated with question. A few languages have distinctive verbal inflections for this purpose but the interrogative mood is more commonly expressed by particles, by distinctive word order or merely by intonation", (Trask, 1993).

There are four types:-

- 1.1 Yes-no questions
- 1.2 Wh-questions
- 1.3 Alternative questions and
- 1.4 Tag questions.

Yes-no questions and Wh-questions are major type questions. Alternative questions and Tag questions are minor type questions.

### 1.1 Yes-No Questions

It is a type of question which can give one of the answers ‘yes’ or ‘no’. It is formed by suffixing the question markers -mo, -m, -nih, -tih and -di to the nouns, verbs, numerals, etc. It comes at the final position of the given sentence as examples:

(1) /ə boŋmo/

It cow Q.MK.

Is it a cow?

(2) /ə huŋəm/

3PP come Q.MK.

‘Does he come’

(3) /ʃirtitu ə nih/

teacher 3PPQ.MK.

‘Is he a teacher?’

(4) /lek<sup>h</sup>əbu hip<sup>h</sup>ai i tih/

bookDET. take 2PP Q.MK.

‘Will you take the book?’

(5) /i p<sup>h</sup>ediŋ/

2PPgo UNR. Q.MK.

‘Will you go?’

### 1.2 Wh-Questions

In Wh-questions, the question markers are added to the Wh-question words and the verbal roots. The question words may be an interrogative pronoun or an interrogative adverb. The interrogative pronouns are -tuəm ‘who’, iem/ieŋəm ‘what’ k<sup>h</sup>om ‘which’, etc. The interrogative adverbs are -k<sup>h</sup>oləm ‘where’, ieŋlaiəm ‘why’, ieŋtinəm ‘how’ and ieŋtika ‘when’ etc. Examples:

A.	/ieŋləijəm/	‘why?’	(reason reference)
B.	/ieŋtinəm/	‘how?’	(state/nature reference)
C.	/iem/	‘what?’	(things reference)
D.	/ieŋtika/	‘when?’	(time reference)
E.	/k <sup>h</sup> oləm/	‘where?’	(place reference)
F.	/k <sup>h</sup> om/	‘which?’	(choice reference)
G.	/tuəm/	‘who/whom/whose?’	(person reference)

**A. /ieŋləijəm/ 'why':** the determiner /hi/ carries the meaning of this and /cu/ carries the meaning of 'that'. The question marker /nə/ stands in the final position of a sentence with /ieŋləijəm/ 'why' as examples.

(6) /ieŋləijəmit<sup>h</sup>ohinə/

why2PP do DET. Q.MK.

'Why did you do this?'

(7) /ieŋləijəm i p<sup>h</sup>urmənsa cu nə/

why 2PPcarry bag DET. Q.MK.

'Why did you carry that bag?'

**B. /ieŋtinəm/ 'how':** It goes with question marker /mo/ in the examples.

(8) /ieŋtinəm ə tlanmo/

how3PP run Q.MK.

'How does he run?'

(9) /ieŋtinəmihumo/

how2PP come Q.MK.

'How did you come?'

**C. /iem/ 'what':** It goes with question marker /əh/ in the following examples

(10) /iem i t<sup>h</sup>oəh/

what 2PPdoQ.MK.

'What are you doing?'

(11) /iem i dit ə əh/

What 2PP wantQ.MK.

'What do you want?'

(12) /nəhmiŋi ieməh/

you name 2PPwhatQ.MK.

'What is your name?'

**D. /ieŋtika/ 'when':** It goes with question marker /nə/ as in the following examples.

(13) /ieŋtikap<sup>h</sup>eəm i nə/

when go are 2PPQ.MK.

'When do you go?'

(14) /ieŋtikat<sup>h</sup>o i diŋ/

when do 2PP FUT. Q.MK.

‘When will you go again?’

(15) /ieŋtikahuŋəminə/

When come are 2PP Q.MK.

‘When are you coming?’

**E. /k<sup>h</sup>oləm/ ‘where’.** It goes with question marker /diŋ/ in the following examples.

(16) /k<sup>h</sup>oləmip<sup>h</sup>ediŋ/

where 2PP go Q.MK.

‘Where are you going?’

(17) /k<sup>h</sup>oləm ə huŋdiŋ/

where3PP come Q.MK.

‘Where will she come?’

(18) /k<sup>h</sup>oləm ə nəidiŋ/

where3PP isQ.MK.

‘Where is she?’

**F. /k<sup>h</sup>om/ ‘which’:** It goes with question marker /əh/ in the following examples.

(19) /lek<sup>h</sup>əbuk<sup>h</sup>om i ditleməh/

book which 2PP want prefer

‘Which book do you want?’

(20) /k<sup>h</sup>om ə hmelt<sup>h</sup>raəh/

which it beautiful more Q.MK.

‘Which one is more beautiful?’

(21) /k<sup>h</sup>om ə pək<sup>h</sup>ətnaəh/

Which it first Q.MK.

‘Which one is first?’

**G. /tuəm/ ‘who/whom/whose’:** It goes with question marker /nə/ in the examples.

(22) /tuəm i nə/

who you are

‘Who are you?’

(23) /pen tuəmkuomapediŋnə/  
pen who to give UNR. Q. MK.  
'To whom will you give the pen?'

(24) /kəkɔr hi tuəm ə nə/  
Shoe this whose it Q.MK.  
'Whose shoe is this?'

### 1.3 Alternative Questions

In Hmar, alternative questions are formed by adding the alternative question marker – 'umləu' to the verb and noun. This alternative can be divided into two types as:

- a) Nouns alternatives
- b) Verb alternatives.

#### a) Noun alternatives:

In the construction of noun alternative, the marker 'umləu' is added to the nouns.

Examples:

(25) /ʃirtitu ə nih, umləuni/  
teacher he is Q. MK.  
'Is he teacher, or not?'

(26) /tombəimo, umləuni/  
tomba you Q. MK.  
'Are you Tomba, or not?'

#### b) Verb alternatives:

It is formed by the suffixation of '-umləu' to the verb as examples:

(27) /ənnihuŋəm, umləudiŋ/  
they come Q. MK. tag Q. will  
'Are they come, or not?'

(28) /i p<sup>h</sup>ediŋ, umləudiŋ/  
2PP go FUT Q. MK.  
'Will you go, or not?'

(29) /t<sup>h</sup>iŋpui hi don i tih, umləutih/  
teaDET. drink 2PPFUT. Q.MK. TAG Q.  
'Will you drink the tea, or not?'

### 1.4 Tag Questions

The tag questions should be in agreement with the subject and the verb in a statement. They are the questions which immediately follow a statement and that serve to seek confirmation. The verbal root of the tag questions are the same as that of the sentence on which the tags are formed. These are formed with the combination of verbal roots and the question marker '-mo, ʔm'. The construction of the tag questions is similar to that of the yes/no question.

Tag question has two types-

- a) Reversed tag question.
- b) Constant tag question.

#### a) Reversed tag question:

In the reversed tag question the proposition and tag part are reversed. "As far as the meaning of reversed tag is concerned, the most commonly identified function is to obtain confirmation", (Jespersen, 1940). Examples:

(30) /əmahɪ hmelt<sup>h</sup>ra, hmelt<sup>h</sup>raə no mo/  
heDET. handsome, handsome 3PP. NEG.Q. MK.  
'He is handsome, isn't he?'

(31) /əmaskulah ə p<sup>h</sup>e no, ə p<sup>h</sup>emo/  
he schoolLOC. 3pp goNEG. 3PP goQ.MK.  
'He doesn't go to school, does he?'

#### b) Constant Tag Question:

In constant tag question the proposition and the tag part are constant. Constant tags are not frequently used whereas reversed tags do. Examples:

(32) /əma hi saə p<sup>h</sup>ak, ə p<sup>h</sup>akmo/  
heDET meat 3PP eat, 3PP eatQ.MK.  
'He eats the meat, does he?'

(33) /əmahmelt<sup>h</sup>ra, ə hmelt<sup>h</sup>ramo/  
he beautiful 3PPbeautifulQ.MK.  
'She is beautiful, is she?'

## 2. Tag on Different Sentences

In Hmar, tags can be a part of declarative, interrogative and imperative sentences. But the constant tags are not used frequently.

## 3. Tag On Affirmative Sentences

Both types of tags can be attached to the declarative sentences. Examples:

(34) /k<sup>h</sup>ak<sup>h</sup>əm ə huŋtahno, huŋtahmo/  
there3pp come PERFNEG.comePERFQ.MK.

'He did not go there, did he?'

(35) /əmaunaopa ə nih, əmaunaopainnomo/  
she brother3PPBE. he brother 2PPNEG.Q.MK.

'You are her brother, aren't you?'

## 4. Tag On Interrogative Sentences

When a tag is attached to the interrogative sentences, the tag becomes a non-interrogative structure. Examples:

(36) /k<sup>h</sup>ak<sup>h</sup>əm i p<sup>h</sup>emo/  
there2PP goQ.MK.

'Did you go there, yes/no?'

(37) /əma hi vuokt<sup>h</sup>əiimo/  
heDET.beatcan 2PP Q.MK.

'Can you beat him, yes/no?'

(38) /k<sup>h</sup>ak<sup>h</sup>əm i p<sup>h</sup>emo/  
there2PP goQ.MK.

'Did you go there, yes/no?'

## 5. Tag On Imperative Sentences

In this type, tag questions can be suffixed to the verbs of the imperative sentences.

(39) /ʃu i don no ro, i don mo/  
liquor 2PP drinkNEG.COMD. 2PP drink Q.MK.

'Don't take liquor, will you?'

(40) /k<sup>h</sup>k<sup>h</sup>əm ah i p<sup>h</sup>enoro, i p<sup>h</sup>emo/

thereLOC2PP go NEG. COMD. 2PP go Q.MK.

'Don't go there, will you?'

### Conclusion

Four types of interrogative sentences - Yes-no questions, Wh-questions, Alternative questions and Tag questions are discussed in this paper. Yes-no questions and Wh-questions are major type questions. Alternative questions and Tag questions are minor type questions. Yes-no questions is formed by suffixing the question markers -mo, -m, -nih, -tih and -di to the nouns, verbs, numerals, etc. In Wh-questions, the question markers are added to the Wh-question words and the verbal roots. The question words are interrogative pronouns or an interrogative adverb. The interrogative pronouns are - tuəm 'who', iem/iejam 'what' k<sup>h</sup>om 'which', etc. The interrogative adverbs are -k<sup>h</sup>oləm 'where', ieŋlaïəm 'why', ieŋtinəm 'how' and ieŋtika 'when' etc.

### Abbreviations:

Q.MK.	--	'question marker'
1PP.	--	'first person pronominal marker'
2PP.	--	'second person pronominal marker'
3PP.	--	'third person pronominal marker'
UNR.	--	'unrealized aspect marker'
LOC.	--	'locative'
NEG.	--	'negative'
COMD.	--	'command marker'
PERF.	--	'perfective aspect marker'
DET.	--	'determiner'

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