'SELF AND REFLECTIONS OF SELF' IN WORD FORMATION IN MANIPURI

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1. Introduction

'Self' as the beginning of a person followed by his kinship, location, ie. house, environment, etc., have a great behavioural change on the language. This can be proved in the formation of words, and even sentences in a language. This article tries to bring in the philosophy of 'self' and personal identity to illustrate the claim. This will help in historical analysis, descriptive studies and language teaching as well. In the curriculum for language teaching, it is often emphasized that the education of a child should start with learning 'self', followed by home, village/town, the state and the country for better understanding of the environment, learning the language use from known to unknown, etc. This concept, perhaps, is taken in Manipuri in the formation of words from the unknown past.

The philosophy of 'self' defines the conditions of identity that makes one subject of experience distinct from all others. The 'self' is, sometimes, understood as a unified being essentially connected to consciousness, awareness, and speech. Knowing others is wisdom and knowing the 'self' is explanation. Therefore, perfection comes only after a full length of self-knowledge.

2. Word formation

Keeping these points as the background, let us analyse how Manipuri language has developed some linguistic items, such as, kinship terms, clothing, body parts, Meitei Mayek script, etc., related to 'self', which is very much a language specific feature.

2.1 The Kinship terms

The kinship terms are coined taking 'self' as the reference point. While most of the languages have words like father, mother, etc. from the point of view of 'reference', Manipuri makes the 'self' as the base. In other words, the pronoun /əi/ 'I' for first person or its
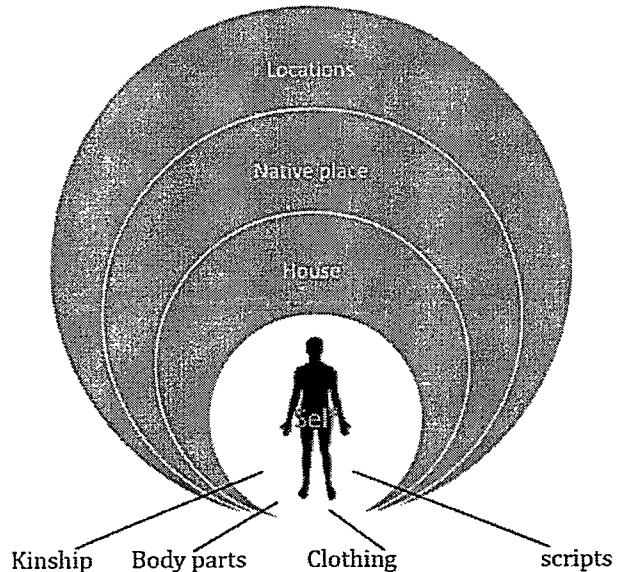

Figure 1: 'Self' and his immediate environments

Kinship   Body parts   Clothing   scripts

possessive pronoun form /əigi/ or /i-/ 'my' as the prefix for the kinship terms and /nəŋgi or nə-/ 'your' for second person and /məhakki or mə-/ 'his/her' for third person. The focus then is the point of view as the reference point. Blood relationship or family relationship is perhaps the second reason to have such word formation. One may say that roots, stems and affixes, i.e., the morphemic elements combine to form words and the words are arranged together to form sentences, of course, following the prescribed rules of a particular language. The same applies to meaning also. The word meaning may be viewed as a fusion of the meanings of stems, roots, and affixes and further, the meaning of a sentence may be viewed as a fusion of the meanings of its constituent words. There may be different schools of thought about the formation of sentences and meanings, but here we take a simple view as expressed above to illustrate the 'self' as the focus for word formation at least in the following cases.

Self is permanent, substantial, autonomous self or 'I'. So coining and development of words in any language is mainly done based on some principles. Relationship between words and meanings is established on the basis of the usage of specific words to denote specific meanings in the community of speakers. Complex word formations are collections of smaller morphological components and hence formation of words prefixing /i-/, /nə-/, /mə-/ presupposes that the formation is unique to the language. When a word is formed it has a sense, reference, denotation, connotation, intention, and carries specific nuances of their own. This can be seen in the specific illustrations from Manipuri. Inclusion of the 'self' as well as second and third person prefixes in the word formation is to account for the relation between concepts and sensory content which is peculiar to Manipuri. This formation highlights the intimate relation between language, thought, and knowledge.

Relationship	My-	Your-	His/her-
Father	ipa	nəpa	məpa
Mother	ima	nəma	məma
Son	icanupa	nəcanupa	məcanupa
Daughter	icanupi	nəcanupi	məcanupi
Elder brother	ibuŋ	nəbuŋ	məbuŋ
Elder sister	ice	nəce	məce
Younger brother	ipwa	nəupwa	məupwa
Younger sister	inaonupi	nənaonupi	mənaonupi
Grandson	isunupa	nəsunupa	məsunupa
Granddaughter	isunupi	nəsunupi	məsunupi
Husband	ipuroibə	nəpuroibə	məpuroibə
Wife	itu	nətu	mətu
Uncle	ikhura	nəkhura	məkhura
Aunty	ine	nəne	məne
Sister in law 1	inəmmə	nənəmmə	mənəmmə
Sister in law 2	itəimə	nətəimə	mətəimə
Brother in law 1	itəi	mətəi	mətəi
Brother in law 2	ibai	nəbai	məbai

| Son in law | iyanupa | nəyanupa | məyanupa |
| Daughter in law | iməunupi | nənəunupi | mənəunupi |

Table 1: Kinship terms

Note 1: Sister in law1 and Brother in law 1 are from the point of view of girls and Sister in law 2 and Brother in law 2 are from the point of view of boys.

Note 2: Though all these kinship terms are for reference, 'ice' 'ine' 'inəmmə' 'itəimə' ibai' are also the terms used for addressing.. The term 'khura' is used to address uncle.

2.2 Body parts

Instead of calling the names of body parts as an independent item, Manipuri makes these words from the point of view of 'self' and uses the prefixes /i-/, /nə-/ and /mə-/ as in the case of kinship terms.

Body parts	My-	Your-	His/her-
Head	ikok	nəkok	məkok
Eye	imit	nəmit	məmit
Ear	ina	nəna	məna
Nose	inaton	nənaton	mənaton
Mouth	icin	nəcin	məcin
Teeth	iya	nəya	məya
Tongue	irəi	nərəi	mərəi
Hair (head)	isəm	nəsəm	məsəm
Hand	ikhut	nəkhut	məkhut
Leg	ikhoŋ	nəkhoŋ	məkhoŋ
Buttocks	ithun	nəthun	məthun
Urine	iyuŋ	nəyuŋ	məyuŋ
Stool	ithi	nəthi	məthi
Saliva	itin	nətin	mətin
Tears	ipi	nəpi	məpi

Table 2: Body parts/excretion

2.3 Clothing

In Manipuri, words related to clothing from the point of view of 'self' are also formed by prefixing /i-/, /nə-/ and /mə-/ as given below.

Dress	My-	Your-	His/her-
Cloth	iphi	nəphi	məphi
Phurit	iphurit	nəphurit	məphurit
phənek	iphənek	nəphənek	məphənek
phəijom	iphəijom	nəphəijom	məphəijom
khudəi	ikhudəi	nəkhudəi	məkhudəi

Table 3: Clothing

Soibam Rebika Devi

Note: Normally, clothing for '(my)self' is concerned, /əigi/ is used instead of prefixing /i-/. For example: əigi phənek 'my phanek'. This cannot be taken as a single word formation.

2.4 Possessions

In the case of possessions also, the prefixes /i-/, /nə-/ and /mə-/ are used from the point of view of 'self' in Manipuri.

Environments	My-	Your-	His/her-
house	iyum	nəyum	məyum
place	iphəm	nəphəm	məphəm
locality	irəikai	nərəikai	mərəikai
state/country	irəmdəm	nərəmdə	mərəmdəm
country (nation)	irəibak	nərəibak	mərəibak

Table 4: Possessions

3. Script formation

Every human community possesses language. However, the development of the writing system for that language takes years of experience by the native speakers. Sometimes other communities give the writing system also. Once established, writing systems generally change more slowly than their spoken counterparts do.

The conventional method of writing system depends on their thought and models. The processes of encoding, decoding and the writing system involve a shared understanding between the script maker(s) and the readers. The case of Manipuri scripts is an interesting one. The model for the creation of letters depended mainly on the human body or the 'self', as has been discussed throughout this paper.

The writing system of Manipuri in the ancient Meetei mayek script is not pictographs. It has both individual letters and syllabic letters as well. The formation of the original eighteen letters of Meitei mayek script, namely, k, s, l, m, p, n, c, t, K, q, T, w, y, h, U, I, P and a is based on or related to the shape of human organs/body parts and also to the cosmological existence. Of the twenty seven letters, the remaining nine letters, namely, g, J, r, b, j, d, G, D and B are developed later to represent the borrowed sounds of other languages. This grapheme, which is a specific base unit of the writing system of Manipuri, is important from the point of view of philosophy. These graphemes, which are the minimally significant elements, are based on lots of observation of creators themselves. Most of the writing systems available in other languages will typically have an ordering of its symbol elements in one way or the other whereas Manipuri has a different order of the letters in the alphabet.

Letter	Name of the letter	Body parts
k	kok	head
s	səm	hair
l	lai	forehead
m	mit	eye

p	pa	eyelash
n	na	ear
c	cin	mouth
t	tin	saliva
K	khəu	throat
q	ŋəu	palate
T	thəu	giving life (soul)
w	wai	heart
y	yaŋ	backbone
h	huk	body, tang shoujinnapham
U	un	skin
I	i	blood
P	phəmbi	sperm and egg
a	ətiya	sky, universe
g	gok	not related to any body parts
J	jhəm	not related to any body parts
r	rai	not related to any body parts
b	ba	not related to any body parts
j	jil	not related to any body parts
d	dil	not related to any body parts
G	ghəu	not related to any body parts
D	dhəu	not related to any body parts
B	bhəm	not related to any body parts

Table 5: Meitei Mayek scripts

Conclusion

The formation of kinship terms, body parts, clothing and the scripts in Manipuri is an interesting and thought provoking one. This word-formation process is a kind of lexicalization, which explains it as the process of creating a new word for a new thing or notion instead of describing them in a sentence or with a paraphrase. The use of such words is more economical because they are shorter than the corresponding or underlying sentences or paraphrases. Furthermore, they can be more easily used as elements of sentences.

In the case of Manipuri word formation, the following developments have been observed. Firstly, when a verbal cognition results from the primary function of a word, the object or content of that verbal cognition is called primary meaning. Secondly, when a verbal cognition results from the suggestive function of a word, the object or content of that verbal cognition is called suggested meaning. Thirdly, when a verbal cognition results from the intentional function of a word, the object or content of that verbal cognition is called intended meaning. This intended meaning is the main asset of Manipuri Language.

Soibam Rebika Devi

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