Kinship Terms of Aka Koro Tribes in Arunachal Pradesh: A Sociolinguistic Study

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Abstract

This paper examines the existing kinship terminology system of Aka Koro tribe from a linguistic point of view. The paper tries to bring out the nature of Aka Koro tribe inhabiting in the East and West Kameng districts of the north eastern parts of Arunachal Pradesh, especially Kichang, Pichang, Chichang, Kadeya, Sapung, Pochung, Kajung, New Sapung and Yangse villages. This native language of Koro is highly endangered with 800 to1200 people. The Koro tribe is matrilineal which means that they allow marriage between a man and his immediate relation of his mother's side. This study is an attempt to bring out a classificatory system for the Kinship which prevails among them.

Key Words: Kinship, Aka Koro, Endangered language, Socio-linguistics, Classificatory

Introduction

According to the Census of India (2001 to 2011) there are 26 scheduled tribes in the state of Arunachal Pradesh. Apart from these, there are a number of other sub-tribes with its own diverse culture and conventions. However, in its latest research the National Geographic Society's **Enduring Voices Project** discovered a new tribe called 'Aka Koro' in the remote corner of India and this has been published in the *Science Daily* magazine. This language is not been listed in the given tribal languages list of Arunachal Pradesh.

Fox (1967) states that the study of kinship is the study of what man does with these basic facts of life such as mating, gestation, parenthood, socialization, siblingship, etc. Morgan (1871) pointed out that most kinship terminologies reflect different sets of distinctions such as sex,

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generations, blood and marriage. A factual statement about kinship was given by James Peoples (2014) and he states that "anthropologically, kinship is the web of social relationships that form an important part of the lives of most humans in most societies". Basically, kinship is universal and in most societies it plays a significant role in the socialization of individuals and maintenance of group solidarity. It facilitates not only the socialization of children but it also forms an economic, political and religious group.

Focus of This Paper - Kinship

The investigators try to find out how the social structure, class difference, sex, and age differ from one another through kinship terms and how the language emerges through linguistic view point. The study of kinship deserves special attention as it refers to the person to whom an individual is related by blood or some other way.

Commonly, kinship is of two types (a) affinal kinship (b) consanguineous kinship. While affinal kins are individuals who are related by marriage, consanguineous kinship is characterized by the sharing of common ancestors/common blood. Kinship is universal in societies; every language includes a system of kinship terms but different languages shape up the family tree in different ways.

Aka Koro society and language are different from other tribal populations. This language of Koro belongs to Tibeto-Burman, a branch of Sino-Tibetan language family. The study has linguistic relevance as it deals with an endangered language and it is a minority tribe. The aim of the study is to find out Aka Koro kinship terms and its role in their relationship in society.

Objectives

1. To find out how kinship terms are used in Aka Koro hierarchy in terms of relationships.
2. Through this study the researchers attempt to find out the linguistic terms used for to express kinship relations.

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3. Aka Koro is an endangered language. Here researchers aim at understanding and documenting the data in order to, preserve the language for the future generations.

Review of Literature

Arunachal Pradesh is one of the protected areas under the Government of India. The name Koro exists among the tribals of East Manus in New Guinea and in Nigeria[7].The American linguists David Harrison and Gregory Anderson (2010) were the pioneers in the study of the Aka Koro tribe and they took the initiative to bring them back to the modern world along with Ganesh Murmu. Though people were early settlers, there have been very little studies about their ethnic group and culture. But in *Ethnologue*, Lewis (2005) had mentioned about Hrusso Aka tribes. In his study he has stated that Aka Koro is a dialect of Hrusso Aka (mother language) but it was totally different from other native languages. *The Hindu* a leading Indian daily newspaper also published an article which appeared with the title "A hidden language revealed" written by John Noble Wilford discussing the tribe. I.M. Simon (1970), worked on Hruso Aka language for the Government of Arunachal Pradesh and brought out the "Aka Language Guide" in 1970. Also in 2010, *Christian Science Monitor* published an article about their studies on the Koro tribe. Gibji Nimasow (2003) was born in the same tribe and worked extensively on this tribe and wrote a couple of articles connected with different aspects of Aka. The news about Aka Koro came out for the first time through National Geographic news by Dan Morrison 2010 and the news spread all over the world. Also, the CNN television channel has talked about it. Gregory D. S. Anderson and K. David Harrison produced a dictionary named 'Koro Aka English Online Talking Dictionary. Hrusso Aka is considered as an unwritten language in India by *Ethnologue* (2017). Its varieties are grouped under Tibeto-Burman as Hruish language. This was the first accepted notification about the indigenous language. It is also believed that most of them do not know about their origin but some believe that it has descended from Tibet, Mongolia or China. This is because they still hold some inevitable similarities like body type, traditions, food habits, celebration, etc. These aborigines have neither written script of their own nor written literature of their own.

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Methodology

The study used both primary data which the researchers gathered from the field visit and secondary data, which are publications such as books, magazines, journals, government departments, and organizational records. The present study goes through different steps. The data was collected using questionnaires by direct interview method. The questionnaire included kinship terms which were arranged properly for getting kin terms for both the consanguineous and affinal groups and the peculiarities of the terms were identified specifically. The data was collected from the native speakers of Kichang village in the Banna Circle in the East Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh.

Description and Role of Kinship in Aka Koro Community

The Aka Koro uses the term / nuŋga ajiŋ / meaning- kinship, in their native language. People learned their kinship terms during the early stage of their life. The Koro tribe is a matrilineal tribe and they allow marriage between a man and his immediate relations on his mother's side. Normally within the Aka Koro, people do not cut jokes with their parents and elder members of their family and society and cutting jokes is prohibited. Similarly, among the family members, the elder person or age-old man in their generation is never addressed by their name as a sign of respect. At the same time, people are allowed to address young people and kids in the lower age using their personal names. In their social relationship respect could differ from one relationship from another. For brother, they commonly use the term /ama/ and for uncle it is /ose/. If the people are in the same age group they are called /ajiŋ/. Similarly, / ajiŋ / is used for for nephew and /ama/ stepfather. Generally, children from all relations used the term /nana/. Likewise /ako/ and /maye/ are commonly used for boys. When a boy or girl reaches the marriage age, usually Koro tribes select people (bride and bridegrooms) from the nearest village which must be from their mother's side, which will not be from the same their own clan. But nowadays they are taking relations from the distant area for marriage. Child marriage is prevailing according to their tribal custom but he or she will be the life partner after they become grown up adults.

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Analysis of Data

The following tables show field data collected from Aka Koro community for analysis:-

Table 1: Data of Consanguineous Kinship Terms

Sl. No	Phonetic transcription of Kinship terms of Aka Koro tribes	Relationship
1	/ abo. mʉrjɪ /	Grand Father (Father's side)
2	/ ase. misiŋ /	Grand Mother (Father's side)
3	/ abo.mʉrjɪ /	Grand Father (Mother's side)
4	/ aye ʰ misiŋ /	(Grand Mother) (Mother's side)
5	/ abo /	Father
6	/ aje /	Mother
7	/ amasuŋ /	Elder Brother
8	/ temiŋ/	Elder sister
9	/ abo. mʉrjɪ /	Father's Middle brother
10	/ ne ʰ /	Middle sister
11	/ nesuŋ /	Younger brother
12	/ nana / - /ne ʰ /	Younger sister
13	/ abo .mʉrjɪ /	Father's elder brother
14	/ofo /	Father's elder sister
15	/ ne ʰ /	Father's younger sister
16	/ ane /	Mother's brother
17	/ ane /	Mother's elder sister
18	/ ugnaʰ /	Son's son
19	/ ugnaʰ /	Son's daughter
20	/ same /	Daughter's son
21	/ same /	Daughter's daughter
22	/ ne ʰ /	Brother's son

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23	/ ako /	Brother's daughter
24	/ saccu /	Sister's son
25	/ sacchoŋ /	Sister's daughter
26	/ ose /	Mother's brother's son
27	/ ane /	Mother's brother's daughter
28	/ niŋmare /	Father's brother's son
29	/ temiŋ/	Father's brother's daughter
30	/ hinyiŋne /	Mother's sister son (elder)
31	/ hinyiŋne /	Mother's sister daughter (elder)
32	/ abo: mʉrjɪ /	Mother's father
33	/ ase. misiŋ /	Mother's mother
34	/ ane /	Mother's elder sister
35	/ ane /	Mother's younger sister
36	/ o se /	Mother's elder brother
37	/ o se /	Mother's younger brother
38	/ temiŋ /	Elder daughter
39	/ ofo /	Elder sister
40	/ ōŋga /	Younger son
41	/ saccu /	Elder son

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42	/ aje misiŋ /	Father's mother
43	/ abo: mɯrjɪ /	Father's father
44	/ o se /	Father's elder brother
45	/ ose /	Father's younger brother
46	/ temiŋ /	Younger daughter

Table 1

Consanguine Kinship Terms

In Aka Koro community, consanguine kins experience high privileges, honor, and leadership within their family relationships. A family is the base of society created from two different relationships based on marriage and descent. Koros follows a lineage that traces their common ancestry from a single person. Otherwise, the descent groups calculate through only one parent either the father patrilineage or the mother matrilineage. For Grandfather they use the term /abo.mɯrjɪ /, for father; it is /abo/, for son /omoǹo/ and for Grandson /saccu/. Father is assumed to be the head of the family even if mother holds equal rights and powers to control. Siblings address each other according to their relative's age with the terms /nana/ for 'brother' and /ako/ for 'sister'. However, they use adjectives like /bəɽka/ to represent elder people /məʒula/ for middle group and /nan/ younger group to differentiate the age. For elder brother, they use the term /amasuŋ / and for elder sister /teminŋ/. Commonly /temiŋ / represents "elder" which indicates all elder ladies in Koro community. If somebody is younger in age, they use the term /ajiŋ / likewise /osiya/ for younger brother and / ne ʰ / for Younger Sister. Father's brother is /abo.mɯrjɪ / and Father's Elder Sister /ofo/. In the case Father's Younger Sister / ne ʰ / Mother's Elder Sister /ane /. A detailed list of kinship terms is included to get a good understanding of kinship relations.

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Affinal Kinship Terms

Sl. No	Phonetic transcription of Kinship terms of Aka Koro tribes	Relationship
1	/ ose /	Wife's Father
2	/ aʰsey/	Wife's Mother
3	/ ose /	Husband's Father
4	/ aʰsey/	Husband's Mother
5	/ ofo mesa:ŋ /	Father's elder sister's husband
6	/ racci /	Father's younger sister's husband
7	/oŋga /	Mother's elder sister's husband
8	/ temiŋ /	Mother's younger sister's husband
9	/ pa:ŋ /	Father's elder brother's wife
10	/ chaŋmi /	Husband's sister (younger)
11	/ ofo /	Husband's sister (elder)
12	/ barbo /	Wife's sister's husband
13	/ rayeŋ /	Husband's elder brother's wife
14	/ yu /	Wife's elder Brother
15	/ bɭe /	Wife's younger Brother
16	/ ama /	Sister's Husband
17	/ anǹas /	Husband's brother's son
18	/ ama /	Husband's brother's daughter
19	/ kamaʰ /	Daughter's husband
20	/ ooyeʰ /	Son's wife

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21	/ nanma /	Son's wife's Father
22	/ ahsey /	Son's wife Mother
23	/ osey /	Brother's Father in law
24	/ panʰg /	Brother's of Brother's wife
25	/ uyi /	Wife
26	/ rɑːci /	Husband
27	/ yu /	Brother-in-law
28	/ arayum /	Sister-in-law
29	/rayeŋ/	Mother-in-law
30	/bḻaji /	Father-in-law
31	/ose/	Uncle
32	/ mʉrjɪ /	Aunt

Table 2

Affinal Kinship Terms

Affinal kin are persons who are connected to persons by marriage[9]. Affinal relations are based on a validity or agreement. Although they are considered to be members of the family, the kinship tie can be broken if the marriage dissolves. In case of affinal relation similar elementary terms **/abo/** (father) and **/aje/** (mother) are used exclusively. For Wife the term they call /uyi/ and Husband /rɑːci/. These terms are preceded by adjectives to differentiate the age and these elementary terms are mostly used for parental generation. The term /abo /, is used for father's elder brother as well as mother's elder sister's husband. For father-in-law, the term /bḻaji/ is used and mother-in-law /rajenŋ / is used. For father's brother's wife and elder brother's wife they use

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the term /pɑ:nŋ/. Even though there are many dialects in circulation, they have not borrowed linguistic terms for representing their kinship terms.

Data of Descent Group's Kinship Terms of Aka Koro

/abo. mʉrjɪ /	Grandfather	/ayeʰ masaŋ/	Great-grandmother
/ase. misi/	Grandmother	/saccu/	Grandnephew
/sac̄u /	Grandson	/ mʉrjɪ /	Great great grandmother
/sac̄oŋ/	Granddaughter	/abo. mʉrjɪ /	Great grandfather
/ mʉrjɪ /	Granduncle	/ mʉrjɪ /	Great great grandfather
/ane-ʰ masaŋ/	Grandaunt	/ mʉrjɪ /	Great great grandmother
/sacuŋ.m̆ /	Grandniece		

Table 3

The above table shows some of the kinship terms of Aka Koro Descent group. It represents a unilineal society in which the descent of an individual is reckoned either from the mother's or father's line of descent.

Findings of the Study

In this analysis, the researchers chose homogenous kinship terms from the data list and collected frequently used terms and explained the terms in connection within the family members. For example, from the data we see that the consanguineous and affinal term /ofo/ for Husband's sister (elder) is used the same as /ofo/ for Father's elder sister. Similarly, the term Mother's elder brother and Father's elder brother /o: se/ is same in the matrilineal kinship and patrilineal relations. At the same time, /o: se/ is used for Mother's younger brother and Father's Younger Brother in both relations. Similarly for Elder Daughter, Younger Daughter, Mother's

younger sister's husband, Father's brother's daughter, there is only one term /temiŋ/. In unique terms, / mʉrjɪ / represents all older male men in their community. At the same time, for all older female members they use /masa:ŋ/. In Aka Koro for matrilineal kinship term Mother's Mother is /ase misiŋ / and Mother's elder brother /o: se/. But Patrilineal kinship term for Father's mother is /aje misiŋ/, Father's Younger Brother is /o: se/. Mother's father in matrilineal kinship is /abo:mʉrjɪ / Patrilineal kinship term Father's Father is /abo:mʉrjɪ /. In matrilineal and patrilineal kinship, Mother's elder brother, Mother's Younger Brother, Father's Elder Brother, Father's Younger Brother are all denoted by the use of the same term /o: se/. Besides, Aka Koros have their own particular address and reference terms for their own use in their day to day communication.

The sentence structure of Aka Koro comes under SOV pattern and an adjective follows the noun it modifies. That is to say, the subject comes first, the verb second, and the object third. For example:

li   pule den kaba   li   gibi   dem lihba   (table)

he   bird   the   hits   she snake the killed

'He hits the bird'   'She killed the snake'

Here, English sentence 'he hits the bird' changes into 'li pule den kaba' in Koro language. Similarly 'She killed the snake 'changes into 'li   gibi   dem lihba'.

Address Terms and Reference Terms in Aka Koro Kinship

Address terms and reference terms are usual and common among them but key naming behaviors are applied in diverse social communications. It is used to identify certain relationships of people and their relatives. In relationships, the Aka Koro community, both in the nuclear and extended family, have their own distinctive address and reference terms for the identification and expression of ideas. It depends upon one's sex and generation. For example, in Koro community, each and every village is controlled by an aged village headman called 'Gavu Buda' who is appointed by village panchayat. Each and every village has its own Gavu Buda. But here 'Gavu Buda' is an address term; people commonly call "Buda" as a sign of respect. People will not use

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his/her actual name directly in front of the public. While addressing a 'King' they use the term /mordo/. For outsiders who command higher status in society they use the term 'Sir- ji' and 'Madam- ji'. An unmarried woman is called /meʰbeʰb/ both in address and reference terms. While addressing both male and female teachers they generally use /mastər/. When people want to get somebody's attention for them they use the term /ninɟo.bude/.

Conclusion

The current paper gives us a picture about Aka Koro tribes, their locality, population and the importance of their kinship terms in the society. The study also maintains a sociolinguistic point of view where society's effect on language including cultural norms, expectations, and context, is observed. In the analysis part, the researchers picked out linguistic terms from affinal and consanguinous tables and analyzed the use of terms in relation to role in family and society. The researchers found out some unique kinship terms which have been used only in particular relationship.

The Koro is a minority language which has come under the endangered list. Nowadays community and people may change their mother tongue due to the influence of Hindi and English as part of globalization. New generations may not speak their mother tongues. This will cause complete extinction of the language, According to UNESCO's report; two hundred and twenty Indian languages have died out in the last 50 years. More than 200 languages have become extinct around the world over the last three generations. If India's endangered languages are digitally documented, we can keep these languages as an asset for the generations to come. In addition, this study also provides a glossary of linguistic terms.

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