Gender in Anal: A Preliminary Investigation

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Abstract

Anal is a language as well as name of a community inhabiting the South Eastern, North and Western parts of Manipur and in the border areas of neighboring country like Myanmar. Anal is one of the thirty-three recognized scheduled tribes of Manipur with a total population of 13,853 according to the 2001 Census of India. The present paper attempts to describe the gender marking systems in Anal, a Kuki-Chin language mainly spoken in Chandel district of Manipur.

Key words: Anal language, Kuki-Chin languages, Manipur

1. Introduction

Anal is the name of a language, the group of people who speak the language. It is one of the undocumented endangered languages of Manipur (Moseley, 2009). Linguistically, Anal belongs to Mizo-Kuki-Chin of the Tibeto-Burman language family (Burling, 2003). It has close affinities with Laizoand Malsom languages (Gordon, 2005). It is mainly spoken in the Chandel, Churachandpur and Thoubal districts of Manipur with a total population of 13,853 according to the 2001 census of India. Like many other Kuki-Chin languages, it has no indigenous script. However Roman script has been adopted to write their language with some modifications. Similarly, the language is not being taught in schools as a medium of instruction or a subject.

2. Theoretical Background

Gender is not a universal feature in the structure of the languages of the world. Therefore Corbett (1991) rightly pointed out that in some languages gender is central and pervasive, while in others it is totally absent. Furthermore, modern linguistic theory distinguishes between

languages having grammatical and natural gender, regarding the former as structural or formal phenomena, and the latter as semantic or content phenomena. Stanley (1977) explains the distinction between the two kinds of gender in linguistics. Grammatical gender refers to the three main noun classes, as recognized in Greek and Latin, namely, "feminine", "neuter" and "masculine." Classification of nouns into three genders accounts for pronominal reference and adjectival concord. Theoretically, it is independent of sex. Natural gender, in contrast, "refers to the classification of nouns on the basis of biological sex, as female or male, or animate and inanimate (Stanley, 1977). It is worth mentioning here that most of the Tibeto-Burman languages lack grammatical gender, rather natural gender is certainly widespread in the family.

3. Typological Features of Anal

(i) Like most of the Tibeto-Burman languages, Anal is a tonal language.

(ii) The basic structure of syllable in Anal is (V)CV.

(iii) As in many other Kuki-Chin languages, Anal has a system of particles, particularly prefixes accompanying verbs which show agreement with the subject and the object.

(iv) Anal,being a Tibeto-Burman language has nominal pronominalization, i.e., the pronominal markers are attached to the nominal root in the form of prefixes and as a result it expresses the sense of possession.

(v) As in many other Kuki-Chin languages, tense is not prominent in Anal, rather the aspect is frequently expressed by the verbal suffixes.

(v) Like many other Tibeto-Burman languages, negation in Anal is expressed by means of affixation.

(vi) As many other south Asian Languages, the preferred order of clausal constituents in Anal is SOV. However we find OSV order in clauses with special focus.

4. Gender in Anal

Like many other Kuki-Chin languages, Gender in Anal has no role in showing grammatical relationship between the nouns and other categories in the sentences except in the case of noun and nominal modifiers. In other words, Anal has no grammatical gender, it has only

natural gender, i.e., all the male comes under the masculine and all the female comes under the feminine. However, as mentioned earlier, in Anal noun phrase, there is a grammatical relationship between noun and nominal modifiers as found in Manipuri and other Tibeto-Burman languages. In Anal, gender of animate nouns is marked morphologically except in some kinship terms which are absolute forms. All the inanimate nouns are considered as neuter gender, which are morphologically unmarked. Like many other Kuki-Chin languages, gender in Anal is expressed by postposing a word or suffix to a noun stem. Moreover, the language also possesses the lexical opposition features used to express gender. Unlike English or Sylheti, a dialect of Bengali language, the third person pronoun in Anal does not distinguish for gender.

The Anal gender-marking system distinguishes female versus male in human and non-human beings including animals, birds, plants, etc., as described below:

4.1. Gender-marking with Human Nouns

In Anal, different strategies are used to express gender distinction in the case of human nouns asillustrated below:

4.1.1. By Using Opposite Lexical Items

In Anal, some of the opposite lexical items are used to denote male or female nouns. It is observed that some of the nouns in the language are lexically marked as masculine and feminine as evidenced by the use of kinship terms such as the following:

pa 'father'	*nu* 'mother'
cəpə 'son'	*cələ* 'daughter'
ələl 'bachelor'	*nəlha* 'maid'
əma 'son-in-law'	*əmi* 'daughter-in-law'
pu 'grandfather'	*pi* 'grandmother'

4.2. By Adding *pa/pu* and *nu*

Gender distinction for human beings is also made by adding the morpheme **pa/pu** for 'male' and**nu** for 'female'. It is interesting to note that these gender markers are quite likely derived from the lexical items **pa** 'father', **pu** 'grandfather' and **nu** 'mother'. However, the further investigation is required to ascertain the issue.

Male	Female
im-pu 'husband'	*sin-nu* 'wife'
u-pa 'elder brother'	*u-nu* 'elder sister'
sin-pa 'man'	*sin-nu* 'woman'
cənəsel-pa 'bridegroom'	*cənədoŋ-nu* 'bride'
hmikʰu-pa 'widower'	*hmikʰu-nu* 'widow'
ətʰim-pa 'priest'	*ətʰim-nu* 'priestess'
ne-pa 'younger brother'	*ne-nu* 'younger sister'
ne-pa 'uncle'	*ne-nu* 'aunt'

It is observed that the root **u** in Anal basically means elder kin who may be either male or female as illustrated above. Similarly, **ne** is used to denote the younger kin who may be either male or female as stated above.

In case of the professional terms as well, the male and female gender are indicated by adding morphemes **pa** and **nu** respectively as shown below.

idamca sin-pa 'male dancer'	*idamca sin-nu* 'female dancer'
pisumcasin-pa 'male robber'	*pisumcasin-nu* 'female robber'
hlaisacasinpa 'male singer'	*hlaisacasin-nu* 'female singer'
buithucasinpa 'male cook'	*buithucasin-nu* 'female cook'
pijosinpa 'male writer'	*pijosin-nu* 'female writer'
idonsinpa 'male hunter'	*idonsin-nu* 'female hunter'

The proper names of first to fifth male child can be addressed by using the morpheme **pu** except in the case of first son as it is marked by **te** as can be seen in the following examples:

mo-te	'first son'
ko-pu	'second son'
be-pu	'third son'
əŋ-pu	'fourth son'
tʰim-pu	'fifth son'

Similarly, the proper names of first to fifth female child can be addressed by using the morpheme ***nu*** as can be seen in the following examples:

kʰi-nu	'first daughter'
to-nu	'second daughter'
səŋ-nu	'third daughter'
pe-nu	'fourth daughter'
tʰum-nu	'fifth daughter'

4.1.4. By Adding *pu* and *pi*

The name of the occupation particularly the teaching profession is made male and female distinction by adding morphemes ***pu*** and ***pi*** respectively. Interestingly, the female marker ***pi*** is not very productive as it is rarely used to express female gender in the language. It is observed that the female marker ***pi*** may be borrowed from Manipuri as can be seen in the following example:

Male	**Female**
tʰimpu 'teacher'	*tʰimpi*

4. 2. Gender-marking with Non-human Nouns

With all the non-human nounsin Anal, female gender is usually marked by the morpheme ***nu*** probably derived from the lexical item 'mother'; however, the male gender is marked by different morphemes such as ***pa***, ***kuŋ*** and ***pətəl*** as discussed below.

4. 2.1. By Adding *pa* and *nu*

In non-human animate nouns as well, the morphemes **pa** and **nu** are used to indicate male and female gender respectively as can be seen in the following examples:

Generic name	Male	Female
humpi 'lion'	*humpi-pa*	*humpi-nu*
kisin 'fox'	*kisin-pa*	*kisin-nu*

It is observed that the strong or wise wild animals like lion and fox are considered as superior animals. Therefore, the same markers for human being, i.e., **pa** and **nu** are used to express male and female gender in the case of above non-human animate nouns.

4. 2.2. By Postposing *pətəl* and *nu*

With almost all the non-human nouns both animate and inanimate nouns including animals, birds, insects, trees etc., the morphemes **pətəl** and **nu** are used to express male and female gender as can be seen in the following examples:

Generic name	Male	Female
pəse 'elephant'	*pəse-pətəl*	*pəse-nu*
kel 'goat'	*kel-pətəl*	*kel-nu*
vi 'dog'	*vi-pətəl*	*vi-nu*
nəse 'sparrow'	*nəse-pətəl*	*nəse-nu*
pəthru 'pigeon'	*pəthru-pətəl*	*pəthru-nu*
pək^{h}u 'bee'	*pək^{h}u-pətəl*	*pək^{h}u-nu*
pət^{h}i 'house fly'	*pət^{h}i-pətəl*	*pət^{h}i-nu*

Another important feature prevalent in Anal is that the plants bearing fruits are treated as feminine gender indicated by the morpheme **nu** whereas the plants which are not bearing fruits

are treated as masculine gender by adding *pətəl* to the generic name of the plants. A similar case is found in Tibeto-Burman languages like Manipuri, Kokborok, and Chothe, etc.

$$\text{əvat}^h\text{əbi 'papaya'} \qquad \text{əvat}^h\text{əbi-pətəl} \qquad \text{əvat}^h\text{əbi-nu}$$

thihe 'mango'   *thihe-pətəl*   *thihe-nu*

It is to be noted that the gender morphemes *pətəl* and *nu* are productive as they are used to mark male and female gender for the non-human nouns irrespective of their status as animate or inanimate ones as illustrated in the above examples.

4. 2.3. By Postposing *kuŋ* and *nu*

Unlike the gender distinctions of other birds, the domesticated birds like hen and duck are made male and female by adding the morphemes *kuŋ* for male gender and *nu* for female gender instead of *pətəl* and *nu* as described below. It is worth mentioning here that the marker *kuŋ i*s not productive as it is used only with the specific birds as mentioned above.

Generic name	Male	Female
həl 'fowl'	*həl-kuŋ*	*həl-nu*
ŋanu 'duck'	*ŋanu-kuŋ*	*ŋanu*

It can be stated from the above example such as *ŋanu* 'female duck', the female indicator *nu* is being dropped evadingthe repetition of *nu*, in the underlying form *ŋanu-(nu)*.

5. Lack of Gender Distinction in Pronouns

Indo-European languages like English, and Sylheti, a dialect of Bengali language, etc., make use of gender distinction in third person personal pronoun. Conversely most of the Tibeto-Burman languages typically lack gender distinction in pronouns. Likewise, Anal pronouns do not show gender distinction as can be seen in the following table.

ni 'I'   *nihin/ənihin* 'we'

Language in India www.languageinindia.com **ISSN 1930-2940 15:2 February 2015**
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nəŋ 'you'　　　　　　　　　*nəŋhin* 'you (Pl.)'

əma 'she/he'　　　　　　　*əmahin* 'they'

6. Noun-Nominal Modifier Agreement in Noun Phrase

One of the interesting phenomena in Anal is that some human nouns agree in gender with nominal modifiers in a Noun Phrase as in (1a) and (2a), However, non-human nouns do not show gender agreement with nominal modifier as in (3a) and (3b). It is important to note that similar case is found in Manipuri as well (Yashawanta, 1985). Furthermore, it is found that Anal modifiers can precede or follow the noun.

(1a)　　*ruŋcin-tʰrə*　　*sinpa-cərə*　　*əkʰe-uŋ-ka*

　　　　beautiful　　　man-DIMN　　one-sit-ASP

　　　　'A handsome boy is sitting.'

(1b)　　**ruŋcinni*　　*sinpa-cərə*　　*əkʰe-uŋ-ka*

　　　　beautiful　　　man-DIMN　　one-sit-ASP

　　　　'A handsome boy is sitting.'

(2a)　　*ruŋcin-ni*　　　　*sinnu-cərə*　　　　*əkʰe-uŋ-ka*

　　　　beautiful-FEM　　　woman-DIMN　　　one-sit-ASP

　　　　'A beautiful girl is sitting.'

(2b)　　**ruŋcintʰrə*　　*sinnu-cərə*　　*əkʰe-uŋ-ka*

　　　　beautiful　　　woman-DIMNone-sit-ASP

　　　　'A beautiful girl is sitting.'

(3a)　　*vi-pətəl*　　*pihol-he*　　*pəriŋ-ka*

　　　　Dog-MALE　　big-DET　　　bark-ASP

　　　　'The big dog (MAL) is barking.'

(3b)   *vi-nu*   *pihol-he*   *pəriŋ-ka*

Dog-FEM   big-DET   bark-ASP

'The big dog (FEM) is barking'

In the above examples, the noun **sinpa-cərə** 'boy' agrees with the modifier **ruɲcin-tʰrə** 'beautiful' particularly with the male marker **tʰrə** and the noun **sinnu-cərə** 'girl' agrees with modifier **ruɲcin-ni** particularly with the female marker **ni.** Thus the interchange of modifiers causes ungrammatical forms as in (1b) and (2b).

7. Conclusions

Like many other Tibeto-Burman languages, Gender in Anal is not grammatically marked. However, gender agreement is maintained in the case of human nouns and nominal modifiers. Gender in Anal is mainly expressed by postposing a word or morpheme to a noun stem. Moreover, the language also possesses the lexical opposition features used to express gender. It is also observed that as in many other Tibeto-Burman languages, Anal typically lacks gender distinction in pronouns.

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Abbreviations

ASP   Aspect

C   Consonant

DIMN   Diminutive

FEM   Female

MAL   Male

PL   Plural

V   Vowel

FEM   Feminine

DET   Determiner

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