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Numerals in Zeme Naga

Francis Muchahary, Ph.D. Scholar

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Abstract

The paper attempts to present some aspects of the numeral system which are used in Zeme Naga spoken in Dima Hasao (earlier N. C. Hills) district of Assam. It deals with cardinal, ordinal, multiplicative, distributional, fractional and restrictive numerals. The subtypes of cardinal numerals have also been presented.

1. Introduction

Zeme Naga is one of the sub-tribes of Zeliangrong which consists of Zeme, Liangmai and Rongmei. According to Grierson's Linguistic Survey of India (1903), Zeme belongs to Naga-Bodo subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman family. However, Burling (2003) grouped it under Zeme group along with Liangmai and Rongmei. The Zeme Nagas are found in Tamenglong district of Manipur, Nagaland and Dima Hasao (earlier N. C. Hills) district of Assam. Most of the Zeme in Assam are bilingual. They use their language while

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 14:1 January 2014

Francis Muchahary, Ph.D. Scholar
Numerals in Zeme Naga

communicating among themselves and Hindi (which is most popularly known as Halflong-Hindi) with others. According to 2001 Census of India, the total population of Zeme is 34,100.

2. Numerals

Numeral is a class of words denoting numbers (e.g. forty-two in English). Numeral plays a great role in human languages. It specifies different ways of using numbers in different situations. The numeral system in Zeme is decimal based. They are discussed below.

2.1. Cardinal Numerals

Cardinal numerals are classified into two types. These are:

- (i) Basic cardinal numerals and
- (ii) Compound cardinal numerals

2.1.1. Basic Cardinal Numerals

The basic cardinal numerals are as follows:

ket	‘one’
kəna	‘two’
kətʃum	‘three’
mədai	‘four’
meŋeu	‘five’
səruk	‘six’
səna	‘seven’
dəset	‘eight’
səkui	‘nine’
kereu	‘ten’
əŋkai	‘twenty’
himreu	‘thirty’
hədai	‘forty’
reŋeu	‘fifty’

2.1.2. Compound Cardinal Numerals

Compound cardinal numerals can be classified into three groups. They are:

- (i) Additive compound
- (ii) Multiplicative compound and
- (iii) Multiplicative-cum-additive compound

2.1.2.1. Additive Compound

The numerals from eleven to fifty nine are formed without taking any affixes by compounding the basic numerals from 1 (one) to 9 (nine) to the numerals 10, 20, 30, 40 and 50. These numerals are formed in a purely additive compound, except /əŋkai/ 'twenty', /himreu/ 'thirty', /hədai/ 'forty' and /reŋeu/ 'fifty'.

Examples:

kereu	'ten'
kereu-ket	'eleven'
10-1	$(10+1)=11$
kereu-kəna	'twelve'
10-2	$(10+2)=12$
əŋkai	'twenty'
əŋkai-mədai	'twenty four'
20-4	$(20+4)=24$
əŋkai-meŋeu	'twenty five'
20-5	$(20+5)=25$
himreu	'thirty'
himreu-səruk	'thirty six'
30-6	$(30+6)=36$
himreu-səna	'thirty seven'
30-7	$(30+7)=37$
hədai	'forty'

hədai-dəset	‘forty eight’
40-8	$(40+8)=48$
hədai-səkui	‘forty nine’
40-9	$(40+9)=49$
reŋeu	‘fifty’
reŋeu-ket	‘fifty one’
50-1	$(50+1)=51$
reŋeu-meŋeu	‘fifty five’
50-5	$(50+5)=55$

Unlike other Tibeto-Burman languages, cardinal numerals 20, 30, 40, and 50 are not formed by compounding the numeral ten (10) to basic numerals 2, 3, 4 and 5. Their occurrence is monomorphemic.

Examples:

kereu	‘ten’
əŋkai	‘twenty’
himreu	‘thirty’
hədai	‘forty’
reŋeu	‘fifty’

2.1.2.2. Multiplicative Compound

There are two multiplicative compound numerals. They are as follows:

- (a) Lower multiplicative compound numerals and
- (b) Higher multiplicative compound numerals

(a) Lower Multiplicative Compound Numerals

The lower multiplicative compound numerals in Zeme are 60, 70, 80 and 90. These numerals are purely multiplication of ten with the basic numerals. Although, ‘kereu’ denotes ‘ten’ in

Zeme, it is not used to form multiplicative compound. Instead of it, 'riak' (denotes ten) is generally used along with the basic numerals to form lower multiplicative compound.

Examples:

riak-səruk	'sixty'
10-6	(10X6)=60
riak-səna	'seventy'
10-7	(10X7)=70
riak-dəset	'eighty'
10-8	(10X8)=80
riak-səkui	'ninety'
10-9	(10X9)=90

(b) Higher Multiplicative Compound Numerals

Higher multiplicative compound numerals are multiples of hundred and thousand. Examples are given below:

hai-ket	'one hundred'
100-1	(100X1)=100
hai-mədai	'four hundred'
100-4	(100X4)=400
tʃaŋ-ket	'one thousand'
1000-1	(1000X1)=1000
tʃaŋ-səkui	'nine thousand'
1000-9	(1000X9)=9000

In higher multiplicative compound, when the numerals 2 /kəna/ and 3 /kətʃum/ are added with hundred and thousand to form compound numerals, the first part of basic cardinal numeral 2 and 3 are deleted. Thus, 'kəna' becomes 'na' and 'kətʃum' becomes 'tʃum' respectively.

Examples:

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 **14:1 January 2014**
Francis Muchahary, Ph.D. Scholar
Numerals in Zeme Naga

hai-(kə)na	‘two hundred’
100-2	$(100 \times 2) = 200$
hai-(kə)tʃum	‘three hundred’
100-3	$(100 \times 3) = 300$
tʃaŋ-(kə)na	‘two thousand’
1000-2	$(1000 \times 2) = 2000$
tʃaŋ-(kə)tʃum	‘three thousand’
1000-3	$(1000 \times 3) = 3000$

2.1.2.3. Multiplicative-cum-Additive Compound

The multiplicative-cum-additive compound numerals are formed from 61 to 69, 71 to 79, 81 to 89 and 91 to 99 by adding ‘ze’ between the two basic numerals.

Examples:

riak-səruk-ze-ket	‘sixty one’
10-6-ze-1	$(10 \times 6) + 1 = 61$
riak-səna-ze-meŋeu	‘seventy five’
10-7-ze-5	$(10 \times 7) + 5 = 75$
riak-dəset-ze-səna	‘eighty seven’
10-8-ze-7	$(10 \times 8) + 7 = 87$
riak-səkui-ze-sekui	‘ninety nine’
10-9-ze-9	$(10 \times 9) + 9 = 99$

3. Ordinals

Ordinal numerals are the contrast forms of cardinal numerals. For example, in English, first for one, second for two and so on. In Zeme, ordinal numerals are derived from the cardinal numerals by adding the prefix ‘pa-’ and the suffix ‘-be’ to the cardinal numbers but in the case of ‘first’ it is realised as ‘railaŋbe’ which is not formed by adding the affixes to cardinal number ‘ket’ (one). Examples are given below:

First	‘railaŋbe’
Second	‘pa-kəna-be’

Language in India www.languageinindia.com ISSN 1930-2940 **14:1 January 2014**

Francis Muchahary, Ph.D. Scholar
Numerals in Zeme Naga

Third	‘pa-kətʃum-be’
Fourth	‘pa-mədai-be’
Fifth	‘pa-meŋeu-be’
Sixth	‘pa-səruk-pe’
Tenth	‘pa-kəreu-be’
Twentieth	‘pa-(ə)ŋkai-be’

In ordinal number ‘sixth’, the suffix ‘-be’ is replaced by the suffix ‘-pe’ to the cardinal number ‘seruk’ i.e. sixth. This is the case where a neighbouring sound is influenced by the first sound. As ‘seruk’ ends with a voiceless sound, the following sound too becomes voiceless.

4. Multiplicatives

The multiplicatives are formed by adding the prefix ‘lo-’ to the basic cardinal numbers. As discussed earlier in higher multiplicative compound, the first part of the numerals ‘kəna’ (two) and ‘kətʃum’ (three) gets deleted, similar is the case if it is added with the prefix ‘lo-’ to form multiplicatives. Examples are given below:

lo-ket	‘once’
lo-na	‘twice’
lo-tʃum	‘thrice’
lo-mədai	‘four times’
lo-meŋeu	‘five times’
lo-səruk	‘six times’
lo-səna	‘seven times’
lo-kereu	‘ten times’

5. Distributive

The distributive numerals are formed by reduplication of the last syllable of the numerals. Examples are given below:

One each	‘heket-ket’
Two each	‘kəna-na’
Three each	‘kətʃum-tʃum’
Four each	‘mədai-dai’
Five each	‘meŋeu-ŋeu’
Seven each	‘səna-na’
Nine each	‘səkui-kui’
Ten each	‘kereu-reu’

6. Fractionals

Fractionals are formed by adding ‘ge’ between the two numerals and the greater number precedes the smaller number. Examples are given below:

kətʃum ge ket	‘one-third’
mədai ge ket	‘one-fourth’
kətʃum ge kəna	‘two-third’
mədai ge kəna	‘two-fourth’
kereu ge meŋeu	‘five-tenth’

7. Restrictive

The restrictive numerals are formed by postposing ‘runne’ to the numerals. Examples are given below:

ket runne	‘only one’
kəna runne	‘only two’
mədai runne	‘only four’
kereu runne	‘only ten’

8. Conclusion

On the basis of above analysis, it is seen that numerals are formed in various ways. It takes different forms of affixes to form different types of numerals. In cardinal numerals, affixation is used only in multiplicative compound. On the other hand, Ordinals and other types of numerals used different forms of affixes. The most important feature is seen in the formation of multiplicatives. Generally, multiplicatives are formed by prefixing 'lo-' to the numerals. For example, /lo-ket/ 'once'. If the prefix 'lo-' is added to the numerals /kəna/ 'two' and /kətʃum/ 'three' the first syllable of 'two' and 'three' is obligatorily deleted. Finally, it can be concluded that all the numerals discussed above are used in day to day communication in the language.

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