A Linguistic Study of Kumbi Dialect of Meeteilon

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Abstract

Meeteilon (Manipuri) has a number of dialect communities. Among those, Kumbi is also one of the dialect areas of Meeteilon. This dialect area of Meeteilon is situated at the southern part of Imphal. This paper attempts to find out the variations that are found in Kumbi dialect with reference to Imphal dialect. These two dialects have variations regarding morphophonemic changes, lexical variations, syntactic level, tone etc. For example, *həiboŋ* means fruit fig in Imphal dialect whereas in Kumbi dialect it means a kind of fruit which is known as *puŋdon* 'guava' in Imphal dialect. In Kumbi dialect *həiboŋ* is called as *laihəiboŋ*. In these two dialects, not only lexical variation but also semantic variation can be observed.

Keywords: Meeteilon, Kumbi Dialect, Morphophonemic variations, Lexical and Semantic Variations, Morphosyntactic variations.

Introduction

Manipuri, a Tibeto-Burman language, has more than twenty different varieties or dialects. Among those, some are established as a dialect, and some are needed to establish as a dialect. Kumbi dialect is a variety of Manipuri that is spoken at the southern part of Imphal. It is 52 km far away from the capital city, Imphal. Moirang, Thanga, Saiton, Ithai, Wangoo, Sagang etc. are the neighbouring villages of Kumbi. There is good connectivity with other villages through road transportation system. The main occupations of the villagers are agriculture, fishing, weaving, etc. Rice and fish are the main products of this village. Kumbi is also famous for *Hentak* (pastry fermented fish).

There is mutual intelligibility between the Kumbi and Imphal dialects. Sometimes, the people of Imphal cannot understand the speech of Kumbi dialect because of having differences in accent, lexical items, tone etc. However, to minimize the communication gap, the people of Kumbi dialect try to speak in standard form i.e. Imphal dialect which is treated as standard one. Not only Kumbi, but also other dialects of Manipuri use standard form while communicating with others. It is also observed that there is no big difference between the male and female speakers of Kumbi dialect except pitch level and selection of some specific words while speaking. Those male and female forms of speech are not focused in this paper.

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Nowadays, the original dialect forms of speech are losing gradually due to the influence of standard dialect as well as dialect borrowing. Even though, some variations can be observed still today. Those variations are in the morphophonemic, lexical, semantic as well as morphosyntactic levels.

1. Morphophonemic Variations

Morphophonemic variation means the variations found in the morpheme due to the variations in phoneme(s). It can be analysed into two- morphophonemic variations in affixes and morphophonemic variations in compounds. However, in this paper, only the morphophonemic variations in affixes will be discussed.

Morphophonemic variations in affixes can further be analysed into two-variations in the prefixes and variations in suffixes. There is no variation in the prefixes in the two dialects. Therefore, morphophonemic variations in prefixes will not be discussed and morphophonemic variations in suffixes are discussed as follows.

1.1. Simple Aspect

The simple aspect marker *-i~li* undergoes a number of changes according to the environment it occurs. Examples are given below to illustrate the variations that occurred in Imphal and Kumbi dialects of Manipuri.

(a) The roots which are ended by /t/, /n/ and /l/, the suffix –li of Imphal dialect changes into -le in Kumbi. However, the syllable final /n/ of the root that precedes the suffix changes into /l/ in Imphal and Kumbi dialects. Examples-

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
lat**li**	lat**le**	'worships'
jal**li**	jal**le**	'cuts'
mal**li**	mal**le**	'looks like'

(b) After the roots ending with /p/, /m/ and /ŋ/, the suffix *-i* changes into *-pi*, *-mi* and *-ŋi* in Imphal, *-pe, -me* and *-ŋe* in Kumbi respectively. Examples-

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
kəp**pi**	kəp**pe**	'weeps'
cəm**mi**	cəm**me**	'simple'
haŋ**ŋi**	haŋ**ŋe**	'opens'

(c) After the roots ending with /k/, the suffix *-i* changes into *-e* in Kumbi and no changes in Imphal. Examples-

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
tʰək-i	tʰək-e	'drinks'
hek-i	hek-e	'plucks'

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(d) After the roots ending with diphthongs like /əu/ and /au/, the suffix *-i* changes into *-wi* in Imphal whereas it is *-we* in Kumbi respectively. Examples-

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
kəu**wi**	kəu**we**	'shorts'
ləu**wi**	ləu**we**	'takes'
cau**wi**	cau**we**	'is big'

(e) After the roots ending with /a/, /o/, /ə/ and /u/ vowels, the suffix -i does not change in Imphal whereas in Kumbi, the suffix -i changes into -je. This is the insertion of semivowel /j/ before aspect marker /i/ so that it changes into -je. Examples-

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
pa**i**	pa**je**	'reads'
ka**i**	ka**je**	'over burnt'
po**i**	po**je**	'carries on back'

(f) After the root ending with /i/, then the suffix -i is zero change in Imphal but the suffix -i changes into -je in Kumbi. Examples -

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
pi	pi**je**	'gives'
ki	ki**je**	'afraid'

(g) After the root ending with /oi/, /əi/ and /ui/, the suffix -i doesn't change in Imphal dialect, however, the suffix -i changes into -je in Kumbi dialect.   Examples-

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
koi	koi-**je**	'is long'
coi	coi-**je**	'is separable'
cəi	cəi-**je**	'scolds'
pʰui	pʰui-**je**	'beats'

1.2. Proposal Negative

The proposal negative suffix is –kumsi in Imphal dialect with two allomorphs (kumsi~gumsi) whereas it is –loise and has six allomorphs (loise~roise~poise~moise~ŋoise~oise) in Kumbi dialect. Some selected examples are given below-

(a) After the root ending with /t/, the suffix -kum changes into -loi in Kumbi but remains unchanged in Imphal dialect. Examples -

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
cət**kumsi**	cət**loise**	'let's not go'

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| metkumsi | metloise | 'let's not press' |
| latkumsi | latloise | 'let's not worship' |

(b) After the root ending with /n/ and /l/, the suffix –kum changes into –gum in Imphal and –loi in Kumbi dialect. Examples –

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
cengumsi	cenloise	'let's not run'
langumsi	lalloise	'let's not guilt'

(c) After the root ending with /p/, the suffix -kum changes into -poi in Kumbi and remains unchanged in Imphal dialect. Examples-

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
kəpkumsi	kəppoise	'let's not cry'
kapkumsi	kappoise	'let's not shoot'

(d) After the root ending with /m/, the suffix -kum changes into -moi in Kumbi and –gum in Imphal dialect. Examples-

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
camgumsi	cammoise	'let's not wash'
tʰəmgumsi	tʰəmmoise	'let's not keep'

(e) After the root ending with /ŋ/, the suffix -kum changes into -gum in Imphal, -ŋoi in Kumbi dialect. Examples -

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
cəŋgumsi	cəŋŋoise	'let's not enter'
məŋgumsi	məŋŋoise	'let's not dream'

(f) After the root ending with /k/, the suffix -kum changes into -oi in Kumbi and -kum in the Imphal dialect. Examples -

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
lakkumsi	lak-oise	'let's not come'
cakkumsi	cak-oise	'let's not burn'

(g) After the root ending with vowel or diphthong, the suffix -kum changes into -gum in Imphal and -roi in Kumbi. Examples-

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
cagumsi	caroise	'let's not eat'
kəugumsi	kəuroise	'let's not call'

1.3. Locative Case Marker

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The locative case marker is -tə in Imphal dialect whereas it is -lə in Kumbi dialect. It has two allomorphs (tə~də) in Imphal and five allomorphs (lə~rə-mə~ŋə~ə) in Kumbi dialect.

(a) After the roots ending with voiceless stops viz. /p/ and /k/, the suffix -tə remains unchanged in Imphal, on the other hand, in Kumbi, -tə changes into -ə and -lə if the root is ended by /p/, /k/ and alveolar /t/ respectively. Examples-

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
tʰoptə	tʰop-ə	'brain-loc'
caktə	cak-ə	'rice-loc'
kʰuttə	kʰut-lə	'hand-loc'

(b) After the roots ending with voiced sounds like /m/, /n/, /ŋ/ etc., the suffix -tə changes into -də in Imphal dialect whereas in Kumbi, the suffix -tə changes into different forms depending on the preceding sounds. Examples-

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
ləmdə	ləmmə	'place-loc'
kʰundə	kʰunlə	'village-loc'
ceŋdə	ceŋŋə	'rice-loc'
kadə	karə	'room-loc'
məidə	məirə	'fire-loc'

1.4. Ablative Case Suffix

The ablative case suffix is -təgi in Imphal dialect of Meeteilon and has two allomorphs (təgi~dəgi). In Kumbi dialect, it is -ləgi and has five allomorphs (ləgi~rəgi~əgi~məgi~ŋəgi). They are illustrated below.

(a) After the roots ending with /p/, /t/ and /k/, the suffix remains unchanged in Imphal but in Kumbi, -ləgi changes into -əgi when the root is ended by /p/, /k/ and -təgi changes into -ləgi when the root is ended by /t/. Examples -

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
tʰoptəgi	tʰop-əgi	'brain-abl'
caktəgi	cak-əgi	'rice-abl'
kʰuttəgi	kʰut-ləgi	'hand-abl'

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(b) After the root ending with voiced sounds, the suffix -təgi changes into -dəgi in Imphal but in Kumbi, this suffix changes into -məgi, -ŋəgi, -ləgi and -rəgi depending on the sounds that precedes the suffix. Examples -

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
səm**dəgi**	səm**məgi**	'hair-abl'
ceŋ**dəgi**	ceŋ**ŋəgi**	'rice-abl'
kol**dəgi**	kon**ləgi**	'utensil-abl'
cu**dəgi**	cu**rəgi**	'sugarcane-abl'

2. Lexical and Semantic Variations

Lexical variation can be observed between the two dialects. The detailed analysis is given under the following sub-headings.

2.1. Lexical Variations

It can be analysed under the three categories as -
2.1.1   Partial difference among the words
2.1.2. Complete difference among the words
2.1.3. Irregular correspondences among the words

2.1.1. Partial Differences among the Words

In this partial difference, the differences are mainly due to the difference in one syllable either in the first syllable or in the second syllable. This can further be analysed into two forms.

2.1.1.1. Difference in the First Syllable

Under this, some selected examples that are different in the first syllable are given. This difference is mainly due to the change of one sound or two sounds in the first syllable or due to the insertion of one morpheme.

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
kʰu-u	**kʰuk**-u	'knee'
toŋgon	**tum**bon	'a basket for keeping fish'
ləurak	**mə**rak	'a unit for measuring land'

2.1.1.2. Difference in the Second Syllable

In this sub-category, the difference is mainly in the second syllable of the words. These words are formed by combining one free root and one bound root or both may be bound roots. Examples-

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
səm**bun**	səm**ɟi**	'hair bun'

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leŋ**ɟum**	leŋ**ban**	'shoulder'
soi**bum**	soi**ɟin**	'bamboo shoot'
pʰəu**ɟum**	pʰəu**hik**	'olivier/ Sitotroga cerealella'
mə**na**	mə**rəi**	'upper part of shoes'

2.1.2. Complete Difference among the Words

It can be observed that there is complete difference among the words in the two dialects of Manipuri i.e. Imphal and Kumbi. The words may be monosyllabic or disyllabic or multisyllabic in nature. Example-

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
pa	mittu	'eyelash'
pʰabəuŋa	ŋacoŋ	'swamp barb'
kʰoiniŋ	cucrubi	'nightingale'

2.1.3. Irregular Correspondences among the Words

In this, some irregular correspondences among the words that are found in the two dialects of Manipuri are discussed. These irregular correspondences are due to the insertion or deletion of sounds or replacement of one sound or cluster by a single sound. Examples

Imphal	Kumbi	Gloss
segrak	səka	'armpit'
kaŋcek	kaŋcit	'beetle'
səmbandoŋ	səmandoŋ	'hair bun'

2.2. Semantic Variations

Due to the change of lexical items, semantic changes can also be observed in the two dialects. Following are the categories found under the semantic variations. They are-

a. Meaning broadening
b. Meaning narrowing and
c. Meaning shift

However, in the two dialects, mainly meaning shift is observed and only meaning shift is discussed in this paper. Some lexical items are given in order to observe the semantic variations between the two dialects. One dialect has an interpretation for one lexical form, but that interpretation may be different from the remaining dialect due to their different cultures or beliefs or occupations etc. For example, the term *həiboŋ* means cluster fig tree in Imphal, on the other hand, it means guava in Kumbi dialect. Some more examples are given to illustrate the meaning shift.

2.2.1. səmɟi 'hairbun'

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səmʝi means hairbun in Kumbi dialect of Meeteilon whereas it is called *səmbun* in Imphal dialect of Meeteilon. On the other hand, in Kumbi, *səmbun* means fallen hair that is thrown after combing.

2.2.2. həiboŋ 'cluster fig tree'

In Manipuri *həiboŋ* is used for the fruit cluster fig tree (*Ficus glomerata*) in Imphal dialect but in Kumbi dialect, it is known as *laihəiboŋ*. In Kumbi, *həiboŋ* means a kind of fruit which is known as *puŋdon* 'guava' in Imphal dialect of Manipuri.

2.2.3. pʰəujum   'olivier'

This word means a kind of small and white insect, which is found in the paddy granary in Imphal, but in the Kumbi dialect, it is not so called as *pʰəuʝum*. Instead of *pʰəuʝum*, Kumbi dialect uses the term *pʰəuhik*. In Kumbi dialect, *pʰəuʝum* means small pieces of husks remain in the basket or on the threshing mat.

2.2.4. səmbəlləi/noŋbəlləi 'lantana'

It is a thorny plant and called as *səmbəlləi* or *noŋbəlləi* in Imphal and in Kumbi, it is called as *tʰirəi*. In Kumbi dialect of Meeteilon, *səmbəlləi* means a plant with yellowish leaves planted to decorate the garden and known as Duranta thorn in English. The term *noŋbəlləi* is not found to use in Kumbi dialect.

3. Morphosyntactic Variation

It is also one feature found in the two dialects. In this variation, one morpheme in the one dialect is replaced by another morpheme in the remaining dialect. The comprehensive discussion is as given below.

3.1. Replacement of –tum suffix

The suffix –tum is used as alternative marker/emphasis marker in Imphal dialect. However, this suffix is replaced by –kum in Kumbi dialect. It indicates an alternate action that follows a previous action in a discourse. It is mainly found to use in suggestive and let imperative types of sentences. Examples-

Imphal
1a.   lairik-tum   pa-si
       book-emp   read-sug
       'Let us read the book'
Kumbi
1b.   lairik-kum   pa-se
       book-emp   read-sug
       'Let us read the book'
Imphal

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2a. kannə-de   cak-tum   tʰoŋ-si   lau
     anyway   rice-emp   cook-sug   come-ɸ
     'Anyway, let us cook the rice'

Kumbi

2b. kannə-te   cak-kum   tʰoŋ-se   lau
     anyway   rice-emp   cook-sug   come-ɸ
     'Anyway, let us cook the rice'

3.2. Use of -dənə

The suffix -*dənə* is used in sentence to show the continuity of the action in the Imphal dialect. On the other hand, the suffix -*rənə* is used instead of -*dənə* in sentence in Kumbi dialect as shown in the given examples-

Imphal

1a. cak   ca-də-nə   lei-re
     rice   eat-cont-inte   live-prf
     'He is still eating rice'

Kumbi

1b. cak   ca-(rə)-nə   lei-re
     rice   eat-cont-inte   live-prf
     'He/She is still eating rice'

In the above examples, the word *cədənə* has two interpretations due to tonal differences. One means continuity in eating with high tone and another one is without eating with low tone in Imphal dialect. But, in Kumbi, there is no tonal difference, *carənə* means continuity in eating and *cadənə* means without eating respectively.

3.3. Use of kənnə 'strongly'

kənnə is an adverb placed before a verb to qualify a verb in the two dialects. However, this adverb is not placed before an adjective to modify or qualify the adjective in Imphal dialect. In Kumbi dialect, this adverb *kənnə* is placed before an adjective that is not common feature of Imphal dialect. Some examples are illustrated below in which *kənnə* is placed before a verb.

1. kən-nə   cel-lu/lo
    strong-adv   run-com
     'Run fast'

2. jam-(nə)   kən-nə   cel-lu/lo
    very-(adv)   strong-adv   run-com
     'Run very fast'

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These above two forms (1 and 2) can be observed in the two dialects. Further, some examples are given in which adverb *kənnə* is placed before an adjective in Kumbi dialect but not in Imphal dialect.

1a. məhak   məsək   jam-nə   pʰəɟə-i
    He   outlook   very-adv   beauty-sam
    'She is very beautiful'

1b. məhak   məsək   satʰi-nə   pʰəɟə-i
    He   outlook   extremely-adv   beauty-sam
    'She is very beautiful'

The above examples 1a and 1b are found to use in the Imphal dialect but in Kumbi dialect *kənnə* is used instead of *jamnə* or *satʰinə* or *tʰinə* as-

1c. məhak   məsək   kən-nə   pʰəɟə-i
    He   outlook   strong-adv   beauty-sam
    'She is very beautiful'

1d. məhak   məsək   kən-nə   pʰəɟə-i
    He   outlook   very-adv   beauty-sam
    'She is very beautiful'

3.4. Use of the word həkcaŋ 'body'

həkcaŋ means 'body' in the Imphal dialect of Manipuri. However, in Kumbi, the interpretation of the *həkcaŋ* is different from Imphal dialect. Examples are given below-

1. həkcaŋ   nuŋŋai-te
   body   well-neg
   'I am not well'

2. əi   həkcaŋ   nuŋŋai-te
    I   body   well-neg
    'I am not well'

3. ŋəsi-di   həkcaŋ-si   icok-coktʰə-i
   today-part   body-det   exhaust-sam
    'Today, I am very exhausted'

In the examples 1, 2 and 3 *həkcaŋ* is used extensively in the Imphal dialect whereas in Kumbi dialect, the word *həkcaŋ* is not used, instead of that, the word *isa* is used as

1a. i-sa   nuŋŋai-te
    1pp-body   well-neg
    'I am not well'

2a. əi   i-sa   nuŋŋai-te
    I   1pp-body   well-neg
    'I am not well'

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3a. ŋəsi-ri   i-sa-se   i-cok   cokt^{h}ə-i
     today-part   my-body-det   1pp-exhaust   exhaust-sam
     'Today, I am very exhausted'

In the above examples, it is also noted that there is a semantic variation in the use of *həkcaŋ*. If *həkcaŋ* is used instead of *isa* in Kumbi dialect, it connotes a kind of meaning which is related to sex organs. Therefore, it is not allowed to use the word *həkcaŋ* freely in the conversation or discourse. Further, all the three pronominal markers, i.e., i-, nə- and mə- can be added to *isa* to describe the person to whom the utterance is focused upon, but in *həkcaŋ*, pronominal markers cannot be added to describe the person. Examples-

1a. i-sa   nuŋŋai-re
     1pp-body   happy-prf
     'I have good health'

1b. nə-sa   nuŋŋai-rə-bə-rə
     2pp-body   happy-prf-nomz-int
     'Do you have good health?'

1c. mə-sa   p^{h}ə-re
     3pp-body   good-prf
     'He has good body'

2a. *i-həkcaŋ   nuŋŋai-te
     1pp-body   happy-neg
     'I am not well'

2b. *nə-həkcaŋ   nuŋŋai-tə-bə-rə
     2pp-body   happy-neg-nomz-int
     'Are you sick/ill?'

2c. *mə-həkcaŋ   p^{h}ə-i
     3pp-body   good-sam
     'He has good body'

In the above examples 2a, 2b and 2c the addition of pronominal markers (i.e. i-, nə- and mə-) are not allowed to use before *həkcaŋ* instead of this, personal pronouns i.e. əi, nəŋ and ma/məhak are used respectively. However, *isa*, *nəsa* and *məsa* is found to use in the Imphal dialect occasionally but not frequently.

Conclusion
From the above analysis, it can be concluded that there are variations between the two dialects, i.e., Imphal and Kumbi in some aspects. Those variations are mainly due to the different socio-cultural background of the two dialect communities. Therefore, more detailed

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study of dialects of Manipuri is required in order to find out those variations so that it can help to enrich the vocabulary and structure of Manipuri.

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