

Word Order in Lairamlo
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Abstract

The present paper is an attempt to describe the order of grammatical elements in Lairamlo such as the order of noun and verbs, order of genitive and noun, order of nouns and adjectival, order of nouns and numerals, order of nouns and demonstrative, order of noun, numeral and adjectival, order of verbs and question particle, order of verb and negative particle, order of adverbs and verbs and so on. The paper will also examine how far the Lairamlo word order conforms to the language universals proposed by Greenberg (1963). The data are collected from Ringpam village of Chandel district of Manipur through questionnaire and interview method.

Keywords: Lairamlo, Tangkhul Naga, Word Order, noun, adjective, verb, adverb, numeral

1. Introduction

Word order is one of the primary ways which make languages differ from one another. All the languages of the world have the basic word order typology. Logically, there are six possible orders: SVO, SOV, VSO, VOS, OSV and OVS (Greenberg 1963). Of these six orders, SVO, SOV, VSO are the dominant orders and the other three VOS, OSV and OVS are least dominant. Like many other SOV Tibeto-Burman languages, Lairamlo follows the SOV order.

2. Overview of the Language (Dialect)

Lairamlo is one of the dialects of Tangkhul. Tangkhul is one of the recognized schedule tribe of Manipur which belongs to the Kuki-Chin-Naga subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman sub family of languages (*Grierson's LSI*, 1903). Ethnically, they are Mongoloids. Tangkhul has a large number of dialects which are mutually unintelligible to each other. The language which is spoken by the tribe is known as Tangkhul language or Standard Tangkhul. Arokianathan (1987) noted that there are 219 Tangkhul villages and it is found that each village has its own dialect or speech form name after the village. The intelligibility among the village varies according to the distance between them. That is farther the village more the unintelligibility. Mortensen (2003) made the same statement that Tangkhuls are quite diversified linguistically, and the speech

varieties of most of the Tangkhul villages are mutually unintelligible with those of neighbouring villages (though the similarities are large enough to facilitate the rapid learning of another's languages). Lairamlo is also one of the dialects of Tangkhul spoken by the Ringpam people in Ringpam or Momlo Ringpam village in the Machi sub-division of Chandel District of Manipur, which have 540 (approximately) speakers. The term Ringpam is a compound word *ring* 'alive' and *pam* 'land' which literally means 'living land'. Lairamlo belongs to the Kuki-Chin-Naga sub-group of Tibeto-Burman family (*Grierson's LSI, 1903*).

Like many other tribal languages and dialects of Northeast India, Lairamlo is an endangered undocumented dialect of Tangkhul. Lairamlo do not have their own script. Language is written in the Roman script with some modifications. It is also observed that younger generation is used to learn Meitei script as it is taught in the schools under the government of Manipur. Like many other tribal people of Manipur, there is no written literature in Lairamlo, but they have a rich oral literature which has not been recorded or documented. It is interesting to note that most of the younger generations of Lairamlo are not well aware of their heritage oral literature in the form of folk songs, folk tales, oral narratives etc., as it plays a crucial role to enhance their literature in great extent. Moreover, Lairamlo oral literature depicts Lairamlo society in which it flourished such as the ways of life, customs, joys, sorrows etc. which are inherited from their forefathers. Interestingly, this unwritten, unexplored literature has been orally transmitted from generation to generation, but in recent times their villages committee have published some of their oral literature in the language of Standard Tangkhul.

Typologically, Lairamlo exhibits many more features of Tibeto-Burman languages namely tonal, mono-syllabic verb root, natural gender, decimal numeral system etc. and it also shares areal features of South Asian languages like SOV order and reduplication etc.

3. Word Order in Lairamlo

Word order is one of the primary ways which make languages differ from one another. All the languages of the world have the basic word order typology. Logically there are six possible orders: SVO, SOV, VSO, VOS, OSV and OVS (Greenberg 1963). Of these six orders, SVO, SOV, VSO are the dominant orders and the other three VOS, OSV and OVS are least dominant. Like many other Tibeto-Burman languages and their dialects, Lairamlo is an SOV Tibeto-Burman dialect which has different word patterns in both clausal and phrasal levels. The various order of word in the language is discussed below.

3.1. Basic Word Order

3.1.1. Word Order in Transitive Clause

Like many other TB languages of Southeast Asia, the order of words in Lairamlo in an unmarked sentence is subject, object and verb (SOV) as exemplified below.

- (1) *a čiyak kə-če-we*
 1SG rice NMZ-eat-SIM
 ‘I eat rice’.
- (2) *nəŋ čiyak kə-če-we*
 2SG rice NMZ-eat-SIM
 ‘You eat rice’.
- (3) *a-ne nəŋ-lo kʰə-me-i-we*
 1SG-NOM 2SG-ACC NMZ-see-SIM
 ‘I saw you’.
- (4) *nəŋ-ne ute-we kʰə-me-i-we*
 2SG-NOM bird-ACC NMZ-see-SIM
 ‘You (sg) see the bird’

Furthermore, the alternative order of words in the dialect is OSV i.e., the verb follows object and subject. In this connection, Zograph (1982) pointed out that “**The normal order of words in the Tibeto-Burman sentence is SOV- Subject, object, predicate, though this is not always and everywhere rigorously observed.**” Thus, the OSV alternative order is one of the typical features of SOV languages (Greenberg, 1963) as shared by the language. Consider the following examples.

- (5) *čiyak a kə-če-we*
 rice 1SG NMZ-eat-SIM
 ‘I eat rice’
- (6) *čiyak nəŋ kə-če-we*
 rice 2SG NMZ-eat-SIM
 ‘You eat rice’.
- (7) *nəŋ-lo a-ne kʰə-me-i-we*
 2SG-ACC 1SG-NOM NMZ- see-SIM
 ‘I saw you’.
- (8) *ute-we nəŋ-ne kʰə-me-i-we*
 bird-ACC 2SG-NOM NMZ-see-SIM

‘You (sg) see the bird’

3.1.2. Word Order in Intransitive Clause

In the language, the order of subject and verb in intransitive clause are [S V]. In the dialect, subject always precedes the verb as illustrated in the following examples:

- (9) *a čət-p^he*
1SG go-DECL
‘I go’
- (10) *nəŋ ce-p^he*
2SG eat-DECL
‘You eat’
- (11) *a kə-se-we*
1SG NMZ-sing-SIM
‘I sang’
- (12) *hinuŋ kə-čət-we*
3SG-NOM NMZ-go-SIM
‘She went’
- (13) *nəŋ kə-čət-we*
2SG NMZ-go-SIM
‘You went’

From the above analysis, the consistency of verb in the word final position is noticed in Lairamlo. Hence, it is a verb final dialect of Tangkhul spoken in Chandel district of Manipur.

3.1.3. Indirect Object Precedes the Direct Object

Objects are classified by direct and indirect objects. In the language, an object usually follows the subject and precedes the verb. However, both the direct and indirect objects are present in a clause or sentence, the indirect object usually precedes the direct object, The order of words is **Subject – Indirect Object – Direct Object – Verb** (S-IO-DO-V) as discuss in the following examples:

- (14) *rohən-ne a-lo larik kə-pi-we*
Rohan-NOM 1SG-DAT book NMZ-give-SIM
‘Rohan gave a book to me.’

- (15) *rita-ne a-lo čit^{hi} t^ha-k^hə-waŋ-we*
 Rita-NOM 1SG-DAT letter sent-NMZ-come-SIM
 ‘Rita sent a letter to me.’
- (16) *ram-ne sənzit-lo kədeironŋ kə-pi-we*
 Ram-NOM Sunjit-DAT money NMZ-give-SIM
 ‘Ram gave money to Sunjit.’

From the above analysis example illustrated that *Rohan, Rita, Ram* is the subject, *alo, sənzit* is direct object *larik* ‘book’, *čit^{hi}* ‘letter’, *kədeironŋ* ‘money’ is the indirect object and *kə-pi-we* ‘gave, *t^ha-k^hə-waŋ-we* ‘sent is the verb in the sentence.

3.1.4. Order of Noun and Adjectival

In the language, the adjectival may follow or precede the head noun in a sentence. The preferred order is [NOUN + ADJECTIVAL] or [ADJECTIVAL + NOUN]. Consider the following examples:

- (17) *ŋəle kə-p^hre*
 girl NMZ-be good
 ‘Beautiful girl’
- (18) *kəta ŋim*
 large house
 ‘The large house’
- (19) *k^həŋo tumin*
 white cat
 ‘The white cat’
- (20) *hewe t^hiŋhe-we ipekkəta-p^he*
 DEM leaf -DET large-DECL
 ‘This is a large leaf’.
- (21) *imiŋ-ne t^hənot^ha kəta če-əm-e*
 3SG-NOM mango big eat-PROG-DECL
 ‘He ate a big mango’.
- (22) *hewe k^hun-we kə-p^hre-p^he*

DEM village-DET NMZ-be good-DECL
'This is a beautiful village'

From the above analysis, it can be said that Lairamlo conforms to the Universal no. 19 as proposed by Greenberg (1963) “**When the general rule is that the descriptive follows, there may be a minority of adjectives which usually precede, but when the general rule is that descriptive adjectives precede, there are no exceptions.**”

3.1.5. Order of Genitive and Noun

In Lairamlo, the genitive always follows the governing noun and precedes the possessed noun and the order of same is [GOVN NOUN – GENETIVE – POSS NOUN] as many other SOV languages do. Consider the following examples:

(23) *rohit-we larik*
Rohit-GEN book
'Rohit's book'

(24) *malem-we larik*
Malem-GEN book
'Malem's book'

(25) *Pritam-we ima*
Pritam-GEN 3SG-brother (E)
'Pritam's brother'

(26) *rohan-we biyak*
Rohan-GEN bed
'Rohan's bed.'

3.1.6. Order of Noun and Numeral

In Lairamlo, the numeral always follows the noun in a sentence. In other words, the constituent order of noun and numerals can be construct as **NOUN-NUMERAL (N-NUM)**. Consider the following examples;

(27) *a-we fim kədo hədi kʰəla-we*
1SG-GEN house small two EXIST-SIM
'I have two small houses'.

- (28) *a-we* *əniye-impeniye* *hədi* *kʰəla-we*
 1SG-GEN baby-boy two EXIST-SIM
 ‘I have two sons’.
- (29) *imiŋ-ne* *tʰənotʰa* *hətʰum* *kə-če-we*
 3SG-NOM mango three NMZ-eat-SIM
 ‘He eats three mangoes’.

From the above analysis it can be stated that the reverse order is not possible in the language as ungrammaticality of the following examples.

- (30) **a-we* *hədi* *fiŋ* *kədo* *kʰəla-we*
 1SG-GEN two house small EXIST-SIM
 ‘I have two small houses’.
- (31) **imiŋ-ne* *hətʰum* *tʰənotʰa* *kə-če-we*
 3SG-NOM three mango NMZ-eat-SIM
 ‘He eats three mangoes’.

3.1.7. Order of Noun, Numeral and Adjectival

In Lairamlo, the order noun, numeral and adjectives is schematized as Noun may followed or precedes and numerals always followed noun and adjectives. The order of noun, numeral and adjectives in a sentence is **ADJECTIVAL – NOUN – NUM or NOUN – NUM – ADJECTIVAL (N-NUM-ADJ) or NOUN – ADJECTIVAL– NUM (N-ADJ-NUM)** as can be seen in the following examples:

- (32) *kʰəŋo* *tumin* *hədi*
 white cat two
 ‘Two white cats.’
- (33) *tumin* *kʰəŋo* *hədi*
 cat white two
 ‘Two white cats’
- (34) *kəta* *fiŋ* *məli*
 large house four
 ‘Four large houses’

- (35) *ʃim kəta məli*
house large four
'Four large houses'
- (36) *kʰun hitʰe hədi-we kə-pʰre-we*
village DEM two-DET NMZ-be good-SIM
'These are two good villages'.
- (37) *inuŋ-piyəŋ medi kə-pʰre hədi kʰəla-we*
2SG-GEN skirt NMZ-be good two EXIST-SIM
'She has two beautiful skirts'.
- (28) *kʰun kə-pʰre hədi kʰəla-we*
village NMZ-be good two EXIST-SIM
'There are two good villages'.
- (39) *a-piyəŋ məlakpuyet kə-pʰre hədi kʰəla-we*
1SG-GEN doll NMZ-be good two EXIST-SIM
'I have two beautiful dolls.'

3.1.8. Order of Noun and Demonstrative

The order of noun and demonstrative in the language, demonstrative may precede or follows the noun in a clause or a sentence. In additional words, the orders noun and demonstrative can be present as **NOUN-DEMONSTRATIVE** or **DEMONSTRATIVE-NOUN**. Consider the following examples:

- (40) *larik hewe polo*
book DEM read-IMP
'Read this book.'
- (41) *a hewe tərət-we kə-piyam-e*
1SG DEM story-DET NMZ-be like-DECL
'I like this story'.
- (42) *hewe əŋku-we tei de-dum-e*
DEM child-DET dawn fall-IRS-DECL
'This child will fall dawn'.

- (43) *a hewe larik-we kə-piyam-we*
 1SG DEM book-DET NMZ-be like-SIM
 ‘I like this book’.

3.1.9. Order of Adverbs and Verbs

Like many other Tibeto-Burman languages of South Asia, adverbs always precede the verb. The order of adverbs and verbs is **ADVERB-VERB** as can be seen in the following examples.

- (44) *inuŋ-ne kət^hiyək-čəŋ čət-əm-e*
 3SG-NOM fast-ADV go-PROG-DECL
 ‘She walks fast’.
- (45) *ipe-we naknəno čə-əm-e*
 3SG-DET slowly eat-PROG-DECL
 ‘He eats slowly.’
- (46) *tomba-we kət^hiyək-čəŋ ŋəwaŋ-əm-e*
 Tomba-DET quick-ADV run-PROG-DECL
 ‘Tomba runs quickly.’
- (47) *t^hoibi-we kəhuya-čəŋ i-əm-e*
 Thoibi-DET slow-ADV write-PROG-DECL
 ‘Thoibi wrote slowly’

3.1.10. Order of Specifier and Adjectival

In the language, the order of specifier and adjectival is [SPEC-ADJ]. In other word specifier always follow the adjectival in a phrase or sentence as illustrated in the following examples.

- (48) *larik hewe kə-p^hre-čəŋ-p^he*
 book DEM NMZ-be good-SPEC-DECL
 ‘This book is very good’
- (49) *a luŋk^haŋa -čəŋ-p^he’*
 1SG happy-SPEC-DECL
 ‘I am very happy’
- (50) *u-we kə-čik-cəŋ-p^he*

dog-DET NMZ-be black-SPEC-DECL
'The dog is very black'

- (51) *leipiyet-we kə-p^hre-cəŋ-p^he*
flower-DET NMZ-be good-SPEC-DECL
'The flower is very nice'

3.1.11. Order of Noun and Quantifiers

As in many Tibeto-Burman languages, quantifier always follows the noun in the dialect. Thus, the order of noun and quantifier in a phrase or a sentence as can be constructed in the following way **NOUN – QUANTIFIER** as shown in the following examples:

- (52) *intu ičiyehət p^huŋ-waŋ-lo*
water some bring-come-IMP
'Bring some water'
- (53) *impeniye ičiyehət məlak-əm-e*
boy-small some play-PROG-DECL
'Some boys are playing'
- (54) *impeniye ičiyehət ŋəriye-əm-e*
boy-small some play-PROG-DECL
'Some boys are playing'
- (55) *eto leipiyet kəčuŋčəŋ k^həla-we*
there flower many EXIST-SIM
'Many flowers are there'

From the above analysis, it's observed that quantifier cannot precedes the noun as it is shown from the ungrammatically of the following construction as in (56) – (59)

- (56) **ičiyehət intu p^huŋ-waŋ-lo*
some water bring-come-IMP
'Bring some water'
- (57) **ičiyehət impeniye məlak-əm-e*
some boy-small play-PROG-DECL
'Some boys are playing'

- (58) **ičiyehat* *impeniye* *ŋəriye-am-e*
 some boy-small play-PROG-DECL
 ‘Some boys are playing’
- (59) **eto* *kəčuy-čəŋ* *leipiyet* *kʰəla-we*
 there many-very flower EXIST-SIM
 ‘Many flowers are there’

3.1.12. Order of Noun Plus Adjectival and Quantifiers

The order of noun, adjectival and quantifier in language is: [NOUN – ADJECTIVAL – QUNT]. In other word, quantifier always follow the adjective and the noun. However, adjectival also follow the noun as illustrated following examples:

- (60) *leipiyet* *kə-pʰre* *kəčuyčəŋ*
 flower NMZ-be good QUNT
 ‘Many beautiful flowers’
- (61) *intu* *kə-se* *čəŋ*
 water NMZ-be hot QUNT
 ‘Very hot water’
- (62) *əŋki* *kəta* *kəčuyčəŋ*
 basket big QUNT
 ‘Many big baskets’

3.1.13. Order of Adverb, Verb and Imperative Marker

Adverb precedes the verb and imperative marker always follows the verb in the language. In other words, the imperative marker is post posed to the verb. Thus, the order of adverb, verb and imperative marker is constructed by the following way: **ADV – VERB – IMPERATIVE**. The order of **V – IMP** is very common in most of the Tibeto-Burman languages of Northeast India namely Korbong, Manipuri, Rongmei, Kharam, Chorei etc as illustrated in the following examples:

- (63) *kahuya-čəŋ* *məlo-lo*
 Slow-ADV speak-IMP
 ‘Speak slowly’
- (64) *kəkən-čəŋ* *čəp-lo*
 Loud-ADV cry-IMP

‘Cry loudly’

- (65) *kə^hiyak-čəŋ* *wəŋ-lo*
Quick-ADV come-IMP
‘Come quickly’

3.1.14. Order of Verb and Negative

The order of negative particle and verb is that the verb may precede or follow the negative particle. It is also worth mentioning here that the reverse order is not possible in the dialect as exemplified below.

- (66) *pi-də-lo*
give-DIR-IMP
‘Don’t sleep’

- (67) *bi-də-lo*
give-DIR-IMP
‘Don’t give’

- (68) *t^hənot^ha če-tə-lo*
mango eat-DIR-IMP
‘Don’t eat mango’

- (69) *ramu-we* *həmuŋ-do* *a-wəŋ-p^he*
Ramu-DET tomorrow-LOC NEG-come-DECL
‘Ramu will not come tomorrow’

- (70) *nəhənte-wo* *larik* *a-po-e*
2PL-DET book NEG-read-DECL
‘You (pl) are not reading’

- (71) *a* *həmuŋ-do* *a-wəŋ-e*
1SG tomorrow-LOC NEG-come-DECL
‘I shall not come tomorrow’

3.1.15. Order of subject and copular

In Lairamlo, the order of subject of copular verb in a clause or sentence is that the subject is always precedes the copular verbs. The order of subject and copular is [SUBJECT – COPULAR] as shown in the following examples.

- (72) *dev-wo silčər-do bam-əm-e*
 Dev-DET silchar-LOC COPL-PROG-DECL
 ‘Dev is at Silchar.’
- (73) *ihente fim čum-do bam-əm-e*
 3PL house inside-LOC COPL-PROG-DECL
 ‘They are inside the house’
- (74) *adope-nte lele adonuŋ-te fim-to bam-əm-e*
 1-brother-PL and 1-sister-PL home-LOC COPL-PROG-DECL
 ‘My brothers and sisters are in the house’
- (75) *ihente fim čum-do bam-əm-e*
 3PL home inside-LOC COPL-PROG-DECL
 ‘They are inside the house’

3.1.16. Order of Subject and Copula

In Lairamlo, the order of subject and copula verb is that the subject always precedes the copula verb as the order of subject and lexical verb is made. The order of subject and copula verb is [SUBJECT + COPULA VERB] as illustrate in the following examples.

- (76) *a doktər-ve*
 1SG doctor-COP
 ‘I am a doctor.’
- (77) *imiŋ oza-ve*
 3SG teacher-COP
 ‘He is a teacher’
- (78) *inuŋ oza-ve*
 3SG teacher-COP
 ‘She is a teacher’
- (79) *imiŋ fiŋlai-ve*
 he Shinglai-COP
 ‘He is Shinglai.’
- (80) *hewe a-we fim-ve*
 DEM 1SG-GEN home-COP

‘This is my home’

3.1.17. Order of Verb and Question Particle

The order of verb and question particle is schematized in the following way: V-QP i.e., the question particle always follows the verb. In other word, the question markers occur in sentence final position like many other SOV languages do as exemplified below:

(81) *nəŋ kə-čə-ma*
2SG NMZ -ill-Q
‘Are you ill?’

(82) *nəŋ-ti kə-čə-la*
2SG-what NMZ-eat-Q
‘What do you eat?’

(83) *hinuŋ-we nəŋ-we i-donuŋ-ma*
3SG-DET 2SG-GEN 3SG-sister-Q
‘Is she your sister?’

From the above analysis, it can be said that Lairamlo conforms to the Universal no. 9 as proposed by Greenberg (1963) “**With well more than chance frequency, when question particles or affixes are specified in position by reference to the sentence as a whole, if initial, such elements are found in prepositional languages, and, if final in postpositional.**”

3.1.18. Order of relative clause and noun

In Lairamlo, the relative clause is formed by the relativizer. In the dialect, the relative clause usually precedes the relativized noun. In other words, the relative clause occurs in the pre-nominal as shown in the following examples.

(84) *ihəŋsuŋ a-ne meihɪŋtuwək-nuŋ-wo hinuŋwe-we*
yesterday I-NOM meet-FM-REL DEM-woman-DET-SIM
‘This is the woman whom I met yesterday’

(85) *nəŋ-ne kuma so-əm-nuŋ-wo nuŋ-lo həkəp^hit-we*
2SG-NOM dance do-PROG-FM-REL girl-ACC beat-SIM
‘You beat the girl who dance’

(86) *əŋkuniye-pe-lo həŋka-wo hewe ʌ-ne-we*
baby-boy-ACC bit-REL DEM dog-NOM-SIM
‘This is the dog that bit the boy’

3.1.19. Order of Conditional Clause and Conclusion

Conditional clause in Lairamlo is formed by the morpheme *wo* which always occurs clause finally. In other word, conditional morpheme follows the verb and other of the same in [VERB + CONDITIONAL]. In Lairamlo, the conditional clause also precedes the conclusions as many other SOV languages do as shown in the following examples:

- (87) *nəŋ-ne* *kʰə-maŋ* *wo* *a-ne* *če-dum-e*
 2SG-NOM NMZ-drink CONDI-NOM eat-IRS-DECL
 ‘If you drink, I will eat’
- (88) *tithehətle* *nəŋ-ne* *kʰə-waŋ* *wo* *a* *kətʰei-do*
 if 2SG-NOM NMZ-come COND 1SG market-LOC
we-dum-e
 go-IRS-DECL
 ‘If you come, I will go to the market.’
- (89) *a-ne* *kəpo-wo* *ŋamba le* *po-tum-e*
 1SG-NOM NMZ-read-COND Ngamba-CS read-IRS-DECL
 ‘If I read, Ngamba will read.’

Lairamlo conforms to the Greenberg’s Universal no. 14. **“In conditional statements, the conditional clause precedes the conclusions as the normal order in all languages”**.

4. Conclusions

From the above analysis, the following conclusion may be drawn that Lairamlo follows the subject-object-verb word order with OSV as alternative order. As an SOV language, adjectival in the language may precede or follow the noun. However, the preferred order is NAdj. Interestingly, in this language, the genitive always follows the governing noun and precedes the possessed noun. The numeral always follows the noun in a sentence. The order of noun, numeral and adjectival is organized as noun may follow or precede the adjectives and numerals always follows the noun. In the language, demonstrative may precede or follow the noun in a clause or a sentence. Like many other Tibeto-Burman languages of South Asia, adverbs always precede the verb. The question particle and imperative always follows the verb in the language. In the language, the relative clause may precede the relativized noun. Similarly, the negative particle may precede or follow the verb. Lastly, the conditional clause also precedes the conclusions as many other SOV languages.

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Abbreviations

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Aheibam Linthoingambi Chanu

Word Order in Lairamlo

ACC	Accusative
ADJ	Adjectival
COND	Conditional
COP	Copula
COPL	Copular
CS	Conjunctive suffixes
DECL	Declarative
DEM	Demonstrative
DET	Determiner
FM	Female
GEN	Genitive
GOVN	Governing
IRS	Irrealis
LOC	Locative
NOM	Nominative
POSS	Possessed
POST	Postposition
Q	Question Mark
QUNT	Quantifier
1SG	First person singular
2SG	Second person singular
3SG	Third person singular
*	This form is ungrammatical or reconstructed

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