

Dependency Relation between Number and Gender in Chang

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Abstract

The present paper highlights the dependency relations of gender and number in Chang, a Naga language belonging to the Tibeto-Burman language family spoken in the North East state of Nagaland, India. The study is based on Greenberg's universal 36, which states that if a language has the category of gender, then it always has the category number (Greenberg 1963). Chang validates Greenberg's universal 36 and explores the presence of gender and number in the language, where nouns in Chang differentiate the marking of masculine and feminine gender in both animate human and animate non-human nouns. The language distinguishes plurality in the form of suffixation. The order of gender and number in the language is fixed, which shows the interdependence of Gender and number in the language.

Keywords: dependency, gender, number, Chang

1.0 About Chang

Chang is a language spoken in the North East state of Nagaland, India. Chang is a major tribe that has its own distinct culture and language. Chang is dominant in the Tuensang district, which is 274 km from the capital city, Kohima. The term Chang indicates both the language and the community that speaks it. Chang is also known by alternate names Mojung,

Changyanguh, Mochumi and Mochunger. According to the 2001 census, the total population of Chang is 60,9000 inhabited in 36 villages. Chang doesn't have its own script; it uses Roman script for writing purposes. Benedict (1972), has classified Chang with the Konyak group.

2.0 Introduction

The paper explores the formation of gender and number and their interdependence based on Greenberg's Universal 36, which states that if a language has the category of gender, then it always has the category number (Greenberg 1963). According to Corbett, gender and number are two features of nominal morphosyntax which contributes to reference construal and reference tracking, that is, to the linguistic representation of real-world entities. Gender is a nominal classification strategy which, in the languages that possess it, functions as an inherent lexical property of nouns. Corbett further stated that Gender distinctions distribute the nominal lexicon of a language into two or several classes whose semantic motivation varies a great deal in the languages of the world, while generally revolving around such notions as animacy, sex, size and shape. Number is a feature of inherent nominal inflection. Number distinctions serve the purpose of representing nouns and noun phrases as denoting one or several instances of an entity (Corbett 2000). Plurality is the most frequently attested type of number value, and the one that is also most likely to be obligatorily coded across the languages of the world (Corbett 2000; Greenberg 1963). The present paper focuses on two sections, namely the marking of gender and number in Chang and testing the validity of Greenberg's universal 36 to see whether gender hinges on number in the language or not.

3.0 Marking of Gender and Number in Chang

Chang is an SOV language where agreement is not a feature of the language. Having agglutinating feature, Chang morphology is rich with affixation. Number and gender in the language are marked with the process of suffixation.

3.1 Gender

Gender is a class of nouns reflected in the behaviour of associated words (Hockett, 1958). This term was first used in the 5th century B.C by the Greek philosopher Protagoras, when he divided Greek nouns into three classes: 'feminine', 'masculine', 'inanimate' (nowadays

called neuter). It is a term used in three ways: i) a biological distinction between male and female called natural gender; ii) a distinction between classes of nouns as masculine, feminine (or neuter), also called grammatical gender; iii) a distinction between social roles of men and women, also called social gender (George Yule: 2006). Chang has a natural gender. There is a distinction in the marking of animate human and animate non-human, while an inanimate noun doesn't carry any gender marking. In the case of an animate human, the male gender is marked by *-bəu* while the female gender is marked by *-ju*. Animate non-human also distinguishes masculine and feminine gender. Masculine is marked as *-baŋ*, while feminine is marked as *-bi*.

Animate human		Animate non-human	
Musculine	Feminine	Musculine	Feminine
<i>heifaubəu</i> 'bachelor'	<i>mədeiju</i> 'maiden'	<i>keibaŋ</i> 'male dog'	<i>keibi</i> 'female dog'
<i>tʃjalaubəu</i> 'male singer'	<i>tʃjalaju</i> 'female singer'	<i>munibaŋ</i> 'male cat'	<i>munibi</i> 'female cat'
<i>tʰuŋbəu</i> 'male cook'	<i>tʰuŋju</i> 'female cook'	<i>mafubaŋ</i> 'ox'	<i>mafubi</i> 'cow'

There are also many kinship nouns in the language that don't inflect for gender as below

Masculine	Feminine
<i>lao</i> 'husband'	<i>jak</i> 'wife'
<i>jai</i> 'brother'	<i>nou</i> 'sister'
<i>kou</i> 'uncle'	<i>ji</i> 'aunt'

3.2 Agreement

The language doesn't show grammatical agreement in gender. In (1), the verb *'juŋda'* 'drank' and the subject *bəusu* 'man' doesn't show any agreement. The following example supports the absence of grammatical agreement.

- bəusu-ei tei juŋ-da*
man-ERG water drink-DECL
'A man is drinking water.'

Inanimate objects are gender unmarked in the language. In the following example (2) *le* ‘book’ is suffixed with the determiner *k^ho* and not with the gender suffix-*nu* or *-bao*

2. *le-kho mǎja-gei*
 book-DET good-DECL
 ‘The book is good.’

3.3 Number

Number is a grammatical category used for the analysis of word-classes displaying such contrasts as singular (sg, SG, sing), plural (pl, PL), dual (du) (‘two’), trial (‘three’), paucal (‘few’), etc., as in English boy v. boys, he walks v. they walk. The contrasts generally correspond to the number of real-world entities referred to, but linguistic discussion has drawn attention to the problems involved in proposing any such straightforward one-to-one correlation. (David Crystal, 2008).

Plurality in Chang can be shown in any one of the three ways, as shown below

- a) using a plural suffix
- b) using a numeral
- c) using a quantifier

3.3.1 a) Using a Plural Suffix

Chang distinguishes number as singular and plural. Singular is unmarked, while plurals in the language are marked by the suffix *-foŋ*. All animate human, animate non-human and inanimate nouns are marked by the plural marker *-foŋ*.

Animate human	Animate Non-human	Inanimate
<i>bəufu</i> ‘boy’	<i>muni</i> ‘cat’	<i>tebəl</i> ‘table’
<i>bəufufoŋ</i> ‘boys’	<i>muniŋfoŋ</i> ‘cats’	<i>tebəlfoŋ</i> ‘tables’
<i>jaksa</i> ‘girl’	<i>kei</i> ‘dog’	<i>fətfaŋ</i> ‘chair’
<i>jaksafoŋ</i> ‘girls’	<i>keifoŋ</i> ‘dogs’	<i>fətfaŋfoŋ</i> ‘chairs’

3.3.2 b) Using a Numeral

In chang, cardinal number follows the noun and in the following example, in the presence of a cardinal numeral, the noun doesn’t take the plural suffix. Example (3) shows that the plural

suffix *-foŋ* is not required with *tʃəusi* ‘child’ in the presence of cardinal number *mətʃəm* ‘three’.

3. *tʃəusi mətʃəm ləwada*
child three come-DECL
‘Three children are coming.’

3.3.3 c) Using a Quantifier

Nouns in chang are not plural-marked in the presence of a quantifier. In the following examples, the nouns *bəusu* ‘boy’ and *jəkʰsa* ‘girl’ don’t take any plural suffix in the presence of the quantifiers *bəndəu* ‘all’, *ət* ‘some’ and *mətʃuŋ* ‘many’. Examples 4), 5) and 6) also show the absence of number agreement in the language.

4. *bəusu bəndəu iskul hə-wa*
boy all school go-PST
‘All the boys went to school’

5. *ət bəusu məja-gei*
some boy good-PRF
‘Some boys are good’

6. *jəkʰsa mətʃuŋ tət ə-ləu-gei*
girl many today NEG-come-PRF
‘Many girls were absent today’

4. Greenberg’s Universal 36 and Chang

Chang agrees with Greenberg’s universal 36, which states that “*If a language has the category of gender, it always has the category of number*”. The above explanation on the formation of gender and number clearly indicates the presence of number and gender in the language, where Chang nouns are marked with masculine and feminine, and it also distinguishes nouns with plurality. However, the discussion also concentrates on the dependency between gender and number in the language and how far it agrees with the statement that gender hinges on number.

According to Walchil (et al. 2019), this universal establishes an asymmetry about the existence of gender and number in the languages of the world, such that the presence of grammatical gender (as a general morpho-syntactic category) always hinges on the existence of some type of number system (also as a general morphosyntactic category). In other words, languages possessing gender and lacking number are expected to be rare, whereas languages with number only or both gender and number are more common. From a language evolution perspective, this would suggest that before the gender category can emerge, a language should have developed number first. Similarly, other works propose the dependence of gender on the availability of number or other morphosyntactic categories in a language. Specifically, the emergence of gender has been described as “*parasitic on other category types, notably number and case*”.

According to Corbett (2013), the key difference between gender and number morpho-syntactically is that the presence of gender agreement is the prerequisite to establish that a grammatical gender system exists in a given language, whereas the presence of number marking can be restricted to nouns only, or to the noun phrase level. In general, number tends to be marked on nouns more frequently than gender does.

Though agreement is not a feature of Chang language and there is no agreement of gender and number with other parts of the sentence in the language, the pattern of gender and number in a noun phrase is fixed and they are bundled together and not independent. As stated above, gender and number in the language are expressed by the process of suffixation. In a noun phrase with number and gender, the order will be noungendernumber and this order cannot be broken, which stands against the statement that Gender hinges on Number. Gender and number are properties of noun and the suffixes denoting gender and number in the Chang are always dependent on noun, where the number suffix is dependent on the gender suffix, it has to occur after the gender suffix in a noun phrase. Order of gender and number in Chang in terms of plurality by suffixation, numerals or quantifier is fixed, where they occur only after gender. In the following examples, the plural marker *-foŋ* and the gender marker *-bəu* and *-nu* are intertwined and cannot occur independently.

7. *tʃjalau-bəu-foŋ*
singer-male-PL
'male singers'

8. *tʃjalau-nu-foŋ*
singer-female-PL
'female singers'

9. *lelən-bəu-foŋ*
teacher-male-PL
'male teachers'

10. *lelən-nu-foŋ*
teacher-female-PL
'female teachers'

5. Conclusion

The present study discusses the relationship of number and gender from the perspective of Greenberg's universal 36. Chang is an SOV language where agreement is not a feature of the language. Chang gender and number are interdependent in a noun phrase, where number depends on the gender. To indicate plurality in a gender marked noun, plural is dependent on the number, as it has to occur after the gender suffix. The language distinguishes masculine and feminine gender in both animate human and animate non-human nouns, while inanimate nouns are not gender marked. Chang nouns are marked for plurality with the help of suffixation, a numeral and a quantifier. The paper showcases further scope to study the relationship between number, gender, demonstrative and adjective, which is not mentioned in the paper.

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