

NOMINAL COMPOUNDS IN MANIPURI

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ABSTRACT

In Manipuri, compounding as such is an extremely productive process. The semantic relationship between the constituents is understood and cannot be easily recovered from syntactic or morphological analysis. In compounding, there are instances where the original meanings of the constituents are generally lost or an item may be inserted between the constituents of the possible compound. In either of the case, if the constituents are inseparable they can be considered to be compounds.

Keywords: *Compounding, connective particles, possessive markers, purposive markers.*

I. Introduction

The Manipuri language belongs to the Tibeto-Burman sub-family of the Sino-Tibetan languages. It is the official language of Manipur, a north eastern state of India.

A compound is a word (lexeme) that consists of more than one free morpheme. Compounding refers to the joining or combining of two or more words which has its own meanings which then function as a single word.

A formal criterion is used to distinguish nominal compounding. Three types of nominal compounding are discussed according to the difference in the underlying structure.

1. Compound nouns formed with connective particles
2. Compound nouns formed with possessive markers
3. Compound nouns formed with purposive markers

1. Compound nouns formed with connective particles:

In this type of compound noun structure, the constituent elements of the compound retain their identity to a certain extent and are inseparable. The connective particles that are present in the underlying structure do not surface in the compound words thus formed. There is a certain tendency of the compound words thus formed to appear with a space within the two constituents. The form of the compound noun is noun plus connective particles plus noun plus connective particles as in sa ‘animal’ gə (connective particle) ɲa ‘fish’ gə (connective particle) > sa ɲa ‘animals’.

Example:

phurit	+	khongaw	>	phurit khongaw ‘dresses’
shirt		trousers		
upu	+	kaŋthol	>	upu kaŋthol ‘furnitures’
almirah		bed		
nupi	+	əŋaŋ	>	nupi əŋaŋ ‘women’
woman		child		
mətəy	+	mənaw	>	mətəy mənaw ‘husband-wife’
brother-in-law		younger in age		
məma	+	məpa	>	məma məpa ‘parents’
mother		father		
sumaŋ	+	theloŋ	>	sumaŋ theloŋ ‘courtyard table land’
courtyard		land		
ciŋ	+	man	>	ciŋ man ‘hilly areas’

hill		area		
til	+	kaŋ	>	til kaŋ ‘insects’
insect		mosquito		
səna	+	lupa	>	səna lupa ‘jewellery’
gold		silver		
cak	+	isiŋ	>	cak isiŋ ‘meal’
rice		water		
sa	+	kəy	>	sa kəy ‘animals’
animal		tiger		
sa	+	ucek	>	sa ucek ‘animals and birds’
animal		bird		
pukhəm	+	teŋgot	>	pukhəm teŋgot ‘plates and bowls’
Plates		bowl		
khabəy	+	cegəp	>	khabəy cegəp ‘cooking sets’
serving-spoon		tongs		

2. Compound nouns formed with possessive markers:

In this type of compound noun structure, the possessive markers that are present in the underlying structure do not surface in the compound words thus formed. There is a certain

tendency of the two constituents of the compound words thus formed to appear in the purely merged-form.

The form of the compound noun is noun plus possessive marker plus noun as in ləw 'paddy' + gi (possessive marker) + kon 'place' > ləwkon 'paddy field'.

Example:

ləybak + həway > ləybakhəway 'groundnut'

mud nuts

yot + chəy > yotchəy 'iron-rod'

iron stick

u + həy > uhəy 'fruits'

tree fruit

way + məy > wayməy 'fire from burning of musk'

musk fire

isəy + lila > isəylila 'musical play'

song play

suməŋ + lila > suməŋlila 'courtyard play'

courtyard play

wahəy + pərəŋ > wahəypərəŋ 'sentence'

word line

ləy	+	pəreŋ	>	ləypəreŋ ‘garland’
flower		line		
lay	+	wa	>	laywa ‘word of God’
God		bamboo		
khudaŋ	+	ghəri	>	khudaŋghəri ‘wrist watch’
wrist		watch		
sən	+	gari	>	səngari ‘bullock-cart’
bull		vehicle		
cek	+	kon	>	cekon ‘brick-farm’
brick		place		

3. Compound nouns formed with purposive marker:

This type of compound noun structure is formed with the purposive marker added to the general linking verb. The purposive marker added to the general linking verb that is present in the underlying structure does not surface in the compound words thus formed. There is a certain tendency of the two constituents of the compound words thus formed to appear in the purely merged-form.

The form of the compound noun is noun plus linking verb-purposive marker-nominalizer plus noun as in cak ‘rice’ + thoŋ (linking verb)-nə (purposive marker)-bə (nominalizer) + səŋ ‘hut’ > caksəŋ ‘kitchen’.

Examples:

khudol	+	təwnəbə	+	pot	>	khudol pot
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gift		do-PUR-NZR		things		gift
ṅa	+	hapnəbə	+	lubak	>	ṅarubak
fish		put-PUR-NZR		basket		a closed basket for
keeping fish						
kwa	+	cəpnəbə	+	cegəp	>	kwajəp
betel nut		cut-PUR-NZR		cutter		a betel nut cutter
lay	+	khoyrəmnəbə	+	səŋ	>	laysəŋ
God		pray-PUR-NZR		hut		temple

Abbreviation

PUR purposive

NZR nominalizer

Conclusion

Nominal compounds represent a large part of our vocabulary and involve a great deal of creativity. For this reason, they have received a great deal of attention in linguistic research. This paper is essentially an exploratory analysis of the structure of nominal compounds in Manipuri.

These preliminary findings will hopefully serve as a basis for further advancement.

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