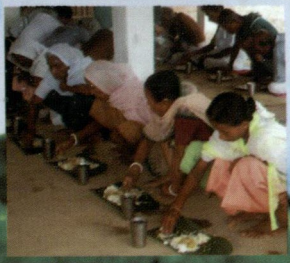
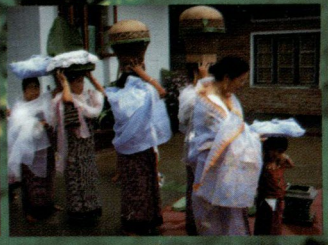
Manipuri

A Social Grammar

N. Pramodini





Manipuri: A Social Grammer. This study is devoted to a sociolinguistic analysis of the language, structure, style and socio-cultural nuances in Manipuri.This research work is divided into four chapters. Dr. N. Pramodini in her introduction defines sociolinguistics and its various related aspects. The author embarks on methodical description of the chosen topic, presents linguistically tangible evidence and judiciously pronounces scholarly judgment. It is a sociolinguistic study of first of its kind of Manipuri culture. The author, quite confidently selects four topics, namely kinship terminology, Forms of Address and Names,Taboo and Male and Female differences in Manipuri. Discussion on the chapters of of different topics yet interrelated lends grandeur to the scheme of the text under consideration. The grasp of the topic and in depth scholarship in sociolinguistics is splendidly displayed. In each chapter every term required to understand the subject is lucidly explained with suitable examples. This, in a way, prepares the reader to appreciate subsequent chapters comfortably.

The kinship terminology involves the analysis with the expressive resourses of language at various levels; vocabulary, morphology. The author brilliantly enumerates what makes Manipuri culture unique. An elaborate evaluation of the Forms of address and Names is very lucid and easily comprehensible. The author offers ample examples to illustrate her argument. Taboo and Male and Female differences are characterized by the use of a special language. The content of Taboo and Male and Female differences in Manipuri are culture-specific. Understanding of these culture create favorable interpersonal atmosphere. These are all aspects which deal with this essential aspect of Manipuri life with remarkable erudition and pragmatism.

Finally the work deserves appreciation for appending a very lengthy and highly useful bibliography to the text. This, in itself, is a glowing testimony to the quality of work. In fact this is a very valuable referential text and an eminently enjoyable book providing a new dimension in the evaluation of sociolinguistic study in Tibeto-Burman Languages.

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INTRODUCTION

I. Meiteiron~Meiteilon or Manipuri is a Tibeto-Burman language of Kuki-Chin sub-family (Grierson, 1904 Vol. III part III). It is the most advanced Tibeto-Burman form spoken in India having its own developed literary language and script (archaic script). With the advent of Hinduism in Manipur, Bengali script was introduced thereby discarding the native script with beginning of 18th Century (L. Iboongohal 1963: 59, L. Kriti 1980:130). Since 1925, Meiteis have been using only the Bengali script. More recently however, people have become conscious of their native script. Along with revival of old religion and culture, the native Meitei script has also been revived. It has also been introduced in schools (from the K.G. standard upto the VI standard).

Manipuri is the official language of the state of Manipur besides English. It is also the medium of instruction upto the tenth standard in government schools. It is the mother tongue of more than one million people out of the total

population of about one and half million in Manipur, according to 1981 census report. The speakers of Manipuri in Manipur are concentrated in the valley. It also serves as a lingua-franca of various tribes who speak different languages of the same family (Tibeto-Burman) in this State.

It is also spoken in the neighbouring states namely, Assam and Tripura and also in neighbouring countries, namely Burma and Bangladesh by the Meitei inhabitants of these places.

The word Meitellon ~Meiteiron literally means the language of Meiteis (that is, Meiteis 'plain people' and Lon 'language'). Meiteis are the plain people of Manipur who have settled in the valley of Manipur. Seven exogamous clans constitute Meiteis. It is not only the mother tongue of the Meiteis but also of the Brahmins and Muslims who have settled in Manipur. However, the speech of Muslim is found to differ in intonation pattern. from that of Brahmins but the Brahmin speech is the same as that of the Meiteis.

It is interesting to make a note here that the word Meiteilon ~ Meiteiron is used for referring to this language by Meiteis in their day-today life, whereas, the word Manipuri is used only in some formal situations as seen, in 'Manipuri Department', 'Manipuri language and literature' and **ma.ni.pu.ri.də paw pʰəŋ.bi.gə.ni** 'you will hear the news in Manipuri' (All India Radio, Imphal) etc. It seems that this latter word was introduced by outsiders (non-Manipuris) and became conventionalized as it is apparently used by a section of educated people who had contact with outsiders. It was, probably, coined on the analogy with other existing languages such as Bengali, Tripuri, Punjabi and Kumauni.

Thus, the word *Manipuri* seems to be more prestigious than the word *Manipuri*, probably because of the fact that it occurs in the speech of educated people. Another probable reason is that this language is known as *Manipuri* to outsiders,

whereas, the word Manipuri is understood only amongst the local people. However, amongst the local people particularly, youngsters are found to use the word *Manipuri instead of Manipuri.* This is apparently due to the fact they are being taught in this way in schools. However, the Meiteis who are conscious about their native languages, culture and religion prefer to use the native word Meiteiron~Meiteilon. But whatever may be the case the word Manipuri (language) has an official place. It is the first language of Tibeto-Burman family recognized by the VIII Schedule of Indian Constitution. This language is also known as or written as "Meithei" (Meitei) to the linguistic scholars in the west. A clarification is required to be made here regarding the use of the ethnonym Meithei (Meitei) as it is being used wrongly for the language i.e. Manipuri. The terminology "Meithei" (Meitei) is the ethnonym while Manipuri is the glossonym. And Manipuri and Manipuri are the allonyms of the same language. I have used the glossonym Manipuri in this study as it is popularly known by this glossonym outside the state of Manipur.

II. The inhabitants of Manipur valley consists of the following groups, namely, (1) Meiteis, (2) Brahmins, (3) Lois (schedule caste), (4) Mayangs (people of non-mongoloid origin), (5) Hill people (scheduled tribe), (6) Pangans (Muslims). However, we had no caste system during the pre-Hindu period in Manipur, instead, there was a class system (K.B. Sing, 1978); when Hinduism was introduced into Manipur in 18th century, caste system was also brought along with it, though it is not as rigid as in other parts of India.

However, still a structure of ranked hierarchical groups has come into existence. Over the past two centuries, the Meiteis living in the shadow of Brahminic caste values have acquired a great deal of caste consciousness in their habits and life style. The Brahmins and Meiteis did not accept

cooked food or water from the remaining groups as they were considered to be of low status. Even Mayangs of high caste were seldom invited to social events as they were considered to be low caste people by the Meitei community. However, due to the rapidly changing society such practices are in fact treated as a thing of the past.

1. The Meiteis:

The Meiteis are the plain people of Manipur whose mother tongue is Manipuri. They can be sub-divided into three groups, namely (a) the Meitei Hao Aranba (Meitei commoners) (b) the Meiteis RKs (Rajkumaris, Maharajkumars and Maharajkumaris) and (c) Leimas (who are indirectly related to royal descendants as they are the children of Rajkumaris and Maharajkumaris who were married to commoners). The Meiteis claim to belong to the Kshetriya caste group in the caste hierarchy. As a result, they wear the sacred thread of Hindu caste. Seven exogamous clans constitute the Meiteis. However, in the present society they can be further subdivided into two groups namely, (i) the Hindu Meiteis and (ii) the non-Hindu Meiteis. The non-Hindu Meiteis are those people who have faith in Sanamahism (or ancestor worship) – an indigenous religion of Meiteis. This was the religion which was prevalent before the coming of Hinduism. Their presence indicates that de-sanskritization processes have been going on in Meitei society.

(a) Meitei Hao Aranba (Commoners) : Meitei Hao Aranba constitutes the majority of Meitei community. Seven clans constitute the Meitei Hao Aranba.

(b) The RKs: The descendants of the male members of the royal family are known as Rajkumars 'princes' and Rajkumaris 'princesses'. They are not actually

the immediate children of the kings. They adopted their family name as Rajkumar for male members of royal family and Rajkumari for the female members of royal family, only after the advent of Hinduism. Earlier they had their family name Ningthemcha-mayum 'royal descendants'. They formed a distinct group with a privileged status till the kingdom was merged into the Indian Union, the RKs enjoyed special privileges in the exclusive use of some clothing seats and in the holding of political power in the royal office. The immediate children of the Maharaja are known as Maharajkumar and Maharajkumari, in shortened form, MK. They enjoyed the highest status among the royal descendants. The sons and daughters of Maharajkumari automatically become Leima. However, they are considered as Leima of higher rank.

(c) The Leima (ləy.mə): They are the descendants of the female members of the royal family, (but only the children of the Rajkumaris). Like RKs they too enjoyed special privileges in the exclusive use of the same kind of clothing and seats. The children of Leima become commoners.

2. The Brahmins:

Brahmins, as agents of Hinduization, started coming to Manipur during the 15th century. From the 18th century onwards, during the reign of Maharaja Garibniwaj (1709-1748), a large number of Brahmins have migrated to Manipur from different parts of North India. The king was the first to adopt the Hindu Vishnavite faith as state religion. Brahmins enjoyed the highest ritual status under his rule. A Brahmin can have a hypergamic relationship with Meiteis by marrying

a Meitei woman. But a Brahmin husband maintains his ritual distance from his wife by not accepting food cooked by her. The Brahmins do not touch plough. However, they are so much integrated into Meitei life style and community that they are part and parcel of it; they have in fact adopted Manipuri on their first tongue. They did not maintain their original language except the fact that Sanskrit is used for ritual purposes.

3. The Lois and Yaithibis (scheduled caste):

They are the outcasted Meiteis. Lois are the group of people who resented the mass conversion of Meiteis into the fold of Hinduism. They remained satisfied with their traditional religion (Sanamahism). As they did not embrace Hinduism they were not allowed to stay at Imphal (capital). Their settlement areas remained outside the capital as compact units at a safe distance from the locality of Hindu converts. It is probably due to the segregation of these people that their language is quite unintelligible to other Meiteis. Yaithibis, another section of the out casted group, comprised those punished by the king for the violation of Hindu social customs and marriage regulations such as that of clan exogamy. They were exiled to a place called Hawjongpan. They were deprived of the social status of wearing the sacred thread. However, in the present society some changes are being noticed, as some of them are found to wear the sacred thread.

4. Mayangs:

Mayangs are those outsiders who do not have the mongoloid feature. They are known as 'Indian immigrants' to the older generation of Manipur.

5. The Hill people (scheduled tribes):

Many hill people who belong to different tribes also stay at Imphal. They are the Kabui, Kuki, Tangkhul, Paite, Hmar, Anal and Kom etc.

DATA COLLECTION

The data for this study largely come from actual speech and partly from written materials such as old literary texts and royal chronicles. That is, both primary and secondary sources of data are being used in this study. We have taken up two settings, that is, urban and rural, (rural setting around ten square miles from Imphal) because by studying the speech of both urban and rural settings the changes in language can be seen. It is observed that the forms which are obsolete in the urban setting are still very much in use in the rural setting. Being a native speaker of Manipuri, the scholar has access to facts about the language, the social and cultural norms of Meiteis. This native knowledge has saved time which a field worker must otherwise spend in acquainting her with the language, people and culture of a given society. The mode of collection of data was participant observation. The data was collected through observation with my daily encounters with my own people in different social situations followed by unobtrusive note taking at every opportunity to record the terms used by dyads in a given situation. In addition to this, data was also collected by asking narrative stories of the past and through personal interviews with people when the need arose to verify the data. The information so obtained was supplemented by another's own introspection as a native of Manipuri speaker.

Sociolinguistics

More recent concepts relating to the study of language in its social context have their methodological and historical roots in structuralism, in the tradition of dialectology, and in the study of languages in contact. Even though the need for analysis of language in its social context was felt by many authors, mainly linguists but also sociologists and psychologists, as early as the first half of this century the name 'sociolinguistics' does not appear until 1952 in a work by Haver C. Currie, whose intention was to encourage investigation into the relation between speech behaviour and social status. The terms sociolingvistika and social'naja lingvistika came into use in the USSR ten years later (Lencek 1971), and in 1964 sociolinguistic research also gained broader interest in the USA, even though at first this was in many respects of a programmatic nature. Hymes, who at first describes the analysis of language in its social context as the 'ethnography of speech' Gumperz and Hymes (1964), declares in his reader, Language in Culture and Society, which was published in the same year, that sociolinguistics is a main area of interest for anthropologists.

Hymes's large volume contains the first studies on the social significance of language to have been made since the 1920s: Firth's programmatic essay of 1937 on sociological linguistics (also in Firth 1958), Bloomfield's comparison of literate and illiterate speech (1927), McDavid's observations of 1948 on the social significance of post-vocalic /r/ in South Carolina (also in Bright 1966), Fischer's analysis of inflections as social markers (1958), the investigation of social dialects (Bright 1966 and Gumperz 1964) and Garvin's attempt of 1959 to classify factors of linguistic standardization. Similarly, the advance of dialectology into the social dimensions of dialectal colouring can be seen in the volume on social dialects edited by Shuy (1964), where Labov's essay (1964b) provides new

insight into the acquisition of language specific to social groups.

Finally, it should be noted that the first conference actually on sociolinguistics under that name took place at the University of California in Los Angeles in 1964. In the conference publication that appeared two years later, Bright formulated seven dimensions of research for sociolinguistics: (1) the social identity of the speaker and (2) that of the hearer involved in the process of communication; (3) the social environment in which speech events take place; (4) the synchronic and diachronic analysis of social dialects; (5) the different social assessments by speakers of speech behaviour forms; (6) the degree of linguistic variation; and (7) the practical applications of sociolinguistic research (Bright 1966, 12-14). However, 1964 marks not only the programmatic propagation of a new discipline but also the turning-point in empirical research. Labov's dissertation on the social stratification of English in New York City (1964, published 1966) proves for the first time a regular variation of linguistic variables with social parameters.

Thus, although its realization was characterized by varying academic interests and by a certain vagueness, it was in 1964 that a place was carved out for a new discipline which in subsequent years caused by boom in what became known as 'sociolinguistics' and 'sociology of language'. Before inquiring as to the reasons behind this boom, we shall briefly outline its further development.

Communicative competence

Broadly speaking, 'communicative competence' describes the ability of individuals to communicate with one another under situationally and normatively defined conditions (linguistic, psychological, social and pragmatic in nature). In defining this notion it must be taken into

account that communicative behaviour ranges from mutual agreement between speakers to the solution of serious conflicts. Stylistic features reflect such differences through a whole repertoire of different strategies.

A sociolinguistic theory, which is based on the concept of communicative competence, is founded partly on a 'linguistic (syntactic and phonological) theory which incorporates appropriate sociological parameters, and partly on a theory of speech in situation; in this, linguistic elements are not only correlated with extra-linguistic elements, but also seen as factors which presuppose, as well as alter, a situational context' (Wunderlich 1971b, 298).

Hymes (1968a) was the first to coin the term 'communicative competence' with his demand for qualitative extension of linguistic theory by the incorporation of aspects of functional communication. Hymes criticizes Chomsky's postulate of the ideal speaker-hearer for excluding social aspects of communication, which the latter had assigned to the sphere of performance. Chomsky's concept of performance, however, is of little use, as it relates to psychological factors of actual speech (incompleteness of natural utterances, restrictedness of memory etc.), and does not consider speech as action related to situation. Performance rules are thus seen solely in a psychological dimension.

Grammatical and psychological aspects, however, are only some of those covered by the concept of communicative competence. This broader perspective shows that Chomsky's dichotomous judgment of utterances according to grammaticality and acceptability (a pair of terms analogous to competence and performance) is also oversimplified. Utterances are not only grammatical or acceptable, but must also be assessed by the extent to which they are successful and appropriate to the context, by the way in which they are

affected as actions, and with what results. In other words, the analysis must include those aspects which, in a theory of communicative competence, should decide the way in which sentences of a particular phonological and syntactic structure are regarded as functional for a given situation. This is where the concept of speech acts comes into its own. Sentences that are identical in their formal grammatical structure can, according to the situational context, be commands, requests, demands or apologies. Conversely, two grammatically different sentences can be understood as one and the same speech act. Furthermore, speech acts have immediate pragmatic consequences: a person who makes a promise or apologizes for something is performing an action which has consequences both for himself and for others. It is obvious that traditional grammatical categories are not adequate for describing distinctions of this kind.

In fact, the pragmatic dimension of speech acts is connected with a broader problem: how speakers interact with one another by means of the speech they employ, i.e. how a speech act that has been uttered is correctly understood and transformed into a new speech act. With regard to the concrete process of communication, the verbal interaction of two speakers is a question of interpreting utterances. This interaction process should be described by the concept of sociolinguistic interference, which is borrowed from Weinreich. The concept of sociolinguistic interference embraces 'problems of the interpretation of manifestations of one system [e.g. transmitter] in terms of another [e.g. receiver]' (Hymes 1968a, 25). Sociolinguistic interference involves the interaction of reception and production, of competence and performance, of production and interpretation strategies. As distinct from the theoretical concept of grammar with which we have been concerned up till now, it can only be described adequately by an

integrated theory of sociolinguistic description whose scope should incorporate primarily the function and secondarily the structure of language.

Components of speech behaviour

All speech in verbal interaction takes place in a physical environment, is situated in a particular speech context and is concerned with a particular topic, which depends on the prevailing psychological circumstances (intentions, attitudes) and on social features of those taking part in the conversation (position in the production process, roles). . Ervin-Tripp (1969) puts forward the following components of speech as essential for communication: (1) participants, (2) situation, (3) form of communication, (4) speech act, topic and message, and (5) functions of interaction. These components can be regarded as variables which systematically determine the style-shifting and variations of speakers (cf. Ervin-Tripp 1969, 121-39).

Every act of communication involves at least a transmitter and a receiver, and possibly also listeners in particular, Grimshaw (1966) has pointed out the influence of listeners on speech behaviour. It is rare for the speaker role, i.e. speech frequency in interactions, to be evenly distributed: it depends on the situation (formal or informal conversation), the types of speech act (question, request, demand etc.) and the social roles of the participants (in the group, at work, in the family etc.). The most important sociological attributes of the participants are sex, age, occupation and position in the production process; these determine their rights, duties and privileges. It is particularly in the forms of address that the roles specific to situations and contexts are manifested. Systems of address in different societies have been a favourite object of investigation for anthropologists. Social features such as respect, familiarity,

obsequiousness, aversion etc., which characterize the relationship of speakers to one another, are a crucial factor in determining speech behaviour (polite forms, standard v. dialect, insults, ellipses, metaphors etc.).

Co-relative approach: Social categories and linguistic categories

The correlative approach records the relation between linguistic and social categories as one of closely-connected but independent systems. Verbal means are used to convey information about the material environment of individuals (in surveys using questionnaires, interviews, particular tests). Social categories are considered to be part of this material environment; they are measured by social characteristics that are independent of the process of communication. The empirical premise is that systematic changes in the social and linguistic structure can be revealed by correlating the two sets of variables which have been measured independently of one another. Categories such as socioeconomic status (which is generally determined by income, education and occupation), place of birth, membership of groups, age, certain attitudes in evaluation tests etc. serve as social indices. In the correlation, the social categories are usually treated as independent variables, and the linguistic ones as dependent variables.

The principle is explained by an example from an investigation by Labov (1966a;1972d), in which (r) is used as a variable indicating social status: '...if any two sub-groups of New York City speakers are ranked in a scale of social stratification, then they will be ranked in the same order by their differential use of (r)' (Labov 1972d, 44).

In sociology, correlative approaches have been criticized by Garfinkel (1967) and Cicourel (1970), among others; as regards sociolinguistic inquiry, it is chiefly Gumperz who

has objected to this method. According to Gumperz (1967, 131), correlations can only provide inadequate explanations for variations in speech behaviour. In the first place, they do not explain why it is that speech behaviour varies in different societies with social categories that are based on very different criteria; secondly (and this is the main objection) correlations do not enable us to understand the different social norms and rules underlying the actual communicative behaviour of subjects, or to know the differences in their perception of social relations.

Gumperz maintains that the inadequacy of correlative measurements is overcome by the interactionist approach e.g. Garfinkel, Cicourel, which rejects the parallel between social and 'physical' measurements. Its point of departure is rather that information about social categories can be obtained only from linguistic data. Thus sociological measurement always entails the perception of the categories to be measured, both by the informants and by the interviewer:

'Just as the meaning of words is always affected by context, social categories must be interpreted in terms of situational constraints. Concepts such as status and role are thus not permanent qualities of speakers: instead they become abstract communicative symbols, somewhat like phonemes and morphemes. Like the latter they can be isolated in the analyst's abstract model, but they are always perceived in particular contexts. The division between linguistic and social categories is thus obliterated.' (Gumperz 1967, 132). Communication is thus regarded as a unique process, in the course of which speakers modify stimuli from the external environment in accordance with their cultural background, and derive from these the communicative norms for the situation concerned. From the point of view of obtaining and eliciting data, the interactionist view means

that social relations become the most important determinants of speech behaviour. Factors such as ecology, rank, educational background significantly affect verbal behaviour only to the extent that they influence speakers' perception of their social relationships (Gumperz 1967, 134). The sociolinguist, who is aiming at an adequate description of speech variation, must try to grasp the normative rules underlying performance. The only possible ways for him to achieve this are participant observation, unstructured interviews and protocols or records of conversations.

Language, society and reality:

It is not necessary that there is one-to-one relationship between language and society. As a working principle, however, it may be assumed that there are probably not any speech communities in which aspects of society have no impact on language whatsoever. It is part of the task of sociolinguistics to examine the various possible connections between the two which may obtain. Linguist commented that no two languages are sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. This is an acknowledgement of the crucial role language plays as an agent for the transmission of culture. It is often said that the vocabulary of a language is an inventory of the items a culture talks about and has categorized in order to make sense of the world. However, language is not simply a reflection of some external 'objective' reality which gets carved up in different ways in different languages. Language helps us to make sense of the world. By classifying things, we impose a structure on the social world, and language helps us to construct a model of it. A good example is the notion of a distinction between parallel—cousins and cross—cousins containing distinct terminology. These concepts reflect the interaction of humans with the culture and a conscious

agreement on the part of particular societies that the relationship will be regarded as divided into chunks of this kind of relationships. Different cultures have different concepts of kin relationships.

All languages give names to concepts of cultural importance and mark certain conceptual categories in their grammars, e.g. differences between male and female, differences between one and more than one, etc. The many languages of the world are therefore a rich source of data concerning the structure of conceptual categories. An example of kinship terminology in different languages will reveal how the categories of relatives which are distinguished reflect the social construction of reality for a particular culture speaking a particular language. Categorization of the world by language is an ongoing social activity since new things are to be named. Conversely, in some cultures, fearful objects and similar-sounding words may be tabooed, so new words have to be coined or borrowed. We put things and concepts into categories only partly on the basis of perceived similarities. Categorization also has a cultural basis, and items which are characterized as similar in one culture may not be seen as such in another. There is, of course, a substantial overlap among the categories selected for encoding by human languages. It would be most unusual, for instance, to find a language which marked in some way as members of the same category 'things to take home from the office on a weekend', although it is one of some importance to academics and others who regularly take home work from the office.

A useful way of conceptualizing differences between languages is to think of them a varying not so much in what it is possible to say, as what it is unavoidable to say. Although English is a relatively poorer language by comparison with others such as Javanese in terms of the social distinctions

that have to be expressed in its grammar, the grammars of other languages are much more permeable to society, for example, in Japanese, the concept of self depends on social relations. While in English, speakers can usually refer to themselves as 'I', in Japanese there are four pronouns, depending on formality of the occasion and status of one's interlocutor. In some Aboriginal languages of Australia pronominal forms are used to mark kinship relations, so that in Adnyamadhanha there are ten different pronouns which are the equivalents to English 'you and I' (we), which depend on clan membership, kin relation, and generation level. Thus, we can conclude that there are cultural prerequisites to formal grammatical analysis of Adnyamadhanha. In Chinese, the forms which are equivalent to the English first person pronoun are actually more like titles since they mean 'younger brother', 'less worthy one', 'the fool', while the forms for 'you' mean 'big brother', 'wise one', etc. (Romaine1994).

In such languages speakers cannot even refer to themselves without taking into account how they fit into society. In Japanese it is not possible to refer to oneself without making certain social distinctions, just as it is not possible to say 'you are tired' in Spanish and many other European languages without indicating the sex of the person spoken to and the relationship the speaker has to the addressee. To say **estas cansada** means not simply 'you are tired', but that the addressee is female (cf. masculine cansado) and the speaker knows her well enough to address her in the intimate second person singular form (compare the polite form esta).

Most of the languages of Europe except English require speakers to choose between pronouns meaning 'you' according to the location of the speaker and hearer in a multi-dimensional social space, where considerations of solidarity,

status, age, etc. are taken into account. Comparing English and Spanish in this regard, we can say that Spanish speakers are obliged by virtue of the fact that they speak Spanish to make such distinctions of status and gender. These distinctions have been 'grammaticalized', or made obligatory, in Spanish, whereas they have not in English. It is not the case that English cannot make such distinctions. It can, but they have to be encoded in other ways, such as through the use of titles, and such distinctions are not obligatorily encoded for pronouns. Pronoun systems are one important part of the grammar of languages where these kinds of distinctions are often grammaticalized and can be used to maintain, create, or transform social relations.

Manipuri does, in fact, encode other social distinctions such as gender in its expressions which are morphologically marked besides the lexical differences. *In Chapter 4, I* will examine some of these differences reflected in Manipuri. I will look at how changes in the grammatical encoding of social distinctions such as these reflect changing concepts of self in society.

It may be concluded from these examples that no particular language has privileged view of the world as it 'really' is. The world is not simply the way it is, but what we make of it through language. The domains of experience which are important to cultures get grammaticalized into languages. Grammaticalized concepts are more fundamental than concepts associated with words (or lexical items, as they are sometimes called). Our understanding of these concepts contributes to our view of cognitive categories. These multiple points of view are not just simply products of speaking different languages with different categories, but are constantly available to all of us.

Social Grammar of Manipuri:

My work is a study of language as a social reality and activities hence the idea of social grammar has been developed in order to study the complex, intricate relationship between language and society. As language does not exist in vacuum, a meaningful description of human language must attempt to characterize it within the context of its employment in the society. A great deal of work has already been done both empirical and theoretical in the study of language as a social phenomenon. Eminent sociolinguists like J.J. Gumperz, W. Labov, P. Trudgill Dell Hymes and B. Bernstein have already shown that a meaningful study of human language must incorporate the social contexts in which language is embedded. However, this is a pioneering study of some fundamental problems of sociolinguistics in Manipuri. Eminent sociolinguists like, W. Labov, B. Bernstein, P. Trudgill, J.J. Gumperz and D. Hymes have shown that there is a close interrelationship between language and society. Language does not exist in a vacuum. A meaningful description of human language must attempt to characterize it within the context of its employment in the society.

Language usage, that is, what to speak to whom, when, where and in what manner, is not simply a matter of free individual choice. It is affected by sub-consciously internalized social constraints similar to grammatical constraints. Speakers functioning as members of a particular society in terms of particular culture have internalized not only the rules of grammar but also the rules of appropriate speech usage which are broadly shared by other members of the society and which they apply in their speech behaviour. "Competence" thus has been extended to the notion of the mastery of a set of cultural rules which include the appropriate ways to apply grammatical rules in all speech

situations that are possible for that society (Hymes, 1972). Therefore, it cannot be simply assumed that if informants reject an expression, it is ungrammatical. There are several other possibilities such as it might be an impolite expression or a taboo word or a term that should not be used to certain group of people at a certain context. Since structuring and use of expressions have been determined by social situations, the descriptions of those expressions and their use must take into account the social context as well. Now as language as a social entity our choice of language is often constrained by our status, social processes and relationship through which we have grown up. In other words the norms governing the uses of speech are explicitly differentiated according to hierarchy found in Meitei community, sex and age so that the relations of speech behaviour. The socialization pattern reveals the social role differentiation as relative to hierarchy, sex and age. **tʰək.si-kʰa.si** (**tʰək.tə–si** 'senior-this; **kʰa.də-si** 'junior-this' literally) means certain set of norms and behaviour for seniors and juniors; or seniority is the main guiding principle of all behaviour in Meitei community. The older is superior to younger; men are superior to women. This is evident from the fact that the order in which individual's sexes speak in a group is strictly determined by seniority. However, if the oldest person is lower in social rank than some other individual's age gives way before social status. Therefore, a younger person by virtue of his higher social status may be given the opportunity to speak first. Any confusion or conflict in the matter of determining order of precedence is solved by careful handling of the organizers of the function. And the rules for females, children and other inferiors such as servants in presence of outsiders are to speak when spoken to but otherwise to maintain silence.

Here, it is worth making a distinction between traditional and social grammars. The central notion of

traditional grammar is to formalize sentences as grammatically acceptable, whereas, that of social grammar is to present evidences for the existence of a level of rule-governed verbal behaviour which goes beyond linguistic grammar to relate linguistic and social constraints on speech. Therefore, the ability of a native speaker of a language to distinguish culturally correct sentences from culturally incorrect sentences is not a part of his linguistic competence but a part of his cultural competence, which means his ability to use language appropriately within the context of his culture. According to Grashon (1077:38) "the social grammarian is concerned with the relationships found in the functions of the elements of languages. He is concerned with asking what is the social function of those items described by traditional grammar and how these are related to the cultures in which language operates and how this expresses social relationship."

The rules governing social grammar may differ from language to language as the social norms in different societies vary. For examples, the rules governing the usage of forms of address will certainly differ in societies having different social norms. This could be one of the reasons why there are problems when people from societies with different norms meet. It is clear that different norms of speech in different societies can often be explained with reference to other aspects of their culture and cannot, therefore, be satisfactorily studied in isolation. However, a shared language does not necessarily mean a shared set of sociolinguistic rules. There may be various determinants governing the usage of rules, namely, age, sex, social status, economic status etc. For example, people who are in superior status will use a separate set of sociolinguistic rules while talking to people of inferior status but not vice-versa. Similarly, people those who are in the younger age group will employ a set of rules in talking

to people who are in a higher age group.

Language is closely linked to our social relationships and is the medium through which we participate in a variety of social activities. This original study explores the important role of language in various aspects of our social life, such as identity, gender relations, class, kinship, status, and hierarchies. Drawing on data from Manipuri language and society, it shows how language is more than simply a form of social action; it is also an effective tool with which we formulate models of social life and conduct. These models—or particular forms of social behaviour are linked to the classification of 'types' of action or actor, and are passed 'reflexively' from person to person, and from generation to generation.

The present social grammar of Manipuri attempts to study, namely, (1) kinship terminology (2) Forms of address and proper Names (3) Taboo and (4) Male and female differences, in Manipuri. All the chapters are studied from a diachronic perspective beginning approximately from the 18th century, that is, since the advent of Hinduism, till the present society. The particular period (that is, the 18th century) is chosen for this study because of the fact that there have been drastic changes in the language more particularly in the use of Kinship terminology and Forms of address and proper Names.

In this diachronic perspective, we wish to have dealt primarily with two social upheavals, namely, the advent of Hinduism and the merger of Manipur with the Indian Union in 1949, that is, the introduction of democratic set up in Manipur. We would also take into consideration other social changes namely, westernization and the revivalist movement. In the first chapter, we will examine the kinship terminology in Manipuri from a sociolinguistic perspective through the study of kinship terms that are in use among

the Manipuri speakers of both urban and rural settings. The first section of this chapter gives a brief description of the descent and marriage rules, scope of kinship etc. The second section gives an account of the morphology of kin terms, namely (a) generation (b) relative age and (c) sex. Some of these factors also show certain shift of emphasis and conflicts in the use of kin terms. Finally, the fourth section examines inter-relationships between patterns of social behaviour and patterns of kinship terminology. Here, the first problem is to correlate the stratified Meitei society with the kinship terms in use. The second problem is to correlate the changes that have taken place in the Meitei society due to the advent of Hinduism and the introduction of a new political system in 1948 (that is, the democratic set up) with the changes that have taken place in the kinship terminology.

The second chapter discusses the Forms of address and proper names. Under the heading Forms of address we shall have the following sub-heads : (a) kin terms of address for kins (b) kin terms or address for non-kins as in the previous chapter we will discuss the usages of the terms which were used in the past and also the one which are used in the present period. Along with this the changes that have resulted due to factors like (1) the advent of Hinduism in the 18th century and (2) The introduction of a new social order in 1948 (that is, the merging of Manipur into the Indian Union) are also discussed. The second section under the head proper Name describes structural changes in Meitei names and also changes in personal names. In the study of the structure of Meitei names, we will discuss various components used in different historical periods which resulted from the societal changes mentioned above.

The third chapter discusses the aspects of Taboo; it is primarily concerned with linguistic considerations, that is, the verbal taboos. It describes how taboo words were

operating in the earlier times, and how it is being viewed by the present society. Changes in the usage of the taboo words affected by factors like education and the decline of monarchical rule are also examined. The last chapter examines the Male and Female differences in Manipuri. First, this chapter examines the dominance and difference of male and female in the archaic forms of Manipuri by studying forms of address, social titles and order of studying forms of address, social titles and order of constituents. Second, it examines the dominance and difference in modern forms of Manipuri through the studies of some lexical items and phrasal expressions and morphological differences. As has been discussed language is closely linked to our social relationships and is the medium through which we participate in a variety of social activities. Providing a unified way of accounting for a variety of social phenomena, this study is an attempt to show the interaction between language, culture, and society.