Pronouns in Lotha

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Abstract: The paper gives an account of pronouns in Lotha, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Nagaland, India. Lotha is a generic name and refers to both the linguistic group and the ethno-cultural entity. Lothas are racially Mongoloid and linguistically, it has been classified under the Central Naga group of the Naga sub-branch of the Tibeto-Burman languages. Pronouns in Lotha are free forms which can function solely to fill the position of a noun phrase in a clause. Personal pronouns are typically deixis to the speech participants for each of the three grammatical person i.e. first person, second person and third person. In annex to person, numbers i.e. singular, dual and plural are also distinguished on pronouns. Personal pronouns in Lotha are independent and free-standing and for that matter it takes case-markers and postposition in similar ways as full noun phrase. The first, second and third personal pronouns take case marking only when it serves as a subject and does not take any case markers when it serves as an object. Demonstrative pronouns function in several ways based on proximity and distance in time. Lotha has three-way distinction of identifying demonstrative pronoun i.e. proximate, distance and remote marked by /ʃi/’this’ (near the speaker), /ci/’that’ (near the hearer) and /o-ci/’over there’ (far away from both the speaker and hearer). The interrogative pronouns /kva/, /ndo/ and /otʃɔ/ are attached to the bound nominal suffixes. Indefinite pronouns can be formed from the question words which can change to affirmative by attaching the indefinite suffix -sana and its negative particle counterpart /mek/. Reflexive pronoun in Lotha is expressed by the reflexive lexeme /bobɔ/’self’ which is a free morpheme.

Keywords: Lotha, Pronouns, Person, Number, Gender, Case

Ms. Yantsubeni Ngullie has done her M.Phil in Linguistics form North Eastern Hill University, Shillong and currently pursuing her Doctoral programme from the same university in the Department of Linguistics. Her area of research interests includes Descriptive linguistics, Phonology, morphology, syntax, morpho-syntax, socio-linguistics and psycho-linguistics.

1. Introduction

Lotha is a generic name and refers to both the linguistic group and the ethno-cultural entity. Linguistically, Lotha has been classified under the Central Naga group of the Naga sub-branch of the Tibeto-Burman languages (Eberhard et.al, 2020). Lotha is one of the major languages spoken in Nagaland. The speakers of Lotha are scattered all over Nagaland but the majority are concentrated mainly at Wokha district of Nagaland. Lotha has no script of its own and has adopted the Roman script introduced by the British and the American Missionaries in the late 19th century. According to the Census of India (2011), the total number of Lotha speakers is 1, 66,343. Similarly, Lewis et.al (2015) list a total number of 1, 66,000 Lotha speakers. Lotha has a number of varieties but, the variation is mainly at the phonological level, that is, the accent of the speaker, which varies from village to village. However, for the purpose of literary works, the variety spoken in central villages, particularly in and around...
Wokha town is used. This paper is a research done on the standard variety of the Lotha language spoken in and around Wokha town.

1.1 Methodology

The linguistic fieldwork methodology was employed for this research study. This includes: Informants: Primary data were collected from the native speakers of the dialect by going to the field. The informants selected include both male and female which are of different age groups. Educated as well as illiterate informants were interviewed for elicitation of data. The data collected were presented in the form of word-lists, sentence list, narratives and oral tradition. In addition, interviews with scholars and writers who have worked on Lotha are included. Number of language consulted consists of eight people, both male and female.

Tools: The tools include interviews, questionnaires and audio recorder. Audio recorders like Zoom H4n and field linguistic softwares like Flex were used for recording and analyzing the data.

Procedure: Data were collected from primary sources and secondary sources which include textbooks, articles, and journals for cross reference.

Presentation of data: Description and standard procedure of presenting field data were presented. Some of the data collected are presented in the forms of charts and tables.

Data was collected from Wokha town, Wokha village, Yikhum village and Doyang which are the villages adjacent to Wokha town.

1.2 Pronouns in Lotha

Pronouns in Lotha are free forms which can function solely to fill the position of a noun phrase in a clause. Personal pronouns are typically deixis to the speech participants for each of the three grammatical person i.e. first person, second person and third person. In annex to person, numbers i.e. singular, dual and plural are also distinguished on pronouns. Personal pronouns in Lotha are independent and free-standing and for that matter it takes case-markers and postposition in similar ways as full noun phrase. The first, second and third personal pronouns take case marking only when it serves as a subject and does not take any case markers when it serves as an object. Demonstrative pronouns function in several ways based on proximity and distance in time. Lotha has three-way distinction of identifying demonstrative pronoun i.e. proximate, distance and remote marked by /fi/‘this’ (near the speaker), ci‘that’(near the hearer) and o-ci‘over there’(far away from both the speaker and hearer). The interrogative pronouns kvə, ndo and otʃɔ are attached to the bound nomonal suffixes. Indefinite pronouns can be formed from the question words which can change to affirmative by attaching the indefinite suffix -sana. Reflexive pronoun in Lotha is expressed by the reflexive lexeme bɔbɔ ‘self’ which is a free morpheme.

1.3 Personal pronouns

Personal pronouns are typically deixis to the speech participants for each of the three grammatical person i.e. first person, second person and third person. In annex to person, numbers i.e. singular and plural are distinguished on pronouns. In terms of numbers Lotha has singular, dual and plural pronouns. A paradigm of personal pronouns of Lotha is shown in Table 1 below.

| Table 1 personal pronouns |
|---------------------------|
| **Personal Pronouns**     | **Singular** | **Dual** | **Plural** |
| First Person              | a            | eni      | ete        |
| Second Person             | ni           | nini     | nte        |
| Third Person              | ombɔ (M)     | oni      | onte       |
|                           | ombvə (F)    |          |            |
In Lotha the third person singular, in a free speech the speaker always use the male form of pronoun ‘ombɔ’ for reference, irrespective of the gender whether it’s a male or female; however in orthography the female is referred to as ‘ombvə’ and the male as ‘ombɔ’. Personal pronouns in Lotha are independent and free-standing and for that matter it takes case-markers and postposition in similar ways as full noun phrase. The first, second and third personal pronouns take case marking only when it serves as a subject and does not take any case markers when it serves as an object. The following examples show how case is incorporated in personal pronouns:

1. opvai-na ntsainraŋ pi-tʃɔ osi ombo bæŋi-na eŋatʰe
   Lord-AGT wisdom give-PST CONJ 3P.M mouth-AGT knowledge
   osi ntʃ/amri tʃaj-tʃɔ
   CONJ understanding come-PST

   ‘The Lord gives wisdom, and from His mouth come knowledge and understanding’

2. boaz- na ruth-ci kʰi-tʃɔ osi .omvbə-o ombo eq kem-
   boaz-AGT ruth-DET take-PST CONJ 3PF-COMP 3P.F wife become tʃɔ
   PST

   ‘Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife’

3.  ombvə-na ŋara-ci kʰi  ombvə opʰi-lo yip-tʃok tʃɔ
   3PF-AGT child-DEM take 3P.F lap-LOC sleep-CAUS PST

   ‘she took the child and made him sleep on her lap’

   The nominative case in Lotha occurs in two different shapes conditioned by person and number system of case marking. In Lotha there are two nominative case markers -no, and -yo which appears on the subject of both transitive and intransitive verbs conditioned by person and number. The following illustrations below shows how the nominatives behaves in Lotha:

   4.  a-yo ocəya yi-ala
      1P-NOM tomorrow go-PRES.PROG
      ‘I am leaving tomorrow’

   5.  a-yo olaŋ tsa vo-tʃɔ
      1P-NOM road walk go-PST
      ‘I went walking’

   6.  n-no kveto yi-ala
      2P.PL-NOM where go-PRES.PROG
      ‘Where are you going?’

   7.  n-no kveto ni tsa
      2P.NOM what 2P call
      ‘what is your name?’

   8.  etə-no mon mon tai pi-a-la
      1P.PL-NOM good good only give+ PRES.PROG
      ‘we gave the good ones only’

   9.  onte-no oli yi-a
      3P.PL-NOM field go-PRES
      ‘they went to field’

   In the first person pronoun, the nominative case marker -nɔ is marked on the plural but not on the first person singular. In the second person pronoun the nominative -nɔ is marked on both the singular and plural. In
the third person pronoun the nominative -ɔŋ is marked only on the third person plural and not on the singular. -ɔŋ is associated with only interrogatives in the second person singular but interrogatives can extend to first, second and third person plural.

The nominative marker -ɔŋ is exclusive only for the first person singular. In the first person pronoun, the nominative case marker -ɔŋ is marked on the first person singular but not on the plural. Whereas in the second and third person pronoun the nominative -ɔŋ is unmarked on all the three numbers i.e. singular, dual and plural.

A paradigm of how the nominative cases -ɔŋ and -ɔ is incorporated in the personal pronouns and numbers is shown below in table 2.

### Table 2 Incorporation of nominative case on personal pronouns

| Nominative | Singular | Dual | Plural |
|------------|----------|------|--------|
| -ɔŋ        | -        | -    | -      |
| 1P         | -        | -    | -      |
| 2P         | -        | -    | -      |
| 3P         | -        | -    | -      |
| -ɔ        | -        | -    | -      |
| 1P         | -        | -    | -      |
| 2P         | -        | -    | -      |
| 3P         | -        | -    | -      |

1.4 Possessive Pronouns

Following Picallo (2; 1994) Lotha possessive pronominalization is possible only for arguments that are assigned genitive case, and are referred to as weak pronouns because a strong pronoun agrees with its intended referent in person, gender, and number, while the possessive agrees with the N head. In Lotha the genitive functions both as dependent and independent, where the dependent is not marked for possessive but the independent genitive is marked for possessive. The following examples show how possessive pronouns functions in Lotha on a dependent and independent genitives as seen in the table below:

### Table 3 Possessive pronouns

| 1Person | SINGULAR | DUAL | PLURAL |
|---------|----------|------|--------|
| Dependent | | | |
| a kag | 1P.SG book | 'My book’ | eni kag | 1P.DU book | 'Our book’ | ete kag | 1P.PL book | 'Our book’ |
| cic a-tʃa DEM 1P.SG POSS | 'That book is mine’ | kag-cic eni etʃa book-DEM 1P.DU POSS | 'That book is ours’ | kag-cic ete etʃa book-DEM 1P.PL POSS | 'That book is ours’ |
| Independent | | | |
| | | | |
| 2Person | SINGULAR | DUAL | PLURAL |
| Dependent | | | |
| ni kag | 2P.SG book | 'Your book’ | nini kag | 2P.DU book | 'Your book’ | nte kag | 2P.PL book | 'Your book’ |
| Independent | | | |
| cic ni-tʃa DEM 2P.SG POSS | 'That book is yours’ | kag cic nini etʃa book DEM 2P.DU POSS | 'That book is yours’ | kag cic nte etʃa book DEM 2P.PL POSS | 'That book is yours’ |
| 3Person | SINGULAR | DUAL | PLURAL |
| Dependent | | | |
| ombva kag | 3P.SG,F book | | oni kag | 3P.DU book | | onte kag | 3P.DU book |
Dependent genitive pronouns which are often referred to as weak possessives serve more like determiners in front of nouns whereas independent genitive pronouns take the place of a phrase. Most of the possessive markers in Lotha have separate forms for the dependent and independent functions of genitive on personal pronouns. The same genitive is attached to the singular, dual and the plural as seen in table 3 however in the first person singular and the second person singular the particle ‘e’ is dropped and is replace with -tʃə.

### 1.5 Demonstrative pronouns

Demonstratives pronouns occupy the pre-head modifying position in a noun phrase. Demonstrative in Lotha functions in several ways based on proximity and distance in time. Lotha has three-way distinction of identifying demonstrative pronoun i.e. proximate, distance and remote marked by fi ‘this’ (near the speaker), ci ‘that’ (near the hearer) and o-ci ‘over there’ (far away from both the speaker and hearer). There is no particular affix to mark proximity and distance but remoteness is marked by the prefix o- in the language. There are no separate plural demonstrative pronouns, the plural marker suffix -aŋ is attached to a singular pronoun to form a plural demonstrative pronouns as in fi-aŋ ‘these’, ci-aŋ ‘those’, o-ci-aŋ ‘those over there’. The locative is marked by the suffix -lo as in fi-lo ‘here’, ci-lo ‘there’ and o-ci-lo ‘over there’. The following illustrations show how demonstrative pronouns in Lotha functions.

| No. | Demonstrative | Translation |
|-----|---------------|-------------|
| 10. | ʃi-li-aŋ       | ‘This child is his daughter’ |
| 11. | ʃi-li-aŋ       | ‘That child is his daughter’ |
| 12. | o-ci-li-aŋ     | ‘That child over there is his daughter’ |
| 13. | ʃi-li-aŋ       | ‘These children are not his daughters’ |
| 14. | o-ci-li-aŋ     | ‘Those children are not his daughters’ |

The locative demonstratives pronoun fi-lo ‘here’, ci-lo ‘there’ and o-ci-lo ‘over there’ are formed by the demonstratives this and that by adding the locative suffix -lo. The following examples illustrated below show how locative demonstratives occur in Lotha.

| No. | Demonstrative | Translation |
|-----|---------------|-------------|
| 15. | ʃi-li          | ‘It is here’ |
| 16. | ci-li          | ‘This child is his daughter’ |

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| 16. | ci-li          | ‘This child is his daughter’ |
1.6 Interrogative Pronouns

Interrogative pronouns are question words which ask questions about people, object or things. The interrogatives are attached to the bound nominal suffixes as seen in the following data.

- **kvə-lo** ‘where’
- **kvə-do** ‘how’
- **kvə-tʰəŋ** ‘when’
- **kvə-ta** ‘how much’
- **kvə-la** ‘which’
- **ndo** ‘what’
- **ndo-li** ‘why’
- **otʃɔ** ‘who’
- **otʃɔ-etʃə** ‘whose’

The interrogative *kvə* can have the question-answer morphological settings as seen in the following table 4.

| Question | Answer |
|----------|--------|
| **kvə -lo** Q-LOC ‘where’ | **ʃi-lo** PROX-LOC ‘here’ |
| | **ci-lo** DIST-LOC ‘there’ |
| **kvə -to** Q-like ‘how’ | **he-to** PROX-like ‘like this’ |
| | **ci-to** DIST-like ‘like that’ |
| **kvə-tʰəŋ** Q-time ‘when’ | **to-tʰəŋ** DIST-time ‘that time’ |
| **kvə-ta** Q-much ‘how much’ | **he-tata** PROX-much ‘this much’ |
| | **ci-tata** DIST-much ‘that much’ |
| **kvə-la** Q-one ‘which one’ | **ʃi-la** PROX-one ‘this one’ |
| | **ci-la** DIST-one ‘that one’ |
1.7 Indefinite pronouns

Indefinite pronouns in Lotha refer to a person, an object or a thing which are not specified. They can be formed from the question words which can change to affirmative by attaching the indefinite suffix -sana. Indefinite pronouns generally occur in a series like the English some-series, any-series and no-series (Haspelmath. 11: 1997). Following Haspelmath Lotha have sana series and mek series, where the former is a suffix and the latter is a particle and stands next to the pronoun stem in both the cases. The following table show how indefinite pronouns behave in Lotha.

| Table 5 Indefinite forms |
|--------------------------|
| **Affirmative** | **Negative** |
| *otʃɔ-*sana | *otʃi-a mek* |
| who-INDF | who-PRES NEG |
| ‘someone/somebody’ | ‘no one/ nobody/none’ |
| *ndo-*sana | *ndi-a mek* |
| what-INDF | what-PRES NEG |
| ‘something/anything’ | ‘nothing’ |
| *ndo-lo-*sana | *ndi-ala mek* |
| where-LOC-INDF | what-PROG NEG |
| ‘somewhere’ | ‘nowhere’ |
| *kvəlo-*sana | *kvəlo ha mek* |
| where-INDF | where POL NEG |
| ‘somewhere’ | ‘nowhere’ |

In an affirmative and negative structure of an indefinite pronoun, there is a phonological change in the vowel. The mid tone (ɔ) changes to high tone (i) when a present and present progressive is added to the negative structure.

1.8 Reflexive Pronouns

Bhat (79; 2004) defines reflexive as a term generally used to denote co reference between two different noun phrases however, the notion that underlies the use of this device is primarily a distinction between actions that affect the performer himself on the one hand and the ones that affect some other person or object on the other. Reflexive pronoun in Lotha is expressed by the reflexive lexeme bɔbɔ ‘self’ which is a free morpheme. The list of reflexive pronouns in Lotha is shown in table 6 below.

| Table 6 List of reflexive pronouns |
|-----------------------------------|
| **Singular** | **Dual** | **Plural** |
| 1P | a bɔbɔ | *eni bɔbɔ* | *ete bɔbɔ* |
| 1P REF | ‘myself’ | 1P REF | ‘ourselves’(two of us) | 1P REF | ‘ourselves’(more than two of us) |
| 2P | ni bɔbɔ | *nini bɔbɔ* | *nte bɔbɔ* |
| 2P REF | ‘yourself’ | 2P REF | ‘yourselves’(two of them) | 2P REF | ‘yourselves’(more than two of them) |
| 3P | ombɔbɔ | *oni bɔbɔ* | *onte bɔbɔ* |
Reflexive pronouns function as the antecedent of anaphoric nouns and pronouns. It can be seen in the illustration given below:

|   | 3P REFL | 3P REFL | 3P REFL |
|---|---------|---------|---------|
|   | 'himself/herself' | 'themselves' (two of them) | 'themselves' (more than two of them) |

20. a -yɔ a bobo vo- tʃɔ
   1P.SG -NOM 1P.REFL go- PST
   'I went by myself'

21. eni -na eni bobo vo-ta tʃɔ
   1P.DU AGT 1P.DU REFL go-HAB PST
   'We went by ourselves (two of us)

22. ete -no ete bobo vo-ta tʃɔ
   1P.PL NOM 1P.PL REFL go-HAB PST
   'We went by ourselves (more than two of us)

23. ni -na ni bobo kʰi tso- a
   2P.SG AGT 2P.SG REFL take eat PRES
   'You take yourself and eat'

24. nini -na nini bobo kʰi tso- ta
   2P.DU AGT 2P.DU REFL take eat- HAB
   'You (two) take yourselves and eat'

25. nte -ɔ nte bobo kʰi tso- ta
   2P.PL NOM 2P.PL REFL take eat- HAB
   'You (more than two) take yourselves and eat'

26. ombɔ ombɔbo ro- tʃɔ
   3P.SG 3P.REFL come PST
   'He came by himself'

27. oni -na oni bobo ro- tʃɔ
   3PDU AGT 3PDU REFL come- PST
   'They (two of them) came by themselves'

The reflexive pronouns can carry case markers as seen in (20), (22) and (25), where the first person singular, first person plural and second person singular are marked with nominative case markers.

2. Conclusion

Pronouns in Lotha are free forms which can function solely to fill the position of a noun phrase in a clause. Personal pronouns are typically deixis to the speech participants for each of the three grammatical person i.e. first person, second person and third person. In annex to person, numbers i.e. singular, dual and plural are also distinguished on pronouns. In Lotha the third person singular, in a free speech the speaker always use the male form of pronoun 'ombɔ' for reference, irrespective of the gender whether it’s a male or female; however in orthography the female is referred to as 'ombvɔ' and the male as 'ombɔ'. Personal pronouns in Lotha are
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Indefinite pronouns in Lotha refer to a person, an object or a thing which is not specified. They can be formed from the question words which can change to affirmative by attaching the indefinite suffix -sana and its negative particle counterpart mek. In an affirmative and negative structure of an indefinite pronoun, there is a phonological change in the vowel. The mid tone (ɔ) changes to high tone (i) when a present and present progressive is added to the negative structure.

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