Chapter - VII

CONCLUSIONS

It is certainly quite difficult to describe adequately a language: describing a language requires some knowledge about language in general, whereas any adequate general theory of language must, of necessity, build upon descriptions of particular languages. It is a truism about the nature of scientific activity that scientists are intent upon making their theories as general or 'Universal' as possible. Furthermore, since the problem of constructing an evaluation measure for selecting the right descriptively adequate grammar for each language is practically identical with the problem of defining the notion of linguistically significant generalization (Chomsky 1965, 42), it simply follows that the best description or theories, both at the level of one language and at the level of all languages, are always the most general ones. Hence the descriptive level and the explanatory level are inseparable in practice (Itkonen, 1978, 233).

Certain sentence types occur in all languages. All languages have ways of expressing commands, asking
and answering questions and making statements (with varying degrees of qualification). Such resemblances (which are as much pragmatic and semantic as syntactic) are undoubtedly to be accounted for on the basis of universals of human communication. But the ways in which these basic 'speech acts' (Searle, 1969) are expressed are not arbitrarily different.

Typically, commands use special forms of the verb or sentence structure that are shorter than the forms or structures for declarative structures (except where the desire, probably another universal, to express politeness or soften a command provides longer forms). This is also clearly seen in the present study.

The chapter II discusses very briefly some salient features of grammar of this particular language just to make acquaintance with the structural nature of the language. Some important aspects discussed in the chapter are word order, grammatical categories (gender, number, person, tense and voice) and reduplication. Affixes are the backbone of the morphology of such an agglutinative language; one interesting point of suffix, discussed in this chapter is their multi-dimensional nature which incorporates different syntactic and semantic structures.
This chapter also shows the inadequacy and the mistaken practice of keeping morphology and syntax into two water-tight compartments of language description.

The chapter III is verb 'be' in Meiteilon. This chapter deals with some theoretical points like different grammatical theories of verb 'be'; syntactic analysis of verb 'be' and verb 'be' and its polysemous functions. Then it concentrates on verb 'be' in this language which has four different forms, namely, /la/, /-ni/, /-y/ and /oi/. They perform different grammatical functions: /la/ performs locative, existential and possessive functions; /-ni/ performs identification, class membership and class inclusion; /-y/ performs attributive function only and /oi/ performs class membership only.

It is found that in nominal complements in Meiteilon, verb 'be' forms /-ni/ and /oi/ are used as verb 'be' and functions as a linker of copulative sentence. Adjectival complements use /-y/ as a verb 'be' while in predicative adjectives /-y/ functions as a copula verb 'be'.

It is also found that Meiteilon has two different interrogative verbs 'be' forms. /-ra/-/-la/ is added to any noun or pronoun while verb 'be' form /-no/ is added to wh-question words to make the sentence interrogative.
In chapter IV on Negation, we have reached the conclusion that negation is formed by affixes, that is, by the infixation of /-tə/-/ -də-/ as well as by the suffixation of /-roi/-/-lo/- to the verb which is final in a sentence. It is also found that the negator /-tə/-/-də-/ is used in past and present tense; it cannot be used in future tense. The suffix negator /-roi/-/-lo/ indicates unrealized aspect or future tense only and negator /-nu/ and /-kum-//-gum-/ are used in negative imperatives. In other words, negative affixes exhibits not only the negation but various different aspectual and temporal features of the sentences.

Negation can be strengthened by some particular prefixes also. The prefixation of the negative strengthening elements causes the reduplication of the verb-root. Polarity items found in language can be either negative or positive. Negative or positive polarity items are decided by their occurrence in negative sentences or affirmative sentences. Further, the chapter discusses negative as a plenonasm in this language dealing with negative parenthetical and negative appositive.

In chapter V, on Interrogatives, basically two kinds of Interrogatives are discussed.

1. Yes-No question is formed by suffixes. The question markers are /-la/-/-ra/, /-dra/-/-tra/, /-ba/ and /-bo/
which are found having multi-dimensional meanings: one as a Yes/No question marker, another is showing the additional meaning of various relationship between the speaker and the hearer or expressing situational contexts.

2. Wh-question: is constructed by question words which have, without any exception, initial syllable of /kə-/; they are /kərì/ 'what', /kərì/ or /kərəmbə/ 'which', /kənə/ 'who', /kərəgi/ 'why', /kərəmnə/ 'how', /kədəida/ 'where' and /kədəunəi/ 'when'. Wh-question words can grammatically occur initially and medially but not finally. No yes/no question marker occurs in Wh-question.

Besides these, some more results can also be seen: first, interrogative verb 'be' form /-no/ can be suffixed to the Wh-question words; second, in this language the reduplication of Wh-question words having the meaning of plurality or distributiveness exists and the third is that alternative question or 'Either - or' question is found to be constructed with or without the coordinate conjunction /nətrəga/. The linear order is also found very rigid, that is, the positive question VP is followed by a negative VP.

Last but not the least is that the whole interrogative and the whole reply sentence can be reduced to a single verb form. Reduced interrogative and reduced replies are very commonly used among the native speakers of Meiteilon.
Imperatives are discussed in chapter VI. We have analysed that Imperatives are constructed by suffixes, viz. /-u/, /-o/, /-lu/-/-ru/, /-kho/ and /-həu/. Like yes/no question markers, imperative markers have multidimensional meaning. Each imperative marker has an additional meaning other than the command meaning (-ru -lu has an underlying meaning of 'go', while /-lo/ /-ro/ had an underlying meaning of 'come' along with the command meaning).

It is also found that occurrence of more than one imperative markers do not affect the meaning at all. In other words, it does not mean higher degree of command.

In this chapter, we have considered different forms of imperatives like, conditional imperative, let-imperative and wish imperatives. Let-imperative can be constructed by the infixation of a causative particle /-hən-//-həl/ between verb-root and other markers say respect markers.

The chapter also discusses the problem of identification of the subject in imperative constructions. We have also seen that imperative constructions can go with pleanastic particles and that command can be conveyed by interrogative constructions. Repetition in imperatives is also used by the native speakers very commonly.
Imperatives with tag-question constructions are also found in this language.

Section II of this chapter concentrates on Request forms. The use of honorifics specially for making request is quite prevalent in this language. Request is formed by the infixation of a request marker /-bi-/~/-pi-/ between the verb-root and imperative marker. Besides this request marker, we have seen some other lexical items used in request constructions, and degree of request can be expressed by these lexical items. More over, simultaneous occurrence of different lexical items of request can express higher degree of request. We have tried to arrange the various request forms in an hierarchical pattern. Consider DHRF given on page 289. We reach the conclusion that higher degree of Request Form (RF) (or the more polite form) is the one which has the largest number of some Lexical Items (SLIs), Request Words (RWS), request markers and imperative forms.

Repetition in request construction is also found. The section also discusses some other interesting aspects of request construction, viz. negative-request sentence, request with tag-question and ironical or sarcastic meaning in request constructions. It has been found out that age of the addressee is the decisive factor for choosing the appropriate form of Request.
In this chapter, special care has been taken to study the various socio-linguistic factors which might be responsible for appropriate request forms in Meiteilon.

From the present study, on the whole, it is found that in Meiteilon, Negation, Interrogatives and Imperatives are constructed by affixes.

Since there was the limitation of time, the present study does not take into consideration other languages (of Tibeto-Burman) of the region. It will be very interesting to analyse and discuss other languages (for instance, in Negation, see Chapter IV, 4.11, in Tangkhul and Burmese, two negators occur; one is prefixed and another is suffixed to the verb).

A comparative account of verb 'be', Negation, Interrogation and Imperatives in Tibeto-Burman languages could have been extremely fruitful both from the point of view of description as well as from the point of view of linguistic theory in general. However, not withstanding the somewhat limited goal of this study, this study will be useful to both the linguists as well as to the teachers of Meiteilon who wish to teach this language as a first or second language.