Chapter VII

Person
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This chapter discusses the contrast on the category of person of the two languages – English and Manipuri.

7.1 Introduction

The category of person is clearly definable with reference to the notion of participant–roles; the ‘first’ person is used by the speaker to refer to himself as a subject of discourse; the ‘second’ person is used to refer to the hearer; and the ‘third’ person is used to refer to person or things other than the speaker and hearer (Lyon, 1968).

The notion of participant or discourse role is obligatory in the discussion of person. Siewierska (2004) argued that the grammatical category of person, in the case of the first and second persons, does not simply express the speaker and addressee respectively, but rather the participant or discourse roles of speaker and addressee. The difference between the two characterizations (speaker and hearer, participant role of speaker and addressee) can be appreciated by comparing the personal pronouns I and you in (1a) with that of the
nominal \textit{mummy} and \textit{Johnny} in (1b).

(1a) I will spank you.

(1b) Mummy will spank Johnny.

In certain situational contexts, speakers may refer to themselves and their addressees by their proper names, their titles or occupational roles, etc. Thus in (1b) the word \textit{mummy} could be used by a mother with reference to herself and the name \textit{Johnny} with reference to the child whom she is addressing. In such a case, the words \textit{mummy} and \textit{Johnny} can be said to express the speaker and addressee but they cannot be said to express the discourse roles of speaker and addressee as there is nothing in the words \textit{mummy} and \textit{Johnny} to suggest that they are the speaker and addressee respectively. Conversely, this is precisely what is achieved by the two pronouns \textit{i} and \textit{you} in (1a). \textit{i} is always used to refer to the speaker and you to the addressee. Unlike \textit{mummy} and \textit{Johnny}, the two pronominal cannot have any other referents. Moreover, they do not express anything other than that their referents bear the discourse roles of speaker and addressee respectively. Accordingly, only \textit{i} and \textit{you} and not \textit{mummy} and \textit{Johnny} are expressions of the first and second persons. \textit{Mummy} and \textit{Johnny} are lexical expressions which
may be used to refer to the speaker and addressee respectively (Anna Siewierska, 2004).

Person markers (pronouns) rarely mark person alone. The grammatical category most closely connected with person is that of number. Two other grammatical distinctions expressed sometimes together with person are gender and case. Thus, for example, the English *she* indicates third person, singular number, feminine gender and nominative case. Further grammatical categories which may also be marked together with person include definiteness or indefiniteness and proximate or remote. For example, the English pronouns *he, she* and *it* are definite, as against *someone, somebody* and *something*, which are indefinite (Lyons, 1968).

Other grammatical categories which may also be marked together with person include obviation, tense, aspect, mood and polarity (Siewierska, 2004). The marking of mood and polarity together with person is found in the person marker of the Australian language Worora (Love 2000: quoted in Siewierska, 2004).

7.2 First and second persons vs. third person

It is generally acknowledged that "there is a fundamental, and ineradicable, difference between the first and second person, on the
one hand, and the third person on the other" (Lyons, 1968). One manifestation of this difference is that whereas the first and second persons are regularly referred to essentially only by person markers, reference to the third person can be achieved by any lexical expression. It should therefore be unsurprising that languages may have first- and second-person markers but no third-person ones. In many of the languages which lack person markers for the third person, demonstrative pronouns corresponding to the English this and that are used in place of third-person markers (Siewierska, 2004).

The first-person and second-person forms are an inherently deictic expression that is their interpretation is dependent on the properties of the extra linguistic context of the utterance in which they occur. Third-person forms, on the other hand, are essentially anaphoric expressions. Their interpretation depends not on the extra linguistic but on the linguistic context of the utterance. The referent of he or she is typically established by the preceding discourse, as in (2a) or, less often, by the following discourse as in (2b).

(2a) There's no sign of John.

He must have missed his train again.
(2b) She is late again.

You mean Sally.

Yes. (Siewierska, 2004)

Third-person forms may be used deictically, as when someone says (pointing to a grinning child who has just been given an enormous ice cream) He’s happy.

7.3 Person in English

English traditionally distinguishes three grammatical persons: The personal pronoun I and we are said to be in the first person. The speaker (discourse) uses this in the singular to refer to himself, in the plural, to speak of a group of people of which he is a member.

The personal pronoun you is the second person pronoun. It refers to the person spoken to (discourse hearer). You is used in both the singular and plural; the old second person singular pronoun, thou, is archaic in modern English. All other pronouns and all nouns are in the third person. This person is traditionally defined to be what is spoken of or anything that is not first or second person. People who are neither the speaker nor the person spoken to, and any inanimate objects, are referred to in the third person.
7.3.1 Person markers in groups

The person markers found in English do not occur in isolation but rather in groups. Each member of a group is in complementary distribution with every other member of the same group. Thus the English person forms *I, you, he, she, it, we, you, they* constitute one group, as each may occur as the subject of an utterance and the use of any one form excludes the possibility of using any of the others (apart from coordination). The person forms *me, you, him, her, it, us, you, them* belong to another group, since they are employed as objects and complements of prepositions but, crucially, not as subjects. And the forms *my, your, his, her, its, our, your, their* make up a third group used as attributive possessors.
7.3.2 Distinctions of person

Personal, possessive, and reflexive pronouns have distinction of persons as in the following table (Quirk and Greenbaum, 1982):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Reflexive</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>subj case</td>
<td>obj case</td>
<td>det function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st (sing)</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>myself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p (plural)</td>
<td>we</td>
<td>us</td>
<td>ourselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd sing</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>yourself</td>
<td>your</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p plural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>yourselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 rd sing</td>
<td>mas.</td>
<td>He</td>
<td>him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p fem</td>
<td>she</td>
<td>her</td>
<td>herself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-per</td>
<td>It</td>
<td>itself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plural</td>
<td>they</td>
<td>them</td>
<td>themselves</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.3.3 Agreement

English only shows distinctive agreement in the third person singular, present tense form of verbs (which is marked by adding -s); the rest of the persons are not distinguished in the verb. This can be exemplified below for the simple present form of the verb to listen:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1st sg.</th>
<th>2nd sg.</th>
<th>1st pl.</th>
<th>2nd pl.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I listen</td>
<td>You listen</td>
<td>We listen</td>
<td>You listen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3rd sg. He/she/it listens 3rd pl. They listen

Again, the verb takes a form dependent on this person and whether it is singular or plural. In English, this happens with the verb to be.

1st sg. I am 1st pl. We are
2nd sg. You are 2nd pl. You are
3rd sg. He, she or it is 3rd pl. They are

Again, the first and second person is more marked than third person: that verbs agreeing with subject which either semantically or overtly include reference to both a third person and non-third-person referent, will agree in the non-third person: 'I and he', for instance, would take plural first, rather than plural third, agreement; and 'you and her' will take second person plural, rather than third person plural, agreement (Greenberg 1963:113, Universal# 42).

That is, coordination of a first person with any person yields a first person (plural); coordination of a second person with any non-first person yields a second person (plural).

(3a) You are proud of yourselves.

(3b) You and I are proud of ourselves/*yourselves.

(3c) Those guys and I are proud of ourselves /*themselves.

(3d) You and those guys are proud of ourselves /*themselves.
7.4 Person in Manipuri

First person singular pronoun is *ay* "I" and plural is *aykhoy"we". There is no question of inclusive and exclusive in the first person plural form. There is also dual form *ibani"we two". The second person pronouns are *naj "you" (singular), *nakhoj "you" plural and dual *nabani "you two". The second person has honourific singular form *adom and *asom which are used in formal relation and to stranger. The third person pronouns are *mahak "he" singular, *nakhoj "they" plural and *nabani "they two" dual.

7.4.1 Pronominal prefixes

Unlike English, Manipuri has three pronominal prefixes. They are 1st person pronominal ‘i’ 2nd person pronominal ‘naj’ and 3rd person pronominal ‘mep’. These may be affixed to kinship terms or inalienably possessed nouns (Chelliah, 1997).

*imit “my eyes”*

*nakhoj “your feet”*

*mepa “his /her father”*
The use of second person pronominal prefix to kinship term such as *nema* “your mother” and *nepa* “your father” is impolite. Instead *nengi ima* which literally means “you my mother” (your mother) is used. But there is no question of impolite on the use of pronominal prefix *ne-* to other kinship terms.

- nca-nupa: your son
- nca-nupi: your daughter
- nayamba: your brother
- nce: your sister
- nenew-nupa: your brother (younger)
- noku-bok: your father-in-law
- nenem-bok: your mother-in-law

Reflexive pronouns are derived by prefixation of pronominal prefixes i.e. *i-* for first person, *ne-* second person and *me-* third person, to the root *sa* “body” thus literally means “self”.

- i+sa → isa “myself (also my body)”
- ne+sa → nesa “yourself (your body)”
- me+sa → mesa “himself / herself (his / her body)”
7.4.2 Person distinction

We have seen that English has three groups of person forms. In contrast to English, Manipuri has many groups that are distinguished for person.

Group 1

ay “I”  eykho “we”  ibani “we two”

nəŋ “you”  nəkho “you”  nəbani “you two”

ədom /əsom “you (honorific)”

məhak “he”  məkho “they”  məbani “they two”

They can be subject of intransitive verb and object of transitive verb.

Group 2: This group is formed by the addition of suffix -ne to the personal pronouns. They can be the subject of transitive verb.

ay-ne “I”  eykho-ne “we”  ibani-ne “we two”

nəŋ-ne “you”  nəkho-ne “you”  nəbani-ne “you two”

ədom-ne / əsom-ne “you (honorific)”

məhak-ne “he”  məkho-ne “they”  məbani-ne “they two”
Group 3: These forms are formed by the addition dative case marker -de. They can be the object of transitive verb or complement of a verb.

*eyjon-de “to me” eykhoy-de “to us” ibani-de “to us”

nəjon-de “to you” nəkhoy-de “to you” nəbani-de “to you”

adom-de / adom-de (honorific) “to you”

məjon-de “to him” məkhoy-de “to them” məbani-de “to them”

Group 4: These forms are formed by the addition of ablative case marker.

*eyjon-degi “from me” eykhoy-degi “from us” ibani-degi “from us two”

nəjon-degi “from you” nəkhoy-degi “from you” nəbani-degi “from you”

edomdegi, and adomdegi (honorific) “from you”

məjondegi “from him” məkhoydegi “from them” məbani-degi “from them”

They can be the indirect object of transitive verb or complement of a verb. Another group can be formed by the addition of genitive or benefactive case marker -gi to the personal pronouns. Yet another group is formed by the addition of associative case marker -ge to these personal pronouns.
7.4.3 Agreement

Unlike English, there is no person agreement phenomenon in Manipuri between the verb and its argument.

(4a) me kəppi

He/she cry-SIM.ASP.

He/she cries.

(4b) məkhoy kəppi

they cry-SIM.ASP.

They cry.

(4c) ey kəppi

I cry-SIM.ASP.

I cry.

7.5 Conclusion

Unlike English, Manipuri has three pronominal prefixes. They are (a) 1st person pronominal ‘i’, (b) 2nd person pronominal ‘me’ and (c) 3rd person pronominal ‘mə’. Manipuri has the second person honourific singular form adom and asom which are used in formal relation and also to a stranger.
The question of impolite does not arise in the use of English person markers. We can use the pronoun “you” with reference to elders including father and mother. But in Manipuri, the use of nəŋ “you” with reference to elders, mother and father is impolite. Similarly, the use of second person pronominal prefix for kinship term such as nəma “your mother” and nəpa “your father” is impolite. We can drop the pronoun nəŋ “you” when referring to elders as in 5a. and we can refer non-specifically as in 5b.

(5a) (nəŋ) cak carebo

(you) meal eat-Q.mark-NZR.

Have you taken food?

(5b) cak canorebo

Meal eat-NON.SPEC.Q.mark-NZR

Have you(non-specific) taken food?
As for similarities, both the languages distinguish three persons. They are presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Manipuri</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sing</td>
<td>plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>he/she/it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>