

# SOME SOCIOLINGUISTIC AND MORPHOSYNTACTIC FEATURES IN DUMI

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*Dumi is a less described Kirati language of the Rai group. The word order phenomenon in this language is of SOV pattern. This language exhibits a consistently ergative-absolutive case marking system. Including the glottal stop, there are 26 consonants and seven phonemic vowels in Dumi. The maximum syllable structure is (C<sub>1</sub>) (C<sub>2</sub>) (G) V (X), where G is a glide and 'X' is a consonant or a vowel. Dumi children are compelled to read and write in Nepali or English. However, the Dumi language will survive if the Dumi people continue to speak, read and write in their mother tongue.*

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## 1. Introduction

Dumi is a less described Kirati language of the Rai group. Among 27 different Kirat speech communities, Dumi belongs to the western Kirati group of the Eastern Himalayish sub-branch of the Tibeto-Burman branch under the Sino-Tibetan family. It is a preliterate language spoken by an indigenous nationality referred to as 'Dumi Rai' inhabiting the hilly region of Khotang district. Dumi is one of the pronominalizing Kirati languages of the Rai group, carrying person and number indices in the verb root, sometimes for the agent/patient participant. In the case of the multilingual setting of the 24 different Kirati languages of the Rai group (CBS, 2011), there is a complication in determining where one language split-ends and another begins.

The original homeland of the Dumi spreads over the Northern Khotang district in the Sagarmatha zone of the Eastern Nepal. In addition, there are many Dumi people who are living around their homeland, viz., Maheshwori or Ribdung-Raigaun, Sungdel, Patheka, Phedi, Kubhinde, Baspani, Diktel, Khartamchha, Nerpa, Haunchur and Lamidanda, etc. Dumis are also found to have been living in a small number in different parts of West Bengal, viz., Darjeeling, Kalingpong, Sikkim, Kharsang, etc. Likewise, other countries like Bhutan, Burma (Myanmar), Hong-Kong, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada, etc.

This paper is organized into the five sections. Section 1 presents general idea about the Dumi people and their mother tongue. We present a brief overview of morphosyntax in section 2. In section 3, we describe about some phonological issues. Section 4 deals with literacy and future of this language. Finally, section 5 summarizes the findings of the paper.

### 1.1 The people

Dumi is an ethnonym and a loconym referring to both the Dumi community and the language they speak. Among the multilingual Kirat Rai communities, Dumi is one of the minority language groups that belong to the western Kirat of Nepal (Hanßon, 1991:33). The resource persons from the Dumi speech community claim that the dialectic meaning of the term 'Dumi' indicates multi-meanings like 'meeting together', 'association', 'coming into contact', etc. The Dumi people use *Dumi Radu* 'Dumi Rai' as an endonym in their mother tongue, which is the name most exclusively used for both the language and its speakers. In citing the chronicles from the Kirat Rai ancestral records, some Dumi people claim that the word '*Dumi*' signifies a person's name (or an ancestral) *Tumsoli*.

### 1.2 Distribution

The Dumi settlements are concentrated in the Rawakhola valley in the Northern Khotang district. In the surrounding of the confluence of Rawa and Tap River, around 6,000 Dumi people are found, distributed over five distinct areas Kharmi, Jalapa, Baksila, Sapteshwor and Makpa, abbreviated as 'Kha.Ja.Ba.Sa.Ma'. Among these main areas, there is a gradual order of decreasing numbers in the retention of the Dumi language. Besides, there is a minority of Dumi speakers in other certain areas like Maheshwori (Ribdung-Raigaun), Sungdel, Patheka, Phedi, Hacheka (Kubhinde), Baspani, Diktel, Khartamchha, Nerpa, Haunchur, Lamidanda, etc. The total population of the Dumi people is 12,000 in Nepal (Epele et al. 2012:45). According to the latest CBS report 2011, the total Dumi population is 7,638 of which only 2,500 (i.e., 32.7%) of the total population of Dumi speak this language as their mother tongue (Ethnologue 2012:45). Hanßon (1993:34) mentions the number of Dumi speakers about 1,000 to 2,000, with a strong tendency of gradual decreasing.

Majority of the Dumi speakers are from some villages of the Makpa area, viz., Norung, Lumdu-Chhuka, Ilim, Bepla, Bakchuwa, Lewa, Chaintar, etc. whereas a very limited of them are from the other areas like Jalapa, Baksila, Kharmi and Sapteshwor in the adjoining areas. The sociolinguistic survey report (2014) mentions that among the three varieties: (1) Makpa; (2) Jalapa + Kharmi; and (3) Baksila + Sapteshwor, retention of this language in Jalapa, Kharmi, Baksila, Sapteshwor and Kubhinde as compared to Makpa area is very low. In this regard, Dumi, in all its varieties, is spoken in the territory abutting the Rava-Tap rivers and their confluence and upstream from there. All these varieties are spoken in the adjoining area to one another, separated by uninhabited hill barriers between 1,400 to 2,100 meters in altitude.

### 1.3 Multilingualism

Multilingualism is a common phenomenon in a multilingual country like Nepal. It is found in the Dumi speech community that they speak both the Dumi and Nepali languages equally well. The geographical boundary of the Dumi speaking area includes other Kirat Rai communities like Thulung [tdh], Khaling [klr], Koyu/Koyee [kkt],

Sampang [rav], Nachhiring [ncd], Chamling [rab], etc. In the Dumi homeland, other Kirati languages are considered as the second languages. For example, Thulung and Nachhiring languages are spoken in the Makpa area; Koyu/Koyee and Sampang languages are spoken in the Baksila area; and Sampang and Chamling languages are spoken in the Kharmi area. On the other hand, lack of an awareness program and due to heavy influence, the majority of the Dumi speakers are gradually shifting to the dominant language (Nepali).

#### **1.4 Dialectal variation**

Eppelle et al. (2012: 45-46) identify Dumi with the ISO code [639-3: dus] and claim that there are three dialects: Kharbari (i.e., Jalapa), Lamdija (i.e., Baksila) and Makhipa (i.e., Makpa). On the other hand, Hanson (1991:34) claims that the most characteristic western dialect is the Makpa dialect, whereas the Baksila dialect (also known as 'Sotmali') can be considered the most characteristic eastern dialect. The 'Kharbari' dialect can be considered intermediate, whereas the Hacheka seems to have more in common with the Lamdija dialect.' In brief, there seems to be two distinct geographical dialects in Dumi as the western (i.e., Makpa and Jalapa) and eastern (Sapteshwor, Baksila and Kharmi) dialects. However, this study has identified main three varieties in Dumi: (i) Makpa variety: spoken in the north-western; (ii) Baksila variety: spoken in the north-eastern; and (iii) Jalapa variety: spoken in the southern part of the Dumi homeland.

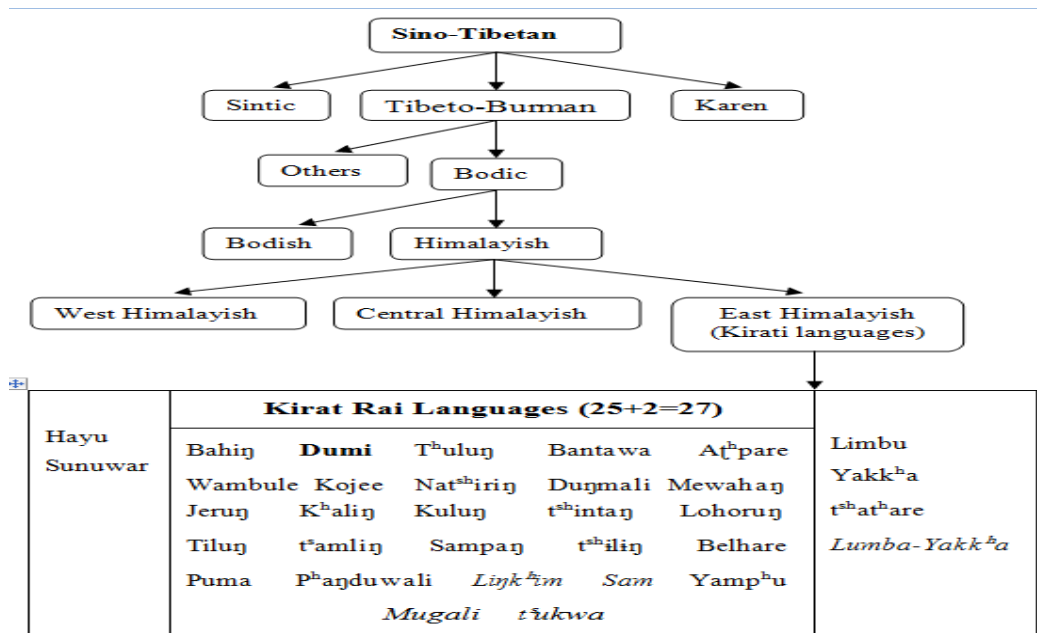
So far as the dialectal variations of Dumi are concerned, van Driem (1993:4) states in this way that 'the main area of Dumi has been found in the Northern Khotang district, in the hill area of the Rawakhola valley. He sub-divides Dumi into four dialects: surrounding the confluence in Sapteshwor (i.e., identical with the idiom 'Brasmi' in the LSN materials), south of the Tap and Rawa river (i.e., 'Kharbari' dialect that comprises Sasarka and Kubhinde) and Kharmi (i.e., the area in which Dumi is said to have become nearly extinct). Despite the various Dumi dialects, the term Dumi denotes one and only one minority Dumi speech community. The most easily identified differences between the Makpa variety versus the varieties spoken further south area are in the lexicon, especially in the nouns and adjectives and in the pronunciation as well.

#### **1.5 Genetic affiliation**

In this section, we first review the attempts made to classify the Dumi language. It has a different classification of the Kirati languages, which are classified as Sino-Tibetan, Tibeto-Burman, Himalayish, Western Kirati (*Koi-Wayu*), Western Kirati, marginal northern sub-group, Dumi (*dumi boʔo*, *dumi bro*), etc. with main three dialects: Eastern (with Sotmali), which is also considered as the Baksila and Sapteshwor area; Western (Makpa), which is also known as distinct variation in Dumi; Southern (with Brasmi, nearly extinct). Similarly, Khaling (*Khaling bra*) and Koyee (*Koi boʔo*, *Koyu boʔ*), two closed neighbouring Kirati languages of the Rai group.

He claims that Dumi’s closest relatives appear to be Khaling and Koyee. Although the genetic classification under the Sino-Tibetan family has been done up to the Eastern Himalayish group, there is not any clear cut genetic classification among the Kirati languages of the Rai group, and so is true for the Dumi language. Linguistically, Dumi is closer to Khaling and Koyee though Michailovsky (2012:49) claims that Dumi is closer to Khaling, Thulung and Bahing. Based on Bradley (2002:16-19), Dumi has been classified as a member of a group referred to as ‘Rai’ Kirati under the Bodic section of East Himalayish as in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: Linguistic affiliation of Dumi**



Source: Epele et al. (2012), LinSuN

**1.6 Previous researches and literature**

There are only a few works dealing with the Dumi people, their rituals, culture and language. These works describe some aspects of the sociolinguistics, phonology, morphology and syntax of the language apart from the other related aspects of this speech community. The reviews of the linguistic researches which have been carried out in the Dumi language till now are as follows:

Hodgson (1828) is the first study which provides basic information about two dozen Kirati languages. In addition, Hodgson (1857: 351-372, 1880: 194-215) is credited to be the first to recognize the separate forms for the dual, and also double sets of the dual and the plural of the first person together with inclusive and exclusive distinction.

He introduced the 'Dumi' word in his grammatical notes and there is also a text labeled 'Rai' in the *Linguistic Survey of India*, which was collected in Dumi (Grierson 1909, III (I): 372-381). Later, he published a comparative vocabulary of 28 T-B languages and the sketch grammars of a few languages of the same genetic stock.

Grierson (1909: 372-381) incorporated several minority languages of Nepal like Dumi in the substantial *Linguistic Survey of India*, though he relied on earlier research and did not provide sufficient information about this language. Benedict (1972) is an extensive work on the Tibeto-Burman languages like Dumi. It presents comparative phonological features of the T-B languages and makes a phonological reconstruction of Proto-Tibeto-Burman.

Toba (1973), with the collection of words consisting of the Swadesh 100 wordlist, claims that Kharbari (i.e. Jalapa) dialect seems to be more common with the Makpa dialect which is absolutely true. Similarly, the Sapteshwor dialect is related to the Jalapa dialect in many aspects. Likewise, the Kubhinde dialect seems to be closer to the Baksila dialect. Hansson (1991: 33) is an extensive work on the Dumi language that presents a peculiar scenario about Dumi.

van Driem (1993) is the first comprehensive study which provides descriptive grammatical categories of Dumi. His analysis of the Dumi language is a traditional descriptive model which is the first linguistic-based grammar ever prepared about the Dumi language in Baksila Dumi (i.e., Halkhum area) following a systematic linguistic tradition.

Rai and Paudel (2008) is the first study based on Makpa Dumi which provides an overview of the Dumi language as the fundamental background to the report of 'The Documentation of the Dumi Language'. Rai and Thokar (2014) present the linguistic and sociolinguistic background information about the Dumi language in the survey report carried out by 'LinSuN'. It is found that the Dumi language has been retained in three generations only in some villages like Norung, Lumdu-Chhuka, Ilim, Makpa, Bepla, Bakchuwa, Lewa, Chaintar, etc. in the Makpa area.

Rai (2016) is a recent Dumi Grammar based on the Doctoral dissertation that provides the detailed linguistic insight from functional typological approach. Epele et al. (2012: 45) categorizes Dumi as EGIDS 7 (shifting) by assessing the level of endangerment. It classifies Dumi in the western Kirati Rai language of Himalayan group that belongs to the Tibeto-Burman branch under the Sino-Tibetan language family. Thus the available works on the Dumi language are Hodgson (1828), Hodgson (1857), Grierson (1909), Benedict (1972), Toba (1973), Hansson (1991), van Driem (1993), Toba et al. (2002), Boyd (1988), Yadava (2004), Rai and Paudel (2008), Rai (2008), Epele et al. (2012), Rai and Thokar (2013), Rai (2016), etc. These works so far reviewed have assisted the understanding of the existing features of the Dumi language.

## 2. Morphosyntax

In this sub-topic, we concentrate on some morphosyntactic issues like (2.1) constituent order, (2.2) grammatical relation and case marking and (2.3) Verb paradigms.

### 2.1 Constituent order

In Dumi, the word order phenomenon is an SOV pattern. The order of the constituents of a simple transitive clause, viz., S (Subject), O (Object) and V (Verb) may be permuted from their stipulated places as illustrated in (1).

- (1) a. *najema si tuju* (SOV)  
 najem-a si tuŋ-u  
 Nayem-ERG rice drink-3SG.PST  
 ‘Nayem drank tea.’
- b. *najema tuju si* (SVO)  
 najem-a tuŋ-u si  
 Nayem-ERG drink-3SG.PST tea
- c. *tujunajema si* (VSO)  
 tuŋ-u najem-a si  
 drink-3SG.PST Nayem-ERG tea
- d. *tuju si najema* (VOS)  
 tuŋ-u si najem-a  
 drink-3SG.PST tea Nayem-ERG
- e. *si najema tuju* (OSV)  
 si najem-a tuŋ-u  
 tea Nayem-ERG drink-3SG.PST
- f. *si tuju najema* (OVS)  
 si tuŋ-u najem-a  
 tea drink-3SG.PST Nayem-ERG

It is to be noted that all the six logically possible clauses (1a-f) are acceptable in Dumi. However, we can argue that SOV in (1a) is the neutral/basic constituent order in this language. The native speakers have a strong feeling that SOV is the basic word-order. The clauses in (1b-f) show the permutation of the constituents in the simple transitive clause. However, the change in order generally triggers a change in the meaning of the permuted elements from its stipulated place.

### 2.2 Grammatical relation and case marking

In this sub-section, we discuss about the two consecutive topics (2.2.1) grammatical relation and (2.2.2) case marking.

### 2.2.1 Grammatical relation

The nominal case markers mark different grammatical relations. Typically, the nouns refer to the notion of the things, places, persons and animals, and the abstract entities like love, honesty, willingness, etc. Givón (1984:63) mentions distributionally, the nouns can function as the head of the noun phrase and perform the syntactic roles. This condition is applicable to Dumi too as illustrated in (2).

- (2) a. *lamdubi donpo minua anilai ajirt<sup>h</sup>ijum ga*  
 lamdu-bi don-po minu-a  
 way-LOC see-GEN man-ERG  
 ani-lai a-jir-<sup>h</sup>ij-um ga  
 2SG-DAT 3SG-scold-PROG-PRF be.PST  
 ‘The man (whom we) saw on the way was scolding you.’
- b. *apo duspi lasbat<sup>s</sup>u h<sup>h</sup>la*  
 a-po duspi lasbat<sup>s</sup>u h<sup>h</sup>la  
 2SG-GEN elder son arrive.PST  
 ‘Your elder son arrived.’
- c. *ratepaa raba k<sup>h</sup>it<sup>s</sup>i koksidi*  
 ratepa-a raba k<sup>h</sup>it<sup>s</sup>i  
 Nanahang-ERG nearly thief  
 jam-sid-i  
 hit-kill-3SG.PST  
 ‘Ratipa nearly hit the thief to death.’
- d. *t<sup>sh</sup>emso t<sup>sh</sup>emso ŋa silpu lupdeti*  
 t<sup>sh</sup>em-so t<sup>sh</sup>em-so ŋa silpu  
 coax-SIM REDUP EMPH bird  
 lup-det-i  
 catch-AMBL-3SG.PST  
 ‘(He) caught the bird at the spot by coaxing.’

Examples (2a-d) show the different roles of the nouns. In (2a), the noun *minu* ‘man’ functions as the head of the noun phrase *lamdubi donpo minu* ‘the man whom we saw on the way’, and the noun phrase *apo duspi lasbat<sup>s</sup>u* ‘your elder son’ in (2b) functions as the subject role in the clause. Similarly, the proper noun *ratepa* ‘Ratepa’ in (2c) plays the semantic role of agent, and the noun *k<sup>h</sup>it<sup>s</sup>i* ‘thief’ plays that of object. Likewise, the noun *silpu* ‘bird’ functions as the object role in (2d).

The nouns can also have the grammatical relations like subject (S) and object (O) as illustrated in (3).

- (3) a. *tomaa upelai sik<sup>h</sup>andi*  
 toma-a u-pe-lai  
 eldest female sibling-ERG 3SG.POSS-e.brother-DAT

- sik<sup>h</sup>and-i  
greet-3SG.PST  
'Eldest female sibling greeted her elder brother.'
- b. *ad<sup>z</sup>aka umlai lutto*  
ad<sup>z</sup>aka um-lai lut-t-o  
later on 3SG-DAT tell-NPST-1SG  
'I shall tell him later on.'

Example (3a) consists of two noun phrases *toma* 'eldest female sibling' and *pepe* 'elder brother'. In the matrix clause, *toma* 'eldest female sibling' preceding the object *upe* 'her elder brother' functions as the subject, whereas *upe* 'her elder brother' preceding the finite verb *sik<sup>h</sup>andi* 'greeted', functions as the object. Similarly, in (3b), the noun phrases *umlai* 'to him' preceding the finite verb *lutto* '(I) shall tell him', functions as the patient.

### 2.2.2 Case marking

In general, case is considered as a syntactic as well as morphological category of the noun phrase. In a clause or sentence, case markers establish the functional (or semantic) relation of the arguments with the predicate. Dumi exhibits a consistently ergative-absolutive case marking system. Givón (200:208) notes that system is governed by the principle of transitivity which primarily codes the syntactic distinction between the transitive and intransitive clauses.

The subject of the transitive clause displays ergative case marking. However, the direct object of the transitive clause shares the absolutive case marking as illustrated in (4).

- (4) **Transitive clause**
- a. *uma d<sup>a</sup> k<sup>h</sup>ipti*  
um-a d<sup>a</sup>-∅ k<sup>h</sup>ipt-i  
3SG-ERG rice-ABS cook-3SG.PST  
'She cooked rice.'
- b. *pwaŋmaa uspu lup<sup>h</sup>u*  
pwaŋma-a uspu-∅ lup<sup>h</sup>-u  
snake-ERG rat-ABS catch-3SG.PST  
'The cat caught a rat.'

In examples (4a, b), the subjects of the transitive clause *um* 'she', *pwaŋma* 'cat' are marked by the ergative marker *-a*, whereas the direct objects of the transitive clause *d<sup>a</sup>* 'rice' and *rat* 'rat' are not marked (or zero marked '-∅') yet.

The direct object of the transitive and the subject of the intransitive clause share the absolutive case marking as illustrated in (5).

- (5) **Intransitive clause**
- a. *um re*  
um-∅ re



- 3SG-ABS laugh.3SG.PST  
 ‘He laughed.’
- b. *k<sup>h</sup>liba huk<sup>h</sup>u*  
 k<sup>h</sup>liba-∅ huk<sup>h</sup>-u  
 dog-ABS bark-3SG.PST  
 ‘The dog barked.’

In examples (5a, b), the subjects of intransitive clause *um* ‘he’ in (5a) and *k<sup>h</sup>liba* ‘dog’ in (5b) are zero-marked ‘-∅’. Like other Kirati languages: Bantawa (Rai 1985), Chamling (Ebert, 1997) and Koyee (Rai, 2015), Dumi also exhibits other relational functions, viz., instrumental, dative, comitative, ablative, genitive, locative, allative, inessive and path. These are illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1: Case inflections and their relational functions**

Case inflections	Relational functions	Label (gloss)
<i>-a</i>	Ergative/Instrumental	ERG/INST
<i>-lai</i>	Dative/Benefactive	DAT/BEN
<i>-po</i>	Genitive	GEN
<i>-kajo</i>	Comitative	COM
<i>-la</i>	Ablative	ABL
<i>o-/a-/u-</i>	Possessive	POSS
<i>-bi</i>	Locative	LOC
<i>-hu</i>	Allative	ALL
<i>-gobi</i>	Inessive	INES
<i>-la/-lam</i>	Path	PATH

### 2.2.3 Case inflections and their relational functions

The case inflections and their relational functions are discussed as follows:

#### (a) Ergative <-a>

MORPH: <-a>

LABEL: -ERG

Dumi does not exhibit split-ergativity. Irrespective of tense-aspect or person, the case inflection, *-a* exclusively marks the subject of the transitive clause as illustrated in (6).

#### (6) (i) Past tense

- a. *uma kΛ dapti*  
 um-a kΛ dapt-i  
 3SG-ERG curry taste-3SG.PST  
 ‘She tested curry.’
- b. *uma dudu hΛpti*  
 um-a dudu hΛpt-i  
 3SG-ERG milk drink-3SG.PST

‘He drank milk.’

**(ii) Non-past tense**

- a. *umakΛ k<sup>h</sup>ipta*  
 um-a      kΛ      k<sup>h</sup>ipt-a  
 3SG-ERG    curry    cook-3SG.NPST  
 ‘She cooks/will cook curry.’
- b. *uma dudu hΛpta*  
 um-a      dudu    hΛpt-a  
 3SG-ERG    milk    drink-3SG.NPST  
 ‘He drinks/will drink milk.’

In examples (6-i), the subjects *um* ‘she’ of the transitive clauses, irrespective of tense-aspect or person, are marked by the ergative marker *-a*. Likewise, in examples (6-ii) the subjects *um* ‘he’ of the transitive clauses, irrespective of tense-aspect or person, are marked by the ergative marker *-a*.

**(b) Instrumental: <-a>**

MORPH: <-a>

LABEL: -INST

The case inflection *-a* is also affixed to the nouns to code implement (i.e., a tool, inanimate), by which an agent accomplishes an action as illustrated in (7).

- (7) a. *ganpaa pΛndia si: t<sup>s</sup>umu*  
 ganpa-a      pΛndi-a      si:      t<sup>s</sup>um-u  
 Ganpa-ERG    axe-INST    wood    chop-3SG.PST  
 ‘Ganpa chopped the wood with an axe.’
- b. *nakimaa lop<sup>h</sup>ea grΛnΛm jali*  
 nakima-a      lop<sup>h</sup>e-a      grΛnΛm      jal-i  
 Nakima-ERG    ladle-INST    nettle      press-3SG.PST  
 ‘Nakima pressed the nettle with a ladle.’

In examples (7a, b), *pΛndia* ‘with an axe’ in (7a) and *lop<sup>h</sup>ea* ‘with a ladle’ in (7b) the case inflection *-a* marks the instrumental case.

**(c) Locative <-bi>**

MORPH: <-bi>

LABEL: -LABEL

The case inflection *-bi* is secondarily used to mark the location of a thing or a person. It indicates a place or a destination as illustrated in (8).

- (8) a. *bet<sup>h</sup>o gatt<sup>h</sup>at<sup>s</sup>obi mota*  
 bet<sup>h</sup>o      gatt<sup>h</sup>a-t<sup>s</sup>obi      go-t-a  
 khukuri    shed-LOC      be-NPST-3SG  
 ‘The khukuri is on the shed.’

- b. *lamdubi biʔ mota*  
 lamdu-bi biʔ mo-t-a  
 way-LOC cow be-NPST-3SG  
 ‘On the way, there is a cow.’

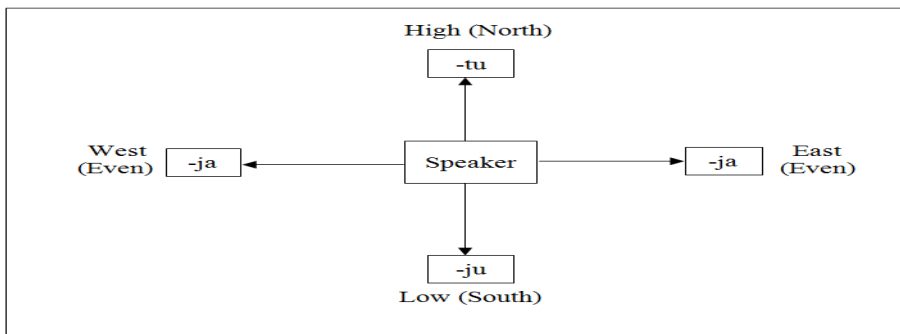
In examples (8a, b), case inflection *-bi* in *gattʰatʰobi* ‘on the shed’ in (8a), *lamdubi* ‘on the way’ in (8b), marks exclusively the locative case. Like Bantawa (Rai, 1985:69), Dumi has locative markers in accordance with the direction as in the Table 2.

**Table 2: The directional locative markers**

Directions	High	Even	Low	suffixes	Remarks
North	+	-	-	<i>-tu</i>	higher level
South	-	-	+	<i>-ju</i>	lower level
East/West	-	+	-	<i>-ja</i>	even (same) level
Neutral	-	-	-	<i>-bi</i>	directionless

The information given in Table 2 can be explained with the help of Figure 2.

**Figure 2: The directional locative markers**



**Locative at higher level <-tu>**

MORPH: <-tu>

LABEL: LOC (higher)

The case inflection *-tu*, is primarily used to mark the location of the things or entities or persons at a higher level as listed in (9).

- (9) suffix /-tu/ ‘in’, ‘on’, ‘at’ (higher level)
- kim-tu/-ti* ‘at home (above)’
  - ma-(p)-tu/-ti* ‘over there (above)’
  - tʰo-(p)-tu/-ti* ‘at the top (above)’

In example (9a-c), the locative case inflection in higher level in *kim-tu* ‘at home (above)’ in (9a), *ma-(p)-tu* ‘over there (above)’ in (9b) and *t<sup>o</sup>-(p)-tu* ‘at the top (above)’ in (9c) is marked by the locative marker *-tu/-ti* at the higher level.

**Locative at lower level <-ju>**

MORPH: <-ju>

LABEL: LOC (lower)

The case inflection *-ju*, is primarily used to mark the location of the things or entities or persons at the lower level as in (10).

- (10) suffix /-ju/ ‘in’, ‘on’, ‘at’ (lower level)
- a. *kim-ju* ‘at home (below)’
  - b. *waje-ju* ‘in the Terai (below)’
  - c. *p<sup>h</sup>ar-ju* ‘at the bottom (below)’

In examples (10a-c), the locative case inflection in lower level in *kim-ju* ‘at home (below)’ in (10a), *waje-ju* ‘in the Terai (below)’ in (10b), *p<sup>h</sup>ar-ju* ‘at the bottom (below)’ in (10c) is marked by the locative marker *-ju* to indicate the existence of any object at the lower level.

**Locative at the same (or even) level <-ja>**

MORPH: <-ja>

LABEL: LOC (even/same level)

The case inflection *-ja*, is primarily used to mark the location of the things or persons at the same or even level as in (11).

- (11) suffix /-ja/ ‘in’, ‘on’, ‘at’ (even/same level)
- a. *kim-ja* ‘at home’ (even level)
  - b. *ta-ja* ‘this side’ or ‘here’ (even level)
  - c. *ma-ja* ‘that side’ or ‘there’ (even level)

In examples (11a-c), the locative case inflection at the same level in *kim-ja* ‘at home (same level)’ in (11a), *ta-ja* ‘this side/here (even level)’ in (11b) and *ma-ja* ‘that side/there (even level)’ in (11c) is marked by the locative marker *-ja* at the same level.

**Locative <-bi>(directionless)**

MORPH: <-bi>

LABEL: LOC (directionless)

The case inflection *-bi*, is primarily used to mark the location of the things or entities or persons in any direction as shown in (12).

- (12) suffix *-bi* ‘in’, ‘on’, ‘at’ (directionless)

- a. *kim-bi* 'at home'
- b. *del-bi* 'in the village'
- c. *nu:-bi* 'in mind'

In examples (12a-c), the locative case inflection at any direction in *kim-bi* 'at home' in (12a), *del-bi* 'in the village' in (12b) and *nu:-bi* 'in mind' in (12c) is marked by the locative marker *-bi* in directionless situation.

**(d) Benefactive <-lai>**

MORPH: <-lai>

LABEL: -BEN

Apart from the primary function of coding the locative case, the case inflection *-lai* is also used to mark the nominals which are affected by the action of the agent as illustrated in (13).

- (13) a. *uma p<sup>h</sup>itikoulaisod<sup>z</sup>a bi*  
 um-a p<sup>h</sup>itikou-lai  
 3SG-ERG beggar-BEN  
 sod<sup>z</sup>a bi  
 money give.3SG.PST  
 'He gave money to the beggar.'
- b. *jumpiaut<sup>s</sup>ulai sumupo su bi*  
 jumpi-a u-<sup>t</sup>u-lai  
 youngest sibling-ERG 3SG.POSS-child-BEN  
 sumu-po su bi  
 deer-GEN meat give.3SG.PST  
 'The youngest sibling gave pheasant meat to her child.'

In example (13a), the benefactive nominal *p<sup>h</sup>itikou* 'beggar' and in (13b), *ut<sup>s</sup>u* 'her child' are marked by the benefactive case inflection *-lai*.

**(e) Dative <-lai>**

MORPH/S: <-lai>

LABEL: -DAT

The dative case is marked by the inflection *-lai*. In an ergative-absolutive language like Thulung (Allen, 1975:92), Chamling (Ebert, 1997:46) and Bhujel (Regmi, 2007:158), the direct objects (i.e., patients) are not theoretically overtly marked. However, the human patient nouns or direct object nouns in a transitive clause are marked by the case inflection *-laid* illustrated in (14).

- (14) a. *k<sup>h</sup>it<sup>s</sup>ia aṅulai aduk<sup>h</sup>o*  
 k<sup>h</sup>it<sup>s</sup>i-a aṅu-lai a-duk<sup>h</sup>-o  
 thief-ERG 1SG-DAT 3SG-see-1SG.PST  
 'The thief saw me.'

- b. *pwaŋmaa uspulai kimgobi sidi*  
 pwaŋma-a uspu-lai kim-gobi sid-i  
 cat-ERG rat-DAT • house-LOC kill-3SG.PST  
 ‘The cat killed a rat inside the house.’

In examples (14a, b), *aŋu* ‘I’ in (14a), *uspu* ‘rat’ in (14b), all the patients are marked by the case inflection *-lai*. Such marking is referred to as an anti-dative marking. It is, however, glossed as the dative case.

**(f) Genitive <-po>**

MORPH: <-po>

LABEL:-GEN

The case inflection *-po* is used to mark the genitive case as illustrated in (15).

- (15) a. *p<sup>h</sup>ūlibi sisilapo ja ga<sup>t</sup>hiŋu*  
 p<sup>h</sup>ūli-bi sisila-po ja ga<sup>t</sup>hiŋ-u  
 cave-LOC swallow-GEN nest exist-HAB-PST  
 ‘There was a swallow’s nest in the cave.’
- b. *majo ŋa sisilapo t<sup>s</sup>u biri*  
 majo ŋa sisila-po  
 at that time FOC swallow-GEN  
 t<sup>s</sup>u biri-i  
 baby fly-3SG.PST  
 ‘At that time, the swallow’s baby flew.’

In examples (15a, b), the case inflection *-po* ‘of’ in *sisila-po* ‘swallow’s’ in (15a, b), marks the genitive case.

**(g) Possessive <o->, <a-> and <u->**

MORPH/S: <o->, <a-> and <u->

LABEL:-POSS

The singular personal pronouns: *aŋu*, *ani* and *umshow* corresponding possessive prefixes <o->, <a-> and <u->, e.g. *o-kap<sup>h</sup>u* ‘my face’, *a-kap<sup>h</sup>u* ‘your face’, *u-kap<sup>h</sup>u* ‘her/his face’, etc. The possessive personal prefixes are well illustrated by the verb *dok* ‘to see’ as in (16).

- (16) a. *aŋua okim doktu*  
 aŋu-a o-kim dokt-u  
 1SG-ERG 1SG.POSS-house see-1SG.PST  
 ‘I saw my house.’
- b. *ania akim adokti*  
 ani-a a-kim a-dokt-i  
 2SG-ERG 2SG.POSS-house 2SG-see-2SG.PST  
 ‘You (SG) saw your house.’

- c. *uma ukim dokti*  
 um-a u-kim dokt-i  
 3SG-ERG 3SG.POSS-house see-3SG.PST  
 ‘S/he saw her/his house.’

In examples (16a-c), the respective case inflection <*o-*>, <*a-*> and <*u-*> (i.e., my, your, his/her) in *o-kim* ‘my house’ in (16a), *a-kim* ‘your house’ in (16b), *u-kim* ‘his/her house’ in (16c) mark the possessive case.

**(h) Ablative <-lamka/-laka>**

MORPH: <-lamka/laka>  
 LABEL: -ABL

The case inflection *-lamka/laka* marks the ablative case as illustrated in (17).

- (17) a. *d<sup>h</sup>amrolaka biʔ t<sup>h</sup>iju*  
 d<sup>h</sup>amro-laka biʔ t<sup>h</sup>i-(j)u  
 cliff-ABL cow fall down-3SG.PST  
 ‘The cow fell down from the cliff.’
- c. *uma dusulamka sod<sup>z</sup>a lokk<sup>h</sup>u hudi*  
 um-a dusu-lamka sod<sup>z</sup>a  
 3SG-ERG friend-ABL money  
 lokk<sup>h</sup>u hud (\*t)-i  
 borrow bring-3SG.PST  
 ‘She borrowed money from her friend.’

In examples (17a, b), the case inflection *-lamka/laka* ‘from’ in *d<sup>h</sup>amro-laka* ‘from the cliff’ in (17a), *dusu-lamka* ‘from her/his friend’ in (17b), has been used to mark the ablative case.

**(i) Comitative <-kajo>**

MORPH: <-kajo>  
 LABEL: -COM

The case inflection *-kajo* is used to express accompaniment (i.e., comitative) as illustrated in (18).

- (18) a. *um anikajo k<sup>h</sup>usta*  
 um ani-kajo k<sup>h</sup>us-t-a  
 3SG 2SG-COM go-NPST-3SG  
 ‘He will go with you.’
- b. *anjukajo tejo sod<sup>z</sup>a mangu*  
 anju-kajo tejo sod<sup>z</sup>a ma-ŋgu  
 1SG-COM now money NEG-be  
 ‘I do not have money now.’

In examples (18a, b), the case inflection *-kajo* ‘with’ *ani-kajo* ‘with you’ in (18a), *anju-kajo* ‘with me’ in (18b), has been used to mark the comitative case.

**(j) Allative <-hu>**

MORPH: &lt;-hu&gt;

LABEL: -ALL

The case inflection *-hu* marks the allative case as illustrated in (19).

- (19) a. *t<sup>s</sup>u:t<sup>s</sup>u kawahu k<sup>h</sup>ut<sup>s</sup>i*  
 t<sup>s</sup>u:t<sup>s</sup>u                      kawa-hu                      k<sup>h</sup>ut<sup>s</sup>-i  
 child                              river-ALL                      go-3SG.PST  
 ‘The child went towards the river.’
- b. *buplo daulohu buli*  
 buplo                      daulo-hu                      bul-i  
 chick                      hearth-ALL                      rush-3SG.PST  
 ‘The chick rushed towards the hearth.’

In examples (19a, b), the case inflection *-hu* ‘towards’ in *kawa-hu* ‘towards the river’ in (19a), *daulo-hu* ‘towards the hearth’ in (19b), is used to mark the allative case.

**(k) Inessive <-gobi>**

MORPH: &lt;-gobi&gt;

LABEL: -INES

The case inflection *-gobi* marks the inessive case as illustrated in (20).

- (20) a. *t<sup>s</sup>u:t<sup>s</sup>u saulogobi suls-i*  
 t<sup>s</sup>u:t<sup>s</sup>u      saulo-gobi      suls-i  
 child      jungle-INES      hide-3SG.PST  
 ‘The child hid inside the jungle.’
- b. *nuru p<sup>h</sup>ũligobi brusta*  
 nuru      p<sup>h</sup>ũli-gobi      brus-t-a  
 tiger      cave-INES      roar-NPST-3SG  
 ‘The tiger roars inside the cave.’

In examples (20a, b), the case inflection *-gobi* ‘inside’ in *saulo-gobi* ‘inside the jungle’ in (20a), *p<sup>h</sup>ũli-gobi* ‘inside the cave’ in (20b) is used to mark the inessive case.

**(l) Path <-la>**

MORPH: &lt;-la&gt;

LABEL: -PATH

The case inflection *-la* marks the path as illustrated in (21).

- (21) a. *majala mono tajala k<sup>h</sup>ut<sup>s</sup>a*  
 maja-la                      mono      taja-la  
 that way-through      not      this way-through  
 k<sup>h</sup>ut<sup>s</sup>-a  
 go-2SG.IMP  
 ‘Not through that way, go through this way.’



- b. *um kʰʌmla tambi piju*  
 um kʰʌm-la tambi pi-(j)u  
 3SG where-through here come-2SG.PST  
 ‘Through which way, did he come here?’

In examples (21a,b), the case inflection *-la* ‘through’ in *maja-la* ‘that way-through’, *taja-la* ‘this way-through’ in (21a), *kʰʌm-la* ‘which way-through’ in (21b), is used to mark the path case. Sometimes, the inflection *-la* is alternatively used as *-lam*.

### 2.3 Verb paradigms

To illustrate how subject agreement in Dumi is expressed in the verb system, consider the following verb paradigm which is representative of all Dumi verb paradigms: Inflections of the verb *tʰʌpt* ‘write’ is presented in Table 3 as a common example.

**Table 3: verb paradigms *tuy* ‘drink’**

	PRONOUN		PATIENT	NPST	PST
AGENT	3SG	<i>um-a</i>	<i>kʌŋku</i>	<i>tuyt-a</i>	<i>tuy-u</i>
	3DU	<i>untʰi-a</i>	<i>kʌŋku</i>	<i>tuyt-a-si</i>	<i>tʌŋ-si</i>
	3PL	<i>unimu-a</i>	<i>kʌŋku</i>	<i>tuyt-a-ni</i>	<i>tuy-ni</i>
	2SG	<i>ani-a</i>	<i>kʌŋku</i>	<i>a-tuyt-a</i>	<i>a-tuy-u</i>
	2DU	<i>antʰi-a</i>	<i>kʌŋku</i>	<i>a-tuyt-i</i>	<i>a-tuy-i</i>
	2PL	<i>animu-a</i>	<i>kʌŋku</i>	<i>a-tuyt-a-ni</i>	<i>a-tuy-ni</i>
	1SG	<i>aŋu-a</i>	<i>kʌŋku</i>	<i>tuyt-o</i>	<i>tuy-o</i>
	1DUi	<i>intʰi-a</i>	<i>kʌŋku</i>	<i>tuyt-i</i>	<i>tuy-i</i>
	1DUe	<i>untʰu-a</i>	<i>kʌŋku</i>	<i>tuyt-u</i>	<i>tuy-u</i>
	1PLi	<i>iŋki-a</i>	<i>kʌŋku</i>	<i>tuyt-i</i>	<i>tuyk-i</i>
	1PLe	<i>uŋku-a</i>	<i>kʌŋku</i>	<i>tuyt-a</i>	<i>tuyk-u</i>

Table 3 shows the inflectional forms of the verb root *tuy* ‘drink’ (i.e., verb paradigm) in Dumi. There will be the same inflections or verb paradigms for all types of verbs (i.e., intransitive, transitive and di-transitive) in this language.

### 3. Phonology

In this sub-topic, we will concentrate on some phonological issues like (3.1) Consonant phonemes, (3.2) Syllable patterns, (3.3) Vowel phonemes, and (3.4) Diphthongs, etc.

#### 3.1 Consonant phonemes

In Dumi, there are 26 consonants (together with the glottal stop /ʔ/) occurring at only three points of articulation: bilabial, alveolar and velar. They show four-way contrasts (or oppositions): place of articulation, manner of articulation, voicing and aspiration. In terms of place of articulation, there are six types of consonant phonemes: bilabial, dental, alveolar, palatal, velar and glottal. In terms of manner of articulation, there are seven

types of consonant phonemes: stops, nasals, affricates, fricatives, trills, laterals and approximants.

In the same vein, there are two types of consonant phonemes on the basis of voicing: voiceless and voiced. In terms of aspiration, there are two types of consonant phonemes: aspirated and unaspirated. The Dumi consonants can be further classified into voiceless unaspirated, voiceless aspirated, voiced unaspirated and voiced aspirated (i.e., breathy voice).

Table 4 shows the classification and full inventory of consonant phonemes in Dumi.

**Table 4: Inventory of the Consonant phonemes in Dumi**

		<b>Bilabial</b> VL VD	<b>Dental</b> VL VD	<b>Alveolar</b> VLVD	<b>Palatal</b> VLVD	<b>Velar</b> VL VD	<b>Glo</b> VL
<b>Plosive</b>	Unaspirated	<i>p b</i>	<i>t d</i>			<i>k g</i>	
	Aspirated	<i>p<sup>h</sup> b<sup>h</sup></i>	<i>t<sup>h</sup> d<sup>h</sup></i>			<i>k<sup>h</sup> g<sup>h</sup></i>	
<b>Affricate</b>	Unaspirated				<i>t<sup>s</sup> d<sup>z</sup></i>		
	Aspirated				<i>t<sup>sh</sup> d<sup>zh</sup></i>		
<b>Nasal</b>		<i>m</i>		<i>n</i>		<i>ŋ</i>	
<b>Trill</b>				<i>r</i>			
<b>Fricative</b>				<i>s</i>			<i>h</i>
<b>Lateral</b>				<i>l</i>			
<b>Semi-vowel</b>		<i>w</i>			<i>j</i>		

### 3.2 Syllable patterns

The maximum syllable structure in Dumi is (C<sub>1</sub>) (C<sub>2</sub>) (G) V (X), where G is a glide and ‘X’ is a consonant or a vowel. In the syllable, only the nucleus ‘V’ is obligatory. The other constituents (C, a consonant), (G, a glide) and (X, a consonant or vowel) are optional. There are eight common syllable patterns as in Table 5.

**Table 5: The common syllable patterns**

a.	V	/e/	‘oh yes’
b.	CV	/ki/	‘yam’
c.	CCV	/gri/	‘throne’
d.	CVX	/k <sup>h</sup> ur/	‘hand’
e.	VX	/um/	‘s/he’
f.	CGVX	/kjap/	‘sting’
g.	CCGVX	/prjak/	‘burst’

Table 5 illustrates the common syllable patterns, consisting of the maximum syllable structure (C<sub>1</sub>) (C<sub>2</sub>) (G) V (X) in Dumi.

### 3.3 Vowel phonemes

Rai (2016: 19-30) establishes the following inventory of seven phonemic vowels in Dumi, each having a long and a short counterpart based on the systematic contrasts and distribution of vowels in Makpa Dumi. There are forms of a symmetrical and typologically common system.

Table 6 presents the inventory of oral monophthongs in Dumi.

**Table 6: Inventory of the oral monophthongs**

Position	Front	Central	Back
	unrounded	unrounded	rounded
High	<i>i/i:</i>	<i>i/i:</i>	<i>u/u:</i>
Mid	<i>e/e:</i>		<i>o/o:</i>
Low-mid			<i>ʌ/ʌ:</i>
Low		<i>a/a:</i>	

Table 6 shows that there are seven oral monophthongs in terms of the height and front-back position of the tongue. They are: high-front /i/ and /i:/, mid-front /e/ and /e:/, high-central /i/ and /i:/, low-central /a/ and /a:/, low-mid back /ʌ/ and /ʌ:/ and mid-back /o/ and /o:/, high-back /u/ and /u:/, respectively.

### 3.4 Diphthongs

In Dumi, there are some diphthongs, which show the feature of rising ones, gliding from low or mid-low to high positions, front or back. The most frequently used diphthongs in Dumi are /ɿi/, /ʌu/, /ai/, /au/, /ei/, /ou/, /iu/, /ui/, /oi/ and /eu/. The mid-back vowel /ʌ/ and the low-central vowel /a/ cluster with both the high vowels /i, u/. All the diphthongs occur word-medially, though there are some instances where they are attested in the initial and final positions as well.

Table 7 presents the examples of diphthongs and their distributions.

**Table 7: Some diphthongs in Dumi**

<u>iu</u>	<u>ui</u>
<u>ei/eu</u>	<u>oi/ou</u>
	<u>ʌi/ʌu</u>
	<u>ai/au</u>

Table 7 shows the examples of diphthongs in Dumi. They are as follows: *ʌisina* ‘to return’, *kʰʌusi* ‘cotton’, *ʌaisina* ‘come down’, *bausa* ‘fox’, *meisi* ‘buffalo’, *muisina* ‘to wear’, *liulima* ‘earthquake’, etc.

#### 4. Literacy and the future of the language

Among 24 Kirati languages of the Rai group, Dumi is a less described language. Apart from some recent publications, van Driem (1993), Rai and all. (2011), Rai (2016), employ Roman, IPA and Devanagari script. Since Roman and Devanagari scripts are not particularly well suited to this language, and the choice between Roman and Devanagari script is not a priority issue. So far as the matter of native language literacy concerned, majority of Dumi children go to Nepali-medium institutions and very few of them attend English-medium schools too. Furthermore, most adult Dumi people (both male and female) over fifty are less literate, and very few young generations are in higher education though the level of education is not as high as one would like it to be. One of the reasons behind this fact is that there is no class in their mother tongue, and many Dumi children start school in Nepali or English medium. Till the date, there are no classes in Dumi at any level, and they have to learn to read and write in the dominant language, which causes trouble for them to catch up the subject matters in classes.

The UNESCO statement (1953) makes us clear that every child has a rightful claim to mother-tongue education, which is clearly not applied by many minority children throughout the world. In multilingual situation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, the teachers training and producing teaching materials is assumed to be costly and is hardly feasible to provide education in each and every language. It is believed that the language style in which the child has oral competence and then transfer to the language recognized as the medium of instruction in the formal educational system of the region. It is quite fair to say that literacy in one's native language facilitates the acquisition of literacy in a second language. The Dumi language will survive if the people continue to speak, read and write.

#### 5. Conclusion

Dumi is a less described Kirati language of the Rai group. The main three varieties in Dumi: (i) Makpa variety: spoken in the north-western; (ii) Baksila variety: spoken in the north-eastern; and (iii) Jalapa variety: spoken in the southern part of the Dumi homeland. In Dumi, the word order phenomenon is an SOV pattern. The nominal case markers mark different grammatical relations in Dumi. This language exhibits a consistently ergative-absolutive case marking system. There are 26 consonants and seven phonemic vowels in Dumi. The maximum syllable structure in Dumi is (C<sub>1</sub>) (C<sub>2</sub>) (G) V (X), where G is a glide and 'X' is a consonant or a vowel. The most frequently used diphthongs are /ɔi/, /ɔu/, /ai/, /au/, /ei/, /ou/ /iu/, /ui/, /oi/ and /eu/.

So far as the matter of native language literacy concerned, there are no classes in Dumi at any level, and they have to learn to read and write in the dominant language 'Nepali and English as well, which causes trouble for them to catch up the subject matters in classes. Obviously, the literacy in one's native language facilitates the acquisition of literacy in a second language and it is widely understood that a sound mother tongue competence

enhances cognitive development in general. To sum up, the Dumi language will survive if the people continue to speak, read and write in their mother tongue.

### Abbreviations

∅	Null	INST	Instrumental
1	First person	IPA	International phonetic alphabet
2	Second person	INES	Inessive
3	Third person	LOC	Locative
ABL	Ablative	MORPH	Morpheme
ABS	Absolutive	NEG	Negation, negative
ALL	Allative	NPST	Non-past
AMBL	Ambulative	PL	Plural
C	Consonant	POSS	Possessive
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics	PRF	Perfect
COM	Comitative	PROG	Progressive
BEN	Benefactive	PST	Past
DU	Dual	REDUP	Reduplication
DAT	Dative	SOV	Subject-object-verb
e.g.	Example	SIM	Simultaneous
EMPH	Emphatic	SG	Singular
ERG	Ergative	T-B	Tibeto-burman
EXCL/e	Exclusive	TR	Transitive
FOC	Focus	V	Vowel
G	Glide	VD	Voiced
GEN	Genitive	VDC	Village development committee
HAB	Habitual	VI	Verb intransitive
i.e.	That is	VL	Voiceless
IMP	Imperative	VT	Verb transitive
INCL/i	Inclusive	X	Vowel or consonant

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