STRUCTURAL PROPERTIES OF NOUNS IN WESTERN TAMANG

Ambika Regmi

Western Tamang (WT), a major dialect of Tamang, exhibits typologically interesting structural properties in the domain of nouns in contrast to Eastern Tamang (ET). Like in ET, the common nouns in WT are marked for gender, number, classifier and relational functions by specific markers. Unlike Himalayish languages and like ET and other Bodish languages, WT does not exhibit agreement between the subject and the verb in terms of gender and number. However, WT differs from ET, especially, in the domains of number, case markings and case syncretism.

Keywords: Grammatical gender, number, classifier, case inflections and case syncretism

1. Introduction

This paper presents a preliminary analysis of the structural properties of nouns in Western Tamang [tdg] from a functional-typological perspective. Western Tamang (WT, henceforth) is a major dialect of Tamang, other being Eastern Tamang (ET, henceforth) (Eppele et al., 2012). Nouns, major lexical categories/major classes in WT, are insightfully characterized by semantic, structural (morphological) and syntactic properties (Givón, 2001:49). Semantically, the nouns are defined as the most time stable, most complex, the most concrete, spatially the most compact and countable lexical category (Givón, 2001:51). WT also exemplifies such nouns as *yunba* 'rock' *doŋbo* 'tree', *la* 'mountain', *dim* 'house'. Structurally, the nouns (i.e., common nouns) in WT, like in ET, are marked for gender, number, classifier and relational functions by specific markers. Unlike Himalayish languages and like ET and other Bodish languages, WT does not exhibit agreement between the subject and verb in terms of gender and number. However, WT differs from ET, especially, in the domains of number, classifiers, case markings and case syncretism.

This paper is organized into seven sections. Section 2 deals with gender system in WT. In section 3, we examine the number whereas in section 4 we discuss classifiers in WT. Section 5 deals with case marking in WT. In section 6, we discuss case syncretism in WT.Section 7 summarizes the findings of the chapter.

2. Gender

Similar to the other Tamangish languages such as Tamang (Paudel, 2006; Mazaudon, 2003), Gurung (Glover, 1974), Chantyal(Noonan, 2003) and Dongwang (Bartee, 2007), WT has a very restricted grammatical gender. Unlike in Nepali, gender is not marked in the verbal complex in WT. However, in a few pairs of generic nouns, WT makes a distinction between male and female morphologically. The male/masculine nouns are marked by the suffixes such as -wa, -ka, -ga, and -ya and whereas the female/feminine nouns are indicated by the suffixes -ni,-ma and -gi in WT as in (1).

Gipan 3:2. 144-156.

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(1)	a.	b ^h ətu-wa servant-MASC	'servant' 'male servant'	b ^h ətu-ni servant-FEM	'female servant'
	b.	jogi	'male hermit'	jogi-ni	'female hermit'
		hermit-MASC		hermit-FEM	
	c.	kami	'male blacksmith'	kami-ni	'female blacksmith'
	d.	blacksmith-MASC na-ka	'cock'	blacksmith-FEM ma-ma	'hen'
	e.	fowl-MASC ra-wa goat-MASC	'he-goat'	fowl-FEM ra-ma goat-FEM	'she-goat'
	f.	məira-ga buffalo-MASC	'he-buffalo'	mə-gi buffalo-FEM	'she-buffalo'
	g.	yos-ya thief-MASC	'male thief'	yo-ŋi thief-FEM	'female thief'
	h.	ta	'horse'	ta-ni	'female horse'
		horse-MASC		horse-FEM	

WT also makes a distinction between male and female lexically in a few pairs of nouns as in (2).

(2)	a. b.	apa apakola	'father' 'man'	ama amakola	'mother' 'woman'
	c.	ajyo	'elder brother'	ale	'younger brother'
	d.	memegren	'maternal grandfather'	mamgren	'maternal grandmother'
	e	meme	'paternal grandfather'	mam	'paternal grandmother'
	f.	ken	'father-in-law'	sume	'mother-in-law'
	g.	m ^h a	'brother-in-law'	nana	'elder sister'
	h.	babu	'uncle'	abuasu	'auntie'
	i.	ajyo	'elder brother'	caŋ	'sister-in-law'
	j.	ale	'younger brother'	jətacaŋ	'sister-in-law'
	k.	aŋa	'younger sister'	m ^h a	'brother-in-law'
	1.	asyaŋ	'maternal uncle'	aŋi	'maternal aunt'
	m.	babu	'uncle'	abuasu	'aunt'
	n.	abren	'big uncle'	amren	'big aunt'
	0.	babu	'uncle'	abuasu	'aunt'
	p.	m ^h a	'older brother-in-law'	caŋ	'older sister-in-law'
	q.	m ^h a	'younger brother-in-	caŋ	'youngersister-in-law'
			law'		
	r.	r ^h embo	'husband'	mriŋ	'wife'

S.	ja	'son'	jame	'daughter'
t.	kon	'male cousin'	konyme	'female cousin'
u.	syaŋbo	'wife's brother'	asucani	'wife's sister'
v.	kon	'grandson'	konyme	'granddaughter'
w.	rawaba	'he-goat'	ramodom	'she-goat'
х.	glapkola	'young bull'	myecakola	'young cow'

It is to be noted here like ET, WT does not exhibit agreement between the subject and verb in terms of gender.

3. Number

In WT, in common with other Bodish languages, the number is also not a grammatical category (Noonan, 2003). In other words, the verb does not agree with the number of any arguments (i.e., subject in the clause). ET exhibits two morphological categories of the nouns in terms of number: singular and plural (Yonjan-Tamang, 2016). However, WT exhibits three morphological categories of the nouns in terms of number: singular, dual and plural. Singular nouns are unmarked as zero but the dual and plural nouns are marked by the suffix -ni and -ma, respectively as in (3).

(3)	a.	mʰi-ŋi	man-DU	m ^h i-ma	man-PL
	b.	mye-ŋi	cow-DU	mye-ma	cow-PL
	c.	ajyo-ŋi	brother-DU	ajyo-ma	brother-PL
	d.	taŋlo-ŋi	pot-DU	taŋlo-ma	pot-PL
	e.	bu-ŋi	field-DU	bu-ma	field-PL
	f.	apakla-ŋi	boy-DU	apakola-ma	boy-PL
	g.	dim-ŋi	house-DU	dim-ma	house-PL
	h.	amakola-ŋi	woman-DU	amakola-ma	woman-PL
	i.	whoen	cloth-DU	whoen-ma	cloth-PL

In examples (3a-i) the nouns are marked by the suffix $-\eta i$ for duality and by -ma for plurality in WT.

4. Classifiers

Numeral classifiers are not the common features of the Bodish groups of the languages (Noonan, 2003). WT, like the Himalayish languages, also employs numeral classifiers. Moreover, unlike many South-Asian languages including the Himalayish languages, WT makes use of numeral classifiers exclusively for human nouns or pronouns. As in other Bodish languages, such numeral classifiers post-modify the nouns in WT (Noonan, 2003). The human nouns are morphologically marked by the suffix *-ma* as in (4).

(4) a. $m^h i gima k^h aji$ $m^h i gi-ma k^h a-ji$ man one-CLF come-PFV 'One man arrived.'

¹ In Western Tamang, ηi lexically refers to the cardinal number 'two'.

- b. ro somma k^haji
 - ro som-ma k^ha-ji friend three-CLF come-PFV 'Three friends arrived.'
- c. uju m^hila ja ŋisma muba
 - uju m^hi-la ja ŋis-ma mu-ba that man-GEN son seven-CLF EXIST-NMLZ 'The man has seven sons.'

In examples (4a-c) the human nouns are enumerated by gi 'one', som 'three', and ηis ' seven', respectively. The numeral to which the classifier suffix -ma is attached post-modifies the human nouns in WT as in ET. The non-human nouns can be modified by the numerals; however, such numerals are not marked by the classifier as in (5).

- (5) a. lipce nakagi t^hajim caji
 - lipce naka-gi t^ha-jim ca-ji after cock-one kill-SEQ eat-PFV 'They killed a cock and ate.'
 - b. huju lipce ragi k^hrujim sobala

huju lipce ra-gi k^hru-jim so-ba-la that after goat-one bathe-SEQ do-NMLZ-GEN 'After that they bathed a goat.'

In example (5a) naka 'cock' and in (5b) ra 'goat' are enumerated as the non-human nouns. Thus, they are left unmarked by the classifier -ma. However, in ET both human and non-human nouns are marked for classifiers. The human nouns are marked by $-m^hendo$ and non-human ones by -gor (Yonjan-Tamang, 2016: 78).

Apart from the morphological classifier -ma, WT uses a number of 'pseudo-classifiers' for mensurality and sortality as in (6).

(6)	a.	sya	dumbu	gi	'One piece of meat'
		meat	piece	one	
	b.	mər	tuncə	gi	'One lump of ghee'
		ghee	lump	one	
	c.	siŋ	ga	gi	'One piece of wood'
		wood	piece	one	
	d.	dal	dadu	gi	'One morsel of porridge'
		porridge	morsel	one	
	e.	ken	pəneu	gi	'One scoop of rice'
		rice	scoop	one	
	f.	cata	dyeka	gi	'One lump of salt'
		salt	lump	one	
	g.	c ^h i	mut ^h a	gi	'One bundle of grass'
		grass	bundle	one	

h.	amba	cailoga	gi	'One grain of mango.'
	mango	grain	one	
i.	cini	cəunaŋ	gi	'One spoon of sugar'
	sugar	spoon	one	
j.	ŋe	t ^h oppa	gi	'One drop of milk'
	milk	drop	one	
k.	sunlanəl	nam	gi	'One stalk of straw'
	straw	stalk	one	

The examples (6a-k) show that the 'pseudo-classifiers' consist of different lexical classifiers. Such classifiers are also followed by the numerals in WT. Moreover, such 'pseudo-classifiers' also post-modify the nouns in WT.

5. Case marking

Like ET, WT exhibits a consistently ergative-absolutive case marking system. Such system is governed by the principle of transitivity which primarily codes the syntactic distinction between the transitive and intransitive clauses (Givón, 2001:208). In WT, the subject of the transitive clause displays ergative case marking. However, the direct object of the transitive and the subject of the intransitive clause share the absolutive case marking as in (7).

```
(7) a.
              Transitive clause
              naje puk<sup>h</sup>ri secji
                              puk<sup>h</sup>ri-o
              ηa-je
                                               sec-ji
               1sg-erg
                              snake-ABS
                                               kill-PFV
               'I killed a snake.'
              Intransitive clause
       b.
              ŋa ŋ<sup>h</sup>eci
                                n<sup>h</sup>e-ci
              ηa-φ
                                laugh-PFV
               1SG-ABS
               'I laughed.'
```

In example (7a) the subject of the transitive clause is marked by the ergative marker *-je* while the direct object of the transitive clause in (7a) puk^hri 'snake' and the subject of intransitive clause in (7b) are zero-marked. WT also exhibits other relational functions as well. They are instrumental, dative, benefactive, genitive, comitative, ablative, possessive, locative, allative, inessive and path. It also presents case syncretism like other Bodish languages (Noonan, 2006). Table 5.1 presents case the inflections and their relational functions they mark in WT and ET.

Relational **Case inflections Case inflections functions** WT ET Absolutive -ф -ф **Ergative** -je~-ce -se Instrumental -je~-ce -se -da~-ta Dative -da -da~-ta Benefactive -da Genitive -la -la Comitative -tin~-din -t^hen Ablative -je -gyam Possessive -da -da~-ta Locative -ri, and -ti -ri -kyor Allative -whona Inessive -naŋ -nyaŋri Path -cele

Table 5.1: Case inflections and their relational functions in WT

5.1 Ergative

The case inflections *-je*and-*ce*, which mark ergative case in WT, are morphophonologically conditioned in WT. The allomorph *-ce* is affixed to the noun stem ending in the voiceless sound. The allomorph *-je* is used following the voiced soundas in (8).²

(8)	a.	m^hi	-je	c.	ŋa	-je
		man	-ERG		1sg	-ERG
	b.	ram	-je	d.	lok	-ce
		Ram	-ERG		Lok	-ERG

In examples (8a-c) the nominals are marked by the allomorph -je because each nominal in (8a-c) ends in the voiced sounds. This phenomenon may be formally presented as in (9).

(9)
$$/-ie/\rightarrow$$
 $/-ce/$ X___#

Where, X refers to any voiceless segment at the word final position. These case inflections, viz., -je and -ce are used to mark different relational functions in WT.

WT does not exhibit split-ergativity. Irrespective of tense-aspect or person, the case inflections, -ce and -je obligatorily mark the subject of the transitive clause as in (10).

²In Tipling variety, -ce is consistently used for marking ergative case in WT; however, in Borang (Dhading) and Bungtang (Nuwakot) the ergative case is marked by -je and -ce. In eastern dialect of Tamang, it is marked by -se only.

(10) a. naje dim soba

na-je dim so-ba 1SG-ERG house build-IMPFV

'I will build/build a house.'

b. $t^h eje \ dim \ soji$

t^he-je dim so-ji 3SG-ERG house build-PFV

'S/he built a house.'

c. hərije dim soji

həri-je dim so-ji Hari-ERG house build-PFV 'Hari built a house.'

Tan bant a not

d. lokce ken caji

lok-ce ken ca-ji Lok-ERG rice eat-PFV

'Lokate rice.'

In examples (10a-d) all the subjects of the transitive clauses, irrespective of tense-aspect or person, are marked by the ergative suffix -je or -ce.

5.2 Instrumental

The case inflections $-ce\sim -je$ are also affixed to the nouns to code implements, i.e., a tool, inanimate or not, by which an agent accomplishes an action as in (11).

(11) a. η aje wareje c^h i breji

na-je ware-je c^hi bre-ji 1SG-ERG sickle-INS grass cut-PFV 'I cut a grass with sickle.'

b. theje tərije sin kile:ci

the-je tari-je sin kile:-ci 3SG-ERG axe-INS fire wood beat-PFV 'He cut the fire wood with axe.'

c. nongyam gobərje syalji

nongyam gobər-je syal-ji first dung-INS rub-PFV 'At first they rub the house with dung.'

In examples (11a-c) the case inflections -ce or -je mark the instrumental case in the nouns in WT. The allomorphy rule given in (9) applies in the instrumental case as well.

5.3 Dative

The dative case is marked by the inflection -da/-tain WT.³ In an ergative-absolutive language like WT, the patients or direct objects are not theoretically overtly marked. However, in WT, the human patient nouns or direct object nouns in a transitive clause are marked by the case inflection -da as in (12a-b).

a. nata krenji
na-ta kren-ji
1SG-DAT hungry.feel-PFV
'I am hungry.'
b. jaje jameda c^hekpa
ja-je jame-da c^hek-pa
son-ERG daughter-DAT bit-NPFV
'The son bits the daughter.'

In example (12a) ηa 'I' and in (12b) jame 'daughter', both human patient pronoun and nouns, are marked by the case inflection -da and ta. Such marking is referred to as dative and anti-dative marking (Dryer, 1986).

5.4 Benefactive

The case inflection -dais also used to mark the nominals which are benefited by the action of the agent as in (13).

(13) a. amaje jada ken waji
ama-je ja-da ken wa-ji
mother-ERG son-BEN rice feed-PFV
'The mother fed the rice to the son.'

b. apaje jame daţa ŋapinji

apa-je jame-da tana pin-ji father-ERG daughter-BEN money give-PFV 'The father gave money to the son.'

In example (13a) the benefactive nominal ja 'son' and in (13b) jame 'daughter' are marked by the case inflection -da in WT.

5.5 Genitive

The case inflection -la is used to mark the genitive case in WT as in (14).

(14) a. *jala dim muba*ja-la dim mu-ba
son-GEN house EXIST-NMLZ
'The son has his house.'

 $^{^{3}}$ It is not easy to define the phonological environment of the use of -da or -ta in WT.

b. jala dim jeppa muba

ja-la dim jep-pa mu-la son-GEN house big-NMLZ EXIST-NMLZ 'The son's house is big.'

c. jamela dim jida mula

jame-la dim ji-da mu-la daughter-GEN house small-NMLZ EXIST-NMLZ 'Then, the father, in his turn, swore an oath.'

In example (14a-c) the case inflection -la marks the genitive case in WT.

5.6 Comitative

The case inflection -din/-tin is used to express accompaniment as in (15).⁴

(15) a. ja nadin nu:ba

ja ŋa-diŋ nu:-ba son 1SG-COM sleep-NMLZ 'The son sleeps with me.'

b. na apatin yamburi niba

ηa apa-tiŋ ni-ba yambu-ri father-COM kathmandu-LOC go-NMLZ 'I go to Kathmandu with my father.' ŋa rodiŋ dimri ŋiba ro-din dim-ri ηa ηi-ba 1s_G friend-COM house-LOC go-IMPFV 'I go to the house with my friend.'

In examples (15a-c) the case inflection -din/-tin/is used to mark the comitative case in WT.

5.7 Ablative

The case inflection -jealso marks the ablative case in WT as in (16).

(16) a. na nuwakotje yamburi yuji

na nuwakot-je yambu-ri yu-ji 1SG Nuwakot-ABL Kathmandu-LOC come-PFV 'I came to Kathmandu from Nuwakot.'

b. dimje ja ŋiji

dim-je ja ŋi-ji house-ABL son go-PFV

⁴The phonological environment for $-di\eta/-ti\eta$ is not easy to define.

'The son left the house.'

c. nuwakot gyamje g^həntana laktiba yamburi

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nuwakot gyam-je g<sup>h</sup>ənta-ŋa lakti-ba
Nuwakot road-ABL hour-five take-NMLZ
yambu-ri
Kathmandu-LOC
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'It takes five hour from Nuwakot to Kathmandu.'

In examples (16a-c) the case inflection -jehas been used to mark the ablative case in WT.

5.8 Possessive

The case inflections-da and -ta are also used to mark the possession in the clause as in (17).

(17) a. ramda kitap muba

ram-da kitap mu-ba Ram-POSS book have-NMLZ 'Ram has a book.'

b. nata kitap arë

ŋa-ta kitap a-rẽ 1SG-POSS book NEG-have 'I do not have any book.'

In example (17a-b) the case inflections-da and-ta mark the possessive case in WT.

5.9 Locative

The case inflections-*ri*and -*ti*are primarily used to mark the locative case in WT as in (18). In Tipling variety, it is exclusively marked by -*ti*. However, in other varieties, -*ti* is solely used to mark the surface location. In MagarKaike, such location is marked by -*g*₂(Regmi, 2013).

(18) a. kitab ţebulţi muba

kitab tebul-ţi mu-ba book table-LOC EXIST-NMLZ 'The book is on the table.'

b. ja dimri muba

ja dim-ri mu-ba son house-LOC EXIST-NMLZ 'The son is in the house.'

In example (18a-b) case inflections -ti and rimark the locative case.

5.10 Allative

The case inflection -kyor marks the allative case in WT as in (19).

(19) a. cu gyam nuwakotkyor ŋiba

```
cu gyam nuwakot-kyor ŋi-ba
this road Nuwakot-ALL go-NMLZ
'This road goes towards Nuwakot.'
```

b. nala ja jame iskulkyor niji

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ŋa-la ja jame iskul-kyor ŋi-ji
1SG-GEN son daughter school-ALL go-PFV
'My son and daughter went towards the school.'
```

In examples (19a-b) the case inflection -kyor is used to mark the allative case in WT.

5.11 Inessive

The case inflection -naŋ marks the inessive case in WTas in (20).

(20) na dimnan tiba

```
dim-nan
ŋa
                       ti-ba
1s<sub>G</sub>
       house-INES
                       sit-NMLZ
'I stay inside the house.'
nala dimnan woen muba
ηa-la
             dim-nan
                                    mu-ba
                           woen
1SG-GEN
             house-INES
                           cloth
                                    EXIST-NMLZ
'My cloth is inside the house.'
```

In example (20a-b), the case inflection -naŋis used to mark the inessive case in WT.

5.12 Path

The case inflection -celemarks the path in WTas in (21).

(21) cu gyam nuwakotcele yambur iniba

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cu gyam nuwakot-cele yambu-ri ŋi-ba
this road Nuwakot-PATH house-LOC go-IMPFV
'This road goes to Kathmandu through Nuwakot.'
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6. Case syncretism

In Section 5, we noticed that a given relational marker may express more than one non-core relation other than its core relation. This phenomenon is referred to as case syncretism Case syncretism is a common phenomenon in Tibeto-Burman languages (Noonan, 2003). Table 5.2 presents the patterns of case syncretism in WT.

Table 5.2: Patterns of case syncretism in WT

Case inflections	Relational functions	
	Core relations	Non-core relations
-φ	Absolutive	
-je/-ce	Ergative	Instrumental, Ablative
-ri and -ti	Locative	
-ta/-da	Dative	Possessive, Benefactive
-la	Genitive	
-tiŋ/-diŋ	Comitative	
-kyor	Allative	
-naŋ	Inessive	
- cele	Path	

Table 5.2 presents the relational functions broadly classified into two categories, viz., core relations and non-core relations. By the core-relations, we simply mean those relations which are primarily coded by a given case inflection. The non-core relations simply refer to those relations which are secondarily marked by a given case inflection. The table shows that the case inflections -je, -ce, -ta, and -damark the core relations as well as non-core relations in WT. The inflection -je primarily marks, for instance, the ergative case relation. This case inflection, secondarily, marks the instrumental and ablative case in WT. The case inflections -da and -ta are primarily used to code the dative case. Secondarily, this case inflection may be used to mark the benefactive and possessive in WT. In ET, ergative case marker -se does not secondarily mark the ablative case.

7. Summary

This paper attempted to analyze some structural properties of the nouns in WT from typological perspective. As in ET, gender is not marked in WT nouns across the board. Unlike ET, WT exhibits three morphological categories of the nouns in terms of number: singular, dual and plural. WT utilizes a combination of numeral plus classifier for the distinction of human vs. non-human nouns. In WT, only a human noun is marked. However, in ET, both are marked. Like ET, WT is a consistently ergative language. WT and ET both exhibit different functional relations. However, relational markers in WT, especially for major functional relations are different from ET. Unlike ET, WT presents a bit more complex case syncretism.

Abbreviations

1	First person	INS	Instrumental
1sg	First person singular	MASC	Masculine
2	Second person	NMLZ	Nominalizer
2sg	Second person singular	PFV	Perfective
3	Third person	PL	Plural
3sg	Third person singular	COM	Comitative

ABL	Ablative	GEN	Genitive
ABS	Absolutive	IMPFV	Imperfective
ALL	Allative	INES	Inessive
BEN	Benefactive	POSS	Possessive
CAUS	Causative	SEQ	Sequential
CLF	Classifier	SG	Singular

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