

**INTONATION OF INTERROGATIVE
SENTENCES IN RELATION TO THE
PRAGMATICS OF POLITENESS IN BARAK
VALLEY MEITEI**

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Dedication

/mit-nə u-bə laj-di ima ipa- ni/
Eyes-NOM see-NZR god-EMP mother father- COP

‘The Gods that we can behold with our eyes are our parents.’

To them.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations	Morpheme	Meaning
1ST P	i-	1st Person Singular
2ND P	ma-	2nd Person Plural
3RD P	nə-	3rd Person Plural
ABL	-dəgi	Ablative
ASP	-kə/-gə	aspect (irrealis)
ATT	-ə	Attributive
AGT	-nə	Agentive
ASS	-ə/-nə	Assertive
AWA	-lu	away from the place of speech
CAUS	-həl	Causative
COP	-ni	copula verb
CTE	-tə/-də	contrary to expectation
COM	-min	Comitative/ together
CONJ	-rə	Conjunctive
DIST	-lək	Distal
EMP	-di	Emphatic
END	-ba	Endearment

GEN	-gi	Genitive
INCL	-si	Inclusive
IND	ləm/rəm	indirect evidence
INDIC	-du	Indicative
INQ	-no	Inquisition
INST	-nə	Instrumental
INT	-doi/toi	Intention
INW	səl/sən/jən/j ^h əl	inward motion of verb
LOC	-də	Locative
NEG	-te	Negation
NM	-mə	noun marker
NOM	-nə	Nominative case
OPT	-ke/ -ge	Optative
OUT	t ^h ok/d ^h ok	outward motion of verb
PERF	-re-/le	Perf
PERM	-sənu	Permissive
PRES	-i	present tense
PROB	-kə	Probability
PROG	-li/-	Progressive

PROX	-lə	Proximal
PST	k ^h ə	Past
Q	-ra/-ro/-la/-lo	Yes/ No question particle
REFL	-cə/-jə	Reflexive
SI	-ne	Shared information
QUO	Hay	Quotative
NZR	-pə/-bə	Nominalizer
REC	-nə	Reciprocal

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Research Problem:

The Meitei language spoken in Manipur has been studied and discussed from many different points of view and theoretical approaches. However, the description of its dialects, mainly the ones which are geographically located outside of the native state of Manipur are found to be lacking. Along with this, the major bulk of work that exists on the language are descriptive grammars of different theoretical approaches which largely omit any kind of prosodic description. Therefore despite having many linguistic descriptions, this area of suprasegmental activity and its function in communicative strategies are non-existent.

Meiraba (2014) presents a preliminary description of the prosodic phonology of Meitei including the basic intonation pattern of simple sentences. Apart from this there is no background study to refer to on this area on intonation studies in Meitei. The lack of such a description about the intonation patterns of the language has motivated the purpose of this study. For this, the study aims to observe the intonation patterns of interrogative sentences. Sociolinguistic observations such as Betholia (2005), Mishra & Dutta (1999) and Devi & Devi (2014) offer descriptions of select phenomena in the language such as politeness and power, language maintenance and polite refusals. In conjunction with the intonation of interrogatives, this study aims to observe politeness phenomena through the spectrum of requests and in relation to the intonation patterns that they display. Intonation of Tibeto-Burman languages is a research area yet to

be explored in depth. There are many descriptive grammars and studies on the numerous languages of the Northeastern region of India. However there is a dearth of material on the prosodic phenomena of these languages. With this study, an attempt is being made to shed light on one of the topics of prosody by taking a look at the intonation of interrogative utterances in particular with reference to the pitch tracks and their behaviour in relation to the boundary tones. According to the British traditional studies of such phenomena, declarative sentences are known to have a falling intonation and questions are known to have a rising intonation. Studies on intonation (Palmer (1922), Pike (1945), Halliday (1967), Bolinger (1951), Pierrehumbert (1980), Hirst & di Cristo (1998), Gussenhoven (2004), Ladd (2008)) have attested to this in languages across the world. In the light of such studies, the intonation pattern of Barak valley Meitei is sought to be explored.

Politeness is an area that is gaining good momentum for the past 30 years. Studies on semantics, pragmatics and related areas have paved the way for specific investigations on the phenomena of how politeness works across languages. Sociolinguistic studies of Meitei language have accounted for the use of specific polite forms and honorifics in the language. However, there is no study that focuses on the politeness phenomena in general and the strategies of politeness as applied in communication apart from the use of specific morphemes and lexemes in particularly required contexts. The current study endeavours to bring forward these strategies adopted in communication in the context of requests and an observation of the role that intonation plays in this mechanism of communication. Politeness by itself is a vast area and to keep a precise as well as comprehensive focus, the mode of requests has been opted for

the study as this is one of the areas where people are required to make use of polite mode of speech in order to arrive at the desired attempt of the communicative strategy.

The language that will be the focus of this study is Barak Valley Meitei, a geographical dialect of Meitei that is spoken in the Cachar district of Assam amidst a highly multi-lingual setting.

1.2. Overview:

The present study aims to investigate the features of Barak Valley Meitei (henceforth BVM). BVM is spoken in a highly multi-lingual setting and therefore liable to influences from language contact. The study will investigate the structure and function of intonation of interrogative sentences in Barak Valley Meitei. It proposes to include the following main topics: the prosodic structure of interrogative sentences, their intonational contours and their pragmatic use. The present study aims to focus on the various functions of interrogative sentences and their intonation patterns. The study aims to take a selective look at intonation of interrogatives through the medium of requests in relation to politeness, such as, polite requests, polite refusals and polite expression of implications, among others. It will also showcase the politeness strategies used in the process. The study is based on the models of intonation presented in studies mainly in Beckman & Pierrehumbert (1986), Hirschberg and Pierrehumbert (1990) Hayes and Lahiri (1991), Gussenhoven (2004), and Ladd (1992, 2008) for the intonational analysis. The analysis of pragmatics and politeness phenomena will be based on Brown and Levinson (1984); Verschueren, Östman & Jan-Ola (2009); Ogiermann (2009); Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984), Lakoff (1977), Leech (1983, 2014); Ide (1982, 1989, 1993).

1.3. Background of the study:

The importance of the study dwells on the fact that there is little or scant resources on this area of study especially in the related language groups from where it might be helpful to draw comparative observations. The descriptive studies overlook this very important area in language use and communication. The study is based on a geographical dialect which may have its own idiosyncratic features as will be evident from the findings. Initial observations of the pitch tracks of the interrogative utterances display an L% or falling boundary tone. Although this is less common, languages such as Greek, Hungarian, Romanian (Ladd: 2008), and a large data base of African languages from the Sudanic region are attested for in Rialland (2007) and also described in Fery (2016) as languages with ‘lax’ intonation which is an alternative from the near-universal rising question intonation as initiated by Bolinger in his seminal article, ‘Intonation across languages’ (1978) in ‘Universals of Human Languages’(Greenberg,ed.), which remains the main reference on the typology of question prosody. The falling tone will be co-related with other phrasal activity in an attempt to understand the behaviour of the way intonation works in this language.

1.4. Methodology:

The methodology that is adopted for this study consists of an elicitation based method to generate the most relevant data required for the study. The first part of the field work consisted of elicitation of interrogative sentences so as to generate a picture of the intonational phonology of interrogative sentences in Meitei. The next step for elicitation of interrogatives in politeness situations was

conducted through DCT or Discourse Completion Tests (Blum-Kulka- Olshtain, 1984; Ogiermann, 2009). An assessment of the elicited sentences was verified by the speakers to verify acceptability and correctness. Informants ranged from ages 25-58. A total of 10 informants were consulted for the data, 5 male and 5 female .The informants are based in the area in focus and although they are multilingual, the language in focus is primarily used by them at home and within the community.

The informants were made familiar with the nature of the requirement of the exercises that were being used to elicit the desired responses from them. The informants are primarily residents of the area in focus. They are in general multilingual – using BVM at home and social occasions within the community; official and academic environments require the use of Bengali, Hindi or English and also BVM as required by situations; market places and commercial avenues witnesses the use of Bengali, BVM, Hindi and the language of the trader or merchant such as Hmar, Rongmei or others if it is known to the speaker.

1.5. Data Elicitation:

Data elicitation for the study was done in two parts keeping in accordance with the requirement for the interrogative sentences in Chapter 4 and Pragmatics of Politeness in Chapter 5. A pitch range of 50-200/250 Hz is taken for the male speakers and a range of 75-300 Hz for female speakers.

1.5.1. Intonation of Interrogatives:

The elicitation for the general interrogative sentences is done with a Power Point Presentation consisting of pictures (in static as well as animated format) which are used as stimuli to generate the questions. The pictures are presented in each slide and two informants are given sets of questions and sets of answers

separately to ask about the picture. Informant A would ask a question and Informant B would reply with the corresponding answer. This was carried out for a total of 6 slides, each slide has 5 questions and 5 related answers. Consequently, Informant B would ask the questions and Informant A responded with the answers. The intention of this method is to generate a semi controlled simulation of the data of the interrogative sentences. Initially the informants were simply reading the texts. However, after understanding the motive of the study they co-operated to their best ability in producing conversation style utterances as required. Initial attempts included making the informants get used to the exercise by running the experiment once or twice to get them comfortable with the exercise before the actual recording

Although the aim of this study is to observe the nature of the interrogative utterances, this also created an opportunity to develop an outlook on the declarative sentences as well. The question-answer method enabled the informants to participate with a clearer goal about the experiment in the elicitation of the required questions.

1.5.2. Discourse Completion Test (DCT)

The next step brings us to the Discourse Completion Test (DCT) Blum Kulka & Olshtain (1984), Ogiermann (2009) and O'Keefe, Clancy & Adolphs (2011), for elicitation of politeness strategies. The informant was required to frame sentences which tend to pose a negative face threat to the speaker (Brown & Levinson: 1987) by getting the hearer to do something for the speaker, thereby imposing a restriction of freedom on the hearer as per their findings. Ide (1986a, 1989, 1993, 2012); Gu (1990); Matsumoto (1993) and others in observations of East Asian societies like Japan and Thailand beg to differ from the findings of

the exemplary works based on Western societies which focus only on the notion of positive or negative face on the grounds that these notions are not universal especially in eastern societies where these concepts are overlooked by group harmony and norms of social participation which are crucial to the community's mode of functioning.

A set of 15 discourse completion scenarios were provided to the informants consisting of situations in which they would imagine themselves making requests to persons who were at a far social distance, higher rank or elder in age . The informant was required to elicit a response that would bring a most satisfactory response from the hearer. The questionnaire is prepared keeping in mind to accommodate relevant scenarios to persons of the target age group (25-60), occupations, social rank and gender and also the settings and propriety of the situations. Although the test is based on the settings used by Blum Kulka & Olshtain (1984), Ogiermann (2009) and O'Keefe, Clancy& Adolphs (2011), their experiments were based on places where the scenarios were in a college or university in which people have the option to work in isolation or hire labour for a required task, the settings were changed to accommodate the activities of an agrarian based semi urban society where the community is interdependent on its members for most social activities. The studies from which the frame of this experiment is derived reflects on the western social norms where the individual's need for liberty is greater than group harmony and the motivation to avoid negative or preserve positive face is a bigger factor than in eastern societies which lays more emphasis on group harmony and interaction than individualistic motives. Basing on these requirements, the experiment design has incorporated

mainly requests; questions and requests to be excused which require politeness strategies.

Requests are face-threatening acts by definition as per Brown and Levinson's (1978) seminal work on politeness. By making a request, the speaker impinges on the hearer's claim to freedom of action and freedom from imposition. Studies on East-Asian societies (Ide, 1989, 1993) draw attention to the fact that the social conventions of the West may not universally correlate with all societies, especially in the East, where a request may in fact be an invitation or a social relation building exercise and does not necessarily have the same negative face threat as observed in the West. The variety of direct and indirect ways for making requests seemingly available to speakers in all languages is probably socially motivated by the need to minimize the imposition involved in the act itself. One way in which the speaker can minimize the imposition is by preferring an indirect strategy to a direct one, i.e. by activating choice on the scale of indirectness. But even after the speaker has decided on the level of directness for performing the act, s/he still has a variety of verbal means available with which to manipulate the degree of imposition involved. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984). Lexical choices, sentence structure, prosody and intonational cues are few of the devices employed by the informant to achieve the required action from the hearer. Apart from the above, the informant would also employ the use of endearment terms, omission or reference to the hearer, permission or consultation from the hearer and situational explanations that require the participation of the hearer to participate are some of the key devices employed by the informants in order to get the desired or required

response from the hearer. These will be more elaborately explained in Chapter 5.

1.6. Data Analysis:

The data used for the study is recorded by Sony IC Recorder ICD-UX513F. Goldwave v 5.56 is used for managing the long speech files and Praat Version 5.3.20 are used for the analysis of the speech. An auto segmental-metrical approach is used to assign the text to tune association of the utterance and study the contours, duration, intensity and other cues that significantly emphasise the semantic content of the utterance in the context where it takes place.

The interpretation of the pitch tracks for the interrogative sentences is based on studies for intonational languages such as English. BVM is a tonal language and the results varied from the existing literature such as Pierrehumbert (1980, 1986); Ladd (2008) which are based on intonational languages predominantly. The defining properties of the prosodic units are in terms their form rather than function – this is the fundamental difference between the formal and functional approaches. However, the interpretation of the pitch tracks in this study necessitates a co-related understanding between the focus of the sentence which is marked by the nuclear pitch accent accordingly as topic, subject or object oriented. The form and the function of the pitch tracks and the boundary tones is meaningful in correlation with one another throughout the sentence.

The key challenge in the study is the dependency on literature which is based mainly on intonational languages such as English, German and similar others for the interpretation of intonational contours and boundary tones. Barak

Valley Meitei is a tonal language and therefore the interpretation of the boundary tones are dependent not only on the boundary tones but the phrases as they occur and the influence of the pitch accents within the phrase and its influence on the boundaries. In this, Rialland's findings of the behaviour of African question prosody and the interpretation of the alternate kinds of question intonation have been profoundly insightful for the current study.

1.7. Organisation of Chapters:

The study attempts to explore the intonational pattern of interrogative sentences in Barak Valley Meitei as it occurs based on the models of intonational phonology in studies such as Beckman & Pierrehumbert (1986), Hirschberg and Pierrehumbert (1990) Hayes and Lahiri (1991), Gussenhoven (2004), Ladd (1992, 2008) and Rialland (2007). In the light of these studies, the intonation patterns of different types of interrogative sentences have been observed in this study. The similarities and distinctive characteristics and their peculiarities are discussed in the course of the thesis.

In conjunction with this, the pragmatics of politeness is also studied through the medium of requests in which many responses in the data have returned in the form of interrogative utterances. The study also attempts to map the function of these patterns in relation to the pragmatics of politeness in the language. The key strategies used in the BVM speech, especially in the context of making requests where the use of politeness strategies becomes crucial in successful communication and prevention of pragmatic failure is broadly discussed. In a language, forms and strategies may be adopted for the exercise of politeness. Forms can be classified as those elements in the language structure

such as lexical items and forms. Strategy can be understood as an approach or a method of conveying the required information in a systematic manner to achieve the desired result and co-operation from the hearer. In conjunction with these, the interpretation of the intonation patterns makes the meaning of the communication more relevant. Along with intonation, other prosodic devices like duration, intensity and structural elements like lexical choice, sentence structure play an important function in these politeness phenomena that will be explored in the chapters. Politeness phenomena is gaining more importance since the past three decades and this is the first attempt to study this area in Barak Valley Meitei.

Unavoidably, there is a large amount of desiderata that is not covered by this study. It is a primary attempt to explore Barak Valley Meitei in these specific areas of intonation particularly of interrogative sentences and the relation it has with the pragmatics of how politeness is practiced in the given situations. The findings of this study can progress to further research.

The chapters in the thesis are organised as given below:

1.7.1. Chapter 1

Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter to the thesis and presents an overview of the study. It discusses the research problem and the background of the study in relation to the relevant literature from which the study draws its base. This chapter presents the methodology adopted for the study such as the design of the experiment and methods of data elicitation and the approach of the analysis.

1.7.2. Chapter 2

Chapter 2 contains an introduction to the Barak Valley Meitei language, an overview about the linguistic facts and key features of the language. A comprehensive account of the historical reasons such as exploratory quests, trade, matrimonial alliances and war that led to a mass settlement of the Meitei people outside the native lands is given in this chapter. This is the reason for Barak Valley Meitei becoming a geographical dialect that exists in the midst of many unrelated languages and at a large distance from the speech community of its origin in Manipur.

1.7.3. Chapter 3

Chapter 3 contains the theoretical literature on which the study is based. Theoretical studies on intonational phonology based on the models of intonation presented in select studies such as in Beckman & Pierrehumbert (1986), Hirschberg and Pierrehumbert (1990) Hayes and Lahiri (1991), Gussenhoven (2004), Ladd (1992, 2008) and Rialland(2007) for the intonational analysis. Literature on politeness phenomena and pragmatic of politeness that are relevant to the study such as Brown and Levinson (1984); Verschueren, Östman & Jan-Ola (2009); Ogiermann (2009); Blum- Kulka & Olshtain (1984), Leech (1983, 2014); Ide (1982, 1989, 1993) are reviewed in relation to the topic in focus. Select works on Meitei which such as descriptive grammars by Bhat and Ningomba (2007), Chelliah (2007) form the basis of reference for the language in general. Meiraba (2014) presents the prosodic phonology of Meitei language and Dutta & Mishra's (1999) paper on language contact and maintenance is the only academic description of Barak Valley Meitei so far.

1.7.4. Chapter 4

Chapter 4 presents evidence the pattern of interrogative sentences in the language and the discussion about the intonational phrase of the sentences. Text to tune transcription of the utterances are done as per Auto-segmental Metrical of Intonational Phonology. The boundary tones and pitch accents of the phrases are taken into consideration to study the patterns of the utterances. Different question types such as Wh-Questions, Yes-no questions and tag questions are taken into consideration to observe the pattern of the intonation contours and their behaviours. The boundary tones singularly do not play a definitive role in this language. For instance, questions are in general observed to have a rising intonation but this is dependent on the context and the data simply did not return any such instance. The intonation of interrogative sentences in Barak Valley is postulated to be a falling one alternate to the near-universal rising tone. The supporting evidence and discussion is carried out on this chapter. Through this discussion we also attempt to explain the reason for this phenomena and understand it behaviour.

1.7.5. Chapter 5

Chapter 5 discusses the devices, strategies and evidence of pragmatics of politeness in languages and presents the same phenomena as it occurs in Barak Valley Meitei through the medium of requests. Politeness relies on devices like intonation, prosody, explanations, endearment terms, reference or omission, permission, consultation. The chapter gives an insight into the general strategies and devices of politeness found across studies. Thereafter it accounts for the

various politeness devices and strategies as they are practised in Barak valley Meitei. The chapter presents the contents of the data derived by the Discourse Completion Tests, how the politeness phenomena actually takes place and explanation of the nuances of pragmatic strategies that are employed by different speakers.

1.7.6. Chapter 6

The concluding chapter of the study discusses the analysis and major findings of the study. It summarises these findings in the light of the discussions. This chapter concludes with select desiderata that have been found in the due course of this study. Although not the main focus of the study, some findings were evident enough not to be overlooked and these can be developed into further studies.

CHAPTER 2

BARAK VALLEY MEITEI

2.1. Overview of Meitei language:

Meitei is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken mainly in the state of Manipur and in certain areas in the nearby states of Assam, Nagaland and Tripura. Meitei language is also spoken by settlers in Bangladesh and Myanmar. Classification of Meitei by scholars of Tibeto-Burman has developed throughout the passage of time. Grierson (1903) classified Meitei to be under the Kuki-Chin branch. Shafer (1955) and Benedict (1972) place Meitei in the same branch of Kachin languages grouped together with Kuki-Naga, bearing affinities with Mikir and Mru as shown in the figure below. The Kachin languages (Benedict, 1972) occur at the linguistic crossroads of the Tibeto-Burman family forming a link between the Northern languages like Tibetan, Bahing and others with those of the Southern language groups such as Bodo, Burmese, Lushei and the like. Bradley (1997) on the lines of Shafer's earlier Baric group which is similar to Benedict's Boro-Garo-Konyak group and was classed as the Sal group (Burlings, 1983b) places Meitei in the Sal group as well in the box of Kuki-Chin which includes Karbi as well. This brings us to the current classification of Meitei as given on the website of ethnologue where Meitei is placed as per the above classification we have observed, but on a separate tier by itself, not clubbed together under the Naga languages or the Kuki groups.

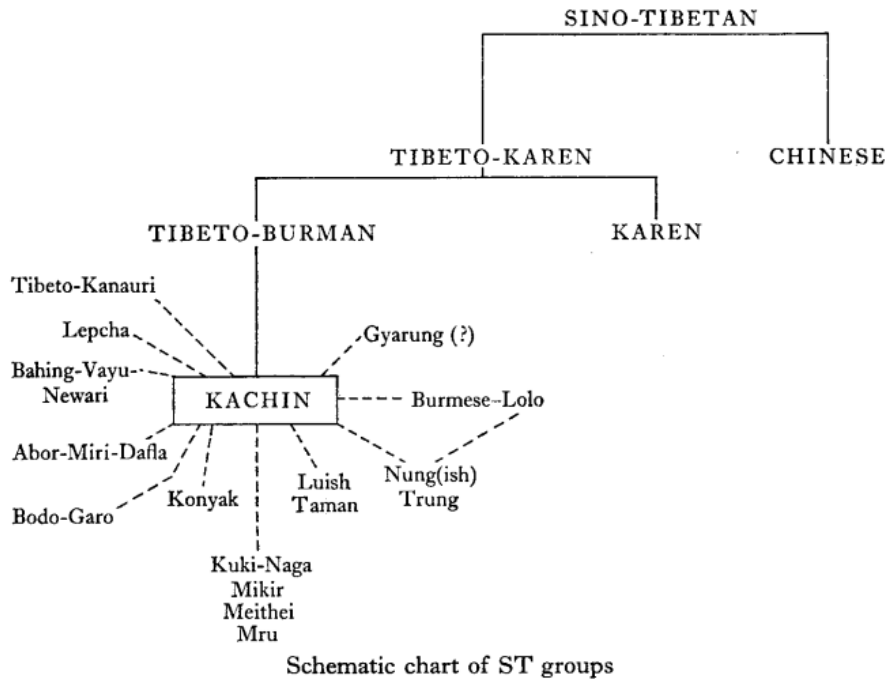


Fig. 2.1. Classification of Sino-Tibetan Languages (Benedict, 1972)

Ethnologue places Meitei in the following position:

Sino-Tibetan →

Tibeto-Burman →

Kuki-Chin-Naga → Angami- Pochuri group (9)

Ao group (4)

Karbi (2)

Kuki-Chin (50) [Central , Maraic, Northern, Southern]

Meitei (1)

Tangkhul (4)

Unclassified (7)

Zeme (7)

It is now acknowledged by many scholars, that Meitei belongs to an independent branch of the Kuki-Chin-Naga sub group of the Tibeto- Burman languages. Mru and Mikir are also placed in similar independent branches of their own.

Meitei was included in the official scheduled languages of by the 71st amendment of the Indian Constitution in the year 1992. Meitei is one of the official languages of Manipur and is a medium of instruction as well in schools as a source of literature. Meitei is offered as a subject in universities in Manipur and Assam. The initiation and ingraining of Hinduism in the socio-cultural life of the Meitei society led to the loss of the original Meitei Mayek or ‘Meitei script’ through royal abolition of its usage. As witnessed in various episodes of historical invasions, an act of book burning encompassing all available literature was carried out to destroy the manuscripts or ‘puyas’ which contained the gathered knowledge of the kingdom on numerous subjects such as astrology, medicine, philosophy, martial arts, warfare and records of various cultural and social significance was destroyed. From then onwards, all literature was written and developed in the Bengali script which has been the reason for enriching the language with many borrowings – lexically and phonologically, gradually altering the phonemic inventory of the language. The major bulk of literature in Meitei at the moment of writing this still exists in the Bengali script. From the early 1990’s onwards there has been a steady development in reviving the script. After numerous discussions and revisions, scholars have unanimously come forward with an updated version of the Meitei Mayek script which has been in use since then with some minor tweaking. In the state of Manipur, Meitei Mayek has already been introduced in the primary level of schooling. The aim is to gradually increase the level of education and usage of the Mayek. Despite these

heartening efforts, the bulk of Meitei literature in still remains in the Bengali script and it will be a while until this can be entirely made available in the Meitei Mayek.

In the Barak Valley, Meitei was not available as a subject or medium of instruction until the middle of 1990's. Elders and scholars of the community strived hard to make Meitei language learning a part of the school curriculum. Now there are primary schools where Meitei is the medium of instruction. It is also offered as a subject at the graduate level in several colleges and post-graduate courses are offered in Assam University which has a Department of Manipuri. Meitei Mayek, however is yet to make an official foray into the picture outside of Manipur and be commonly used as in Manipur. It may be noted that the Meitei that is used in the educational avenues is of the formal, written and literary variety. This present study is based on the colloquial language spoken by the informants outside of formal and academic situations.

2.2. Overview of the language in focus:

Barak Valley Meitei is spoken in the Cachar district of Assam. Two more districts Karimganj and Hailakandi were carved from the old Cachar district and these, now exist as three separate districts. The study draws its data primarily from the Cachar district of the present with a dense population of Meitei speaking settlements. In 1971, the population of the Meiteis was 72290 (Singh, Manik Chand in Sanajaoba, 181:2005). The latest report of the Manipuri Development Council (2011) states that the population of Meitei speakers in the Cachar district is 1, 41,500 from 17,079 households.

The language exists in a multilingual speech environment where most speakers usually have the repertoire of at least two or more languages. The lingua franca amongst most communities is Bengali and sometimes Hindi. Village markets are the space where most of these communities converge together and it is often noted that customers try to make genial communication in whichever language may be most feasible to them for transactions. The languages spoken in the area apart from the language in focus are Hmar, Rongmei, Mizo and Geswali (a mix of Munda languages heavily influenced by Bengali and Hindi). Apart from these, there are also a miniscule populations of Dimasa and Khasi speakers. The speech community exists alongside other speech communities like the above mentioned and Indo Aryan (henceforth IA), Bengali (Sylheti) which is the dominant language of the area is used in official and educational purposes along with English and Hindi. Although primary school teachers who speak the mother tongue of the majority of the students in the class-room may often use it to aid in teaching, English and Bengali predominantly cater to all in the classroom as a common medium of communication. Due to this, most children grow up with a multi lingual repertoire of minimum three languages. Therefore, although the community practices language and cultural maintenance (Mishra & Dutta, 1999), their lexicon is already infused with data from other languages. The frequency and context of usage of the known language depends on with whom they are communicating.



Fig. 2.2. Map of Assam and its Districts

http://mdoner.gov.in/sites/default/files/silo4_content/map_icon/Assam.jpg

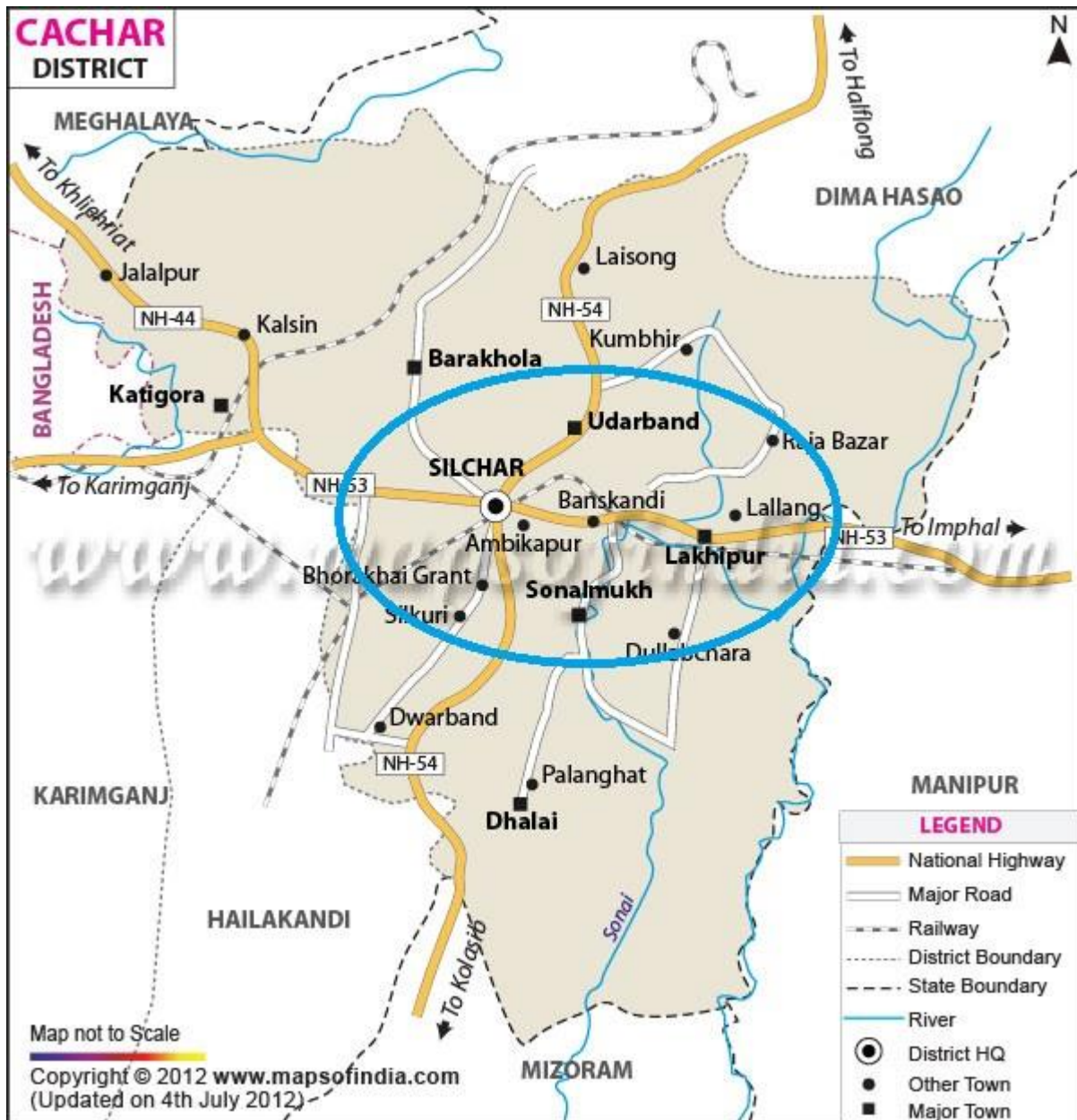


Fig.2.3. Map of the area in focus.



Fig.2.4. Location of Assam India.

<https://dilemmaxdotnet.files.wordpress.com/2012/07/assam-india-location-map.jpg>

2.3. Phonology:

The phonological system of the Barak Valley Meitei consists of twenty four consonants and six vowels. In Meitei, there are no native words that begin with voiced plosives however, BVM depicts the occurrence of voiced plosives at word initial positions. This can be a result of continued close contact with Indo-Aryan languages. The native phonology of Meitei had no voiced plosives, the advent of Hinduism into the animistic community and the heavy influence Indo-Aryan languages are the chief motivations for the evolution of voiced sounds in the vocabulary. There are two supra-segmental tones in this variety – the level tone and the falling tone.

2.3.1. Consonants:

There are twenty four consonants in Barak Valley Meitei. There are fifteen consonants in the stop series with four bilabials, four alveolars, three palatals and four velar stops. There are voiced and aspirated counterparts for each place of articulation except for the gap in the stop series by the absence of /c^h/. There are two fricatives, one alveolar and a glottal, three nasals in the bilabial, alveolar and velar positions. The lateral /l/ and nasal /n/ are phonemic elsewhere except in the coda position where they occur in free variation. In Meitei /c/ also occurs as an allophone of /s/ and occurrence depends on the idiolect of the speaker. All consonant sounds are found to occur in the initial position except for the palatal approximant /j/ which occurs only in the medial or coda positions. This is a deviation from the standard variety which allows the initial occurrence of /j/ in native as well as borrowed words. This very common process of fortition or lenition of /j/ to /j̥/ is the idiosyncratic feature of

BVM. Speakers tend to be conscious of its usage in formal situations where the literary /j/ is used.

2.3.2. Consonant Inventory

	Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p p ^h b b ^h	t t ^h d d ^h	c j j ^h	k k ^h g g ^h	
Fricative		s			h
Nasal	m	n		ŋ	
Lateral		l			
Flap		r			
Approximant	w		j		

Consonant Minimal Pairs

/p/ vs /p ^h /	/pón/	‘barricade like a dam’
	/p ^h ən/	‘spread out’
/p/ vs /b/	/pən/	‘barricade like a dam’
	/bèn/	‘closed’
/p ^h / vs /b ^h /	/p ^h əu/	‘rice grain (with husk)’
	/b ^h əu/	‘until /upto’
/t/ vs /t ^h /	/táři/	‘falling’
	/t ^h áři/	‘sending’
/t/ vs /d/	/táři/	‘falling’

	/dari/	‘edge of veranda’
/t ^h / vs /d ^h /	/t ^h əmba:n/	‘lotus’
	/d ^h əma:n/	‘bridegroom’
/c/ vs /j̄/	/cùm/	‘lizard’
	/jum/	‘house/home’
/c/ vs /j̄ ^h /	/colom/	‘dance form’
	/j̄ ^h ulon/	‘festival of Lord Krishna’
/k/ vs /k ^h /	/kaw/	‘forget’
	/k ^h aw/	‘pocket/ cloth bag’
/k/ vs /g/	/ká:ri/	‘climbing’
	/gári/	‘vehicle’
/g/ vs /g ^h /	/gári/	‘vehicle’
	/g ^h əri/	‘clock/watch’
/s/ vs /c/	/səŋ/	‘house’
	/cəŋ/	‘enter’
/s/ vs /h/	/səŋ/	‘house’
	/həŋ/	‘ask’
/m/ vs /n/	/mà-/	‘grope’
	/nà-/	‘sick’
/n/ vs /ŋ/	/na/	‘ear’
	/ŋà-/	‘lean (v)’
/l/ vs /r/	/lai/	‘god, deity’
	/rai/	‘kind of mustard powder used for pickles’
/w/ vs /j/	əwabə	‘trouble’
	əjabə	‘agreement’

Distribution of the consonant phonemes

Initial	Medial	Final
/p/ /puk/ ‘belly’	/upu/ ‘box’	/utup/ ‘wooden log’
/p ^h / /p ^h ək/ ‘mat’	/up ^h un/ ‘dust’	
/b/ /bera/ ‘fence’	/t ^h əbi/ ‘cucumber’	
/b ^h / /b ^h ap/ ‘thought’		
/t/ /te:n/ ‘arrow’	/mətəŋ/ ‘help’	/k ^h ut/ ‘hand’
/t ^h / /t ^h a/ ‘moon’	/mət ^h on/ ‘fold’	
/d/ /dolan/ ‘building’	/kədai/ ‘where’	
/d ^h / /d ^h əma:n/ ‘bridegroom’	/pənd ^h əu/ ‘uncle’	
/c/ /ceŋ/ ‘uncooked rice’	/kucu/ ‘complexion’	
/ʃ/ /ʃerum/ ‘egg (chicken)’	/k ^h uʃi/ ‘bangle’	
/ʃ ^h / /ʃ ^h ulon/ ‘festival’	/minʃ ^h en/ ‘mirror’	
/s/ /səm/ ‘hair’	/usa/ ‘tree branch’	
/h/ /hì/ ‘boat’	/nəha/ ‘youth (+ human)’	
/m/ /mon/ ‘pillow’	/əmə/ ‘one’	/ləm/ ‘land’
/n/ /naton/ ‘nose’	/una/ ‘leaf’	/sèn/ ‘money’
/ŋ/ /ŋək/ ‘neck’	/məŋa/ ‘five’	/lèŋ/ ‘thread’
/l/ /lik/ ‘necklace’	/malem/ ‘earth’	/k ^h udol/ ‘gift’
/r/ /rəŋ/ ‘colour’	/wari/ ‘story’	
/w/ /wai/ ‘husk’	/həwai/ ‘pulses’	
/j/	/məja/ ‘teeth’	/məj/ ‘fire’

In the medial position too all consonants occur except for /b^h/. Consonants occurring in the coda position are fewer. In the coda position, only voiceless stops /p/, /t/ and /k/ are found to occur. Nasal sounds /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/ also occurs in the coda position. The lateral /l/ is also observed in the coda position. /l/ and /n/ are found in free variation in the final position in Meitei.

2.3.3. Vowels:

There are six vowels in the language. There are two high vowels, one at the front and other at the back. The back vowels are rounded. There are three mid vowels in the front centre and back positions. At low height, there is a central vowel. Vowel length is not phonemic. Tones that are carried by the vowels lend the distinctive element.

Vowel Inventory

	Front	Central	Back
Close	i		u
Mid	e	ə	o
Open		A	

Vowel Minimal pairs

/i/ vs /u/	/pik/	‘small’
	/puk/	‘belly’
/i/ vs /o/	/pik/	‘small’
	/pok/	‘white hair’
/i/ vs /e/	/lin/	‘snake’

	/len/	‘hailstone’
/i/ vs /ə/	/tín/	‘insect’
	/tón/	‘bread (s)’
/i/ vs /a/	/lin/	‘snake’
	/lan/	‘battle’
/u/ vs /e/	/lup-/	‘drown’
	/lep-/	‘stand’
/u/ vs /ə/	/lum-/	‘heavy’
	/ləm/	‘land’
/u/ vs /a/	/lú/	‘fishing trap’
	/la/	‘banana leaf’
/u/ vs /o/	/luk/	‘rice platter (honorific)’
	/lok/	‘mountain spring’
/e/ vs /i/	/pe/	‘umbrella’
	/pi/	‘tear’ (N)
/e/ vs /u/	/pe/	‘umbrella’
	/pu-/	‘borrow’
/e/ vs /ə/	/nembə/	‘short (height)’
	/nəmbə/	‘press’
/e/ vs /o/	/lekpə/	‘lick’
	/lokpə/	‘catch / collect’
/e/ vs / a/	/len/	‘hailstone’
	/lan/	‘battle’
/ə/ vs /o/	/t ^h ətpə/	‘obstruct’
	/t ^h otpə/	‘soft’

/ə/ vs /a/	/təkpə/	‘grind’
	/takpə/	‘instruct’
/o/ vs / a/	/lombə/	‘aromatic herb’
	/lambə/	‘hungry.’

Distribution of vowel phonemes

Vowel	Initial	Medial	Final
/i/	/ín/ ‘fishing net’	/tín/ saliva	/hi/ ‘boat’
/u/	/ukù/ ‘tree bark’	/puk/ belly	/ju/ ‘alcohol’
/e/		/len/ hail	/pe/ ‘umbrella’
/ə/	/əi/ ‘I’	/ləm/ land	/əmə/ ‘one’
/o/	/ói/ ‘left side’	/kót/ granary	/la ² o/ ‘come (imp)’

The vowel phonemes are evenly found in all positions – initial, medial and final. Except for /e/ which is not found to occur in the onset position. Vowel length is not phonemic in this language. The vowel is generally the tone bearing unit in this language which often affects the length of the vowel along with the environment that it occurs in. Vowels are found to be shorter when they occur in a closed syllable. Their duration is longer when they occur in the initial positions and the duration is the longest when they occur at the final position of a word in an open syllable.

2.4. The people and their social culture:

The socio-cultural life of the people in the valley is largely centred around related to the Vaishnavite way of life. *Vaishnavism* is a cult of worshippers of Krishna and has a great impact on the lives of the community.

Religion and religious activities form the back bone of activities in their society. Owing to this encompassing influence, the lexicon is richly loaded with borrowings from Indo-Aryan Bengali and Assamese through which the religious imports were established in the language. The Meiteis followed an animistic religion called *Sanamahism*, which is based on the worship of ancestors and forces of nature identified as the worship of *Sanamahi* before the conversion to Hinduism. In the beginning of the 18th Century, during the reign of Pamheiba or Garibniwaz as he was later known, Vaishnavite Hinduism came to influence his life and he declared it to become the official religion of the kingdom. This brought about an irreversible effect on the language and culture of the Meiteis with heavy linguistic as well as cultural influences. It is to be noted that the Meitei culture that exists today has come about through a fusion of the animistic beliefs of *Sanamahism* and Vaishnavism. This brings about an interesting amalgamation of culture and beliefs which is no longer possible to disintegrate or divide exclusively even though the point of influence in time can be dated back to the introduction of Hinduism by the ruler. The language itself, has expanded in its inventory of native phonology from having only voiceless obstruents to the development of voiced obstruents in the phonology, although found to occur mostly in borrowed words. The vocabulary is also richly and intricately infused by borrowings from the Indo-Aryan culture as religion became an integral part of the life and social culture of the people. Dances and performance arts showcase this merger of culture and religion where it is no longer possible to dissimilate the fusion of the ancient Meitei and Vaishnavite culture.

Migration of people and settling down in another place can be attributed to various reasons as stated earlier. The culture and social practices may or may not be observed by the people depending on their personal choices and often the lack of a composite community to participate with. As with most societies of India, of the socio-cultural practices of the Meiteis are also largely dependent on the participation of the community to execute it successfully. This cannot be done with only a mere handful of people. For the observation and sustenance of long standing cultural practices, there is a requirement for an institution that holds the old legacies and community practices together. In this regard, the temple of Lord Jagannath or *Jagabandhu* as referred to by the Meiteis forms the centre of the community in villages across the Barak Valley. Such a temple requires the presence of a large hall or ‘*mandop*’ which is the area where community feasts, dances, traditional games like Kang¹, marriages and the melange of social ceremonies can take place. This forms the core of the social functioning of the society. The significance of this institution is such that a person or family that for some reason has broken social conventions is not welcome to participate. Such stringent rules are stressed on by the community elders to preserve the cultural legacy and practices which is important for the flourishing of the socio-cultural identity of the Meitei community in the Barak Valley. It is common to find groups of people migrating to various cities and towns for work and education purposes and often settling down permanently in

¹ An indigenous indoor game that may have Pre-Vaishnavite origins. It is played with a roughly round shaped seed of a creeper bean, the size of a large biscuit cookie where the players attempt to hit a target Kang with another as per the various rules of the ancient game. It is believed to have celestial and royal significance and hence observed as a cultural tradition across Meitei diaspora.

that place and slowly adapting to a way of life that may not necessarily involve practice of one's cultural customs. What the Meiteis in Barak Valley are striving for is to maintain and practice the old way of life to uphold the ancient customs and practices in order to preserve the identity that defines them.

In the recent times, a revivalist trend of Sanamahism is emerging in Manipur and some pockets of Barak Valley. This meant rejection or gradual loss of importance of the Vaishnavite way of life which was often ridden with rigorous rules of everyday life. There is a conscious way to practice the old animistic beliefs and an effort to recognize the difference between what is newer than the ancient practices of the community and what has come about after the conversion. The larger population of Barak Valley Meitei speakers adhere to Hinduism as well as *Sanamahism* and their culture reflects an amalgamation of both influences.

As per the Census of 2011, Hindus formed 59.83 %, Muslims 37.1 %, Christians 2.7% and the remaining percent of the population belonged to Buddhists, Jains and other. The point of this demographic information is that the society which surrounds the Meiteis are predominantly Hindus. Therefore the population of Meiteis in the Barak Valley are more inclined to observe the Hindu Vaishnavite way of life and also including the worship of Sanamahism as part of their ancestor worship beliefs. The people who migrated and settled in the valley before the Sanamahi Revivalists were people who were of the newly converted generation of people who were practising Vaishnavite religion. This stock of population consciously maintains linguistic, religious and cultural identity amidst a highly multi-cultural setting.

The community believes it is important to observe and preserve the religious as well as cultural beliefs of the community to prevent amalgamation with other identities. However, the decade beginning from the 2010's shows a development in the idea to identify other Hindu deities through a Meitei viewpoint. Durga Puja which is an important festival of the Bengali Hindu community is also observed by the Meiteis in which the recent trend has been to dress the idols of the deities in Meitei attires. This intermingling of culture and religion undoubtedly brings a lot of influences into the linguistic vocabulary of a community which focuses on the preservation of its identity but is also undoubtedly influenced heavily by its environment.

2.5. History of settlement:

The movement of people from one place to another can be attributed to many reasons. Across civilizations and across history, people have moved from the place of their origins for various reasons and continue to do so throughout the passage of time. Explorations, quest for adventure, trade, commerce and matrimonial alliances with royal families of other neighbouring kingdoms like Tripura, Cachar and Sylhet are a few reasons that can be attributed to the movement of the population outwards from Manipur. Consequently, every outbreak of rebellion in the kingdom Manipur drove fugitive rulers and their retinues to take refuge in the neighbouring Cachar kingdom which created a steady flow of population both ways even before the great exodus of the Anglo-Burmese genocide. Starting from the 4th century A.D, traders from Manipur reached out on horseback to Burma and China during the reign of Khui Ningomba, Pensiba and Naokhamba. The 8th century A.D witnessed the two-

way migration when the western gate of Manipur was exposed to the Sylhet-Cachar sector which led to the expansion of the trade route.

Scholars of Tibeto- Burman languages believe the link between speakers of languages across Northeast India to the Neolithic Yang Shao culture which originated in the central plains of Northern China who later split into Sino-Tibetan and Tibeto- Burman languages². The first king of the Pong kingdom of the Shan Dynasty was ‘Khood Lai’ whose literal translation in Meitei means ‘Lord of the place’ and in archaic Meitei means ‘Lainingthou Ningthou’ or ‘the divine king’³. The Meiteis believe the Lainingthou Pakhangba was the first king of the Meiteis and they are the descendants of his legacy. Genealogy of the Meitei Kings from the ancient times until the colonial era give us a sense of how the population of the Meitei settlements are linked to the neighbouring kingdoms of kingdoms of Awa (Burma), Tekhao (Assam) in Nagaon of Upper Assam, various pockets in Cachar Assam and Takhel (Tripura) and matrimonial alliances of Manipuri princesses with the regents of these kingdoms took place in order to seal political and friendly alliances as witnessed throughout the histories of the world. The settlement of Meiteis in Burma was traced to the year 1470⁴ when the Pong ruler Kikhomba formed an alliance by matrimony with the Manipuri king Medingu Kiyamba’s household. The relations between the kingdom of Manipur and Burma was fraught with alternating peace and warring

² Thurgood, Graham & LaPolla, Randy (2003, 2007). *The Sino- Tibetan Languages*. Abingdon: Routledge.

³ N. Khelchandra in Sanajaoba (2005) cites from E.W. Dun, *Gazetteer of Manipur*, Calcutta, 1886, p.188; Dun wrote, “Pong –The Shan kingdom of Pong was formerly bounded on the north by a range of hills dividing Burma from Assam; south extended to Khampat, West to Yoma range, and east to Yunan”.

⁴ Sanajaoba (2005: 15-18)

periods which is responsible for many historic events in both kingdoms. Along with this, recurring disputes within the ruling house, often amongst brothers ambitious of contesting for the seat of the king of Manipur, caused many an incident of fratricide which often led to the rulers seeking asylum in the neighbouring friendly state of Assam, in which the erstwhile kingdom of Cachar was the nearest. This would consequently entail movement of the armies and retinues of the ruler following him and settling down in Cachar. The settlement of Meiteis in Cachar was recorded in the year 1604⁵ which arose due to a dispute in the royal family between the two brothers Khagemba and Sanongba and the latter fled to Cachar with his generals and his retinues. This marks a first time settlement of a large group of Meiteis in Assam. Later, every invasion by the Burmese would entail the ruler to seek political asylum in the neighbouring kingdom. The assassination of Garibnawaz alias Pamheiba also caused a situation for political exile for Meidingu Chitsai who was compelled to reside in Cachar along with his attendants and retinues from 1752 for several years. During the reign of Meidingu Bhagyachandra (1759-1758) there were frequent wars with Burma in which he lost and regained his seat of power four times. The consequence of every Burmese invasion and recurring system of political asylum created this chain of emigration from Manipur which became almost a regular system resulting in the gradual and eventual settlement of Meiteis settling in the valley permanently in time as the valley besides being a safe refuge provided the basic requirements for forming settlements as it was fertile and plentiful in resources.

⁵ Singh, Tarunkumar.N in Sanajaoba (2005: 20)

In 1702, the marriage of Rani Projabati Devi with the Cachar King Raja Ram Chandra Narayan brought about the settlement of the Manipuri princesses' royal retinue and attendants into the state. Successively, royal alliances between the kingdoms followed in the years. In 1806, Meidingu Modhuchandra of Manipur gave his daughter in marriage to the ruler of Cachar, Krishnachandra while in political asylum being dethroned by his brother Chaurajit. Infighting and fratricidal wars amongst the royal siblings Chaurajit, Marjit and Gambhir Singh led to political exile from the kingdom. This juncture of history in 1812 is crucial as it sowed the seeds for the forthcoming saga that would mark a crucial event in the history of Manipur, its citizens and its neighbours as well in the consecutive years. These wars were often aided by foreign support namely the Burmese and in the later years by the colonial British Empire for the expansion of the imperial conquests. Marjit ascended the throne with the help of Burmese military strength and support and Chaurajit and Gambhir Singh had to seek political asylum in the kingdom of Cachar who was then ruled by Raja Govinda Chandra and his queen, a Meitei princess Induprabha. The ruler entrusted the two brothers with royal duties and allotted them tracts of land to rule and raise. However, the ruler was benevolent and weak and with the help of two of his courtiers, the Meitei princes were able to overthrow the old ruler and divide the kingdom of Cachar to rule amongst themselves.

On the other hand, relations between kingdoms of Burma and Manipur were becoming increasingly tense due to various official as well as private reasons. Historians attribute these to be due to the refusal of King Marjit to attend the coronation of Burmese King Bagidaw in 1819 as a vassal king and indicting the ire of the Burmese ruler. Other mutually supportive reasons are

understood to be the begrudging economic differences and political insecurity due to increase in fortunes of the Meitei king. Marjit is also believed to have refused to lend aid requested by the Burmese Prime Minister who was the younger brother of the Burmese monarch in the delicate matters of the royal family. These reasons combined with the high aspirations of the mighty and ruthless Burmese army fuelled the motivation to wipe out the Meitei kingdom relentlessly in the years 1819- 1825 which is remembered as the ‘Chahi Taret Khuntakpa’ or the seven years of settlement although popularly known as the Seven Years Devastation. The king sought refuge in Cachar and reconciled with his brothers who divided the kingdom into three for each one of them. Large chunks of the population of Manipur were captured as prisoners of war and a countless many subjected to merciless torture, suffering and painful deaths. The ones capable of escape fled to the neighbouring Cachar with their king which was the one major exodus that resulted in the settlement of a large population while the monarchs nursed their wounds to win the kingdom back. The Burmese meanwhile kept the aggression even moving on to full scale incursions onto as far as Assam in 1824. This led the British to declare war on Burma. Seven years after the exodus, modest in number in but highly efficient Manipur Levy constituted by 500 Manipuri soldiers led by Gambhir Singh and Nara Singh, aided by the British included lieutenant R.B. Pemberton set out for the liberation of Manipur on the 17th May 1825 from Sylhet and regained their lost capital and cleared away the remainders of the Burmese invaders in time. The Manipur Levy was later employed by the British for various successful incursions into kingdoms of the region. By this time, a large portion of the population of the Meitei kingdom had by now comfortably settled in Cachar.

After the death of the last ruler of Cachar, Govinda Chandra, the Manipuri ruler claimed to annex Cachar with payment of required annual payments to the British Empire who by then had control of most of the region in focus, but it did not materialise as the British leaders were sharply divided on this issue and thereby Cachar and the people remained as a part of Assam. Cachar was a one of the last outposts of the British government in Assam en route to Manipur and hence an important halting station on the road to Manipur if travelling from the erstwhile British capital, Shillong.

The Meitei population driven out of Manipur by the Burmese had already settled in the fertile Barak Valley with very few returning to their native land. They had begun to settle in various locations forming villages and each one empowered by its own social institutions. They maintained a distinct social identity without being assimilated into the rest of the population which consisted of Bengali (Sylheti), Hmar and Rongmei communities living in close vicinity and continue to do so.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The chapter consists of the theoretical framework and a comprehensive review of literature on which the study is based. The study draws its background from the models of intonation presented in studies such as Beckman & Pierrehumbert (1986), Hayes and Lahiri (1991), Gussenhoven (2004), Ladd (1992, 2008) and Riialand (2007) for the intonational analysis. It is not directly based on these frameworks but developed in relevant consultation to the ideas presented in these works.

Cross cultural studies on Politeness and Pragmatics of Politeness are based on the works of Leech (1983, 2014); (Brown and Levinson (1984); Verschueren, Östman & Jan-Ola (2009); Ogiermann (2009); Blum- Kulka & Olshtain (1984), Lakoff (1975). Works on Politeness and Pragmatics based on East-Asian societies such as Japan and China in Gu (1990) and Ide (1982, 1989, 1993) form the basis of the comparative study with the language in focus as the perspectives of the Western studies do not provide a universal relativity.

3.1. Intonation:

3.1.1. Beckman and Pierrehumbert (1986): Their paper on the Intonational structure in Japanese and English proposes that in both languages, larger prosodic units are marked by boundary tones which are aligned to the edges of the unit and are not phonologically associated to any particular tone bearing unit. In both languages, the boundary tone at some level can be H or L, and the choice of an H or L tone at this level has similar pragmatic consequences

in the two languages. In the treatment of Pierrehumbert (1980), the English intonation phrase had two phrasal tones following the last pitch accent, the phrase accent and boundary tone. They revised the idea that the phrase-accent plus boundary-tone configuration in Pierrehumbert in (1980) should be reanalysed as involving correlates of two levels of phrasing. The phrase accent would then be a terminal tone for the intermediate phrase, while only the boundary tone is terminal to the intonation phrase. Since an intonation phrase is made up of one or more intermediate phrases, both the terminal tone for the intermediate phrase and the one for the intonation phrase are seen in sequence at the end of the intonation phrase.

3.1.2. Hirschberg and Pierrehumbert (1990):

The findings of Hirschberg and Pierrehumbert's study on labelling of intonational meaning sheds an illumination light on the study of intonational meaning. The significance of the boundary tone is foregrounded in the light of the intonational phrase. 'Boundary tones may be H or L but have scope over the entire intonational phrase. As such, they have a considerable role in the conveyance and perception of discourse segmentation.

They propose that the choice of boundary conveys whether the current intonational phrase is 'forward looking' or not – that is, whether it is to be interpreted with respect to some succeeding phrase or direction of interpretation is unspecified. They Hirschberg and Pierrehumbert propose that a High boundary tone indicates that S wishes to interpret an utterance with particular attention to subsequent utterances. A Low boundary tone does not convey such directionality (1990:305). They convey a compositional theory of the meaning of intonational contours. These relationships are conveyed

compositionally via selection of pitch accent, phrase accents and boundary tone.

3.1.3: Ladd (1992, 2008):

Intonation refers to the use of suprasegmental phonetic features to convey 'post lexical' or sentence level pragmatic meanings in a linguistically structured way. Suprasegmental referring to pitch, stress and quantity. Sentence level convey meanings that apply to phrases or utterances as a whole, such as sentence type, speech act or focus and information structure. Linguistically structured intonational features are organised in terms of categorically distinct entities (e.g, low tone or boundary rise) and relations (e.g stronger than/ weaker than). 'Linguist's Theory of Intonational Meaning' (Ladd 1987a: 637) postulates that the elements of intonation have a morpheme-like meaning. These meanings are very general but they are a part of a system with rich interpretative pragmatics, which gives rise to very specific and often vivid nuances in specific contexts. The basic phonological analysis of a pitch contour is thus a string of one or more pitch accents together with relevant boundary tones. Treating this description as an abstract formula, he describes contour types of tunes, and shows how the same contour type is applied to utterances with different numbers of syllables. (Ladd 1992:324)

Ladd's motivation to explore intonation lies in solving the conceptual problem of the relative acoustic and semiotic connection between intonation and the paralinguistic cues. He identifies the 'Linguist's Theory of Intonational Meaning' with a view that the elements of intonation have a morpheme-like meaning. These meanings are very general but they are a part of a language

system with a rich interpretative pragmatics and can give rise to integral meaning which depict vivid nuances in particularly specified contexts. (Ladd 2008:41).

Beckman and Pierrehumbert (1986) have proposed that a ‘phrase accent’ is actually the boundary tone for an intonational domain smaller than the intonational phrase, a domain they call the ‘intermediate phrase.’ Boundary tones are realised at the beginning and end of an utterance and is represented by % as diacritic which is marked as %H for a rising tone and %L for a falling tone on an initial boundary and H% for a rising tone and L% to mark a falling utterance final tone. That is, the end of an intermediate phrase is marked only by what Pierrehumbert called a phrase accent, whereas the end of an intonational phrase is marked by both a ‘phrase accent’ and a full-fledged ‘boundary tone’. The phrasal tones, on the other hand, are defined by their positions relative to the phrase edge; a boundary tone stays at the phrasal boundary regardless of the rhythmic pattern of the phrase, and the phrase accent fills the space between the last accent and the phrasal boundary. The choice of boundary tones can carry relevant pragmatic meanings, nuances or connotations across different languages. (Pierrehumbert, Beckman 1986: Ladd 1992).

3.1.4 .Hayes and Lahiri (1991):

Their paper on Bengali Intonation supports the claim of Beckman and Pierrehumbert (1986) and Hayes (1977) that the ‘phrase accents’ can be reanalysed as ‘boundary tones’ and the set of intonational tones thus may be restricted to just pitch accents and boundary tones. Intonation can be identified

as tunes which often convey highly elusive meanings not contained in the surface form of the utterance. Phonological rules therefore align these tunes to text with auto-segmental association lines. The renovation of the old ‘phrase accents’ into ‘boundary tone’ devises a more coherent way of text to tune analysis by the new proposal (Beckman and Pierrehumbert, 1986) to demarcate the domain of a full intonational tune into an intonational phrase. Under this theory, the old ‘phrase accent’ is now the boundary tone of the Intermediate Phrase, while the old ‘boundary tone’ is now the boundary tone for the Intonational Phrase. They follow the notation of intonation scholars who often divide contours into two parts – a *nucleus* which is the main stressed syllable plus everything after it and a *head* which is everything that occurs before the main stressed syllable.

3.1.5. Gussenhoven (2004):

He provides essential phonetic background information for empirically oriented students of prosody; dealing with basic typological categories like ‘tone’, ‘stress’, ‘intonation’, and ‘accent’, discussion of the place of intonation in language, paralinguistic meanings of pitch variation, phonological configurations encountered in languages; summaries of the ways that sentence prosody has been, or can be, dealt with in Optimality Theory. Determining intonational boundary is based on the phonetic cues like a pause, silent pause or an audible boundary, discontinuation in the pitch contour, change in the intensity, and change in duration, segmental cues observed in a new phrase and evidence of OCP. Information structure of a language also determines where pitch accents occur to signal intonation.

Intonation is treated as the use of phonological tone for non-lexical purposes, or the expression of phrasal structure and discourse meaning. In the discussion of intonation, the notion accent is introduced as a location where intonational tones are located. (Bolinger 1958) assessed that stressed syllables will thus serve as the location for the tones that make up the intonation contour; a stressed syllable is a syllable that has the potential for being pitch-accented. Languages use pitch variation contrastively for the expression of discursal meaning and for marking phrases'. Intonational tones appear on accented syllables as pitch accents or as boundary tones (Pierrehumbert & Beckman 1988) on the edges of prosodic constituents like an intonational phrase. In tonal languages, pitch accents and boundary tones constitute an 'intonational lexicon' from which speakers make semantically and phonologically appropriate choices for every accented syllable and intonational phrase (Lieberman.1975). In intonation, the prosodic structure plays two roles. First, it may codetermine the context of phonological or phonetic rules (e.g. downstep, which is always confined to some prosodic constituent), including those responsible for the distribution of pitch accents. Second, prosodic constituents may be marked by boundary tones.

3.1.6. Rialland (2007):

With a database of 78 languages from the African language families namely Niger-Congo, Afro-Asiatic, Nilo- Saharan and Khosian, based on family grouping of these related languages, she has arrived at two categories of question markers, a high-pitched question marking final intonation and a

low one ending with an L% boundary tone. She classifies the following characteristics for each types of question prosody marking.

High-Pitched Yes/No Question Markers

- cancellation/reduction of down drift, register expansion
- raising of last H(s) (not necessarily sentence-final)
- cancellation/reduction of final lowering
- final High tone or rising intonation (final H%)
- final HL melody (listed in this category as it involves a high component)

Non High-Pitched Yes/No Question Markers

- final Low tone or falling intonation (final L%)
- final polar tone or M tone
- lengthening: V (a vocalic mora) or V... (large vocalic lengthening)
- breathy termination
- cancellation of penultimate lengthening
- [open] vowel

The alternate non-high pitch question marker and its accompanying characteristics add a new dimension of understanding question prosody which deviates from the ‘near-universal’ rising question intonation in many studies on this area. The rising question intonation is a wide-spread phenomena across many languages. The revelations of this study aids the interpretation of languages which deviate from the near-universal rising intonation and the reasons that define it.

3.2. Pragmatics and Politeness Theory:

Research in the field of pragmatics of intonation has been carried out with intense zeal in the past three decades. For the analysis of pragmatics and politeness phenomena, Brown and Levinson (1978, 1984); Blum- Kulka & Olshtain (1984), Leech (1983, 2014), Gu (1990), Ide (1982, 1989, 1993, 2012); Verschueren, Östman & Jan-Ola (2009) and Ogiermann (2009); are a namely a few of the works that the study draws upon.

3.2.1 Brown and Levinson's Politeness Theory (1978, 1987):

Brown and Levinson's work, one of the most iconic in this area is not an exhaustive work but an anchor that led many works to the shore. The concept of face - positive and negative face is developed by them derived from Goffman (1967). Face is one's public self-image and is divided into positive and negative face, both of which need to be protected against face threatening acts. In any social interaction, co-operation is needed between participants to maintain each other's positive and negative face needs. Positive face refers to one's self esteem. It relates to the want for positive self - image, the want to be liked, admired, ratified, and related to positively. Negative face refers to the desire not to be imposed upon. It relates to one's freedom to act as per one's will. Regardless of superficial diversities that might exist, there are underlying universal principles of politeness across all languages and cultures. In describing positive politeness, markers of social closeness like intimate address forms are used; negative politeness on the other hand, includes the use of markers of deference like honorifics in situations where they are actually not required. This work, although a referral point for many studies on politeness has been consulted unanimously as well as criticised for its 'Anglo-centric'

(Weirzbicka,1985) mode of looking at politeness communicative speech which focuses on an individual's agency and liberty to respond to situations. This is not a universal trait as different cultures have different modes of corresponding to such situations and it is not possible to adhere to one code of deciphering such social codes of behaviour.

Nevertheless, it is a seminal work that has paved the way for many studies on this subject from many trajectories not only from linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, pragmatics and communication studies but also in a vast number of fields of social studies such as sociology, anthropology and psychology.

3.2.2. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1984, 1989):

Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP), conducted by an international team of linguists (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper et al. 1989) is one of the most extensive speech act studies conducted in the field. The study examined realisations of requests and apologies in five languages (Canadian French, Danish, German, Hebrew and English) – the last one represented by three varieties (Australian, American, and British) – and several interlanguages. The framework of this study has been so far replicated in many consecutive studies including Ogiermann (2009). The goal of the project was aimed at establishing

- (i) Native speakers' patterns of realization with respect to two speech acts— requests and apologies—relative to different social constraints, in each of the languages studied (situational variability).

- (ii) The similarities and differences in the realization patterns of requests and apologies cross-linguistically, relative to the same social constraints across the languages studied (cross-cultural variability).
- (iii) The similarities and differences between native and non-native realization patterns of requests and apologies relative to the same social constraints (individual, native versus non-native variability).

The method used for generating the data was a controlled elicitation procedure originally developed for comparing the speech act realization patterns of native speakers and learners (Blum-Kulka, 1982) which contained discourse scenarios which were incomplete and represented socially differentiated situations. Each discourse sequence presented a short description of the situation, specifying the setting, the social distance between the interlocutors and their status relative to each other, followed by an incomplete dialogue. Informants were asked to complete the dialogue which would elicit requests and apologies in the given task scenarios such as the following taken from the CSARP project itself.

In the following examples of test items, (1) is constructed to elicit a request, and (2) to elicit an apology.

1 *At a student's apartment*

Larry, John's room-mate, had a party the night before and left the kitchen in a mess.

John: Larry, Ellen and Tom are coming for dinner tonight and I'll have to start cooking soon; _____

Larry: OK, I'll have a go at it right away.

2 *At the professor's office*

A student has borrowed a book from her teacher, which she promised to return today. When meeting her teacher, however, she realizes that she forgot to bring it along.

Teacher: Miriam, I hope you brought the book I lent you.

Miriam: _____

Teacher: OK, but please remember it next week.

Fig.3.1 (From Blum-Kulka, 1984)

The analysis of the responses returned were observed depending on the importance the utterance and its components. The primary aim was to look at the response and determine whether the whole thing is of equal importance and serve equal functions in the realisation of the speech act that eventually takes place as the response to the given discourse completion task. The procedure adopted to deal with the analysis of such a long response is dealt with by analysing the sequence into the following segments:

- (a) Address Term(s);
- (b) Head act;
- (c) Adjuncts) to Head act.

This segmentation is helpful in being able to help realising the main ‘head act’ of the utterance that is the nucleus of the speech act that is elicited in the given situation. The head act carries the main message of the communicative strategy and might be able to act independently on its own without completely relying on the other elements.

According to Brown and Levinson, requests are face threatening acts in the sense that they impinge on the liberty of the hearer and compels them to comply with the speaker’s wants. Although different cultures may have different modes and strategies of executing this, the main intention is to complete the act with minimal possible imposition and use of strategies and devices to reduce the weight of the imposition. Employing different points of view to approach the situation can be a good key start. For instance, hearer oriented, speaker oriented, speaker-hearer oriented and impersonal ways of

request perspectives can be employed in the most relevant context and manner possible. In conjunction with this, several other devices can be employed as required by the context to mitigate the imposition such as syntactic downgraders – interrogatives, negation, past tense and the embedded ‘if’ clause. Other downgraders that can additionally be employed are *consultative devices* to engage the speaker and seek co-operation, *understating elements* by means of which the speaker minimizes parts of the proposition, hedges through which the speaker avoids specification in making a discernible reference to illocutionary act, *downtoning* elements by means of which the speaker modulates the impact his/her utterance on the hearer, *upgraders* that increase the compelling force of the request, *intensifiers* which over-represent the situational reality and *expletives* which explicitly employ lexical force. These elements are usually employed within the main ‘head act.

Aiding the head act from outside are other elements such as making a *preface* or checking the availability of the situation of the request, getting a *pre-commitment* to comply with the request, *grounders* which explain the necessity of the situation, *sweetener* which exaggerates the hearer’s ability to comply with the situation, *disarmer* that indicates awareness of a potential offense, thereby attempting to anticipate possible refusal and a *cost minimizer* which speaker indicates consideration of the ‘cost’ to the hearer involved in compliance with the request .

The project relied on three such working hypotheses regarding universal features in requesting behaviour (a) to relate and distinguish among central phenomena such as strategy types as different from internal and external modification;(b) requesting behaviour is inherently based on choices from a

variety of options ranging from direct to indirect ones;(c) the scale of indirectness encompasses at least three main types of options (direct, conventionally indirect, and non-conventionally indirect).

3.2.3. Kasper (1990):

Kasper draws attention to the select main issues of linguistic politeness and relates with previous studies in the area. She stresses on

(i) the conceptualization of politeness as strategic conflict avoidance and social indexing

(ii) the linguistic enactment of politeness

(iii) social and psychological factors determining politeness forms and functions

(iv) forms and functions of politeness according to discourse type

(v) rudeness.

Brown and Levinson's seminal work on Politeness is a major landmark in drawing the focus of academics to the study of politeness. It however conveys the notion that communication is essentially a tricky and risky endeavour as the effect of each communicative act rests heavily on the notion of face – to preserve face and to avoid disruptive face threatening acts (Schmidt, 1980). 'In so doing, participants ensure protective and defensive face concerns (according to Goffman 1967:10), or the different kinds of face wants postulated by Brown & Levinson, positive and negative face, which they claim to be universally valid social needs.' This universality is refuted by scholars of Asian cultures such as Ide (1986, 1989), Matsumoto (1988, 1989) and Gu (1990) who claim

the existence of the predominantly collective rather than individualistic orientation of Japanese culture, preserving negative face wants does not seem to be a primary concern for social members, and hence cannot be held to sufficiently motivate politeness behaviour. Kasper highlights that throughout the literature of request realization in a variety of Western languages, indirectness serves as 'avoiding intrusion' of the hearer's options of responding to the speaker. On the other hand in cultures of Asian backgrounds such as Japanese, indirectness is contrarily seen as an empathetic understanding amongst the communicators and signifying a high degree of understanding and expectancy which obliterates the value for direct or explicit communication.

Her paper also discusses the impact of gender on the exercise of politeness. Holmes (1989) reports that in New Zealand apologizing behavior, women not only give and receive more apologies than men, but also apologize more readily, even for lighter offenses, and prefer other-oriented apologizing strategies. In other studies, gender-related effects have been shown to interact with social distance, as reported for the use of honorifics in Japanese directives (Ide 1982, Ide et al.1986). Brown and Gilman (1989) hold the degree of imposition and power hierarchy rather than social distance as the cause for this. Kasper concludes that linguistic politeness makes a strong case for the complex interplay of politeness, social relationships and communicative action. The studies accounted in her paper show that contextual and cross-cultural variability of politeness behaviour exists and must be looked at objectively in its relevant context and the speech community.

3.2.4. Leech (1983, 2014):

Leech's 1983 work on the Principles of Politeness forms the basis of many studies on this area. The formulation of these principles is based on Grice's Co-operative Principles which stress on the quantity, quality, relevance and manner of communication. Using this as the basis, he introduces the Politeness Principle and develops the maxim of tact, maxim of generosity, maxim of approbation, the maxim of modesty, maxim of agreement and maxim of sympathy. These maxims were developed to bridge the connection between grammatical senses of a meaning to its pragmatic force. This relation could be direct or indirect. He claims that grammatical explanations are primarily formal and pragmatic explanations are functional in nature. He also laid emphasis on the application and functional aspects of these principles and the social and context dependency of their impact. For instance, comparing the Japanese to be more modest than the British and the British to be more tactful that the Japanese depends on the pragma-linguistic strategies such as indirectness and the norms observed in the performance strategies of these speech communities. The transfer or application of these norms of one community to another may lead to 'pragmatic failure' and that the speaker's intentions may be misinterpreted as being rude or uncooperative.

Pragmatics of Politeness (2014) which comes out almost 30 years after the previous work deals with the said topic elaborating on his earlier works dealing with language use and social behaviour. Within recent developments in the study of pragmatics and politeness during the period there have been many developments in time. He focuses on the study of language use and its meaning to speakers and hearers in terms of two interfaces: the one between pragmatics

and linguistic form (known as *pragmalinguistics*) and the other between pragmatics and society (known as *sociopragmatics*). In this he also addresses the criticisms to his earlier work on Politeness and reviews major developments and remodels his account based on them. He lucidly puts forth key features of politeness and the importance of its function in human and social interactions. He addresses the differences between the Western and the Asian societies and the great divide between the functioning of the pragmatics and politeness phenomena in these different cultures. He highlights that Brown and Levinson's (1987) treatment of politeness contained a Western bias towards individualistic wants and that the Eastern preference for group ethos is not an absolute contradiction to Western individualism, but rather that they are in relative contradiction.

3.2.5. Ogiermann (2009):

Her work is based on cross-cultural studies on politeness phenomena such as requests (e. g., House and Kasper 1981; Blum-Kulka 1987, 1989; Blum-Kulka and House 1989; House 1989; Sifianou 1992; Fukushima 1996, 2000; Van Mulken 1996; Lubecka 2000; Ma´rquez Reiter 2000, 2002; Byon 2004, 2006; Barron 2008). Her study carries out a cross-cultural comparison between Polish and Russian and it is based on Brown and Levinson's theory, while taking a critical approach to and introducing a new perspective on some of their concepts. It attempts to integrate cultural values underlying the perception of what constitutes polite behaviour into their potentially universal framework, while focusing on Polish and Russian cultures which have been rarely been investigated from this perspective. With an introduction to the outlines the theoretical background of cross-cultural pragmatics, she evaluates

how the notion of culture has been dealt with in previous politeness research and describes some culture-specific features of the communicative styles prevalent in the two Slavic cultures. She narrows down the discussion of politeness to the speech act of apologising and examines the applicability of Brown and Levinson's theory to apologies, discusses the face considerations motivating the formulation of an apology while taking into account the speaker's and the hearer's positive as well as negative face needs, which can be expected to carry different weight across cultures. The method of data collection called DCT or Discourse Completion Test is drawn from this study which is also based on the CCSARP of Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984) which requires the informant to complete elicitation tests of given situations or scenarios with a focus on naturally occurring data, role plays and questionnaires.

3.2.6. Lin (2005)

She observes that on the notion of face, some researchers working with non-western languages, such as Chinese and Japanese, contest the claim that negative and positive face wants are universal motivations underlying politeness (Matsumoto 1988; Ide 1989, Gu 1990; Mao 1994). They argue that Brown and Levinson's concept of face, especially the notion of negative face, does not have cross-cultural validity because it does not apply in Asian societies where group harmony and social norms are the motivation as well as the general guidelines for politeness. She concludes that any theory that aims for universal value needs to take into account all the contextual factors by including a 'total-context' component in the model. To this end, a socio-pragmatic approach is not only important, but also essential in analysing a

context-dependent notion such as politeness. These politeness strategies are largely dependent on the proficiency of language of the individual.

3.2.7. Gu (1990):

Gu illustrates how politeness in the Chinese society is demonstrated by self-denigration and elevating the speech partner or hearer. The concept of 'face' as understood in Western society and its literature on politeness in Chinese society as respect in the society is earned by social harmony and acceptance rather than displaying individual autonomy. In the social order of the ancient Chinese society about which Gu writes, the use of politeness was integral to maintain social order and hierarchy of its functions in a smooth and organised manner. The first part of his salient paper reflected on the ancient Chinese society of the time of Confucius which was mainly a feudal society. The politeness in the Chinese society was based on denigrating the self and respecting the other which formed the core of 'limao' or the Chinese ethics of politeness.

In due course of time, the feudal system gave way to a republican system of social functioning. In this, some honorifics have gone obsolete. In the present scenario, 'limao' is practised by respectfulness, modesty, attitudinal warmth and refinement are practised. The two cardinal principles that belie the practise of 'limao' are sincerity and balance.

Gu refutes Brown & Levinson's theory on the grounds that the function of face threatening acts begs to differ in Chinese as their theory is based on the Western society. Situations like invitations, expression of gratitude, seeking pardon under ordinary circumstances are acts of positive politeness. These acts

are not taken to be obstruction of the addressee's freedom but as something that is intrinsically polite. These acts could become negative politeness only if the truth conditions are not maintained. The Address Maxim that is used in the Chinese society helps establish or maintain social bonds, strengthens solidarity and control social distance. The Address Maxim can be seen as being essentially an expression of linguistic politeness. Governmental titles, occupational titles, proper names, kinship terms and address politeness markers are solidarity boosters, such as 'tongzhi' in Chinese meaning comrade. In Meitei, 'itao', 'bhai', 'itaroi', etc. are solidarity enhancing address terms between peers.

3.3. Meitei: Review and background.

Studies on intonation in Meitei are based on the speech of the Meitei population located in Manipur which will be the basis for this study (Bhat & Ningomba 2007; Chelliah 2007). These studies deal with various aspects of Meitei grammar. Mishra & Dutta's (1999) paper about language maintenance by Meitei speakers in Assam in the midst of many other languages alleges that the community maintains its language but has lost its lexical tone and uses context for distinction. This has found to be the contrary on the other hand.

2.3.1. Bhat and Ningomba (2007):

They present a comprehensive reference grammar of Manipuri keeping theoretical discussions to the minimum and present the work in an easy to use reference style with generous examples to illustrate each topic. The work includes a concise description of the phonology, word formation processes,

sentence structure, nominal categories, case suffixes, verbal category, directional and dietic distinctions; valency patterns, valency alternations, tense, aspect mood; modifying constructions, complementation and illocutionary distinctions.

2.3.2. Chelliah (2007):

A detailed and cohesive descriptive grammar of Meitei language. Using a generative approach to present the data and points of analysis she describes the sound system and phonological rules of Meitei, describe the Meitei syntax: the major lexical categories, grammatical relations, the structure of root sentences and subordination. The description of Meitei verb and noun morphology, the distribution of semantics of enclitics and patterns of compounding and duplication described in detail. The work concludes with functional issues such as indirect speech and evidentiality.

2.3.4. Meiraba (2014)

This doctoral thesis examines the prosodic structure of Meitei using the principle of Prosodic Phonology and enquires into the prominence relation among the different prosodic units and realization of the segmental and prosodic phenomena dependent on the prosodic structure of Meiteilol. The study postulates a hierarchical phonological account of the different prosodic constituents in the language including the segmental phonology and lexical tones, prosodic structure of the language and an overview of intonation phonology of based on Ladd (1996 & 2008).

2.3.5. Mishra & Dutta (1999):

Their paper on language maintenance of Meitei speakers in the Cachar district of Assam is the sole published work on the language variety in focus. In this they claim that the speakers have lost the native phonemic tone and instead use the specified context to distinguish between homophones.

CHAPTER 4

INTONATION OF INTERROGATIVES

4.1. Introduction:

The chapter presents an examination of the interrogative sentences in Barak Valley Meitei and its intonational structure based on the models of Autosegmental- Metrical approach to Intonation analysis Beckman and Pierrehumbert (1986), Hayes and Lahiri (1991), Ladd 2008 and Riialand (2007).

Intonational Phonology maps the correspondence between prosodic constituents and physical manifestations of the acoustic realisation, namely pitch, intensity and duration. The purpose of this examination is to determine the intonation patterns of interrogative sentences in Barak Valley Meitei through the pitch accents and the boundary tones. Boundary tones define the edges of prosodic constituents and the existing literature on Meitei (of Manipur) postulates that a rising pattern (Meiraba, 2014) of the intonation determines a question. Meitei is also argued to have a bitonal left dominant stress pattern L+H* so the correlation between these factors will be considered for the interpretation of the analysis of the data. The literature on which the study draws upon is mainly based on intonational languages which are non-tonal so the results may have alternative implications along with what is already known.

4.2. Intonation

Intonation is defined as the ‘use of suprasegmental phonetic features to convey ‘postlexical’ or sentence level pragmatic meanings in a linguistically

structured way' (Ladd 2008) using three defining characteristics. The suprasegmental features – f₀, stress, pitch, intensity, duration, quantity are some of the phonetic correlates that are relied upon for the study of intonation. However, a distinction of physical and psycho-physical properties must be made in reference to particular contexts as these features can be often used ambiguously. At the sentence-level or post-lexical level, intonation conveys meanings that are applicable to phrases as utterances as a whole, such as sentence type or speech act or focus and information structure. By this definition Ladd makes sure that intonation excludes features of stress, accent and tone that are determined in the lexicon which serve to distinguish one word from another. Intonation is not used to designate lexical differences. Although lexical features of stress, accent and tone interact in many ways, their functions can be kept distinct from each other. Intonational features are linguistically structured in terms of categorically distinct entities like boundary tones which may be low or high. Word accents have a lexical function, whereas intonational features like the final peak and fall have a sentence-level function. However, word accent features are linked to stressed syllables, and the intonational features to final syllables and together they form a single sequence of tonal events that is realised as a single utterance contour (Ladd 2008: 33). These characteristics may be influenced by para-linguistic features such as attitude or emotion which may interact with or influence intonational features.

Intonation can be identified with a subset of prosodic (or suprasegmental) devices. These are the results of stereotypical variations in pitch, loudness, duration and quality, superimposed upon different-sized sections of the sound string (Cruttenden 1997: 172–7). The prosodic devices

include pitch patterns (i.e. recurring configurations of consecutive pitch heights), pitch range (i.e. the distance between the highest and lowest pitch heights), pitch register (i.e. the general pitch level of a section of speech), stress, volume, tempo, voice quality variation and pause. Pitch patterns, pitch range and pitch register constitute various kinds of pitch variation. (c.f. Varga 2002:19)

The meaning and function of intonation is thus assumed to be a relational one. Intonation, in co-occurrence with syntactic, semantic and other locutionary properties is used as a contextualization device in conversational activities to signal the status and contextual presuppositions of segments and utterances (Gumperz 1982, cf. Auer: 1992).

An intonation contour is a structured pitch configuration on tune which is interpreted as a prosodically cohesive whole on the grounds of interpreted rhythm..., it is used in co-occurrence with a locutionary or textual stretch of speech to constitute utterance or turn constructional units. (Selting in Auer 1992:234)

In English, then an intonation meaning modifies the lexical meaning of a sentence by adding to it the speaker's attitude towards the contents of that sentence (or an indication of the attitude with which the speaker expects the hearer to react)' Lexical meanings are objective. The intonation meaning is quite the opposite. Rather than being a stable inherent part of words, it is a temporary addition to their basic form and meaning; it is carried by a transitory extrinsic pitch contour and superimposed upon that intrinsic lexical meaning according to the speaker's attitude. An extraordinary characteristic of

intonation contours is the tremendous connotative power of their elusive meanings. (Pike in Bolinger 1972:55).

The difference between tone and intonation can be looked at as ‘on the lexical level, tone distinguishes the meaning of one word from that of an otherwise homophonous word. Intonation on the other hand, is a phonetic manifestation (pitch being its instrument) of the attitude of the speaker assumes towards the things spoken about, or toward the auditor. It follows therefore that tone and intonation are functionally different from each other, in spite of the fact that they are characterised by the ebb and flow of pitch.’ It is different from tone as it has an emotive function. Its purpose is said to supply a delicate shade of meaning to the utterance upon which it is super imposed. It belongs to the field of ‘expression’- being the reflection of the speaker’s attitude or feelings.’ (Abe, 1955).

4.3. Intonational Phrase:

What is an intonational phrase? ‘An intonational phrase is defined as a prosodic unit delimited phonologically by some sort of intonational feature such as a boundary tone’ (Beckman and Pierrehumbert, 1986). An intonational phrase occupies the intermediate position in the prosodic hierarchy of Prosodic Phonology (Nespor and Vogel, 1986) between an utterance and a phonological phrase. According to Selkirk (1995), boundary tones are exploited more uniformly across languages as diverse as English, Chinese, Japanese, and Serbo-Croatian. It can mark whether a sentence is an assertion, a question or a contradiction. Medial boundary tones such as the continual rise in English

can be interpreted for other syntactically definable class of constituents in the sentence such as focus, topic and other parenthetical expressions. Selkirk (2004) also states that ‘a sentence will contain at least as many Intonational Phrase prominences as it contains contrastive foci. And since, by the very nature of prosodic structure representation, the presence of a metrical prominence entails the presence of the constituent of which it is the head, there will be as many Intonational Phrase constituents as there are contrastive foci’.

4.4. Pitch accents and boundary tones:

Pitch accents are usually detected on the most prominent syllable on the pitch contour. Functionally, pitch accents may be lexical, as in Japanese or Swedish, or intonational, in which case they are frequently focus-marking, as in English. Pitch accents determine a strong prominent cue in the contour and signal an important cue in the sentence. In the tradition of Hayes and Lahiri (1991), the intonational contour is divided into the head and the nucleus. The nucleus is represented by the most prominent stressed syllable and the head constituting everything after that. Ladd (2008) defines pitch accents as a local feature of a pitch contour, usually but not invariably a pitch change, and often involving a local maximum or minimum, which signals that the syllable with which it is associated is prominent in the utterance.

Pitch accents marked with an asterisk (*) on the tone such as H* or L* convey information about the status of discourse referents, modifiers, predicates and relationships specified by accented lexical items. Phrase accents convey information about the relatedness of intermediate phrases – in particular whether (the propositional content of) one intermediate phrase is to form part of a larger interpretive unit with another. Boundary tones can be

marked by a (%) symbol on edge tone where %H signifies an initial high boundary and H% means a high end boundary tone. It conveys information about the directionality of interpretation for the current intonational phrase – whether it is forward looking or not. So, not only do different features of an intonational phrase convey different aspects of meaning, but meaning conveyed by each feature has scope over a different phonological domain. Together, pitch accents, phrase accents and boundary tones convey how a hearer should interpret the utterance structurally with respect to what the hearer believes to be mutually believed in the discourse. (Hirschberg and Pierrehumbert, 1990).

4.5. Interrogatives in Meitei

The three primary ways of forming an interrogative sentence in Meitei are,

- (i) Yes/No questions.
- (ii) Tag Questions.
- (iii) Wh-Questions.

These are the grammatically structured ways of forming an interrogative with the attachment of functional suffixes and employment of question particles and question words. Apart from this, intonational structure can also render an utterance to be an interrogative without the employment of the structural evidences that signal an interrogative utterance. Nuances and manner of constructing an utterance embed an interrogative meaning to a sentence which may be suggestive of a non-imposing way of asking a question.

Interrogative sentences are used to ask questions, seek information and make a request. In Meitei, interrogative sentences can be classified into *Wh-Questions* or information requests and queries where /kə-/ is the wh-particle attached to relevant affixes and replaces the sentential element in order to ask a question. The inquisition particle /-no/ replaces the copula verb /-ni/ where required and this question particle can also be attached to the question word directly to form an interrogative sentence. *Yes-no questions* are formed by attaching the interrogative particle /-ra/ or its variant /-ro/ to a nominal construction. *Tag questions* are formed by the suffixation of the question particle /ko-/ to the verb in a sentence and *echo-questions* where the question word is replicated to refer to plural elements in question like people or places (Bhat & Ningomba 1997; Chelliah 1997).

4.5.1. Order of question words in the sentence:

There are three main types of order how the question words or particles generally occur in the language.

- (i) Wh- word + inflected verb
- (ii) Wh- word + main verb + question particle
- (iii) Wh-word + question particle. (Chelliah:2007)

The natural SOV word order of the language prevails with the combination of the interrogative devices stated above. In the first type of the question word , the questioning of the agent, patient, goal, theme and other oblique arguments – the question word appears in situ in the canonical argument + verb order (Chelliah, 148: 1997). Although the canonical word order requires that the verb

must be sentence final, the elements in the interrogative sentence can be repositioned as long as the question word constituent is not broken up. The third type of wh-word and question particle sequence require to occur at the right edge of the clause or sentence.

4.5.2. Yes/ No Question:

Polar questions or Yes/No questions is usually direct question which requires only a yes or a no answer. It can be formed by the suffixation of the /-ra/ suffix to the nominalized root word if it is not a noun. The particles /-ro/ or /-ra/ also have their free variants /-lo/ or /-la/. The suffix is attached to one of the following:

4(a) nominal construction, e.g.

nəŋ-gi- ra

You-GEN-Q

‘Is it yours?’

4(b) where the noun is followed by the determiner, e.g.

/təŋgot-se- ra/

Bowl-DET-Q

‘Is this the bowl?’

4(c) where the noun is followed by a case marker, e.g.

/gari-də-ra/

Vehicle-LOC-Q

‘Is it in the vehicle?’

Verbs in Meitei form interrogatives only after they are nominalised or are in the potential mood (Chelliah: 2007). The common ways of nominalising the verb are by suffixing as in (d) the nominalizer /-bə/ or /-pə/; as in (e) /-kə/ or /-gə/ ‘potential marker, copula /-ni/ is attached to inflected verbs, After this the question particle can be attached to the verb as,

4(d) /cá-bə-ra/

fit-NOM-Q

‘Does it fit?’

4(e) /cət-ke-ra/

Go-POT-Q

‘Will you go?’

4(f) /pàj- gə-ni- ra/

Fly-POT-COP-Q

‘Will it fly?’

The interrogative marker being suffixed to the nominalized form of the verb with potential mood markers is a productive method of forming questions. *Alternative questions* which are also a kind of Yes/ No question can be asked by positing the yes-no question particle on both options as in,

4(g) /ʃaw- ra sən-ra/

Sheep-Q cow-Q

‘Is it a sheep or a cow?’

4(h) /cət-kə-də-ra cət-loj-də-ra/

Go-POT-PERF-Q go-NEG-PERF-Q

‘Will you go or not?’

4.5.2. Tag Questions:

Tag questions are formed by the suffixation of the particle /-ko/ to the verb predicate as in,

4(i) /məjam ta-bi-ju-ko/

Everyone listen-HON-IMP-TAG

‘Kindly listen to me (addressing a group)’, okay?

The other way of forming a tag question is by using the negative form of a positive verb or by using a positive form of a negative verb and attach the yes-no question marker to it as shown in 4(j),

4(j) /nəŋ gari t^həu-bə həj-bə-ra həj-tə-bə-ra/

You vehicle drive-NOM know-NOM-Q know-NEG-NOM-Q

‘Do you know how to drive or not?’

Another way of forming a tag question is by attaching the lexical item /nəttra/ which is derived from /nət-tə-ra/ meaning ‘is it not so?’ or ‘isn’t it?’

4(k) /əsi meri-gi satin nət-tə-ra/

This mary-GEN umbrella be-NEG-Q

‘This is Mary’s umbrella, isn’t it?’

4.5.3 Question words and their morphology:

In Meitei, interrogative sentences or questions can be asked with the question words (which are given in the table below) and by suffixation of the interrogative particle /-no/ which signals inquisition and seeking of information in detail.

The following are the six question words which begin with /kə- / (from the Sino- Tibetan proto form ⁶*ka,) to which the functional suffixes can be attached and inflected like nouns to form interrogative utterances.

Table. No. 4.1. Inventory of Wh-words in Meitei

/kədaj/	/kədomdə	/kəna/	/kəja/ ‘how	/kərəmbə/	/kəri/	
‘where’	/	‘which	‘who’	many’	‘which’	‘what’
		side?/way				
		,				
/kədajdə/	/kədomdə	/kənagə/	/kəjadə/ ‘at	/kərəmnə/	/kərigə/	
‘where’(speci	gi/ ‘from	‘with	what price’	‘how’/in	‘with	
fic)	which	whom’		what way’	what’	
	side’					
/kədajdəgi/		/kənagi/	/kəjanə/	/kərəmkán	/kərigi/	
‘from where’		‘whose’	‘how	də/ ‘when/	‘why’	

⁶ Benedict 1984a in Chelliah 1997.

			much(is	at	what
			required)'		time'
/kedajwajdə/	/kənədə/	/kəjam/	/kəremdəw	/kəridə/	
'from around	'to	'how	nə/	'on	
where'	whom'	much(plur	kəmdəwnə/	what'	
		al)'	'how, in		
			what way'		
	/kənədə	/kəjarək/		/kəridəgi	
	gi/	'how many		/ 'from	
	'from	times'		what'	
	whom'				
	/kənana/	/kəjasubə/		/kərinə/	
	'who/by	'which		'by	
	who'	number'		what'	
	/kənabu			/kəjdəwŋ	
	/			əj/	
	'whom'			'when'	

A question in Meitei can be formed with the suffixation of the question particles /-no/ on the Wh-word directly or on the verb predicate. In using these interrogative forms, the question word replaces the sentence constituent in order to frame an interrogative sentence. The question particle /-no/ is used to seek information about the sentential element in conjunction with the question

word. The use of /-no/ signals that more detailed information is sought rather than yes/no response only, /-no/ in interrogative sentences replaces the copula /-ni/ as seen in the following examples. Intonation alone can be used to ask a question without employing any of the question words and particles.

4(q) /nəŋ hujik-p^haw ŋai-ri/
 You now-upto wait-PROG
 ‘You are still waiting?’ (Yashwanta:
 1984).

This sentence is a declarative sentence but intonation can modify the declarative stance of the utterance as will be seen in later examples. Intonation in sentences with or even without the lexical question words or question particles in many instances can be used for asking questions as observed in most languages.

4.5.4. *Wh-Questions:*

Wh- questions are the most primary way of asking for information in a language. With the inventory of Wh-words that we have seen in Table.4.1, it is possible to form a numerous array of questions in the language for various contexts with the wh-word alone or in conjunction with the question particles /-no/ for detailed information and /-ra/ for polar questions. The following demonstrate a few simple Wh-questions,

4(l) / kəɖaj-də cət-li-no/
 Where-LOC go-PROG-INQ
 ‘Where are you going?’

4(m) /kənanə pi-rək-i-no/

Who give-DIST-PROG-INQ

‘Who gave it (to you)?’

4(n) / əsi kəri-no/

This what-INQ

‘What is this?’

Another way of forming interrogative utterances is with the optative particle /-ke/ or /-ge/ when suffixed to the verb predicate imbibes a meaning of informing about the intention to progress with an intended action or seeking approval or permission. This is often used a politeness inducing device in communication (Chapter 5).

4(o) /kəna-nə haj-ge/

Who-NOM say-OPT

‘Who says?’

4(p) /kəri tou-ri-ge/

What do-PROG-OPT

‘What are you doing?’

This same sentence can also be framed as,

/kəri tou-ri-no/

What do-PROG-INQ

‘What are you doing?’

Both constructions are grammatically accurate and acceptable and can be used interchangeably depending on the speaker's requirement. The function of the two suffixes can be distinguished on the grounds that /-ge/ being the optative marker, has an optative connotation where the hearer is given a sense of having the power to choose or permit something. The other suffix /-no/ has a solicitive nuance and softens the communicative force of the speech act it signals (Chelliah, 2007: 503). Hence the choice of usage depends on the context and requirement.

4.6. Intonation of Interrogatives in Meitei:

In the available works on Meitei, there is only a minimal reference to intonation. Although it is understood, accepted and acknowledged that intonation has an important function in discourse and communication, there is a dearth of studies on this area in Meitei. A general implication about the perception of intonation available in Yashwanta (1984) and Chelliah (2007) is that interrogative sentences have a rising intonation. A rising intonation is perceived to be a question in English and across other languages (Bolinger 1972, Ladd 1992, Gussenhoven 2004).

Meiraba (2014) in his study of Meitei prosodic phonology presents a brief section on the intonation of simple sentences in the language. His observation of interrogative sentences consists mainly of simple Yes/No questions which he concludes has a final rising boundary tone.

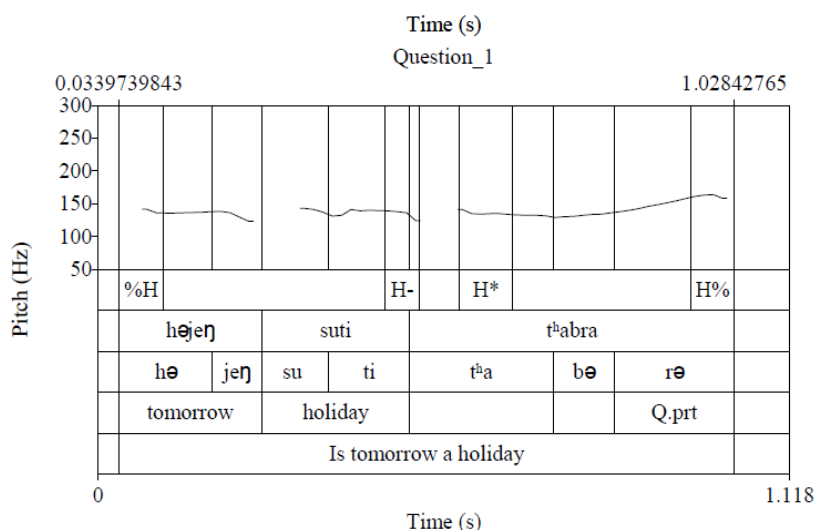


Fig. Waveform and pitch contour of the sentence **həjeŋ sutɪ tʰabrə** 'Is tomorrow a holiday'.

Fig. 4. (From Meiraba, 2014).

The interrogative sentences in his study are observed to have rising final tone and the H* pitch accent is marked on the metrically most prominent syllable /tha-/ of the word /thabra/ which contains the question particle /-ra/. The pitch accent is marked on the most prominent syllable which also happens to be the metrically most prominent position in the above sentence.

4.7. Intonation of Interrogatives in Barak Valley Meitei:

The focus of the present chapter as mentioned is on the intonation of interrogatives of Meitei spoken in Barak Valley, Assam. The data used for this study is elicited through a series of pictures (animated and static) presented to the informant in a power point presentation used as a stimulus to generate questions from the speakers. This section is divided into the three main types of questions that have returned as responses in the elicitation process. The attempt of this exercise was to keep the data as spontaneous and natural as required for the study. The exercise returned an interesting array of styles from

the speakers to ask the most primarily occurring response as soon as they saw the picture displayed on the screen.

4.7.1. *Wh-Questions:*

Wh-questions are the most extensive and productive system of generating interrogative sentences in many languages and in BVM as well. As we have seen earlier in this chapter the array of wh-words can be combined with the inquisitive particle /-no/ in a nominalised verbal suffix or directly on the question word itself as required by the context. The use of the inquisitive particle indicates that the information required is of a more detailed and extensive manner than a Yes/No question.

The example given below is elicited by showing the informant a picture which contains a big group of large dogs that are seen to be moving about in an open forest area. The first reaction that arises when he sees the picture is the following question asking information about the dogs and from where so many dogs have come to gather in such a place.

4.1. / *sidəj* *huj* *məjam-si-bu* *kədaj-dəj* *laji-no-ne/*

sidə-gi *huj* *məjam-si-bu* *kədaj-dəgi* *lak-i-no-ne(UR)*

here-GEN dog many-DET-ACC where-ABL come-PROG-
INQ-SI

‘Where did these dogs come from?’

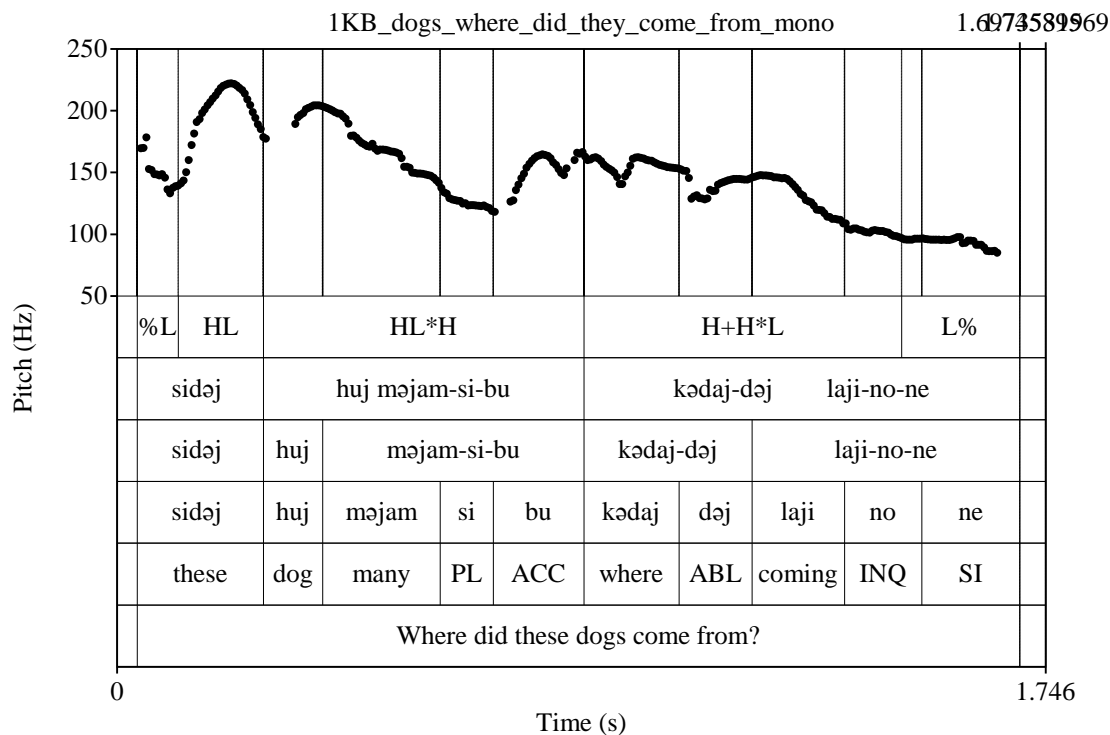


Fig. 4.1. Pitch track of / sidəj huj məjam-si-bu kəɖaj-dəj laji-no-ne /

The pitch contour in Fig. 4.1 shows us the pitch track of the sentence / sidəj hujməjam-si-bu kəɖaj-dəj laji-no-ne/. The prosodic boundaries of the intonational phrase demarcate the semantic categorisation of the utterance above the syntactic phrasing. The boundary of the pitch track begins on an %L with a rise and fall on the first phrase depicting a falling HL tone. The HL*H tone on the next phrase which contain the noun and the constituent of the question shows an H on the noun /huj/ which falls to an L* before rising again on a continuation of the raised height of the pitch track onto the next phrase before culminating to a prolonged L which extends to the end boundary L%. The notation (+) is used here to denote the prolonged continuation of the tone within the same phonological phrase H + H*L. The pitch accent H* is marked on the edge on /kəɖaj-dəj/ emphasising on the Wh-word. Thereafter, the steady

ad prolonged decline of the pitch track begins from the beginning of the verb /laji-/ extending to the question particle/-no/ and ending on a final L% boundary.

The final lowering of the pitch track is also accompanied by a prolonged lengthening and a breathiness of the voice quality. The presence of /-ne/ in the utterance inculcates the meaning of ‘shared information’ with the speaker or including the hearer in the speech act as a collective action. This slightly reduces the stance of posing a stark and direct question. Thereby we are able to understand that the focus of the question is on the dogs or the subject of inquisition is about the dogs on which the question is framed.

The phrase that contains the interrogative part of the sentence is observed to have an H tone on the wh-word and a clear declination of the pitch contour showing a falling L% on the final boundary which is natural for any declarative sentence. However, we are looking at an interrogative utterance and contrary to popular theory that the question intonation is a final rise, it looks like we need to take a closer look at other instances to credibly accept the stance about the rising intonation of an interrogative sentence. The grey area in this matter is the location of the rise which has been noted as a rise on the edge of the final pitch contour (Meiraba 2014).

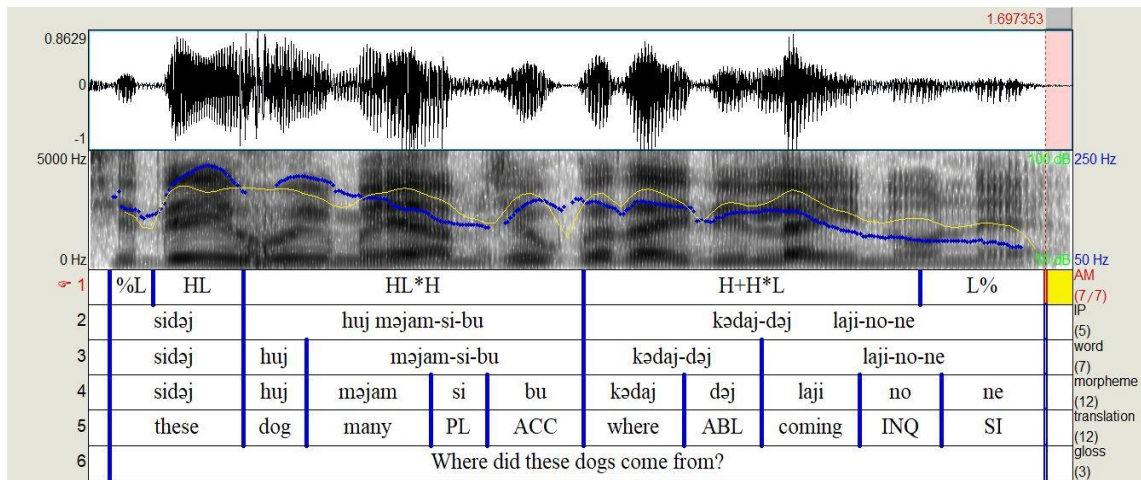


Fig. 4.1.i. Praat image of /sidəj huj məjam-si-bu kədaj-dəj laji-no-ne/ displaying pitch (speckle), intensity contour (line curve) and final breathiness in the spectrogram.

The pitch contour forms the basis of these results but considering the rise in the intensity curve as seen in Fig. 4.1.i. shows a significant rise on the question word /kədaj/. The correlation of both the contours helps to form an understanding that the question word is receiving more intensity and a rise in the pitch than elsewhere in the sentence. The prominent rise on the left of the entire pitch track as observed in case and others to follow-maintains the left dominant stress pattern of Meitei. The final boundary also displays a breathiness as seen in the spectrogram.

In the next example, the response is generated by a stimulus which shows a picture of a boy, named John, who is showing or giving a book to a girl named Mary.

4.2. /jɔn-nə meri-də ʃəŋ-həl-li-se kəri-no/
 John-NOM mary-LOC show-CAUS-PROG-DET what-INQ

‘What is it that John is showing Mary?’

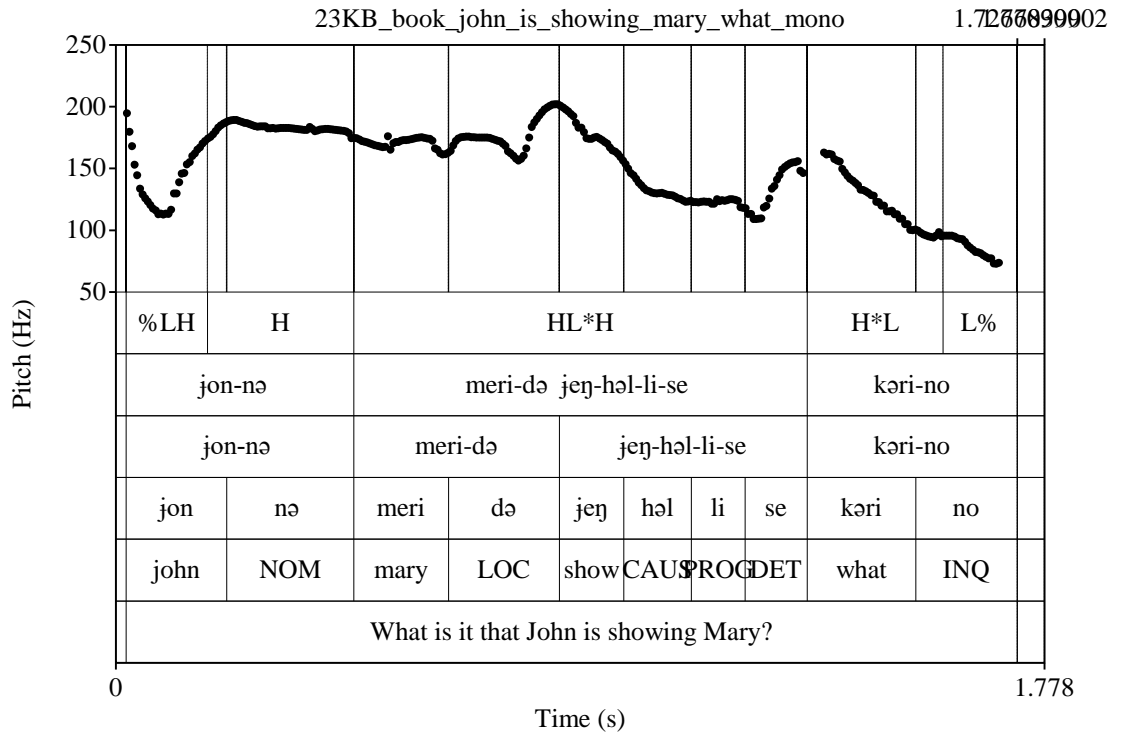


Fig.4.2. Pitch track of the sentence /jon-nə meri-də jeŋ-həl-li-se kəri-no/

The pitch track in Fig. 4.2 begins with a boundary %LH tone and the raised pitch is seen to continue on the current phrase on /jon-nə/ which is the subject of the sentence. The H tone further continues on unto the next phrase marked with HL*H tone. On a closer look, the pitch rises to the highest on the edge of /meri-də/ drawing attention to the verb root immediately adjacent to it before beginning the plunge down to L* and rising again. This marks the attention given to the verb root /jeŋ-/ which carries the subject focus on the action about John showing the book to Mary. The rise after the HL* pitch accent spills over to the next IP which contains the interrogative part of the sentence. The interrogative phrase starts with the pitch accent H* on the syllable /kə-/ of the Wh-word /kəri/ H*L followed by the inquisitive suffix /-no/. The decline starts

from the edge of the Wh-word extending to /-no/ and goes for a steady decline which is lengthened and also acquires a breathiness towards the final boundary L%. It can be noted that the penultimate phrase although marked by HL*H is riddled with many small internal fluctuations within the tone that describes it. This seems to be a common feature of pitch track in BVM that lends it a melodic rhythm along with the other prominent fluctuations on the pitch track.

Let us take a look at another sentence in which the question particle /-no/ does not occur at the final edge of the sentence and the noun phrase occurs in that position instead.

4.3. /kəri-nə ɲa p^ha-ri-no nupa-si-bu/
 What-NOM fish catch-PROG-INQ man-DET-ACC
 ‘With what is the man fishing?’

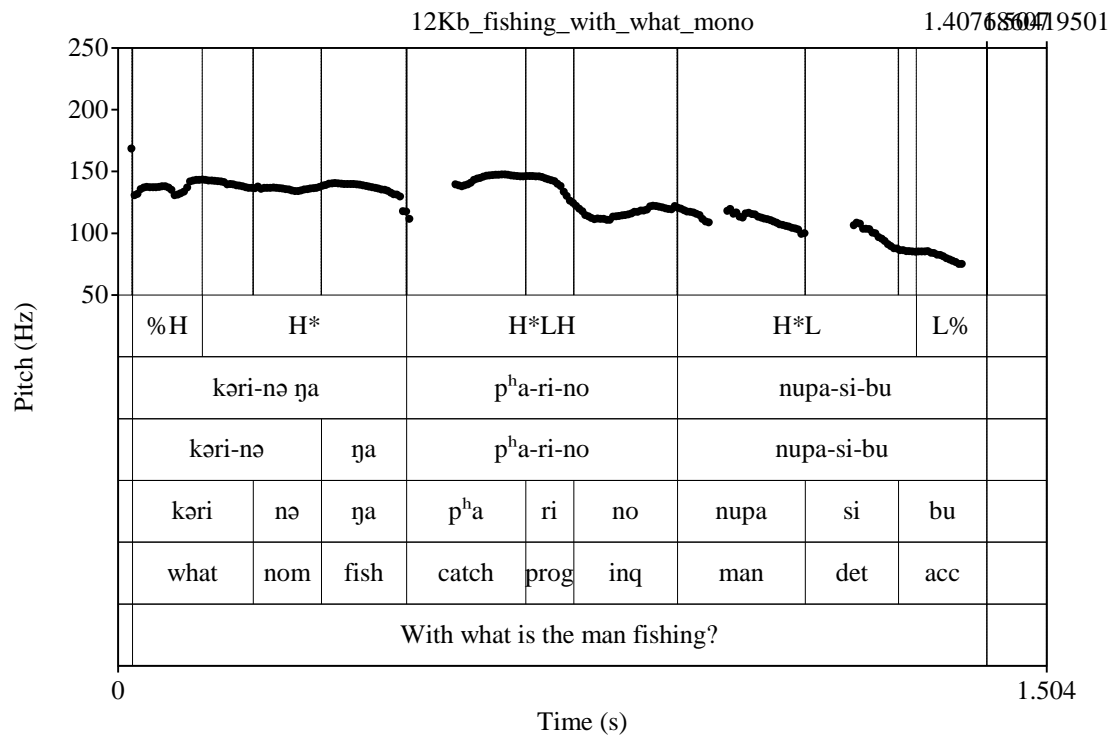


Fig. 4.3. Pitch track of /kəri-nə ɲa p^ha-ri-no nupa-si-bu/

This pitch track begins on a %H which differs from previous examples. This could be attributed to the Wh- word occurring the initial boundary and attracting the pitch which is usually H on the Wh-word even when it occurs in other intermediate phrases. The boundary H continues on to the phrase with a H* pitch accent. This phrase contains the Wh-word /kəri-nə/ and noun /ŋa/ which forms the subject constituent of the sentence. The adjacent phrase shows the nuclear pitch accent H* occurring on the verb root /-p^ha/ on which the question particle /-no/ is suffixed. The H*L pitch drops on the progressive suffix /-ri-/ and subsequently rises to H on this question word /-no/. The H tone of this phrase carries on to the final phrase which is the noun phrase in which H*L is marked on the noun /nupa/ and then decline towards the boundary. Although there is a question word in this sentence, the verb + question suffix gets a more prominent pitch accent and is the highest point in the contour denoting the focus of the utterance. The question word /kəri-nə/ gets nominalized and this could be the explanation for the verb + Question particle /p^ha-ri-no/ to get more prominence in the sentence as it performs the function of interrogation along with the question word. The final edge of the pitch track ends in an L% with accompanied breathiness.

The following sentence has a question word and it stands alone without a question particle. The informant is shown a picture of a man catching fish at night by a lake with a fishing rod. It is not shown whether he has caught any fish or how many fishes he has caught. The question

posed in accordance with the sequence of sentences presented to the informant generates the following,

- 4.4. /nipa-se ɲa kəjam p^ha-re/
 Man-det fish how many catch-perf
 ‘How many fish (es) has this man caught?’

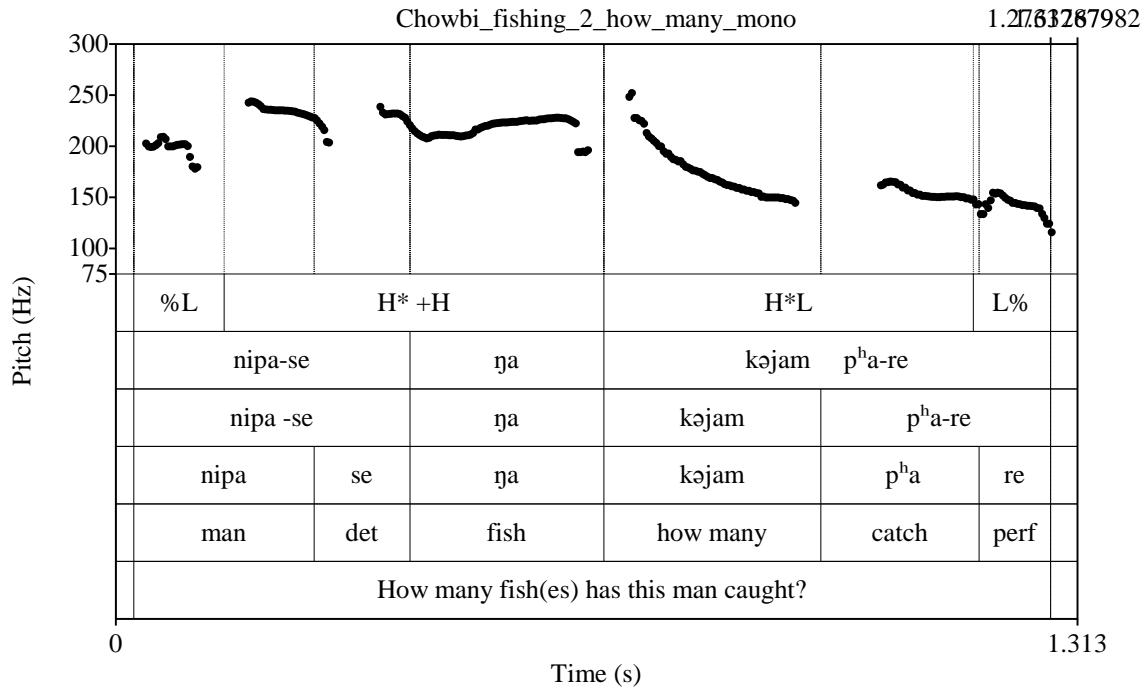


Fig. 4.4. Pitch track of sentence / nipa-se ɲa kəjam p^ha-re/

The %LH* pattern in the beginning of the sentence remains similar with previous examples. The noun /nipa/ gets a H* pitch accent which is an indication of the subject focus. The Wh-word / kəjam/ gets a sharp rise after the noun /ɲa/ and acquires an H*L pitch denoting the prominence on the Wh-word and its interrogative function in the sentence. The fall H*L that occurs after the H* is a prolonged L that continues upto the end of the pitch track and extends unto the boundary L%. The boundary L% is typically accompanied by breathiness.

The last example in this section is the following sentence elicited by showing a picture of several people waiting at a bus shed. The question is formed in regard to the number of people waiting for the bus.

4.5. /bəs ɲaj-ri-se mi kəja-kʰək-no/
 Bus wait-PROG-DEIXIS people how many-CLAS-
 INQ
 ‘How many people are waiting for the bus?’

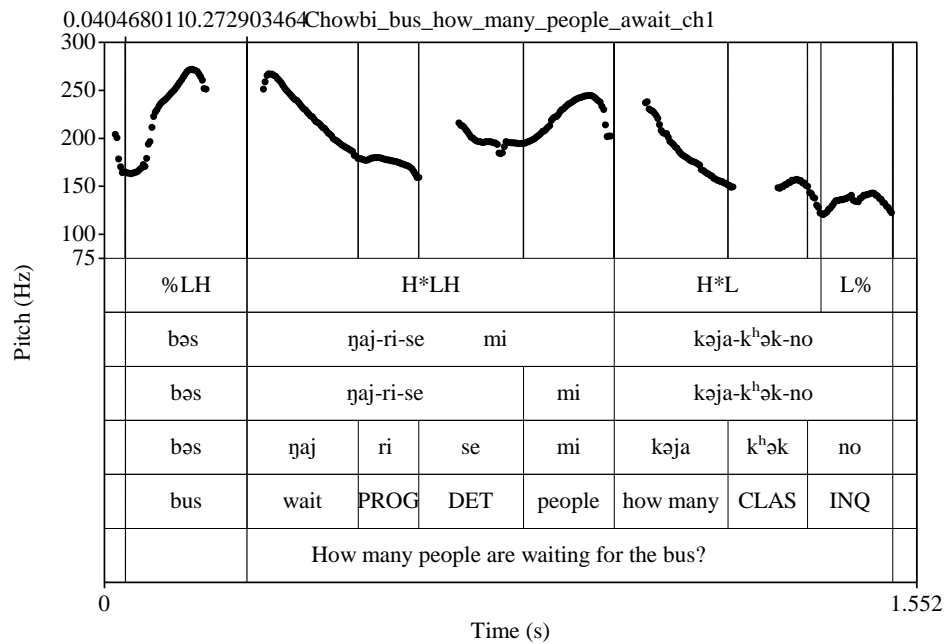


Fig.4.5. Pitch Track of /bəs ɲaj-ri-se mi kəja-kʰək-no/

The typical %LH boundary is seen on the initial part of the pitch track. The H* accent marked on the verb root /ɲaj-/ depicts the action/ function that is the main constituent of the sentence giving the most prominent rise in the sentence. The medial phrase shows the H* LH pattern that has been observed in the other

examples as well. This seems to be a typical characteristic of BVM lending a rhythmic melody to the language. The final phrase of the sentence consisting of the question words has an H*L tone with H* pitch accent marked on the Wh-word /kəja-/ indicating its significance and then continues on a lengthened decline creating the pattern H* L which ends at an L% boundary. Breathiness accompanies the lengthened final lowering. The H*L L% of the final phrase is evident of the final lengthening that has been observed on all examples of the Wh-questions we have seen so far.

From the above observations of the Wh-questions, we can see that there is an %LH tone occurring at most initial positions of the sentences except in 4.3 which starts on an %H. The agent, goal or theme of the sentence is marked by an H*. The metrically most prominent position commonly seems to be marked on the verb and sometimes on the noun of the noun phrase, if it happens to be of semantic or syntactic importance in the sentence. The Wh-word receives an H* or an H in most cases showing its primary function of interrogation. In the phrase containing the question word, the question word gets an H or an H* and the following suffixes develop a falling tone which is generally prolonged and extends up to the boundary. Judging by the patterns we have seen so far the typical pattern of the Wh-questions in BVM seems to be %L(H) | H*LH | H*L L%.

The final edge tones are L or L% and typically end with a breathiness as also observed in Riailand (2007) which are one of the characteristics of 'lax' prosody as she terms it. The other features being falling intonation, lengthening, breathy termination and an open vowel. Considering these criteria, BVM seems to fit into the description she has provided. Meitei can

only have a set of voiceless obstruents /p/,/t/ ,/k/ and nasals /m/, /n/, /ŋ/ in the coda position (Meiraba, 2014). Owing to this, the larger chunk of Meitei words and suffixes have open syllables and the sentences in our sample set end in open syllables/ vowels.

4.7.2. *Yes/ No Questions:*

Moving on the next section on Yes/ No questions, let us take a look at another sentence in which there is no Wh-word but the Yes/ No question particle /-ra/ is suffixed to the verb predicate to ask the question. Verbs in Meitei as mentioned earlier are required to undergo nominalisation to allow the suffixation of question particles. This sentence is also elicited from the same animated image which contains the group of big dogs playing around in a forest as cited in the earlier example. In the midst of all the dogs, a few seconds show a child running in the background before disappearing again. This question tries to capture the element of surprise and determine if she has really seen a child in the picture. Hence, the question to confirm what she has seen is presented in sentence 4.6 and its corresponding Praat images in Fig 4.6 and Fig 4.6.i. As seen earlier, the pitch accent in the interrogative intonation phrase is getting marked on the question particle. In this example we can observe the phrase accent rising on the verb root /jao-/ which focuses on information about the child being present or not.

4.6. /hui mərək-tə əŋaŋ əmə-su jao-bə-ra/

Dog-among-LOC child one-also include-NOM-Q ‘

Is there also a child amongst the dogs?’

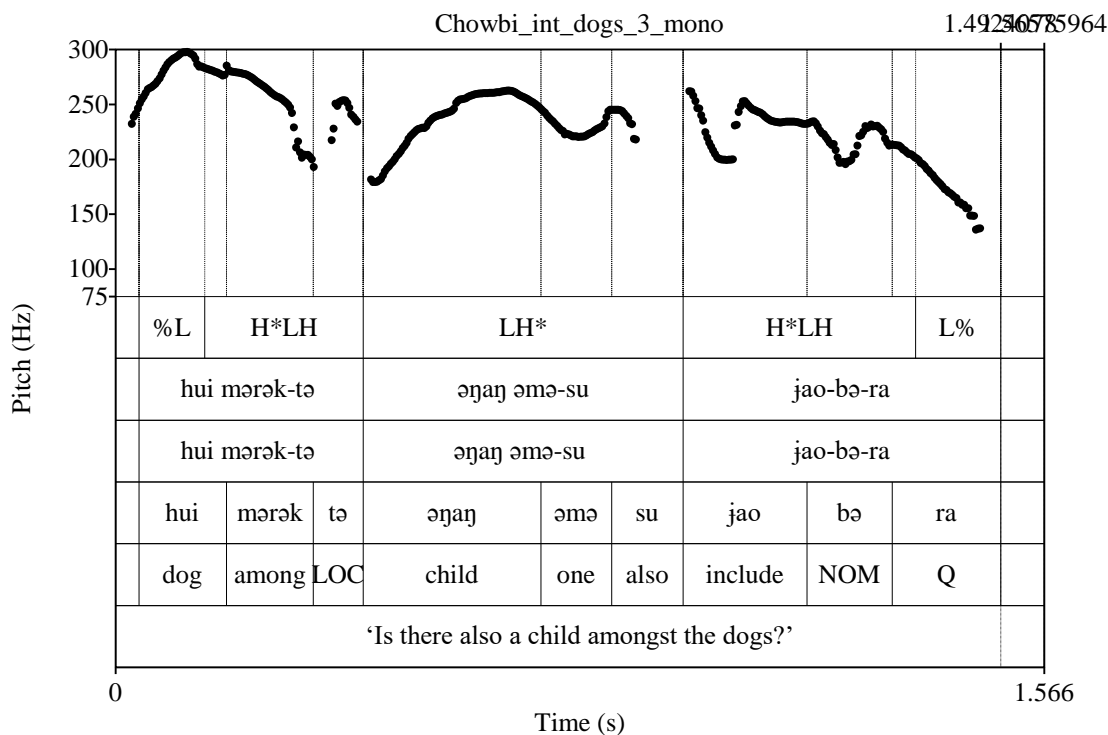


Fig. 4.6. Pitch Track of /hui mərək-tə əŋaŋ əmə-su jao-bə-ra/

In Fig. 4.6., the initial boundary of the sentence begins on a %L which rapidly rises to an H*LH where H* is marked on the noun /huj/, falling to an L on the edge of the adposition /mərək/ and rising on the locative suffix /-tə/. These rapidly occurring fluctuations within this phrase display prominence in the intensity as well (Fig.4.6.i). The prosodic phrasing of this utterance remains on par with the syntactic phrasing. In the next phrase we see an LH* in which the pitch accent is marked on the noun /əŋaŋ/. The last phrase of this sentence shows an H*LH pattern in which /-jao/, the verb root with the question is observed to take the H* pitch in the phrase. A sharp rise creating the H* on the verb root /jao-/ and a sharp fall immediately after that creates a rhythmic pattern in the question word albeit retaining the attention on the entire word which functions as the interrogative owing to the suffix -ra. Due to the rise at the edge of the question particle /-ra/ the boundary tone lowers in a sharp and

steady manner to an L%. Unlike the Wh- questions, the final edge tone falls simply, there is no prolonged lengthening like the Wh-question and there is no accompanied breathiness. An increase on the intensity curve shown below in Fig. 4.6.i is present which remains unbroken throughout the utterance and displays a contiguous rise on /jao/ in the /jao-bə-ra/ phrase which contains the question particle suffix.

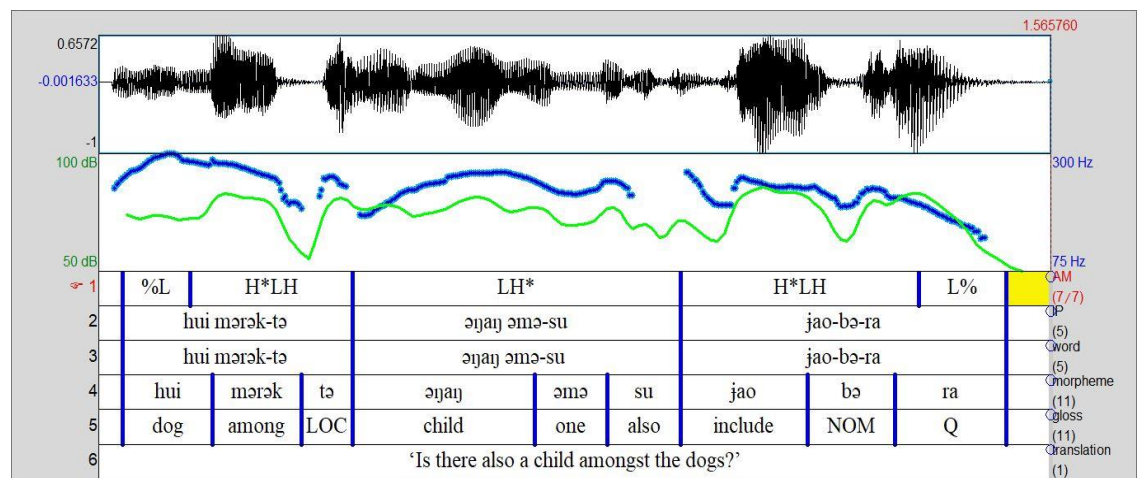


Fig.4.6.i. Pitch track and intensity curve of /hui mərək-tə əŋaŋ əmə-su jəwbəra/

The next example 4.7. is elicited by showing the informant an animated picture of a man, riding a bicycle through a forest and there seems to be a box behind him that looks like a radio. The question is about the box.

4.7. /nipa-si-gi mənɪŋ-dəj-se redijo-ra/ (Utterance)

/nipa-si-gi mənɪŋ-dəgi-se redijo-ra/ (Underlying form)

Man-this-GEN behind-LOC-DEF radio-Q

‘Is that a radio behind him?’

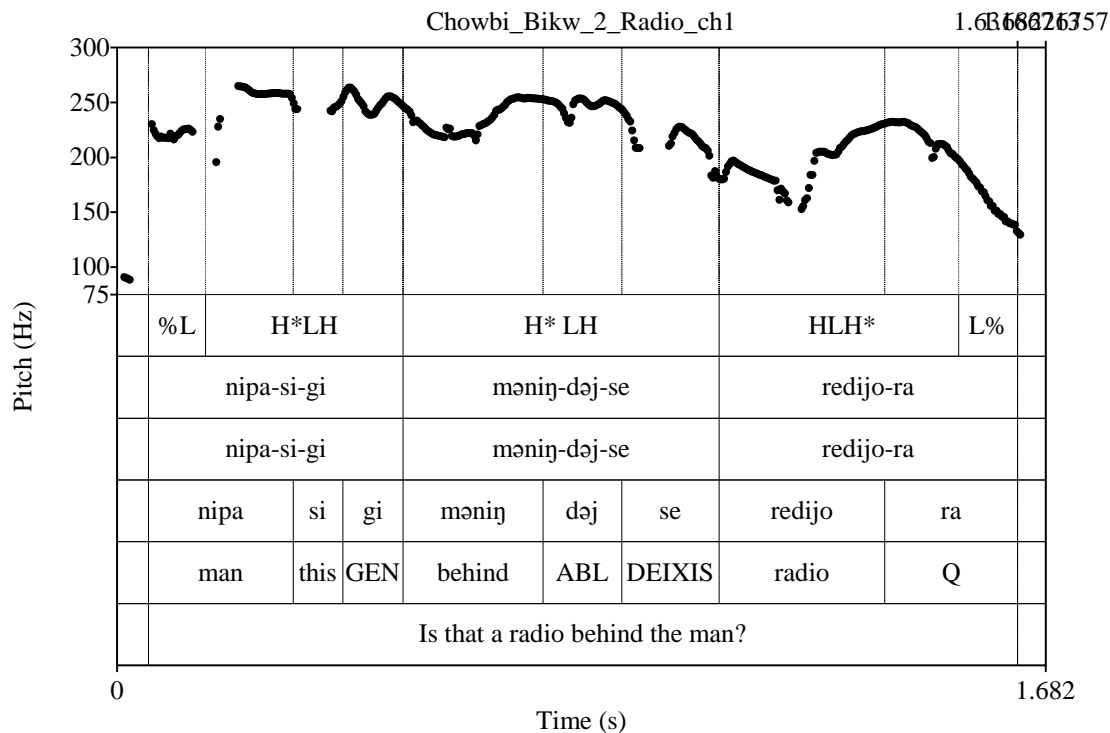


Fig. 4.7. Pitch track of sentence /nipa-si-gi mənɪŋ-dəj-se redijo-ra/

This is a simple interrogative sentence in which the suffix /-ra/ functions as the question element asking a Yes or No question. The initial pitch rise is similar to previously seen examples. The focus of the question is on the object behind the man and there a rise observed on the contour of the IP containing the question particle and the noun. Due to this, the pitch accents get marked on /mənɪŋ-dəj-/ and /redijo-ra/ in individually separate phrases. The H* nuclear pitch accent on /mənɪŋdəj/ ‘behind’ draws attention to the location of the object and the phrase ends on a L% boundary tone. The subsequent phrase containing the noun focus and the question particle /-ra/ gets a H* pitch accent which continues rising up to the beginning of the /-ra/ morpheme and then there is a quick and steady lowering to the boundary L% due to this H*. Despite ending in an open vowel and a final low boundary, there is no

lengthening or breathiness as can be seen in the Fig. 4.7.i where the spectrogram shows the lack of breathiness and a clear fall on the boundary.

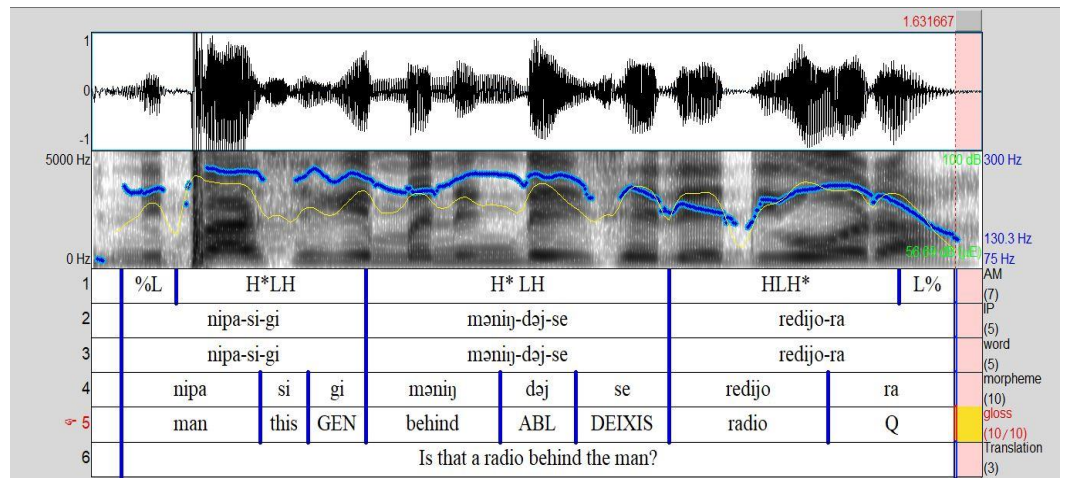


Fig. 4.7.i. Pitch track and spectrogram of sentence / nipa-si-gi mənij-dəj-se redijo-ra/ displaying the absence of breathiness on the boundary.

The following example is elicited by showing the informant a picture of a man sitting alone with a fishing rod on the deck by the edge of the water.

- 4.8. / ŋa p^ha-bə nipa-se mətomtə-ra/
 Fish catch-NOM man-DET alone-Q
 Is the man who is fishing, alone?

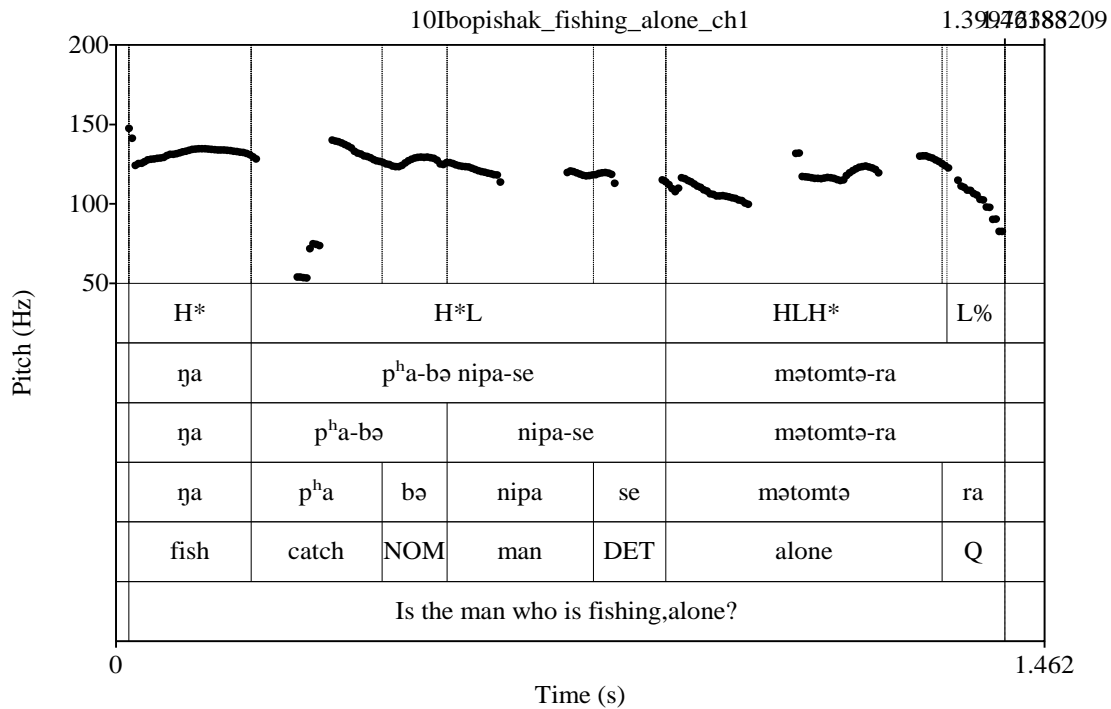


Fig.4.8. Pitch track of /ŋa p^ha-bə nipa-se mətomtə-ra/

The pitch track begins with an H* marked on the noun /ŋa/ which is different from the usually occurring %L or %LH boundary. In the next phrase, the pitch accent is marked on the root verb /p^ha-/ ‘catch’, after which a low tone gradually declines on the noun /nipa/ and onwards. The next phrase /mətomtə/ begins on an H at /mə-/ and shows a fall on /-tom/- and rises just at the edge of the word /mətomtə/ on /-tə/ where the question particle /-ra is suffixed. There is a H* on /-ra/ after which there is the clear sharp fall as seen in other Yes/ No questions.

Alternative Yes/ No Question: An alternative question can be formed by attaching the question particle /-ra/ to both answer options. The following response is elicited from a picture showing a couple of people standing and waiting at a bus stop. The question is about the sequence of people standing in line whether the first person in line is a man or a woman?

4.9. /əhanbə lajn-də leppi-do nupa-ra

nupi-ra/

First line-LOC standing-DET man-Q

woman-Q

‘Who is standing first in the line, a man or a woman?’

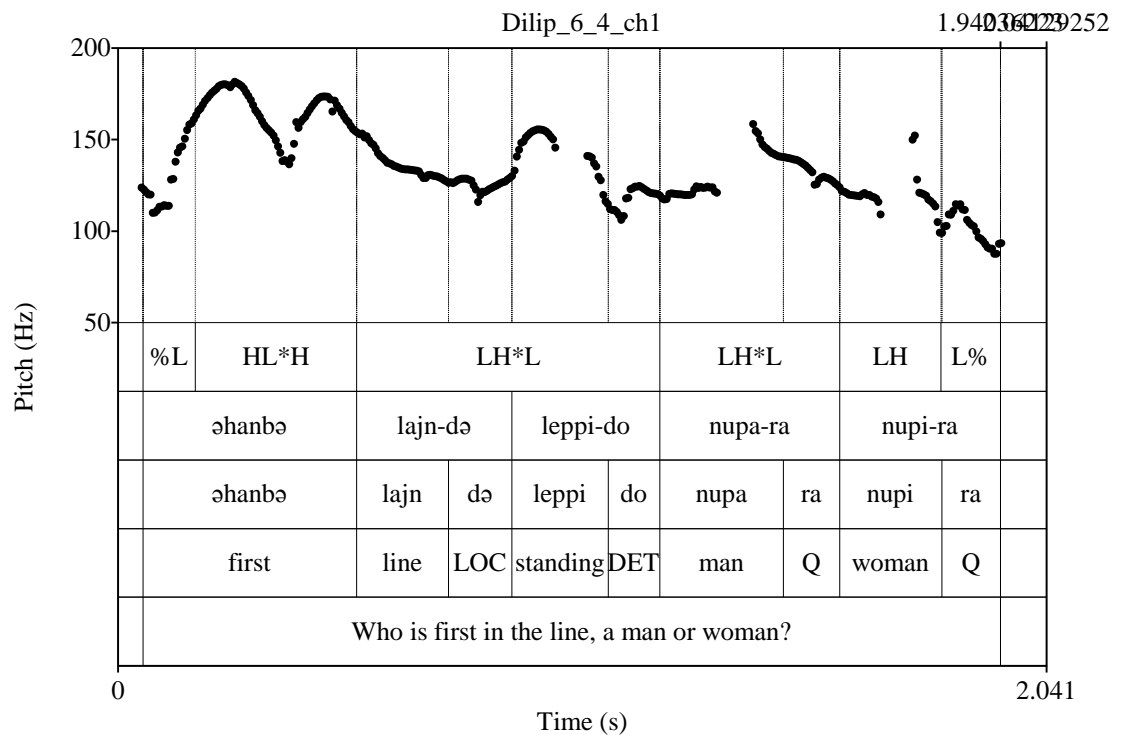


Fig.4.9. Pitch track of /əhanbə lajn-də leppi-do nupa-ra nupi-ra/

The initial pitch track begins with an %L boundary and an HLH pattern on the word /əhanbə/ showing a prominence about the topic of the entire sentence regarding who is standing first in the line. The pitch track on the noun phrase lowers to an L on the noun phrase /lajn-də/ and rises to H* on the verb root /leppi-do/ which declines at the end of the phrase. Next, we see the accent LH* marked on the first option of the question /nupa/ after which the track falls to L on the question suffix /-ra/. The second option of the question /nupi/

gets and LH tone after which the pitch rapidly falls on the question suffix /-ra/. No lengthening or breathiness occurs in the final lowering of the edge tone.

From the above observations of the pitch tracks of the Yes/No questions we can infer that they have a clear falling L% boundary tone. Unlike Wh-questions, they do not have breathiness or lengthening of the lowered final tone. The pitch accents continue to be marked on the verb root which has the question suffix attached to it or else the noun which may be the question constituent of the sentence. The initial rise on the beginning of the pitch track remains largely similar to the Wh-questions.

4.7.3. Tag Questions:

Tag questions are formed by attaching a question ‘tag’ at the end of an already existing sentence. In English, this can be used to ask information from the hearer, expect confirmation from the hearer on what is already assumed to be true or challenging a statement. Similar functions are observed in Meitei and BVM as seen in the section 4.5.2 earlier. The intonation of tag questions in English is often found to have a rising intonation while soliciting information or motivation an action, mainly while seeking a response from the hearer. Such as,

‘You're coming, **aren't you?**’

Falling intonation can be detected on sentences which seek to underline the meaning of the utterance, more like an echo question. Something like,

‘This is really strange, **isn't it?**’

From Barak Valley Meitei, in the following examples we present two responses of informants to the animated picture stimuli of a group of dogs

playing around in a forest area where a child also suddenly makes an appearance. The sentences are almost the same with the exception of using /-ne/ which imparts the meaning of shared information with the hearer. The tag question is formed by attaching /nəttra/ at the end of the sentence which functions like ‘isn’t it?’ in English.

4.10. /mək^hoj məɾək-tə əŋaŋ ojbə əmə ʃaw-bə nət-tra/

They amongst-LOC child is one present-NOM be-Q

‘There is a child amongst them, isn’t there?’

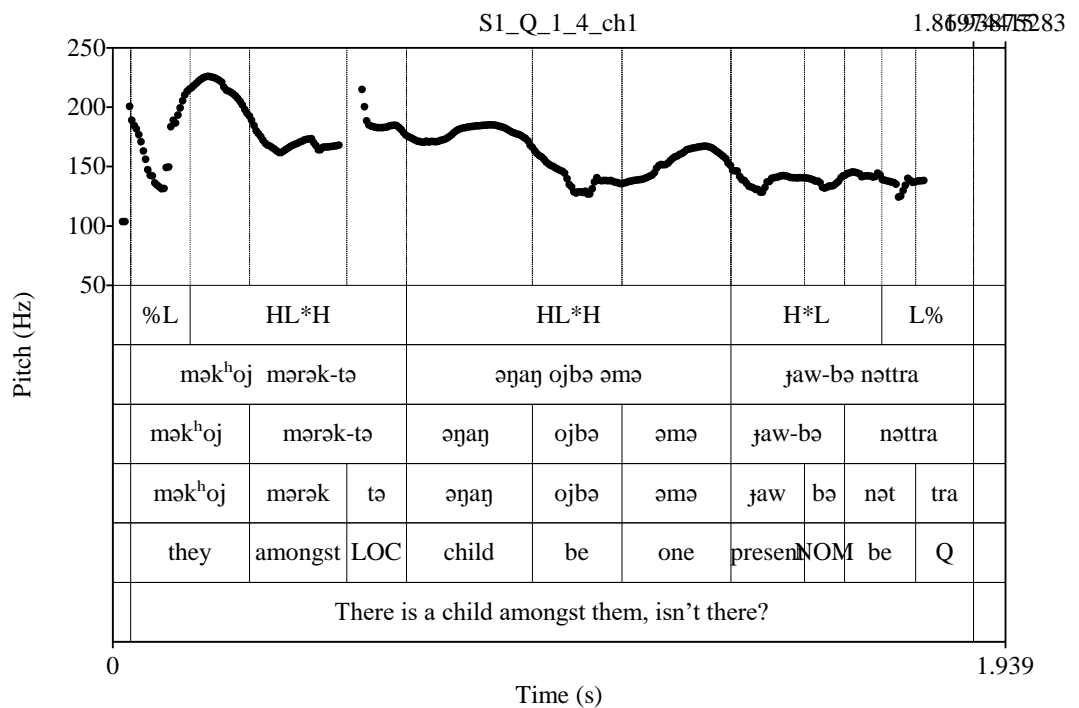


Fig. 4.10. Pitch track of /mək^hoj məɾək-tə əŋaŋ ojbə əmə ʃaw-bə nət-tra/

The pitch track begins with with a %L boundary which is occurring typically at the initial edge of the pitch track in almost all cases seen so far. There is an HL*H tone on the phrase /mək^hoj məɾək-tə/ with a H on /mək^hoj/ that falls on the beginning of /məɾək-/ and rises at /-tə/. After this rise, the pitch track

stays on the H tone carrying over to the next phrase /əŋaŋ ojbə əmə/ with HL*H where the pitch curve displays a *hammock* like structure as noted in Dutch intonation (Haan, Van Heuven, Pacilly, Van Bezooijen, 1997) that is, it has a high beginning, a low stretch in between and an equally high ending. These high tones on that flank the L* tone give it a very distinct melody in where the H signals the inquisitiveness of the utterance.

Thereafter there is a slight lowering at the beginning of the next phrase and a rise on the verb root /jaw-/ as H*. The fall that happens is not very drastic as seen in the other yes/ no questions and declines in a lengthened manner and gradually ends in the fall after the H on the verb. It in fact, resembles the ending pattern of Wh-questions which have a final phrase with an H*L which is prolonged to the edge L% tone. There is relatively no prominent breathiness as seen in Wh-questions.

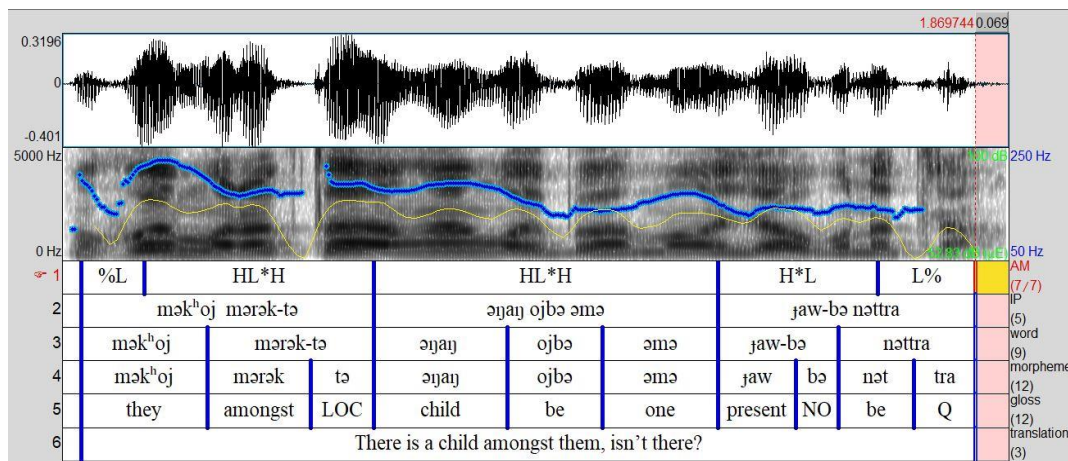


Fig. 4.10.i. Praat image of / mək^hoj mərək-tə əŋaŋ ojbə əmə jaw-bə nət-tra/ displaying slight breathiness.

The next Fig. 4.10.i is another informant's response to the same stimulus where the speaker uses the /-ne/ morpheme at the end of the question suffix /-

ra/. It is a device that conveys the meaning of including the hearer in the speech act in the most subtle and effective manner. By including the hearer in as a participant in the utterance the speaker creates an implication where the hearer is necessitated to respond to the speaker. The use of the shared information morpheme /-ne/ also reduces the direct imposition of the question and imbibes a sense of asking the question in a plural sense with the hearer included in the act of enquiring.

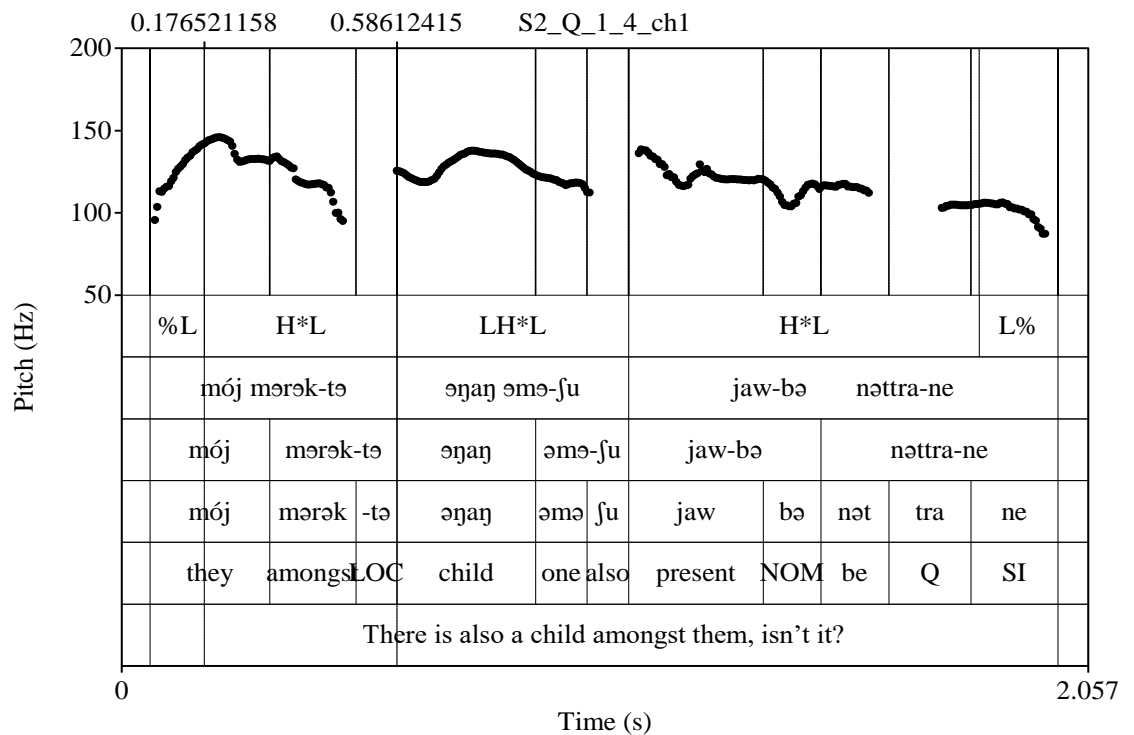


Fig.4.11.i. Pitch track of /mój mərək-tə əŋaŋ əmə fu jaw-bə nəttra-ne/

The %L initial boundary occurs as usual followed by an H*L on the noun phrase that depicts the background and location of the scene. This rise reflects on the verb root /jaw-/ which gradually declines on the question word /nəttra/ with an H*L tone .The L presence of the L before the

boundary causes a prolongation of the L. However the boundary simply falls lower than the L tone that precedes it with almost negligible but presence of slight breathiness and ends on a sharp L% boundary on the /-ne/ suffix.

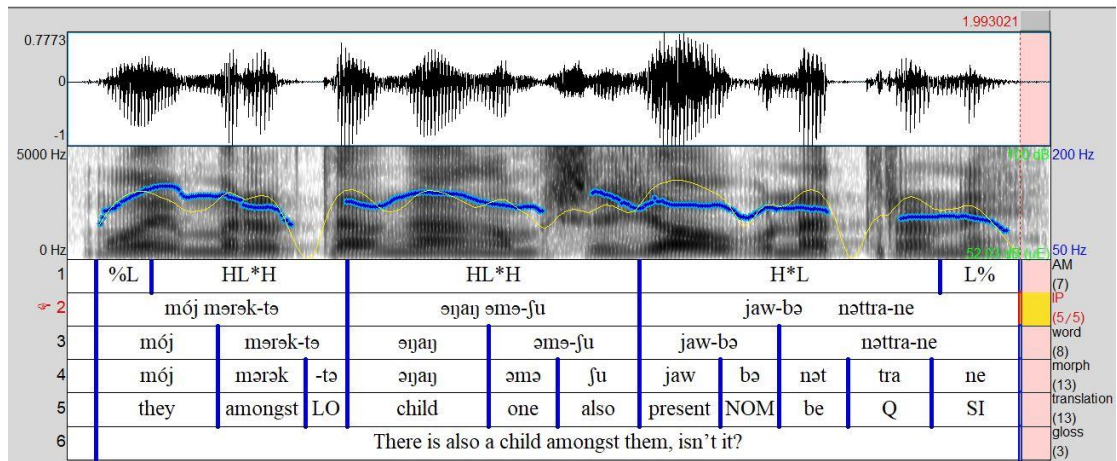


Fig.4.11.i. Praat image of /mój mərək-tə əŋaŋ əmə-ŋu jaw-bə nəttra-ne/ with spectrogram displaying slight breathiness.

In the Wh- words the suffixation of /-ne on the question particle at the sentence final position is shown to create a lengthening and breathiness. However, in the yes/no questions, although there is slight lengthening of the question word, the fall remains characteristic to its type that is a steady clear fall at the final boundary and the L% tone with extremely minimal breathiness.

4.8: Comparison of Questions and Declarative answers:

So far we have seen the pitch tracks of Wh-Questions, Yes/No questions and tag questions and their characteristics and differences. Here, we present a small comparison of the interrogative sentences with their corresponding answers in order to have a relative look and find relevant points

of distinctions amongst the two as the boundary tones are seen to have final lowering in the case of questions as well as declarative sentences.

4.11. / magi mənɪŋ-də ləj-ri-bə-se kəri-no/

His behind-LOC present-PROG-NOM-DET what-INQ

‘What is that behind him?’

The speaker is asking about a man riding a bicycle who has something attached to the carrier behind him. As seen in previous Wh-Questions, the pitch track of Fig. 4.11. begins with an %LH boundary tone.

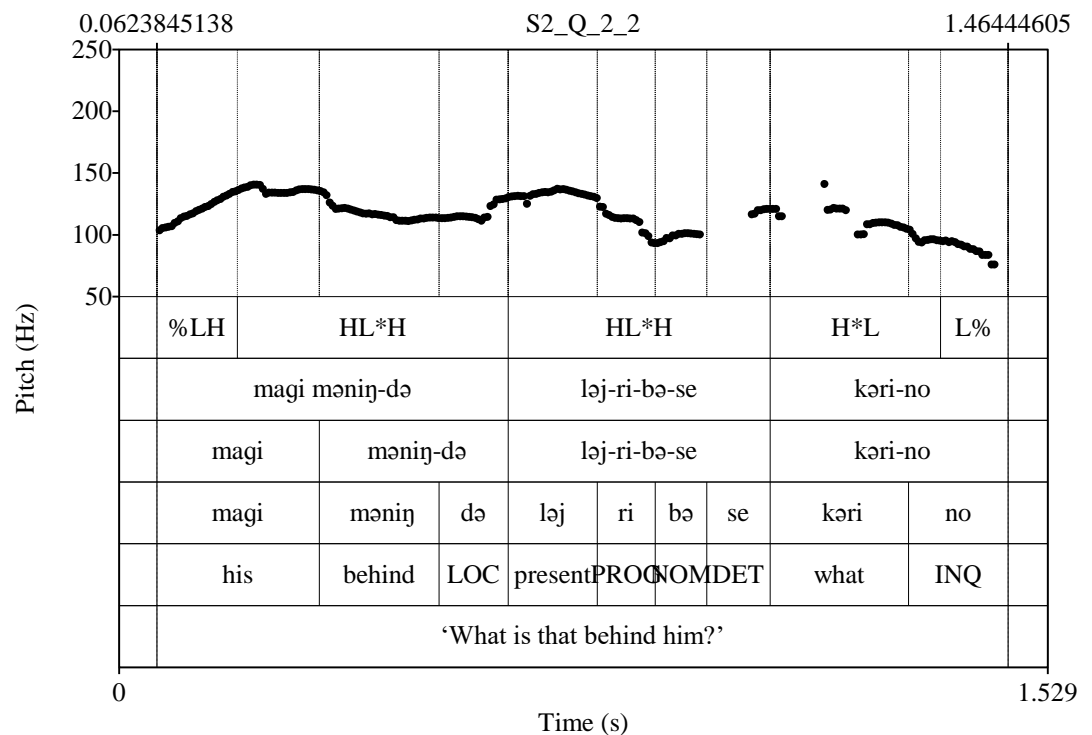


Fig. 4.11. Pitch track of / magi mənɪŋ-də ləj-ri-bə-se kəri-no/

Within this same phrase the hammock like patterns are visible again on the HL*H tone with the pitch accent is marked on the edge of the /mənɪŋ-/ and

/-də/ creating the rhythm that is seen across most examples in this current study. In the next phrase we see the same rhythm HL*H marked on the verb phrase and the H tone occurring on the verb root and a subsequent HL* from the root on the nominaliser /-bə/ which rises on the determiner /-se/. This rise continues on the next phrase which contains the Wh-word /kəri/ and it receives the H* pitch accent before it acquires an L tone which continues to the L% terminal boundary. The fall starts right at the end of /kəri-/ and stretches all the way on /-no/ to the low boundary L%. The breathiness on the final lengthened lowered tone is evidently audible and visible on the Praat image as given below in Fig. 4.11.i.

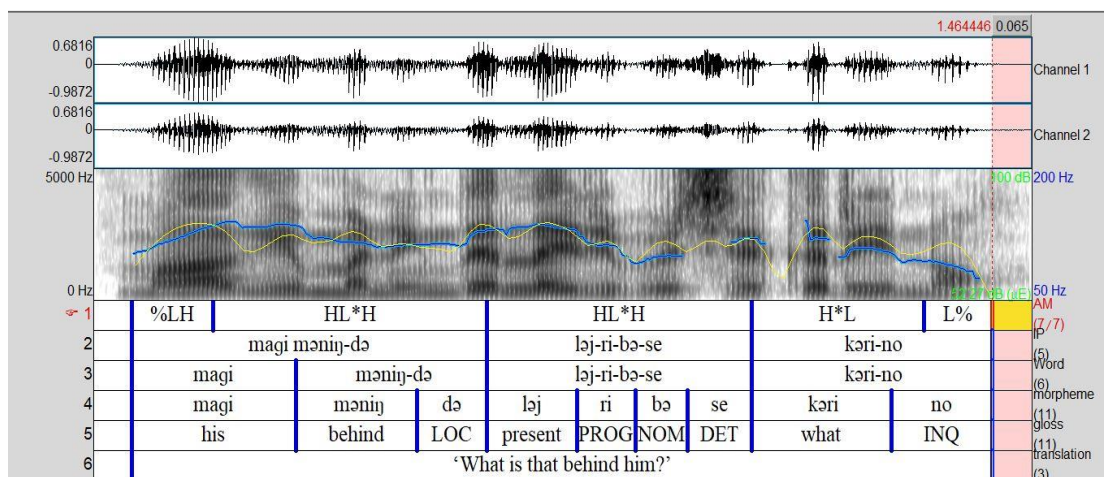


Fig. 4.11.i. Praat image of / magi məniŋ-də ləj-ri-bə-se kəri-no/ with spectrogram displaying breathiness at the boundary edge and prolonged lengthening and breathiness towards the end.

We now take a look at the corresponding answer to this question where the hearer responds with

4.12. / máj məniŋ-də rediŋ əmə ləj/
 His behind-LOC radio one present

‘There is a radio behind him’.

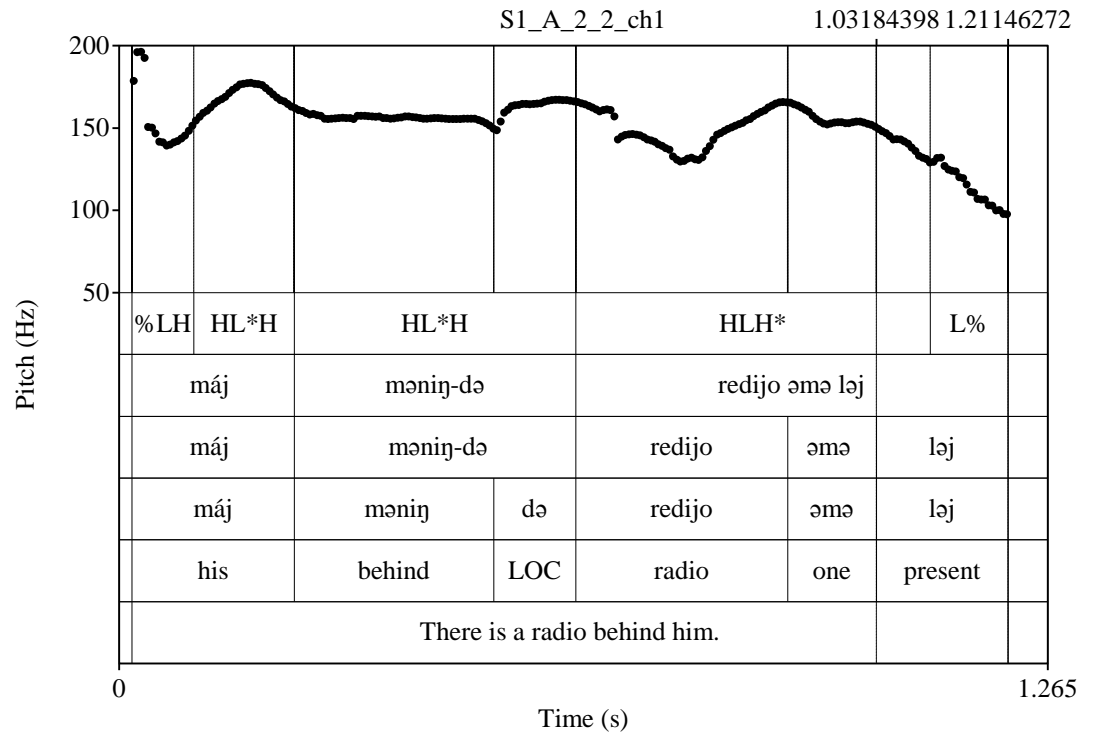


Fig. 4.12. Pitch track of /máj məniŋ-də redijo əmə ləj/

In Fig. 4.12, we see a sentence starting out with the usual %L boundary followed by an H tone on the pronoun /máj/. The H tone is carried on for another stretch on to the next phrase /məniŋ-də/ which depicts the hammock like pattern characteristic of a HL*L melody on the pitch track of other examples in this study. The next phrase shows an HLH* where the last rise on the edge of /redijo/ and /əmə/ give it a distinctly H* pitch accent before cascading down to a clear and sharp edged fall that ended abruptly and not in a fading manner such as has been observed in the Wh- question. There is

however the accompanied breathiness on the final L% boundary. This can be seen in the following Fig. 4. 12.i.

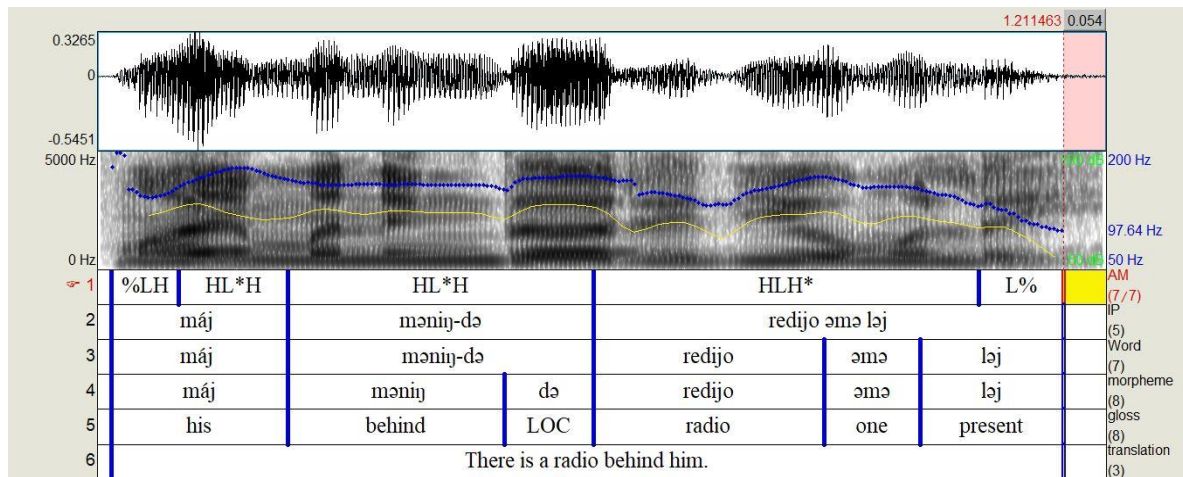


Fig. 4.12.i. Praat image of /máj məniŋ-də redijo əmə ləj/ with spectrogram displaying a sharp clear fall and slight breathiness.

Rialland (2007) identifies this problem of distinguishing between these two falling edge tones on a question and a statement. The only distinction that is detected is that the sentence or the answer ends in a clear stop. The question on the other hand as seen from the earlier sections especially in relation to Wh Question, display and open lengthened ending accompanied by breathiness. She detects the same phenomenon in a cluster of African languages such as the Kru family, the Gur family, Mande family, Kwa family, Banda-Ijoid family non-Bantoid Benue-Congo languages, Chadic family, and Eastern Sudanic family. All these languages, belonging to various families and several phyla (Niger-Congo, Afro-Asiatic and Nilo-Saharan), are spoken in the Sudanic region of Africa, from the western part of the continent to the Ethiopian plateau in the East. In an example from Moba where Rialland

(1984) shows that ‘the statement (táná) ends abruptly with a glottal stop, while the question (táná...) fades away with a progressive opening of the glottis associated with an increase in airflow.’

4.9. Summary:

We can therefore postulate that the general intonational pattern of Barak Valley Meitei is characterised by an %L(H) initial boundary tone. Almost all sentences start with this near equivalent rhythm. The only exception observed appears in sentence 4.3. where the sentence begins with a Wh-word /kəri/. This could be attributed to the fact that the Wh-word is one of those elements in the sentences that attract a H* pitch accent or else a H tone on it. The pitch accent is marked on the element of prominence which can be the noun or verb root which may often bear the question marking suffixes /-no/ or /-ra/. The Wh-word is also prone to attracting an H tone in most cases. These may denote important semantic cues in the utterance. ‘A word or phrase that is marked by intonational prominence is made phonetically more salient; its prosodic colouring is more attention-demanding than it otherwise would be. One reason for a word or phrase to receive intonational prominence is that it refers to something which is being added to the focus space’ (Beckman & Pierrehumbert, 1986).

After the initial boundary, an HL(*)H pattern can be seen across most examples in the subsequent phrases. In some case these tones were realised on the pitch track were seen to have the ‘hammock’ shape as observed in Dutch intonation studies lending the sentence a sing-song kind of a melody that seems to be a characteristic of Barak Valley Meitei. The final phrase of the Wh-questions preceding the final boundary are observed

to have an H(*)L tone after which the terminal tone is realised as L%. Due to this consecutive sequence, of HL and L%, the Wh-questions show a prolonged lowering that stretches up to the culmination of the final boundary L%. The spectrograms of the Wh- questions also account for the breathiness that accompanies this final lengthening.

The behaviour of the final boundary tones of the sentences are all observed to be L% with varying characteristics. One of the ubiquitous occurrences on the pitch contour is a low boundary final tone L% which becomes breathy and lengthened before it ends. Rialland (2007) observed this in African languages which also display a similar behaviour on ‘lax’ intonation languages in which the questions do not have a rising intonation as universally thought to be so. Wh-questions tend to display this behaviour where there is a final lengthening with breathiness on the edge tones of the sentence. Thus we can generalise that the

Yes/ No questions display the initial %L boundary as well. The consistent tones on the phrase preceding the final L% boundary appears to be HL(*)H. Due to this the fall of the final boundary is not prolonged like seen in the Wh-questions but a smaller and sharper fall. There is also the absence of breathiness in these kind of questions and it ends in a clear L% tone.

Tag questions which are also formed by the suffixation of /nətra/ display a behaviour similar to that of the Wh-questions. It shows a %L initial boundary followed by an H(*)L(*) (H) tone on the consecutive phrases. The final phrase before the terminal L% is consistently an HL due to which a lengthening similar to the one observed in the Wh-questions is observed.

However, despite the prolonged L L% tone, there is no accompanied breathiness.

Since the terminal intonation patterns of both statements and questions are observed to be L%, it is difficult to establish a clear distinction between the two. The subtle but effective marker of difference between the two falling edge tones is the way these two elements end. The terminal edge tones of a question are observed to be lengthened, breathy in the case of wh-questions and ending gradually. A statement, on the other hand, ends in a short sudden stop. A question ends in an open syllable and does not stop abruptly like a statement. The timing of the end tones is the only subtle but distinctive quality of statements and questions apart from the obvious lexical elements that distinguish them.

From the observations so far, we can come to a generalisation that the intonation of interrogative sentences in Barak Valley Meitei shows the following general patterns.

Initial boundary tones: %L, %H and %LH

Final boundary tones: L%

Pitch accents: H*L , L*H , HL*H and LH*L

In Wh-questions, the following patterns are observed,

Initial boundary tones: %L

Pitch accents: H*LH

HL*H

H*L (pre- boundary)

Final boundary tones: L%

Therefore Wh-questions in Barak Valley Meitei show the pattern

%L(H) | H(*) L(*) H| H*L |L%

Due to the contiguous arrangement of the pre-final L tone, the Wh-questions tend to display a prolonged lengthening at towards the final boundary with accompanied breathiness that is a defining phonetic co-relate.

In Yes/No questions, the following pattern is observed,

Initial boundary tones: %LH

Pitch accents: H*LH (most common)

HL*H (pre-boundary)

HLH* (less common)

Final boundary tones: L%

Accordingly, Yes/No questions in Barak Valley Meitei show the following pattern

%LH| H*LH| HL*H (*) | L%

It may be noted that the pre boundary HLH tone with relevant pitch accents gives the Yes/No questions a distinction from Wh-questions on the grounds that it ends in a shorter and sharper fall than the former and lacks breathiness despite having the same L% boundary.

Alternative questions display the following pattern

Initial boundary tones:	%L
Pitch accents:	H*LH (common)
	LH*L (less common)
	LH (pre-boundary)
Final boundary tones:	L%

Alternate questions which are also classified under Yes/No questions in this study show this pattern %L | H*LH | LH*L | LH | L% which show a similarity to the Yes/No question ending with the clear short fall and absence of breathiness.

Tag questions appear to have the following pattern:

Initial boundary tones:	%L
Pitch accents:	HL*H
	H*L
Final boundary tones:	L%

Due to the pre final H*L that tag questions display, they seem to have a similar pattern to the Wh-questions. However the breathiness accompanied seems to be less obvious than the Wh-questions. Accordingly, tag questions display the following intonation pattern. %L | HL*H | HL | L%.

Thus we can conclude that the initially, on the boundary tones, there is a

possibility of ambiguous interpretation in a lot of cases with the boundary tone being either L% or LH%. The final L% however, is invariable and consistent throughout all the examples. The pitch accents are marked on semantic and syntactically important segments.

CHAPTER 5

PRAGMATICS OF POLITENESS

5.1. Introduction:

The pretext of this chapter is to study the pragmatic function of politeness in communication. Very little of this area, particularly in this language, has been researched and this one of the first explorations with the topic in focus. This chapter will look at politeness phenomena - the strategies and devices used in exercising politeness and correlate with the pitch tracks of such sentences. The focus of the current study is the interpretation of communication as politeness phenomena, the pragmatic means, strategies and devices that are employed for this and the interpretation of pitch tracks in the employment of the these strategies will be explored. The study of politeness is a vast area and it is a rather daunting task to cover the many areas where speakers exercise this mode of communication. Therefore in an attempt to keep the study relevant and precise, only the area of making requests has been adopted by the study. Speech acts such as requests and apologies are commonly associated with acts of politeness as these speech acts make it possible to study or explore the act of politeness in a relatively more systematic way (Kadar and Haugh 2013: 23). The chapter aims to map the devices and strategies used by speakers in politeness situations and observe the phenomena itself as it occurs in usage.

For the purpose of this chapter as mentioned in Chapter 1, the elicitation of the data is done by the Discourse Completion Task based on

Blum Kulka & Olshtain (1984), Ogiermann (2009) and O’Keefe, Clancy & Adolphs (2011). In this task, 15 scenarios were presented to the informants one by one and they were asked to imagine themselves in the given situation and come up with a response they felt most suitable for that situation. The following are the set of situations that were presented to the informants. It can be noted that the experiment is designed in the attempt to get the most spontaneous or semi-spontaneous response possible from the informants as to be able to observe the different strategies and devices that are adopted by them to fulfil the required condition.

1. Dad is going out of the house. Request him to buy some potatoes when he comes back.
2. You go to a friend’s house and his/her mom asks you to have tea but you are in a hurry. Make a request to be excused.
3. Ask an elderly lady for directions to an address.
4. Imagine yourself as a child, ask your parents to allow you to go out for a picnic.
5. Ask for permission to come inside the room at an office, etc.
6. Ask a fellow passenger to borrow their phone and call home because your battery died.
7. You invite someone for a religious ceremony at a short notice and seek affirmation.
8. How do you decline a request from someone because you are occupied with work at the moment?
9. You ask your neighbour for a lift to the nearest bus stop.
10. Ask for drinking water when you are a guest.

11. Ask to borrow ladder from your neighbour.
12. You are unwell and ask your mother for some ginger tea.
13. Ask your friend to come and help you out with preparations for the community feast.
14. Apologise for being late for a community meeting.
15. Ask for attention, to listen to you.

The Discourse Completion Test from which this data elicitation method is developed, used written responses from university students who were given the data questionnaires and they returned written responses. This study used an interview kind of method where the informants were asked to read and imagine the situation given to them and when they were ready with the response, it was recorded. The situations have been adapted from the other studies to fit the rural agrarian setting of the speakers who lead a community centric life and social harmony is a requisite unlike the independent life of an individual in the Western societies on which most of the available literature on politeness is based. Therefore the smooth functioning of the society is primarily based on group harmony and community oriented goals along with individual ability to participate in those.

5.2. Politeness and Pragmatics Theory:

First and foremost, we need to determine, what exactly politeness means? Different societies and cultures across the world have their own norms and regulations that may vary from one another. While all societies and cultures have their own notions of what is perceived and accepted as

polite and impolite, it may possibly vary as what one culture deems good and acceptable maybe bizarre or rude in another.

‘Politeness is key to all of our relationships and plays a fundamental part in the way we communicate with each other and the way we define ourselves. It is not limited to only conventional aspects of linguistic etiquette, but encompasses all types of interpersonal behaviour through which we explore and maintain our relationships. Politeness is a social practice in one sense because it involves evaluations occasioned by social actions and meanings that are recognisable to participants.’(Kadar & Haugh 2013). The practice or exercise of politeness is through the medium of communication and interaction; and for a precise understanding, here is a look at Grice and his Conversational Maxims which form one of the key points of reference for studies in pragmatics. They are,

1. The maxim of quantity, where one tries to be as informative as one possibly can, and gives as much information as is needed, and no more.
2. The maxim of quality, where one tries to be truthful, and does not give information that is false or that is not supported by evidence.
3. The maxim of relation, where one tries to be relevant, and says things that are pertinent to the discussion.
4. The maxim of manner, when one tries to be as clear, as brief, and as orderly as one can in what one says, and where one avoids obscurity and ambiguity.

Grice sowed the seeds of his maxim-based view of politeness mapping the connection between (semantic) sense and (pragmatic) force and indirectness. In the field of pragmatics of politeness, Leech’s Principles of Politeness of is

a point of reference for all studies in this field as well as others like pragmatics and socio-pragmatics. Geoffrey Leech's Politeness Maxims are:

1. Tact maxim: (a) minimise cost to other
 (b) maximise benefit to other.
2. Generosity maxim: (a) minimise benefit to self
 (b) maximise cost to self
3. Approbation maxim: (a) minimise dispraise of other
 (b) maximise praise of other
4. Modesty maxim: (a) minimise praise of self
 (b) maximise dispraise of self
5. Agreement maxim (a) minimise disagreement between self and other
 (b) maximise agreement between self and other
6. Sympathy maxim: (a) minimise antipathy between self and other
 (b) maximise sympathy between self and other.

Politeness is clearly not an objective behaviour, but involves a rather perceived state of mind about behaviour. It involves an interpretation or evaluation of situated behaviour as meaningful in some way in regards to one person's relationship with others in some way so, inevitably any discussion of politeness is a consideration of cognition. (Kadar and Haugh 2013: 207).

5.3. Politeness Strategies

Apart from gestures and body language, the main linguistic components of exercising politeness includes the use of forms and strategies to achieve the required goal or need for communication. Forms can be language specific such as a morpheme or a lexical item which is conventionally used in politeness

situations. Strategies on the other hand consists of a series of actions, or utterances involving use of polite forms to work towards the desired response from the listener or a target goal or perhaps a specific result.

Downgraders are devices used to ‘downgrade’ or reduce the imposition of the task on the hearer. Interrogative constructions, in contrast, cover various syntactic structures, such as questions in the present tense or the conditional, with and without a modal verb, or more complex constructions including lexical downgrader, such as consultative devices. (Ogiermann: 2009).

Some of the commonly used downgraders in a situation of ‘negative face threats’ (Brown and Levinson, 1978) are endearment terms, omission or reference address to the hearer, permission or consultation and explanations of the situation that has brought about the necessity of making such impositions on the hearer. This may be commonplace in most languages but the deployment of these elements in negative face situations is also largely culture specific.

5.3.1 Honorification:

Honorification in many languages especially from languages spoken in Asia such as Chinese (Gu, 1990) , Japanese (Ide, 1986a, 1992, 2005) and certain Tibeto-Burman languages display the use of honorific particles or lexical items while addressing a listener of a higher rank or age, presence of social distance or to communicate respectfully to people. The use of politeness and honorifics is greatly context dependent as use of politeness with a close associates can be employed for humour or for sarcasm. ‘Honorification is very important in some societies such as in Japan and Korea, whose main languages

(Japanese and Korean) contain elaborate honorific systems enabling speakers to show degrees of respect or deference to the addressee or to a third party.’

(Leech 2014:9)

5.3.2. Indirectness:

Indirectness is a commonly used strategy in politeness situations. In making requests, indirect sentences can be formed mostly in the interrogative or indicative sentences. In Asian cultures such as Thailand (Srinawarat in Ide, 2005), indirectness is valued because saving face and harmony in social relationships are highly valued. As a communication style, indirectness is employed to perform different functions such as giving hints, avoiding confrontation, joking, being ironic are some of the politeness strategies employed by speakers of Thai.

Leech (1983:108) proposes that it is possible ‘to increase the degree of politeness by using a more and more indirect kind of illocution. Indirect illocutions tend to be more polite (a) because they increase the degree of optionality, and (b) because the more indirect an illocution is, the more diminished and tentative its force tends to be’. However, indirectness as a device of politeness can be culturally effective or ineffective when it obscures too much information leading to lack of pragmatic clarity. This is evident in Blum-Kulka’s (1987) study on indirectness based on English and Hebrew where dropping hints is considered polite in English whereas in Hebrew on the contrary, a forthcoming and clear manner of communication is accepted as a sign of sincerity and therefore more acceptable and upholding the benefit to the hearer. Namely, balance in pragmatic clarity is

required for clear and successful communication even if indirect speech is used to imbibe a sense of politeness.

5.3.3. Kinship terms as address terms:

Kinship terms as address terms can be seen across cultures throughout the world. It can be used for related as well as not related persons, mostly as a sign of respectful communication and polite address. Terms equivalent to brother, sister, uncle, aunt etc. are commonly used across languages in order to make polite reference to people in places such as markets and other social avenues. The intention to address a non-kin with a kinship term presents a considerable attempt to be polite and respectful and a sign of solidarity to the addressee.

5.3.4. Other terms of address:

Choice of social terms of address continues in more or less the same understanding as the use of kinship terms for address. The use of official terms such as Sir or Madam in official or institutional environments is deemed more appropriate than the use of kinship terms which could be misinterpreted for over familiarity and could have an opposite effect than a positive one. Gu (1990) writes about the Chinese society in the era of Confucius where such correct official address terms were strictly necessary to ensure a smooth functioning of the hierarchical structure and uphold the harmonious strands of the society. Failure to do so could result in offence taken on account of disrespect and led to dire consequences in cases often causing large scale disruption of peace in the society. This was practised in the feudal times and although many such forms and practices have been done away with the passage of time, the practice of 'limao' or

the 'ethics of politeness' is an integral part of the Chinese society which is the cardinal principle of politeness based on sincerity and balance.

5.3.5. Self-referencing diminutives or humilatives:

Self-referencing terms employing diminutives or humiliative forms are found in languages such as Chinese (Gu: 1990), Japanese, Thai (Lakoff & Ide: 2005) through the use of which speakers put themselves in a lower position in order to elevate the status of the hearer and to enhance the amount of respect being paid in the conversation. The speaker refers to himself or herself in a humble manner giving a sense of deep respect and honour to the listener.

5.3.6. Endearment terms:

Endearment terms can be employed as device to create a bond of familiarity and solidarity with the hearer. In English, terms like 'dear' 'sweetie' etc. are often employed in situations where the speaker wishes to establish a sense of closeness or proximity in order to achieve the requirement of the communicative situation. It is an attempt to reduce the social distance of the interlocutor with the addressee and is a positive politeness device. The application of this is apparently context dependent as misuse or wrong usage can signal an attempt to be over familiar and can result in pragmatic failure or misunderstanding.

5.3.7. Use of diminutives:

Diminutives are used to convey a slighter degree of an object, quantity or quality of something. They have the ability to also convey a sense of intimacy or endearment. This can be said observed while speaking to children or induce

intimacy while speaking to adults. They can also be employed to reduce the imposing nature of requests or favours but inculcating a sense of lightening the weight of the imposition.

5.4. Politeness strategies and devices used in Barak Valley Meitei

Language and meaning are largely context dependent. Meitei is a language which uses a lot of indirect and small sentences as a strategy to get to the main event of communication. A series of hedging sentences would be required to get to the main question in order to make a polite act of communication. Even asking a small question like ‘Would you like to have tea?’ would not beget a direct ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ answer . It would be intercepted by a few other sentences about the kind of tea that is to be made. If in a home, there would be a question about who else is also going to have the tea and whether or not it is too much trouble to make it. Even it were, the tea would be served eventually but the necessity of this small talk is a characteristic of the language and a mirror of the culture and habits which includes many hedging strategies in communication for the sake of politeness. Brevity would signify abruptness, lack of manners or being inconsiderate in most situations. Therefore hedging is one of the devices employed to reduce the directness of the task even if it a known imperative action that is being addressed to the hearer. Factors like social distance between the speakers, power relations and context can influence the quality of the conversation. However, it is the nature of Meitei speech to be at ‘the conventionally indirect level’, procedures that realize the act by reference to contextual preconditions necessary for its performance, as conventionalized in a given language. These strategies are commonly

referred to in speech act literature, since Searle 1975, as indirect speech acts; an example would be 'could you do it' or 'would you do it' meant as requests (Blum-Kulka 1984).

Unlike the Western societies where brevity of expression and communication is appreciated, Indian cultures, more so the Eastern Indian languages and others beyond the East towards the Northeast Indian cultures, have a manner of speaking which may seem cumbersome to someone who is unfamiliar with it. Taking the social and communicative culture of Barak Valley Meitei itself, small talk is an important tool in social exchanges.

5.4.1. Address terms:

Addressing the hearer in the form of kinship terms while addressing a non-familiar can be a token of respectful address and also an attempt to establish familiarity and solidarity. In many cultures, as well as in Barak Valley Meitei, the elders and the non-familar are, if required addressed by a kinship term deemed most appropriate by the addressee. For example,

/ipu/ or /pupu/	‘grandfather’
/ibok/ or /bobok/	‘grandmother’
/kəka/	‘paternal uncle,
/mamo/	‘maternal uncle’
/dəda/	‘elder brother’,
/ice/	‘elder sister’
/inao/	‘younger sibling’
/ine/ or /nene/	‘paternal aunt’,
/indomca/	‘maternal aunt’

The above terms can be used as suitable by the speaker. It can be deemed utterly impolite and disrespectful to address a person who is higher in social distance, age or rank by their name without the use of any of the above stated kinship terms. Oftentimes, it is not that someone is addressed as an inferior but the absence of a proper address terms and first name basis can more than often be seen as a sign of disregard and lack of respect. A person is addressed by their names only in peer situations or to person deemed to be lower in age than the speaker. In situations where the name of the addressee is not known and seems to be of a peer group or age, it may be inappropriate to use any of the above listed address terms as one does not unnecessarily wish to use a wrong address term and indicate that the addressee is older or younger than oneself, in these situations, people often use the term /ədom/ which is a gender neutral third person referential term. It is used in most formal situations when the interlocutor needs to address the hearer but cannot do so without drawing his/her attention.

Apart from kinship terms, in official situations, people are often inclined to not address by kinship terms and use official address terms such as Sir, Madam or Oja (teacher) as the use of kinship terms may induce an unrequired sense of overfamiliarity.

5.4.2. Honorifics:

The use of the honorific marker /-pi/ or /-bi/ is employed for more than just attesting a power relationship or predicated to make the addressee feel good. (Betholia, 2005). The use of the honorific forms such as this one is not only to express politeness but to conform to the socially accepted codes of good conduct. The use of honorifics is a positive face inducing

device when it comes to addressing non-familiars, elders and in politeness situations. The honorific marker /-pi/ or /-bi/ as determined by the phonological environment is indispensable while articulating a request or apology or just an imperative sentence that is an imploration that cannot be refused. Apart from showing respect and honour to a person of higher rank and age, the honorific when used with peers or a person of lesser power or age, it imparts a sense of importance and attentiveness. This is a positive face strategy and enhances the status of the hearer who is in a lower power in the relation (Betholia: 2005).

5.4.3. Endearment terms:

The use of endearment marker like /-ba/ in conjunction with the honorific marker /-pi/ or /-bi/ gives a more personal emotiveness to the sentence. Apart from the use of kinship terms and other address terms, the use of addresses such as /nungʃiba/ ‘dear’, /itao/ ‘friend’, /ibemma/ ‘girl (endearing)’, /ibuŋo/ ‘boy (endearing)’ or nicknames can be considered endearing terms that allow the speaker to address the hearer in a socially proximate term that signals closeness and hence the request has a better chance to be accepted and executed by the hearer. It is a common way for elders to call the younger ones /ibemma/ and /ibuŋo/ in conjunction with their names or alone .It can create a sense of proximity when addressing unfamiliars, and act as an endearing device amongst familiars.

5.4.4. Omission or reference address to the speaker:

Through the previous sections, we have come across the importance of using a correct and appropriate term while addressing a person. This section discusses the opposite of that act. While addressing the

hearer with a suitable address term is proper manners to speak to someone and conducive to getting a request completed, omission of the reference term can also signal an indication of politeness in avoiding a direct reference to the addressee. This is possible when the addresser already has the addressee's attention and is in a direct medium of communication. Omission of the address term especially in this BVM culture indicates that the hearer could be elder or a non-familiar and the omission of address serves as an indication of respect and politeness. The omission of the address term in the sentence commonly involves the use of the reflexive /-jə/ or /-cə/ which is self-referring and acts as a diminutive or a humbling reference to the speaker and the optative /-ke/ or /-ge/ in conjunction that emulates a polite utterance with its inherent meaning of providing an option to the hearer.

5.4.5. Permission or consultation:

The seeking of permission or consulting the hearer to perform the action requested is a sign of power relations or proximity where the speaker gives the authority to the hearer. By doing this the hearer is given the choice to approve the request or favour. This can be a sign of showing respect and acknowledgement of the hearer's will to consider the request. By giving the hearer a sense of power of granting the action to take place, the speaker solicits the hearer's compliance in the matter.

5.4.6. Situational explanations or stating reasons:

A couple of the examples in the DCT elicitation test required imposing the hearer with their co-operation in completing the request. For instance, borrowing, asking for help and other instances where the speaker imposes on the hearer to comply with the speaker's need. The responses

involved explaining the situation that led to the requirement of the speaker asking the hearer's compliance in helping him/ her out. In most cases, the response elicited is quite long and includes a lot of pausing gaps indicating the need and hesitation in making the move to the culmination of the request being made. This is a common feature of South Asian languages, especially in the eastern part of India. This kind of elaborative information about the situation is employed to reduce the impact of the imposing nature of a request or favour by including the hearer in awareness of the situation that requires their co-operation for successful completion of the task at hand.

5.4.7. Seek agreement:

In the DCT tasks, when a speaker is asking for a lift in their vehicle or a favour from the hearer, he/ she makes sure that to confirm that the hearer is headed out in the same direction or present in the same vicinity before making the request. In other cases, the speaker makes sure that the hearer is also on the same ground before proceeding with the request or question. According to Brown & Levinson's (1987) popular theory this can be counted as the attempt to mitigate the 'face threatening act' by reducing the impact of the imposition on the hearer. Scholars such as Gu (1990) and Ide (1989) emphasize on the need for group solidarity and harmony in Eastern Asian societies so in that light this can be observed as an attempt to seek co-operation and adhere to the norms of group harmony.

5.4.8. Use of diminutives:

The use of diminutives in request strategies has the ability to lower the impact of the imposition on the hearer. Diminutives could be identified as making the request to be considered just once, asking a small favour or

implying that the task requested is a really small imposition. Using diminutives to humble oneself lends the hearer a sense of being in a powerful state that the action requires their aid to be completed. This is a positive strategy as it elevates the status of the hearer to be in a position to bestow the completion of the desired request.

The most common use of diminutives found in BVM is /əmuk-təŋ/ meaning ‘only+ once’. While making a request or impinging a favour on someone, it is used in an extremely widespread manner. In fast speech it can become /əmtəŋ/. The suffix /-təŋ/ can be used to reduce the meaning of something or specify whatever it is attached to. For instance,

/k^hi-təŋ/ ‘very little’ (quantity)

/əmə-təŋ/ ‘only one’

/ŋəhak-təŋ/ ‘for a little while’

/má-təŋ/ ‘only him/her’

/ləjbak-təŋ/ ‘only earth’.

5.5. Pragmatics of Politeness in Barak Valley Meitei

The framework for this experiment is based on the Discourse Completion Test (Blum-Kulka- Olshtain 1984; Ogiermann 2009). The format of the DCT adopted for this study is different from the referred studies in the manner that DCT studies comprise of a written response to a set of situations provided to the informant. For this study, the method adopted was similar to the point that the scenarios for the DCT were provided to the informant in a written format. The difference is that the

response was collected immediately as it occurred to them in the most spontaneous manner. The response was recorded and analysed with the help of the Praat software to observe the pitch tracks and correlate the patterns with theories of pragmatics and politeness. A prominence in the pitch track signifies a cue for a pitch accent which could be the detection of a functional element in the utterance focusing on an important event in the sentence. The DCT samples provided to the informants consisted of 15 sets of sentences which described scenarios where the speaker had to elicit a response most appropriate and efficient to get a positive and co-operative response from the hearer. The informants make use of several devices to induce the concept of politeness in their responses as elaborated in the previous section on downgraders. Most of the responses were in the form of requests, some returned responses as polite imperatives, some as questions which as Ogiermann states ‘a request in the form of a question will only be understood as such when the hearer realises that it is not a question.’

The responses were interesting in the array of devices the informants used to protect the positive face as requests are primarily a negative face threatening act (Brown and Levinson 1989). The responses showed a generous use of use of honorifics, explanations of the situation, syntactic downgraders, endearment terms, permissive or optative markers, diminutives and other downgrading strategies like explanations and the like.

Let us now take a look at some of the results of the test. The following response is returned by asking the informant to ask father to bring back some potatoes when he returns home.

5.1. /bəba-nə həl-lək-pə mətəm-də jarəgədi

Father-NOM return-DIS-NOM time-LOC if possible

alu kəji əmə əni-təŋ jaw-bi-rək-u/

potato kg. one two-only include-HON-DIST-IMP

‘If possible, when father returns, can a kg or two of potatoes please be brought along?’

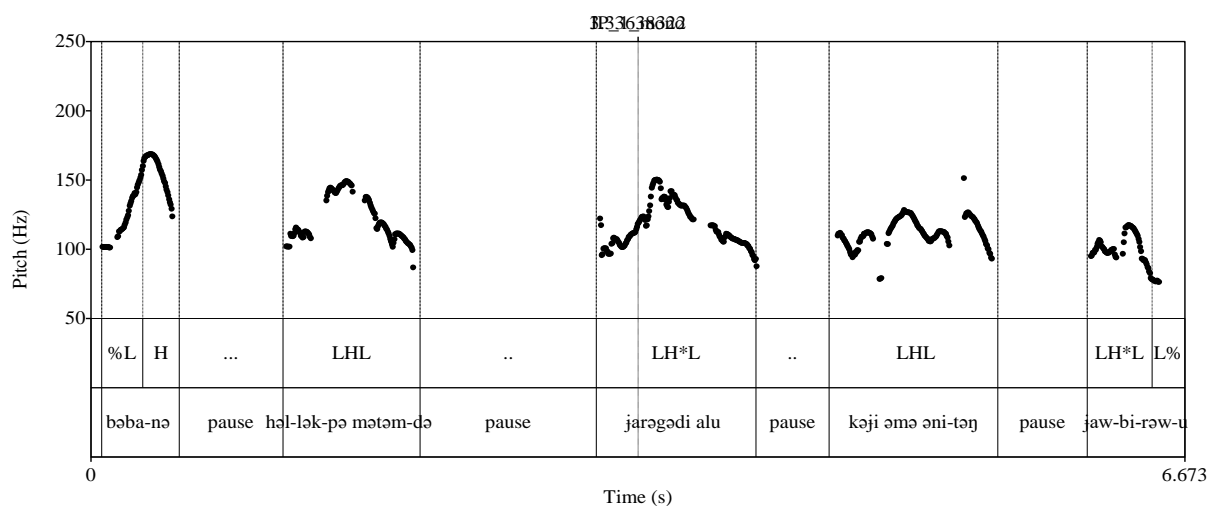


Fig.5.1. Pitch track of sentence 5.1

The utterance style of the speaker is very indirect and discreet. As will be observed from the pitch track, there are a lot of timely pauses before arriving at the main request area. The use of the distal marker /-lək/ is indicative of the hearer’s status which is higher than the speaker’s one. The use of 2nd person pronoun /nəŋ/ is not permitted to persons of higher rank, age or social distance. Due to this, the speaker uses the address term /bəba/ to address ‘father’ and omits the use of a pronoun to refer to father. Omission of the address term is a mark of deference as the attention of the hearer has already been obtained by the use of the address term. The

quantity of potatoes requested is attempted to be diminished by the use of /-təŋ/ meaning one two kgs of potatoes only. Moving on the verb phrase where the request materialises, the use of the honorific marker /-bi/ in conjunction with the imperative /-u/ is important to show deference to the hearer. The distal marker /-rək/ is realised on the surface form as /-rəw/ continues to show the acknowledgement of the distance in rank and power.

On the behaviour of the pitch track, as observed in Chapter 4, the pitch accents are usually marked on the verb root or the noun on the noun phrase. In this case. The pitch accent is observed to be marked at the juncture of the verb root /-jaw/ and the honorific marker /-bi/ marking the crucial prominence of the honorific marker in the request making and imbibing the necessary politeness.

The next sentence is elicited by asking the informant to imagine a situation where they have gone to a friend's house, but due to lack of time have to refuse the tea that is offered to him by the friend's mother and has to make a request to be excused.

5.2. / p^həre əi kɔ:nə əmuk lak-cə-rə-ge kɔ:nə

Okay I later again come-REFL-CONJ-OPT later

mət^həŋ lakpə-də Oi-nə ədum ca-do t^hək-min-nə-rə-si /

next come-LOC Be-nom just tea-DET drink-COM-REC-

DIST-INCL

‘ (while taking leave) Okay, I will come another day, and we shall have the tea together next time.

make up for taking leave by making a future promise to complete the action together by returning again to make good the unfinished act.

Meitei has several devices like these and the manner of speech in which the listener is made to feel involved the event, request or suggestion conveying the imperative in the manner of a very polite and inclusive act performed together with the cohesive co-operation of the hearer.

5.3. / nene moi-gi gopal-gi mayum-do kəɗaj-də-no amtəŋ tak-pi-u-ne/
aunt they-GEN gopal-GEN house-DET where-LOC-INQ once show-HON-IMP-SI

‘Aunty, Can you please show me where Gopal’s house is?’

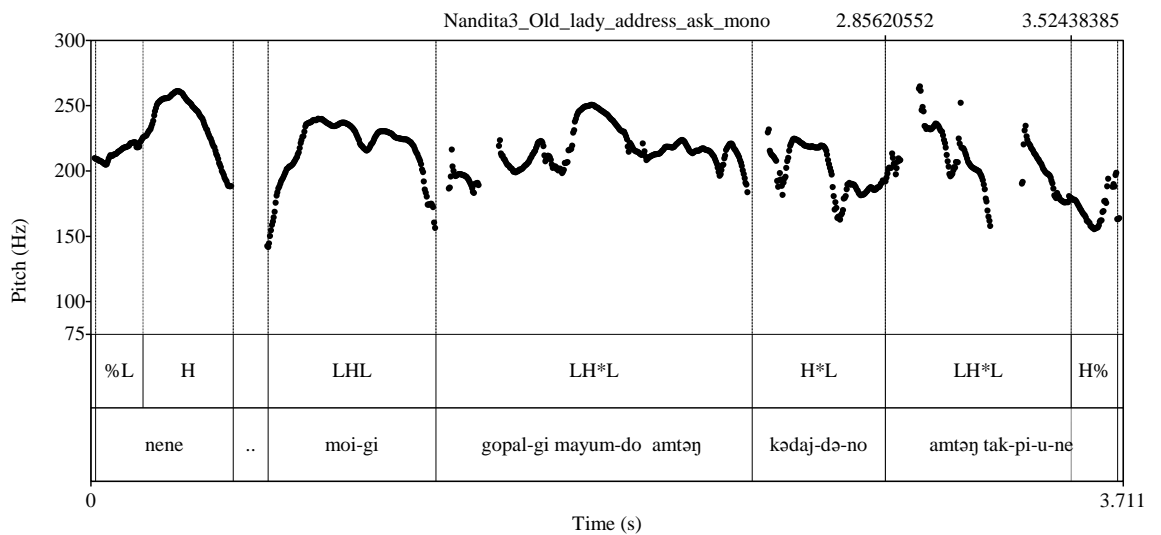


Fig.5.3. Pitch track of sentence 5.3.

The utterance is a negative face request. Requests are by default face threatening acts (Brown and Levinson, 1978) as they impinge upon the hearer’s claim to freedom of action and freedom from imposition. The

speaker is imposing a task on an elderly person to help them find an address. The key words at play are an imperative /-u/. Imperative sentences in general are known to have an H% rising tone and is also attested in Meitei to have an H% (Meiraba, 2014) in an IP ending in a final rise which is observed in this utterance as well. The honorific marker /-pi/ in Sentence 5.3 is the syntactic downgrader used to reduce the imperative mood of the utterance. The kinship term /nene/ which is used as an intimate reduplicated address form is derived from the more formal form /ine/ is also an indication to input markers of social closeness to introduce a more positive politeness to the situation. There is also a considerable pause in between which delays the actual plunge of imposing an imperative task on the elderly person. Pitch accents are marked on the genitive /-gi/ signifying the person who address is being enquired about. Typical of interrogative sentences and wh-words, /kədaj-/ receives the pitch accent in the next phrase.

Imperative utterances are observed to have a higher pitch and it is observed in this figure as well. The speaker also attempts to make the imposition less troublesome by rendering the request to be considered only once for the sake of brevity. The diminutive word /əmtəŋ/ has a pitch accent signalling a prominence in the sentence. The suffix /-ne/ which denotes shared information in the act that is requested to take place makes it look like a group effort and not a singular imposition. In this case, the use of /-ne/ also creates a sense of polite assertion indicating the imploring nature of the utterance to the hearer.

In the next sentence, the informant imagines himself to be a younger child and seeks permission from his parents to go for a picnic with friends.

5.5. / ima pabuŋ moi ɲasi imanaba məjam əmə piknik
cha-bə

Mother father they today friend many one picnic eat-
NOM

cət-kə-ni haj-e do əi-su k^hərə jaw-ru-ge/
go-OPT-COP say-ASS DET I-also some present-AWA-
OPT

‘Mother, father, many friends are going for a picnic today, may I also be allowed to go join them?’

Addressing both parents individually, the speaker seeks permission using a distant way of informing the parents about his friends going for a picnic. The use of the optative marker in the verb phrase / jaw-ru-ge/ is where the permissiveness in the speech act is sought.

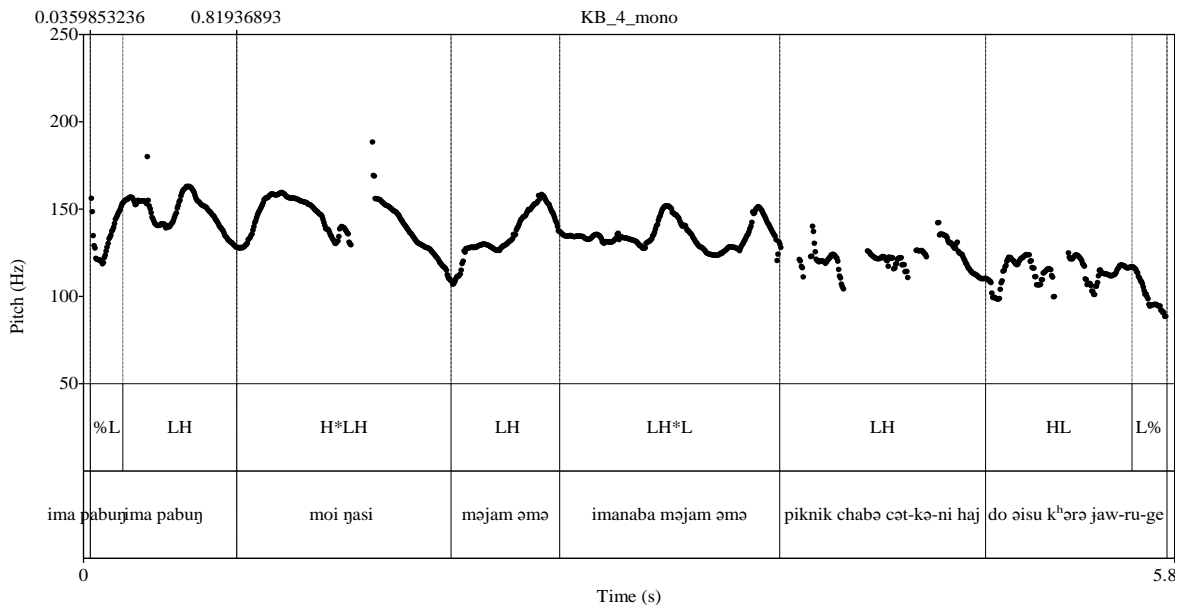


Fig. 5.4. Pitch track of Fig.5.4.

The optative marker /-ge/ gives the hearer a sense of power over the events that entail the utterance. The seeking of permission and agreement from parents is an act of showing deference to the authority of the parents over the speaker. The explanatory reason about the event is one of the common ways BVM speakers display politeness by stating the purpose for which the permission is required. The diminutive element used in this sentence is /kʰərə/ meaning ‘little’ which aims to reduce the time for absence. Pitch accent is marked on /moj/ signalling that the event is triggered by the friends and /məjam/ showing the attempt to normalise the act of going by informing that many friends are going so the speaker may be permitted to go too.

The next sentence is an example of the speaker asking permission to enter a room, perhaps in an official situation.

5.6. /əj əmtə cəŋ-jə-rək-pə ja-gə-dra/

I once enter-REFL-DIST-NOM allow-OPT-Q

‘May I be allowed to enter once? (Humbling oneself)’

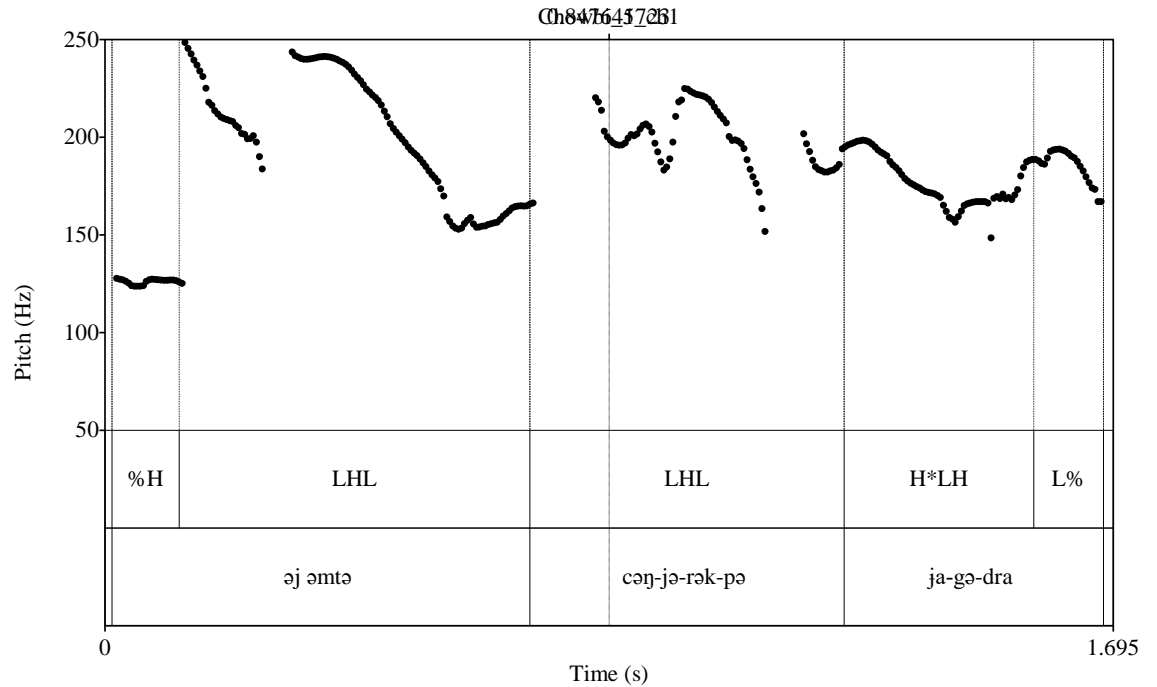


Fig. 5.5. Pitch track of sentence 5.5.

This sentence is straight and to the point and does not employ explanatory strategies as we have seen in the previous examples. This is a situation where brevity is required but nonetheless politeness has to be exercised at this is an address to a possible unfamiliar person who is at a considerable social distance. The first and foremost thing to notice is the absence of an address term. Women in particular have the tendency to omit the address term while addressing elders and persons at a social distance unless required to seek attention. By omitting the direct address, the respectful space is maintained amongst the interlocutors. Using the diminutive /əmtə/ the speaker tries to minimise the intrusion on the hearer. The first verb phrase /cən-jə-rək-pə/ ‘enter’ take the suffixes /-jə/ for reflexive implying the responsibility of the

action is on the speaker herself. The distal /-rək/ helps to infer a sense of distance from which the speaker seeks permission to enter the room. In the last verb phrase is the essential Yes/ No question where we observe a similar pattern seen in Chapter 4. The pitch accent H* is marked on the verb /ja-/ ‘allow’ falling on the optative /-gə/ and falling sharply on the Yes/No question particle /ra/. The pitch accent getting marked on the verb root shows the prominence in the function of the question asking the hearer to allow the speaker to enter.

The next example shows a case of borrowing something from a non-familiar person. The informant is given a scenario where he/she needs to borrow a phone to make an urgent call as his/her phone has run out of battery.

5.7. som-gi p^hon-do əmuk-təŋ sijənə-jə-ge ja-gə-dro

*Other-GEN phone-DET once-DIM use-REFL-OPT allow-
OPT- Q*

əi-gi mobail-se betəri-se loinə si-g^hə-re/

my-GEN mobile-DET battery-DET all die-PAST-PERF

‘(Other), may I please be allowed to borrow your phone (only once)? My mobile battery has died completely’.

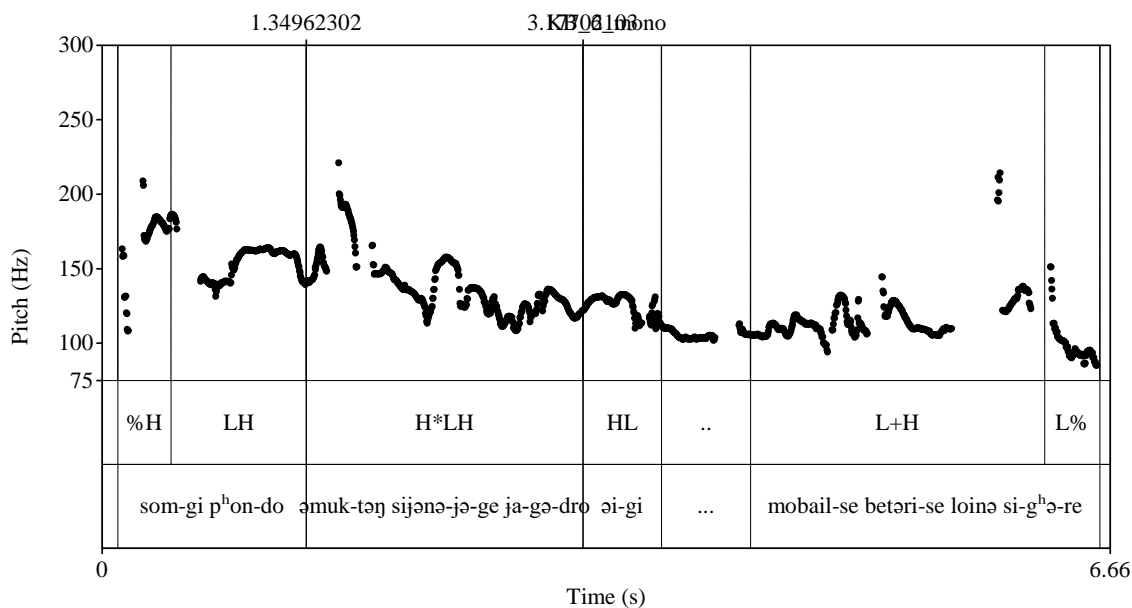


Fig. 5.6. Pitch track of sentence 5.6.

The address term /ədom/ which the speaker has used here is a very formal term that can be roughly translated to as a third person pronoun that is used in literary and formal settings with people for whom it may be difficult to find an address term or more importantly, it could be a person of the same age group or a peer whose name is unknown to the speaker and for want of a proper term resort to this address which is only used in highly formal settings. The diminutive /əmuktəŋ/ ‘once only’ receives the pitch accent H* displaying the prominent function it play in this sentence. The first one phrase refers to the hearer and his phone, the second phrase is the request realised as a question where the speaker asks if he may be allowed to borrow the hearer’s phone and the last phrase is the explanation of the situation that has compelled him to make the request. The use of the reflexive /-jə/ and optative /-gə/ on the verb predicates are the politeness devices used to soften the impact of this request made to an utterly non-familiar person to borrow an extremely personal object for the benefit of the speaker. This flouts the

Leech’s maxim of tact and maxim of generosity where the utterance is for the benefit of the speaker and the cost is borne by the hearer. The negative face of making such an imposition on the hearer is heavy and the speaker hence attempts to meliorate this by using the highly polite formal term of address which addresses the social distance in a very respectful manner. Next the use of optatives on both the verbs which are inflected by the reflexive which is one of the polite suffixes in Meitei (Betholia, 2005) gives the hearer a sense of higher rank and power which elevates his status and may be persuasive enough to grant the speaker the request.

In the next sentence, the speaker invites an elder to a community feast at his home at a short notice and insists that they come without fail.

5.8. / . mamə hajəŋ əjk^hoj-gi uʃop-ʃi-də ʃoj-də-nə lak-pi-u/
Uncle tomorrow our-GEN feast-DET-LOC fail-CTE-NOM
come-HON-IMP

‘Uncle, tomorrow there is feast at our house, kindly do come without fail.’

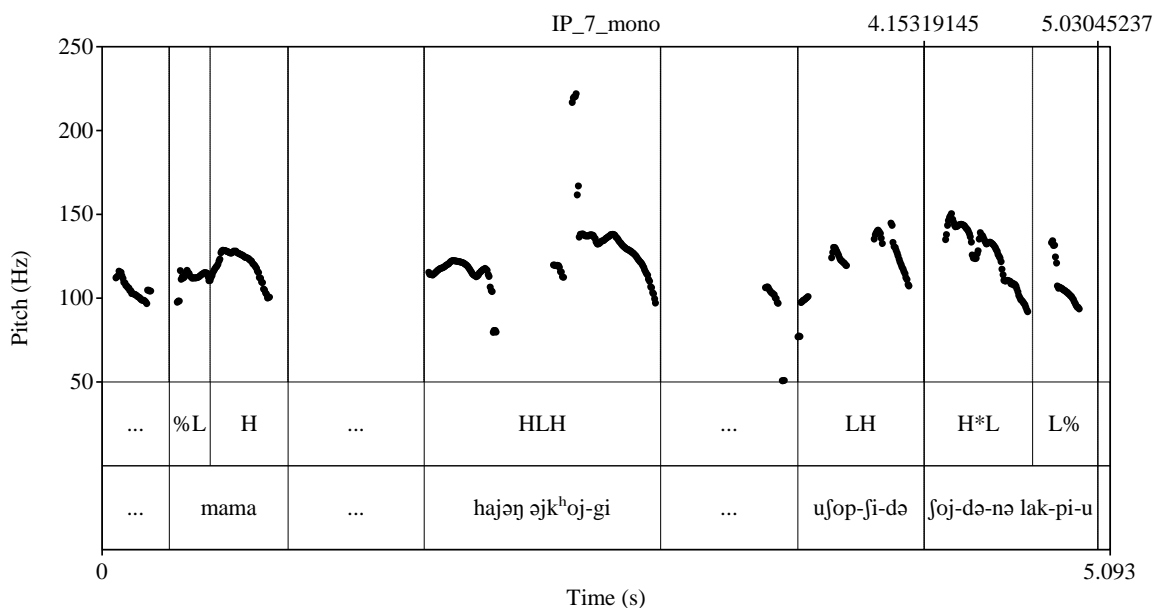


Fig.5.7. Pitch track of sentence 5.7.

Addressing the elder as uncle, is a proper way to begin the request and the information regarding the event is given to the hearer in the initial part of the sentence. The first three phrases as seen in Fig. 5.7, show the situational information being disclosed to the hearer. The final verb phrase takes the crucial request /lak-pi-u/ ‘come’, the imperative in which is softened by the use of the honorific marker /-pi/. The word preceding this final verb phrase /ʃoj-də-nə/ is the device that inputs the insistence on the request by /-də/ which inputs the meaning ‘contrary to expectation’ on /ʃoj/. This then can be literally interpreted as ‘without fail’ and then follows the next phrase which means ‘please come (honorific)’. On the pitch track the root /ʃoj-/ get the pith accent as the emphasis in this sentence is laid on the insistence to accept the invitation made to the hearer.

The following example is a request made by the speaker to excuse them at the moment because they are preoccupied with something.

5.9. /əi-bu	t ^h əbək	jam	k ^h ut t ^h adok-pə	ja-də-bə	mətán-
	ni-ne				
<i>I-ACC</i>	<i>work</i>	<i>very</i>	<i>hand free-NOM</i>	<i>yes-NEG-NO</i>	<i>time-</i>
	<i>COP-ASS</i>				
minit əmtə-di		ŋaj-u-ba	ŋəhak-təŋ	ləj-rə-gə	təw-
ge	yagə-dra/				
<i>minute one-EMP</i>	<i>wait-IMP-END</i>	<i>little-DIM</i>	<i>stay-CONJ-OPT</i>	<i>do-OPT</i>	
	<i>agree-Q</i>				

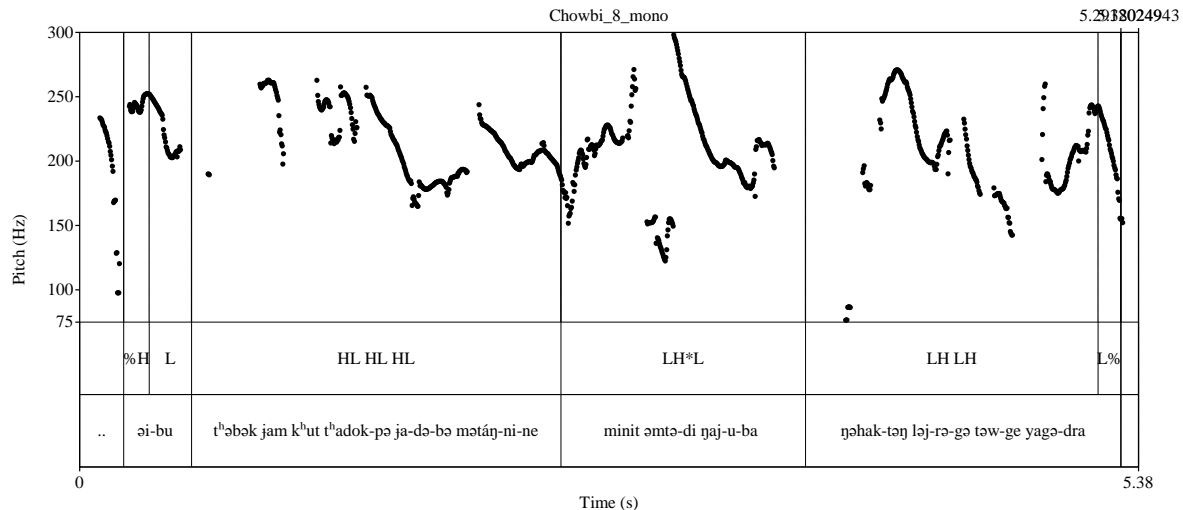


Fig.5.8. Pitch track of sentence 5.8

The sentence starts on %H where the speaker lays emphasis on herself stressing on the busy situation that makes her unable to attend to the hearer. She explains that she extremely busy at the moment. However, she asks the addressee if he/she can wait for a little bit so that she can attend her after she finishes her work. The second phrase /tʰəbək jam kʰut tʰadok-pə ja-də-bə mətəŋ-ni-ne/ can be literally understood as the speaker explaining she has not one moment of free time on her hands at the moment. The use of /-ne/ here functions to share the information and make the addressee included in the declaration and also a kind of assertion about the inevitable condition of being unavoidably busy. The next phrase is where the speaker makes the request asking the addressee to kindly wait for a minute. The use of /-ba/ the endearment marker acts as an effective downgrader attempting to create a bond of proximity amongst the interlocutors. A very prominent pitch accent H* is marked on the diminutive and emphatic marker suffixed together as /əmtə-di/ depicting the insistence on the little wait that the speaker has requested to the addressee. After that, there is attempt to salvage the situation by offering to attend to the task requested after the previously engaged work is over. To do

this, the speaker gives the addressee a sense of authority by asking if it is okay to wait for some time and if she can do the task after some time. The entire request ends in a Yes/No question giving the addressee a sense of control over the whole situation rather than being the one made to wait.

To ask a neighbour for a lift to the bus stop, the following request is made.

5.10. /əi-bu bəs istop-p^haw-təŋ t^hin-bi-rəm-u/
I-ACC bus stop-upto-DIM drop-HOM-IND-IMP

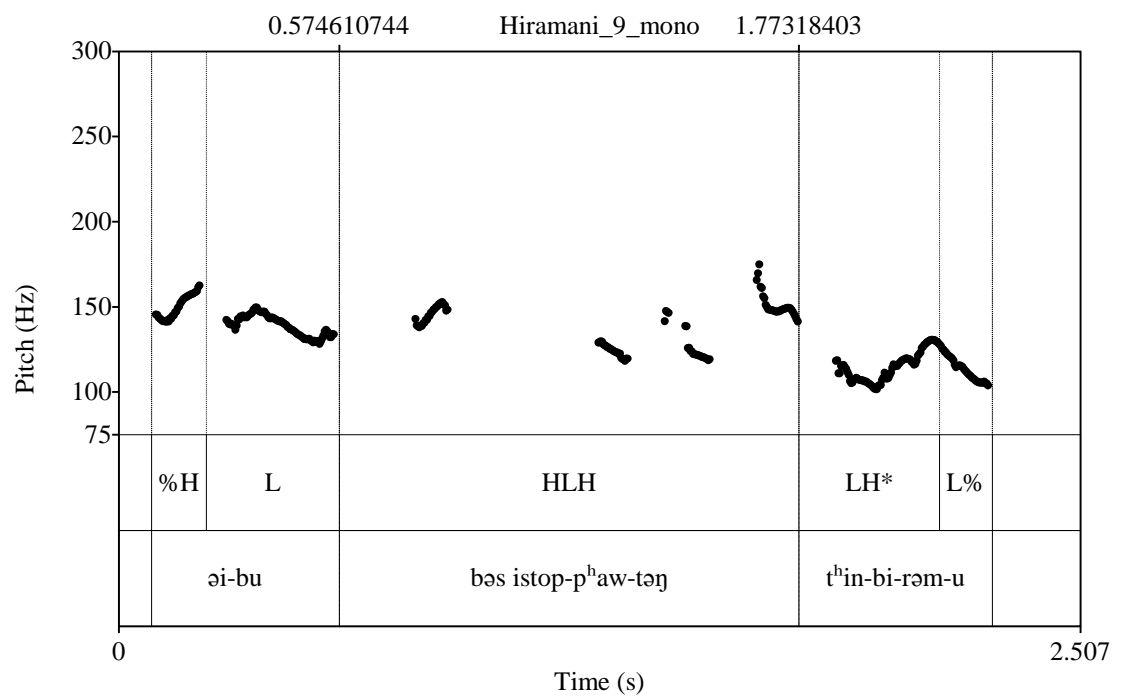


Fig.5.9. Pitch track of sentence 5.9.

To make this simple request, the speaker uses, indirectness, honorific and diminutive on an otherwise imperative sentence. The use of the diminutive on the distance to the bus stop acts as a downgrader on the imposition of the request. Using the honorific /-bi/ on the verb is a common politeness inducing strategy of the language. The morpheme inducing a meaning of indirectness to

the whole approach is /-rəm/, though which a sense of overall politeness is achieved in conjunction with the other politeness strategies.

The following sentence is elicited by giving the situation to the informant where she is visitor at somebody's house and requests for drinking water.

5.11. /ish ibema ice-bu isiŋ k^horaŋbə-nə

loire-ne

Exclamation girl(END) elder sister water thirsty-ASS

finish-ASS

Isiŋ glas əmtə t^hək-cə-ge-ba/

water glass one(DIM) drink-REFL-OPT-END

‘Little sister! Elder sister is extremely thirsty, please let me have just one glass of water.’

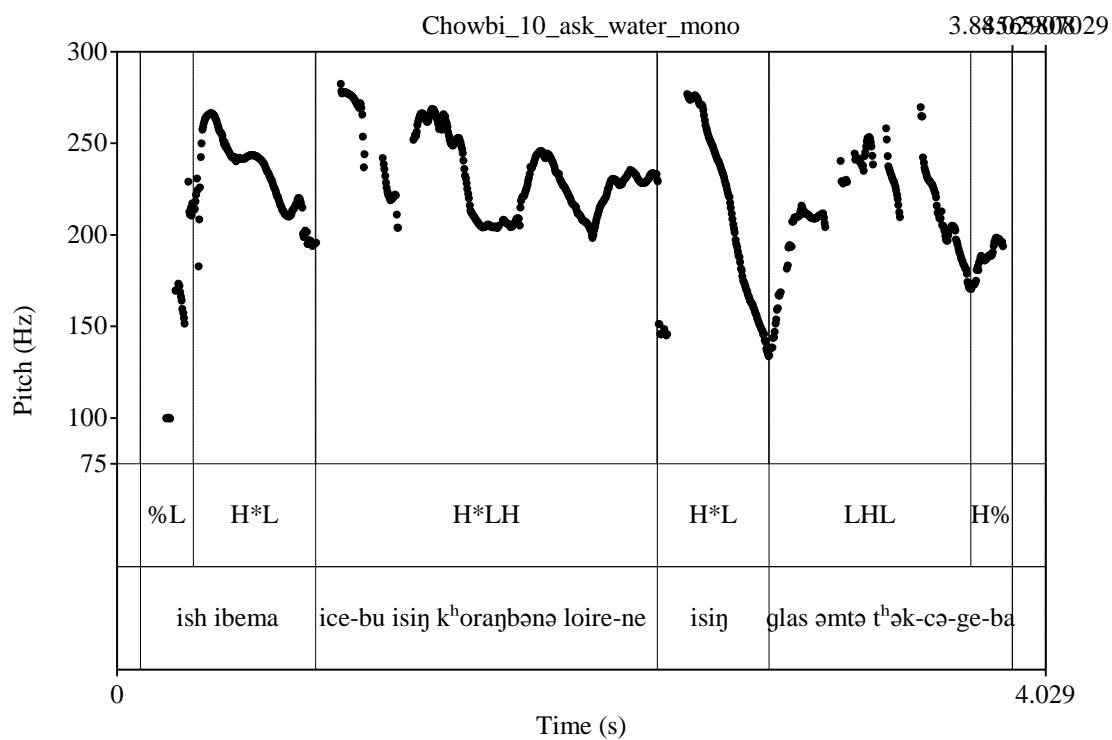


Fig.5.10. Pitch track of sentence 5.10.

The informant begins the request by uttering an exclamation seeking attention of the addressee and also uses an endearing address term for girls. This sentence contains an elaborate use of many politeness devices. Starting with the exclamatory remark and an endearing address term, the speaker explains the extreme thirst she is feeling and requests the addressee to kindly provide her some water to drink. It may be noted that /-ne /is used in the phrase where the explanation is being given and it performs the function of sharing the information in an inclusive manner as well as inducing a kind of polite assertion at the same time. Pitch accents are marked /ibemma/ displaying the importance given to the addressee, on /k^horaŋ-bə/ emphasising on the thirst felt by the speaker. The highest pitch accent H* is observed on /isiŋ/ ‘water’ which is an element of importance as the request pertains to the need for this object.

As observed in the other examples, the use of the diminutive /əmtəŋ/ meaning ‘only once’ is employed to reduce the instance of imposition on the hearer. The emphasis on the word signifies the importance requested to the nuance to kindly consider the request in the smallest possible intrusive way. Another long drawn fall on the last syllable which is also the optative marker which conveys the consultative or permissive meaning to the hearer give the utterance a polite meaning although it is a negative face threat asking an unfamiliar person in their home to entertain a guest’s request. Use of the optative marker gives the hearer a sense of liberty to not actually consider fulfilling the request. It reduces the impingement on the freedom to act that is imposed by these kind of negative face requests, although the request might not be as inevitable as it is made to sound by the use of these markers.

The next sentence is elicited by giving the informant a situation where one has to borrow a ladder from their neighbour. It is assumed that the relation between the neighbours is proximate as the address term is omitted and the 2nd Person pronoun is used which is generally used with peers, familiars or subordinates in rank or age, in that order of things.

5.12. / noi-gi kəjrak-to əi əmuk-təŋ waj-jə-ru-ge/
*You-GEN ladder-DET I once-DIM borrow-REFL-
 AWA-OPT*

‘Can I please borrow your ladder just once?’

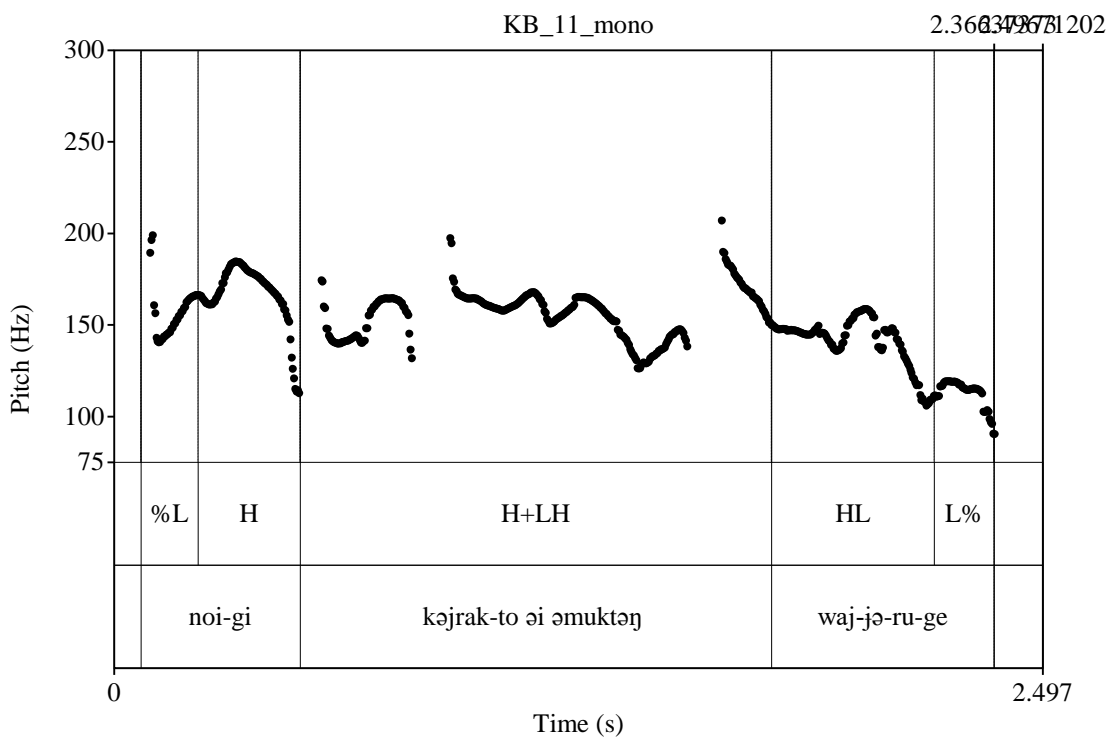


Fig.5.11. Pitch track of sentence 5.11.

Although the sentence begins with the speaker using the proximate 2nd Person pronoun ‘you’ the other elements that characterise a polite request are intact in the sentence. Namely, the diminutive /əruk-təŋ/, reflexive /-jə/ , /-ru/ that

signifies the distal situation of where the ladder is require and optative /-ge/ all work in conjunction to deliver an utterance that is proximately addressed and also maintains deference. The same can be said without the politeness device as / noi-gi kəjrak-to waj-ge/ translated to ‘Can I borrow your ladder?’. The polite meaning is imbibed by the reflexive marker through which the speaker takes entire responsibility for the action of borrowing and returning the item. This reflexive marker has been used in many other instances of exercising politeness and its meaning adapts to the context where it is used. The main function of this marker is that it gives a sense of self- contained responsibility to complete the action undertaken with sincerity. In conjunction with this meaning, /-lu/ which inculcates a sense of distance from where the speech is taking place creates a sense of space and distance that will be taken care of by the speaker. The optative /-ge/ of course continues to provide the sense of permissiveness sought from the addressee.

IN the following sentence, the speaker requests his mother for some ginger tea as he/she is feeling unwell.

5.13. / ima əi ɲasi k^hərə həkcaŋ k^hərə nuŋai-te du-
nə
 Mother I today little health little enjoy-NEG
 IND-NOM
ca-ŋaŋ-do siŋ-k^hərə hap-pə-gə kəp əmtəŋ t^hək-niŋ-i-
ne/
tea-red-DET ginger-little put-NOM-CONJ cup one(DIM)
drink-want-PROG-SI

‘Mother I am not feeling very alright today, I feel like drinking just one or two cups of red tea with ginger.’

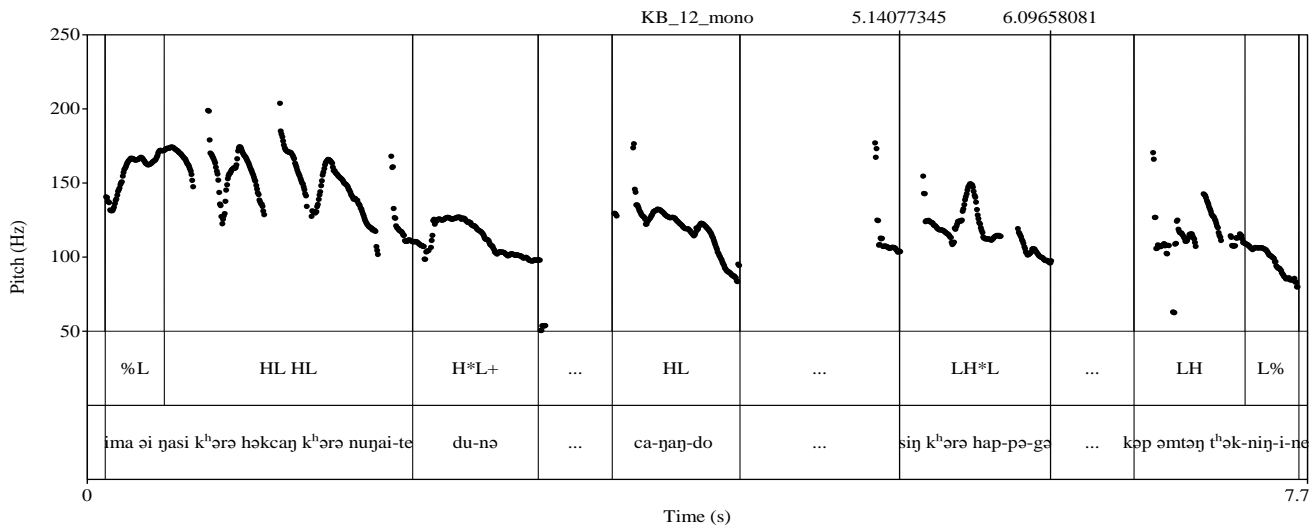


Fig.5.12. Pitch track of sentence 5.12.

The sentence begins by the speaker addressing his mother and explaining the situation that requires him to ask this favour from the addressee. It may be noted that the indirectness of speech is indicative of the situation where one has to request a chore from an elder. Due to this reason, the speaker does not make a direct request laden with all politeness devices but instead informs mother about him being unwell situation and indicates in a very subtle manner how he wishes to have just one or two cups of ginger tea. On the pitch track we can observe the pitch accent getting marked on /-du/ the indicative marker. The prosodic space occupied by these two small syllables in comparison to other phrases with a substantially more number of lexical items is remarkably more. This shows the explanatory and indication to the situation where the speaker readies himself to make this very indirectly framed request. The word /kʰərə/ gets repeated twice displaying the speaker’s hesitancy in asking an elder to do a chore on his behalf and also attempting to mask the imposition of the

task. Using the diminutive also entails a similar attempt to reduce the stance of the imposition. The speaker does not use an imperative with the usual honorific device but instead tactfully expresses the wish to drink the red tea infused with ginger. Along with this the shared information marker /-ni/ induces the said meaning and the polite assertion of the need. These subtle indications help to express an extremely polite request made with an indirect expression and other contributing devices.

In the following sentence, the speaker asks his friend to come and help out at a community feast in their house.

5.14. /həjɛŋ ək^hoj-gi uʃop ləj-e t^həbək-to ək^hoj

Tomorrow our-GEN feast there-ASS work-IND we

ʃu-min-nə-ʃi nom-min-nə-ʃi əmtəŋ lak-u-ko/

work(v)-COM-NOM-SI move-COM-NOM-SI once(DIM) come-IMP-

TAG

‘Tomorrow there is a (community) feast in our house, let us arrange and work it out together, okay?’

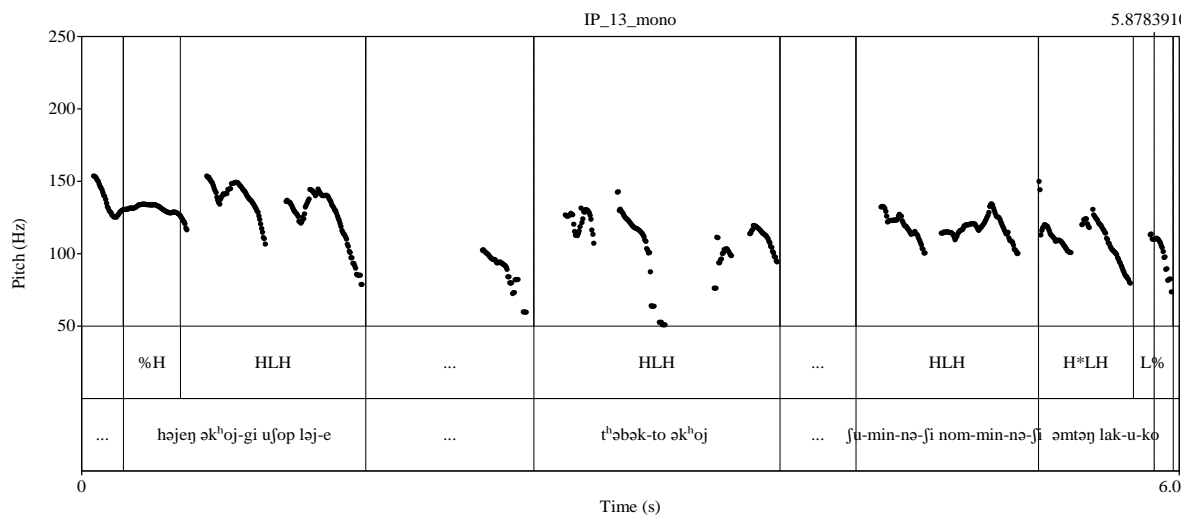


Fig.5.13. Pitch track of sentence 5.13.

The speaker seems to be addressing a peer but omits the address form .The situational explanation about the event that entails the addressee’s co-operation is narrated in a solidarity inducing manner in which the help which is requested is also incorporated with intention that the speaker and the addressee will be working together. On this note, the speaker requests the hearer to come using the diminutive /əmtəŋ/ and a tag question /lak-u-ko/ which is generally attached to affirmative situations and used for confirmation mostly. The lack of honorifics signifies the utterance to be taking place between peers and the presence of the comitative marker signals a consolidated effort in the task that lies ahead.

In the next sentence, the speaker apologises to a large gathering of people and requests to be excused for being late.

5.15. /məjam	saw-bi-bə-ya-de	əi	k ^h itəŋ
All	angry-HON-NOM-agree-NEG	I	little(DIM)
t ^h eŋ-g ^h re	t ^h əbək	əmə-nə	cin-də-nə/
late-PERF	work	one-INST	occupy-CTE-AGT

‘(Addressing) all, kindly do not be angry at me, I got a little late due to some work.’

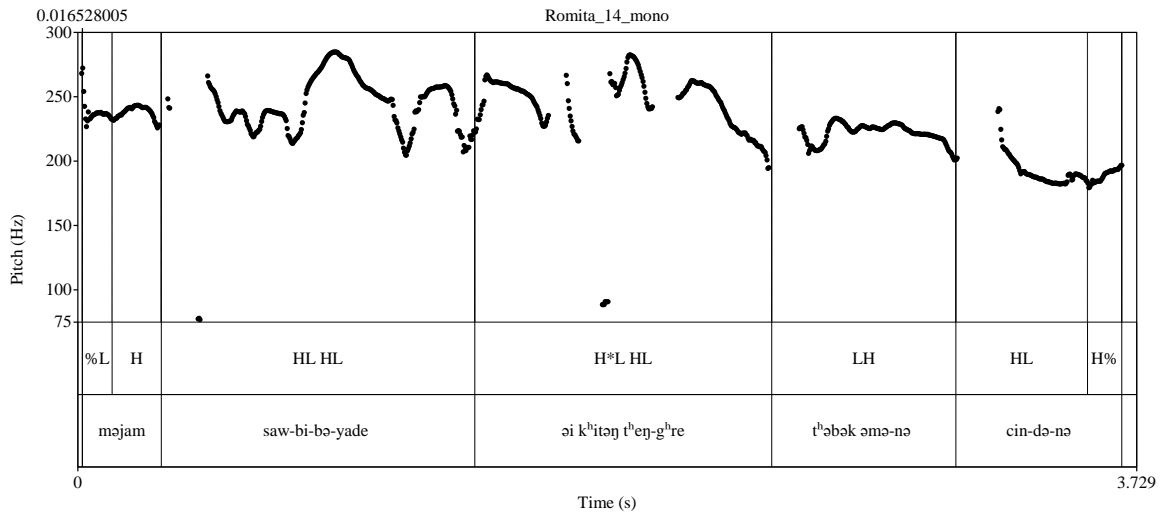


Fig.5.14. Pitch track of sentence 5.14.

The speaker supposedly addresses a gathering and requests them to not be cross at her as she was late due to some work. Meitei does not have a lexical entry equivalent to the English ‘sorry’ and in instances when an apology is requested from anyone, there is a situational explanation or else an attempt to repair the given situation. In this case, she has politely requested them to please not be angry at her with the politeness devices we have seen in earlier cases, such as the diminutive to reduce the amount of time; honorifics and situational explanation. The pitch accent H* is also marked on the diminutive expressing the emphasis laid on the word /-k^hitəŋ/. It may be noted that the general structure of the language is SOV and the verb phrase occurs at the end. In this case, the speaker has re-ordered the verb in the middle of the sentence reducing the directness of the utterance and ended the sentence with a nominalized verb which provides the situational explanation at the end unlike most of the instances seen so far. Primarily, the situational explanations are provided and then the request is made, it is the opposite in this case, where the request is made first and explanations given later. This strategy is useful in paying

importance to the addressee(s) rather than to the self and is a positive politeness strategy.

The last sentence of the experiment is an address to a formal gathering of people seeking their attention.

5.16. /məjam əmtəŋ ta-bi-ʃi-ra
 All once (DIM) once (DIM listen-HON-SI-Q
 əi wa əmtəŋ haj-jə-ge/
 I word once (DIM) say-REFL-OPT

‘(Addressing) all, may I have your attention just once, I wish to say a little something.

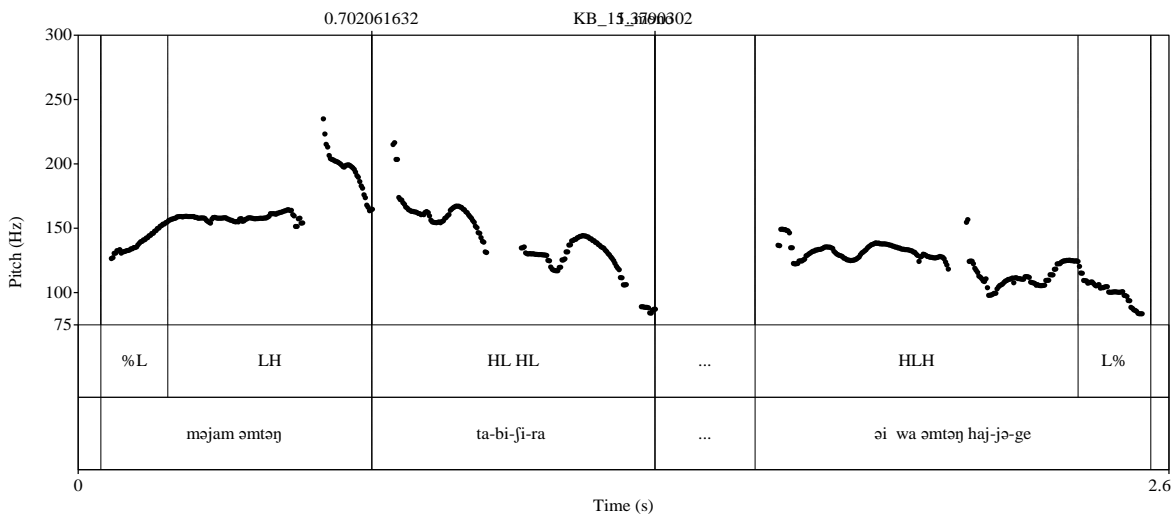


Fig. 5.15. Pitch track of sentence 5.12

The speaker begins by addressing the gathering and uses the diminutives to make a yes/no question based request seeking their attention and permissiveness to speak a few words. This utterance is relatively direct and the polite yes/no question and optative on the verb phrase give the whole utterance hearer oriented and seeking their permission makes it a positive politeness inducing device.

5.6. Linguistic features of Politeness in BVM:

The examples listed in this chapter are select representation of the samples from the DCT experiment. The experiment is designed in such a way that each informant responds as spontaneously as possible. Due to this, statistical representation of data is not accounted for by this study. In section 5.3, we see the general strategies and devices that is used by the speakers to practise politeness in speech.

In this section, the study aims to account for other forms in the linguistic structure that have been observed from the data along with the ones listed in Section 5.3. In the grammar of the language we find these morphemes which help to induce politeness into the sentence structure and embed meanings that show respect and deference to the addressee. The use of honorifics and diminutives have been accounted for in sections 5.5.2 and 5.5.9 respectively, so instead of dwelling on these again, let us move to other elements in the grammar that contribute inherently to politeness in speech.

The following morphemes are found across the data which aid in imbuing the sense of respect to the addressee.

5.6.1. The morphemes that mark distance between speaker and addressee:

Usually marked on the verb or suffixed in the verb phrase, the distal morpheme /-lək/ or the free variant /-rək/ signifies the presence of a distance from the speaker. This can be used to mark the physical distance away from the speaker in most cases. In politeness situations, this can be employed to acknowledge the distance between speakers especially while addressing persons at a social distance, higher rank, age or simply to address the lack of

proximity with respect in terms of address as seen in sentence 5.5. in the terms of directionality, this one is moving towards the speaker.

The other marker /-lu/ and its free variant /-ru/ give a sense of going away or being located at an opposite end from the speaker's point of origin.

5.6.2. Comitatives or marking companionship and togetherness:

The comitative marker /-min/ gives a sense of comradeship when suffixed on the verb directly or in conjunction with other suffixes in the verb phrase as seen in sentence 5.13. Offering to do a chore or task together can be pragmatic while also asking for help at the same time.

5.6.3. Reflexive or self-referring:

When the speaker uses /-cə/jə/ while making requests or other instances but referring to himself with this marker, it inculcates a meaning of self-effacement while taking responsibility for the intended action as seen in sentences 5.5 and 5.10.

5.7. Intonation features of Politeness in Barak Valley Meitei:

In the previous chapter 4 on Intonation of Interrogative sentences, we have seen the features of the different types of interrogative sentences. In these requests that are an attempt to capture the politeness phenomena, we can observe that a majority of them are Yes/no questions arrived at through situational explanations that eventually require the addressee's compliance. The intonation of the Yes/no questions remain the same where the verb is marked with a pitch accent if the question occurs at the end of the sentence.

H* pitch accents are also marked on the words or syllables that have a semantic prominence such as the diminutives, emphatic marker or the

constituent topic of the sentence. The boundary tones for interrogative sentences are observed to be %L or %LH and HL L% or HL% or simply L% as described in Chapter 4. Similar %L and %LH patterns are observed on sentences which start with situational explanations before the request culminates towards the end of the sentence. In these instances, where the request is generally a Yes/No question it ends on the similar HL% boundary peculiar to Yes/No question intonation. When the request is not a Yes/No question but rather implicative questions, the edge tones are still observed to be L%. The only exceptions occur in instances where the informant is a female in sentences 5.3, 5.10 and 5.14. The context of these sentences are assertion, endearment and agency of the action which could be responsible for the H% boundary tone as it denotes a function other than question marking. A %H boundary tone is observed in those sentences which begin with a strong emphasis on the subject, especially when the speaker is referring to himself or herself.

5.8. Characteristics in the results: Gender influence on language use.

The informants considered for this study are speakers of both genders and within the age range of 35-60. Although having a multilingual repertoire of language vocabulary, they use BVM in most aspects of their daily life, especially in the home and social community situations. Thus the points of distinctions that are observed can be broadly divided into the characteristics defined by gender which impact personal and social use of the language.

Lakoff (1977, 2017) has attested for ‘the use of lexical, grammatical, or phonological devices to suggest hesitancy or deference in a woman’s speech. She notes profuse use of hedges and a greater variation in pitch and intonation.

Women's language differs from the standard in being more non-direct, more capable of expressing emotion, and more conservative.' The sentences returned by the female speakers display more elaborate explanations as compared to the men. The responses of the men are pretty straight forward and rationally explained. The responses from the women are also more expressive and vivid in their descriptions than the men. Women also tended to have self-effacing attitude while making the requests. Men tended to have a more matter-of-fact way of stating things using all the requisite lexical words, morphemes and prosodic devices, but their demeanour was more authoritative although polite.

The speech of the men seem to be indicative in most cases where the speech of women are politely indirect. Omission of the addressing the hearer is one of the common characteristics of female speech while speaking to persons of social distance or higher age and rank.

In the experience of the researcher while doing field work, some male informants did not return any polite form of speech until specified to do so as they were speaking to a younger female and did not see the requirement to show deference. Only when the purpose of the DCT was elaborated in detail, the informants were able to respond in a more satisfactory manner despite the test having situational explanations in relation to the addressee.

5.9. Conclusion:

The contents of the chapter display, that to arrive at the request, the speaker goes through the situational explanation that compels them to seek the hearer's compliance in the matter. In doing this they are able to make use of the array of politeness devices listed in 5.3. The pitch accents tend to get

marked on these politeness devices or the word (s) that defines theme of the utterance. The pitch tracks display prominence in relation to the semantic content of the sentence and its constituents. The question prosody is observed to be similar to the pattern detected in Chapter 4. The H% boundary in sentences of the females are an exception which deviate from the major patterns seen in the language. This could be attribute to contextual and the variation in the female pitch ranges (Lakoff, 1977, 2017).

Throughout the examples we have observed widespread use of honorifics, diminutives, reflexives, situational explanations other strategic devices to manage situations pragmatically and exercise politeness in speech to make requests. Ide (1992c) also illustrates similarly on how honorifics implicitly convey meanings of psychological distance between conventional forms.’ In the use of these forms the speaker is able to inculcate the deference required while addressing different orders in the social hierarchy.

Therefore we can conclude that the politeness phenomena of BVM can be distinguished on the basis of gender influences for this study. Other influences can be elaborated in future studies.

Females are also in the BVM society required to show more deference as compared to males in most social situations. This can be attributed to the patriarchal set up of the society.

The main objective of being polite in a culture is to conform and abide by socially attested codes of conduct especially in language use which forms the basis for fundamental and effective communication. With a view on these examples, if we are unable to articulate the acceptable forms

of communication across to the hearer, it is quite possible that the hearer may actually not comply with the request and leave the speaker in a state of want unfulfilled. In conjunction with this, improper strategy of communication can result in pragmatic failure rendering further communication uncomfortable and stranded. Applicability of politeness is indispensable for smooth functioning of communication.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY

This chapter aims to consolidate the main findings of the current study. The thesis is an exploration of the intonation of interrogative sentences in relation to the pragmatics of politeness in Barak Valley Meitei. Along with the interpretation of the intonation patterns, the study aims to relate the pragmatics of politeness in the language- the devices and strategies that is a part of the language structure and its employment in exuding polite speech in given contexts.

6.1. Summary:

Chapter 1 primarily introduces us to the research problem which validates the need for this study. Primarily, the lack of any detailed work on this dialect of Meitei and secondarily, the existing literature on Meitei has very little reference on the subject on intonational patterns of the language. There are fleeting references of politeness in larger descriptive grammars and some sociolinguistic enquiries in to select topics so this study aims to address the study of politeness phenomena through the medium of requests.

The chapter then introduces us to the background of the study relating the study to other relevant works such as Beckman & Pierrehumbert (1986), Hirschberg and Pierrehumbert (1990) Hayes and Lahiri (1991), Gussenhoven (2004), and Ladd (1992, 2008) for the intonational analysis. For referring to pragmatics and politeness the study referred to Brown and Levinson (1984); Verschueren, Östman & Jan-Ola (2009); Ogiermann (2009); Blum- Kulka & Olshtain (1984), Lakoff(1977), Leech (1983, 2014); Ide (1982, 1989, 1993).

Next, the methodology and data elicitation techniques are presented and the method of interpretation of the data is inclusively discussed. Thereafter the chapter concludes with the organisation of the contents of the thesis chapters.

Chapter 2 contains an introduction to Barak Valley Meitei and gives an overview of the Meitei language and Barak Valley Meitei. The chapter also gives an account of the phonology of the language. Thereafter, the people and their social culture, the history of the migration and settlement of the people outside their native state is comprehensively discussed.

Chapter 3 contains reviews of studies on intonation, politeness studies and works on Meitei language that have been referred to in the course of the study.

Chapter 4 presents the analysis of the interrogative sentences in Barak Valley Meitei. The chapter presents an introduction to the background theories and presents the different kinds of interrogative sentences in Meitei – the Wh question, Yes/No, question and the Tag question. A brief section on the intonation of interrogatives in Meitei is presented. After which, the chapter takes us through the different types of interrogative sentences in Barak Valley Meitei in the order of Wh-questions, Yes/ No questions and Tag questions supported by evidence in the form of praat pictures and pitch tracks of the sentences that show us the intonation patterns of these sentence types. At the end of the chapter, pitch tracks of a question and a response statement is given for comparison.

Chapter 5 brings us to the pragmatics of politeness. The chapter presents us with the analysis of the pragmatics of politeness in Barak Valley

Meitei. With an introduction to the theories of pragmatics and politeness, the chapter lays out a general strategy of politeness such as honorifics, syntactic downgraders, indirectness, kinship terms, endearment terms and self-effacing diminutives. These are then illustrated through the responses elicited from the DCT study as it occurs in Barak Valley Meitei. The politeness forms and strategies are presented with each sentence and the corresponding pitch track that helps correlate the linguistic forms of politeness phenomena with the prosodic phenomena.

6.2. Findings of the study:

In Chapter 4, we find the results of the analysis of the different types of interrogative sentences in Barak Valley Meitei. The analysis is interpreted by the co-relation of the boundary tones and pitch accents in the sentences. We find the intonation patterns of the different types of the interrogative sentences in BVM. The primary finding is that the initial boundary tones are commonly %L or %LH and the end boundary is invariably L% throughout all examples, from question

Initial boundary tones: %L, %H and %LH

Final boundary tones: L%

Pitch accents: H*L , L*H , HL*H and LH*L

Based on these the Wh questions have the following intonation pattern

$$\%L(H) \mid H(*) L(*) H \mid H*L \mid L\%$$

The initial boundary can be %L or %LH and the intermediate phrases can be

either H*LH or H*LH. The pre-boundary phrase is always characterised by a H*L. This penultimate L preceding the boundary is the one that gives the Wh-question type the prolonged low boundary. Due to this, the Wh-final boundary also acquires a breathiness.

Yes/ No questions are characterised by this pattern,

$$\%LH | H*LH | HL*H (*) | L\%$$

The initial boundary is %LH and the intermediate phrase is H*LH. The pre-boundary phrase displays a HL*H , the H preceding the L% boundary plays a key role in creating a clear sharp fall devoid of lengthening or breathiness. Alternate questions which are also a kind of Yes/No question according to this study, displays the following pattern,

$$\%L | H*LH | LH*L | LH | L\%$$

Initial boundary %L , intermediate phrases, H*LH and an less common LH*L followed by an LH , the H of which preceding the end %L boundary conforms to the pattern of Yes/No questions having a clear, sharp , non- breathy fall.

Tag questions are similar to Wh-questions to the pre final H*L that tag questions display, they seem to have a similar pattern to the Wh-questions. However the breathiness accompanied seems to be less obvious than the Wh-questions. Accordingly, tag questions display the following intonation pattern.

$$\%L | HL*H | HL | L\%$$

At the end of the different types of the question intonation patterns, the intonation pattern of statements in response to a Wh-Question is presented to

differentiate between the above category and itself. The statements display the following pattern,

$$\%LH |HL^*H| HL^*H| HLH^*| L\%$$

The initial boundary is %LH, the intermediate phrases are H*LH and the penultimate H has a pitch accent H* marked on it which makes the boundary fall abruptly sharp with negligible breathiness. The point of distinction between the statements and wh-question is the lengthening of the sentence that comes to a gradual end. The end of the statement is rather abrupt like a clear stop indication the finality of the utterance.

Thus we can postulate the intonation of the interrogative sentences in Barak Valley Meitei occur as

- (i) **Wh- Questions** %L(H) | H(*) L(*) H| H*L |L% (Breathy, Lengthened)
- (ii) **Yes No Questions** %LH| H*LH| HL^*H (*) | L% (Short fall)
- (iii) **Tag Questions** %L| HL^*H |HL| L% (Lengthened, Slight breathiness)
- (iv) **Statements** %LH |HL^*H| HL^*H| HLH^*| L% (Short stopping fall, slight breathiness).

Chapter 5 brings to light the various politeness devices and mechanisms used by the speakers to make polite requests. The primary strategy of the speaker is to make situational explanations to the hearer before arriving at the main act of making the request. In the course of this some of the most

commonly used strategies involve the use of diminutives and honorifics. The pitch accents tend to get marked on these morphemes. Apart from this, the matter of the request tends to attract the pitch accent depicting the prominence in the meaning of the sentence. Most of the requests culminate in the form of Yes/No questions downgraded by polite markers such as honorifics, diminutives, endearments and similar mechanisms.

In this we are able to observe the same pattern of Yes/No questions as they were observed in Chapter 4 displaying the HLH|L% boundary despite other suffixes which often got prolonged due to the speaker laying emphasis on certain syllables for exuding the required respectful utterance. Initial %L and %LH patterns are observed on sentences which start with situational explanations before the request culminates towards the end of the sentence. In instances, where the request is generally a Yes/No question it ends on the similar HL% boundary peculiar to Yes/No question intonation. When the request is not a Yes/No question but rather implicative questions, the edge tones are still observed to be L%. The only exceptions occur in instances where the informant is a female in sentences 5.3, 5.10 and 5.14. The context of these sentences are assertion, endearment and agency of the action which could be responsible for the H% boundary tone as it denotes a function other than question marking. A %H boundary tone is observed in those sentences which begin with a strong emphasis on the subject, especially when the speaker is referring to himself or herself.

Thus, for the correlation of pragmatics of politeness with intonational features we can postulate that,

- (i) %L or %LH initial tones are seen on sentences that begin with situational explanations and culminate to a Yes/No question at the end.
- (ii) %H initial tones are seen on sentences which begins with the speaker emphasising on himself or another person.
- (iii) Pitch accents are marked on the politeness markers –honorifics, diminutives, emphatics and
- (iv) Final boundaries are seen to be L%
- (v) Final boundaries are H% in cases where the speaker is female and the tones are marked on assertion, endearment and agency of action.

6.3. Desiderata:

This study is one the first of its kind to account for this language looking at the intonation and politeness phenomena strategies. The scope of the study was well justified in its cause however, there are many things that came up in the due course of the experiments and its findings which are found to occur across several places in the data which are not possible to explore in its entirety in this study but opens up the scope for further research to verify the nature of the pitch tracks and the peculiarities observed in it.

One such is the observation is the ‘hammock’ shape on the pitch contours of several sentences. It seems to commonly occur at just the beginning of a phrase or a phrasal boundary and does not show up across a considerable stretch on the contour. This small but sudden dip in the contour could be accountable for the sing-song quality of this language. It has been observed to occur adjacent to the phrase boundaries where there is a transition of an H% to an H tone. There is not sufficient evidence to verify this but as it has been

found across many instance, this can become a topic to be explored and understood in depth in later research.

In Chapter 5, the results of the requests have brought to light some of the social factors such as the status of women and men in the society and how this can be reflected in their speech. Although this is not the focus of the study, this has a major impact on the results of the study and this can be further explored in the future.

Appendix I

Informants Profile

Sl.No	Name	Age	Gender	Languages known
1.	Y.K.B Singh	59	Male	Meitei, Hindi, Bengali, Assamese, Khasi, English.
2.	Ch. Ibopishak Singh	52	Male	Meitei, English, Hindi, Bengali, Assamese.
3.	O. Biramani Singh	58	Male	Meitei, Hindi, English, Bengali, Assamese, Garo.
4.	S. Dilip	52	Male	Meitei, Bengali, Hindi, English.
5.	Hiramani	57	Male	Meitei, English, Bangla, Hindi.
6.	Y.Pushpabati	57	Female	Meitei, Bengali, Hindi.
7.	Nandita	29	Female	Meitei, English, Hmar, Bengali, Hindi
8.	Romita	27	Female	Meitei, English, Hmar, Bengali, Hindi
9.	R.K. Jamuna	48	Female	Meitei, Bengali, Hindi.
10.	Ch. Meena Kumari	47	Female	Meitei, Hindi, Bengali.

Appendix II

Data Elicitation Stimulus

These pictures were used as stimuli to generate responses for eliciting the interrogative sentences for Chapter 4. Some of them are animated GIFS for which multiple screenshots are provided and a single image for the static ones.

1.1. Picture of dogs in the forest.



1.2. A boy appears amongst the dogs.



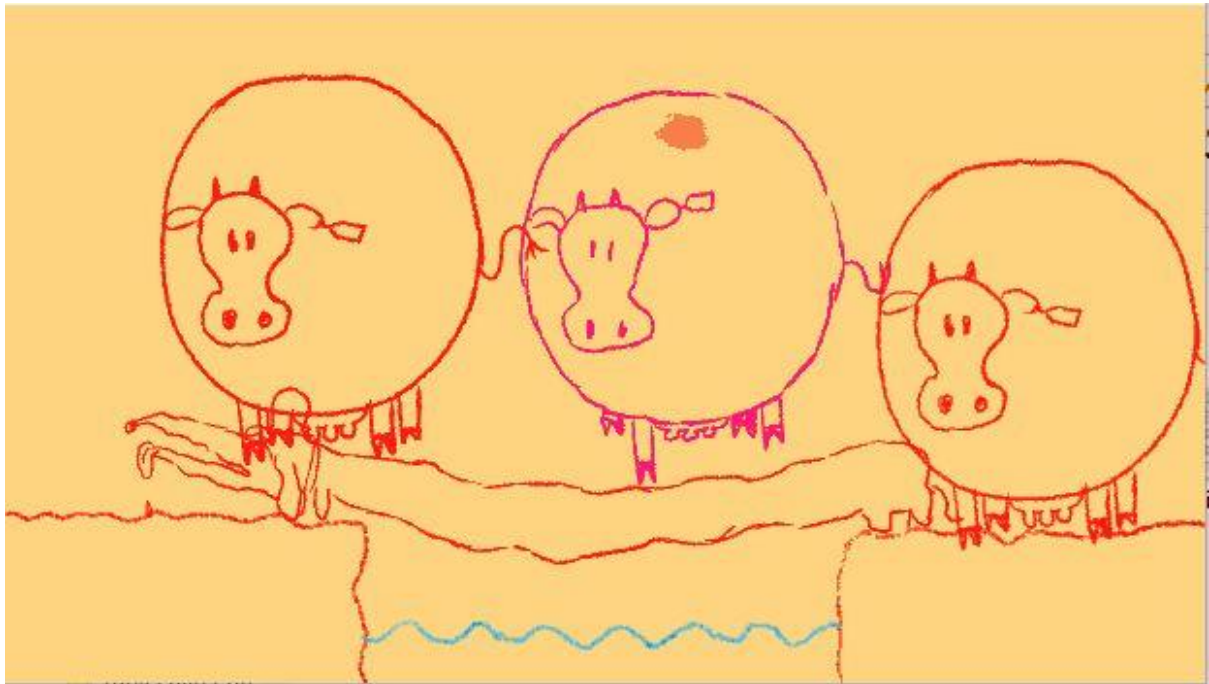
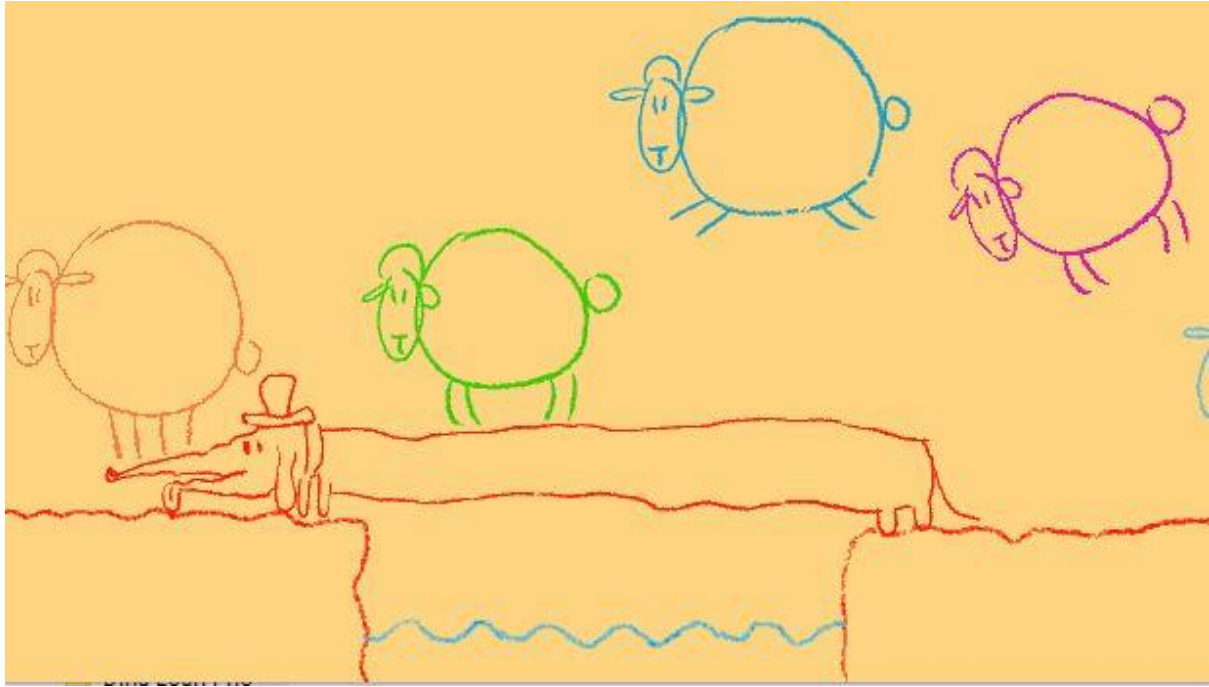
2. A man riding a bicycle through a forest with a radio behind him.



3. A man fishing alone at night sitting on the deck at the edge of the water.



4. Sheep and cows crossing over a bridge, where the bridge is a dog.



5. John is showing /giving a book to Mary.

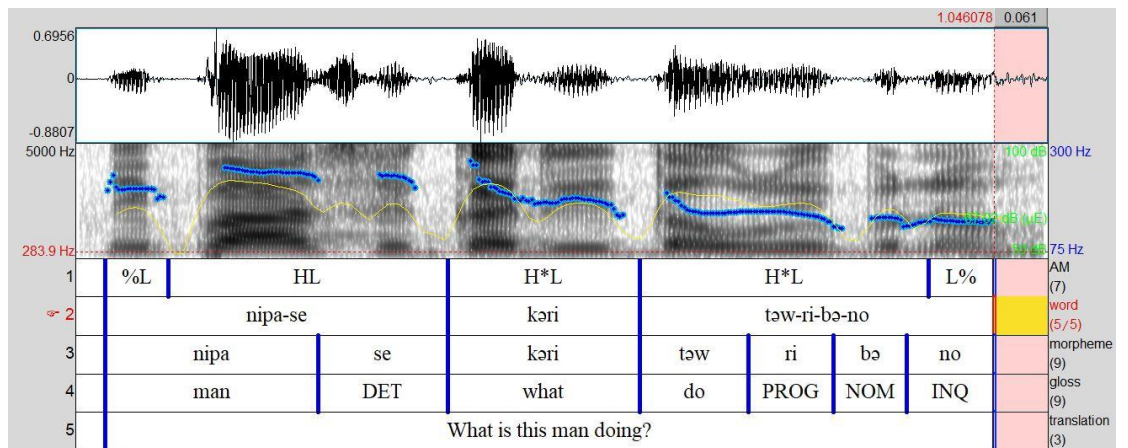
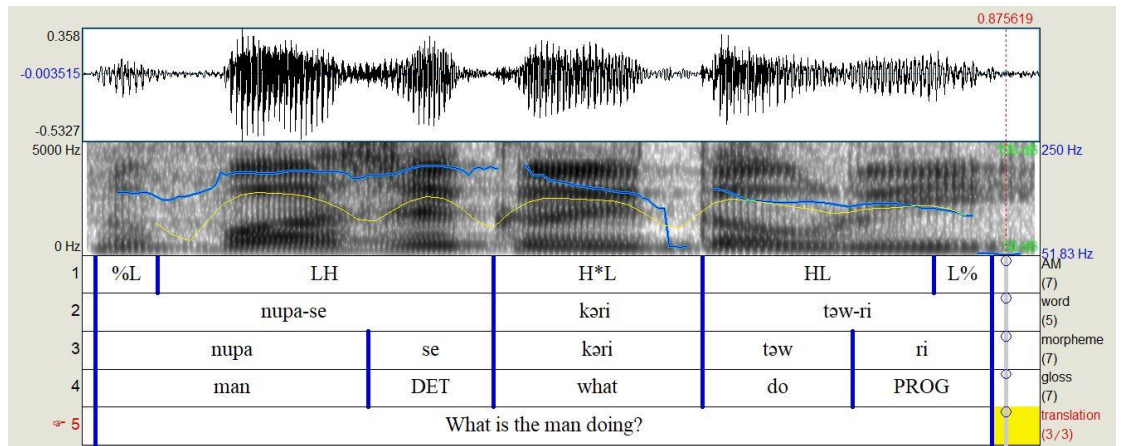
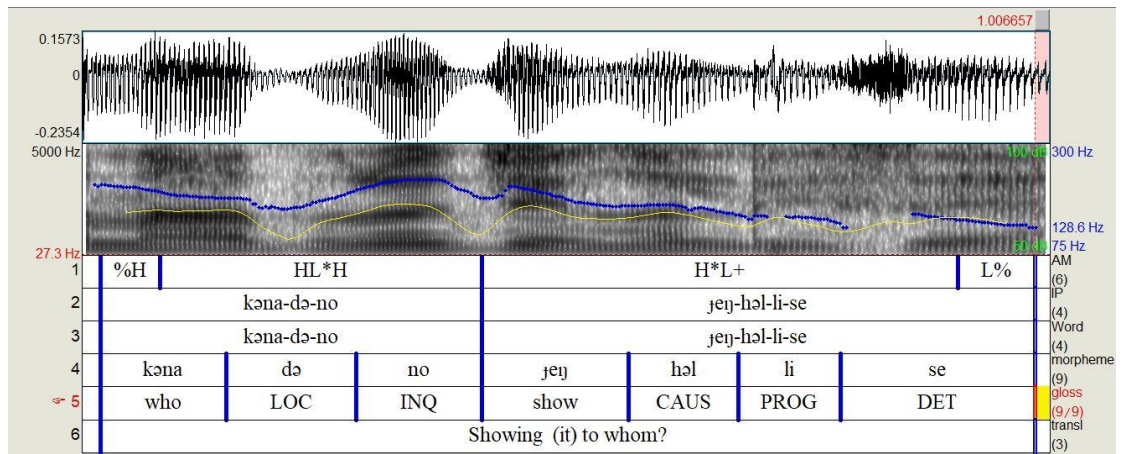


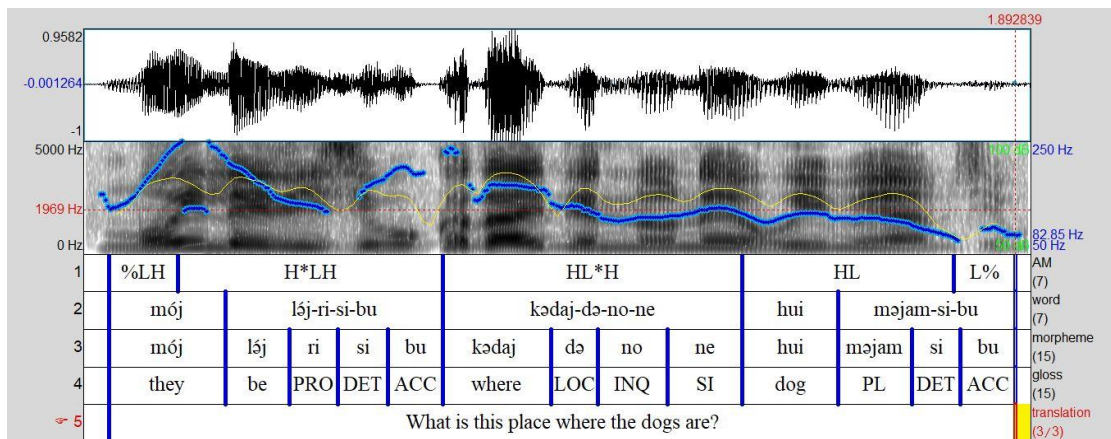
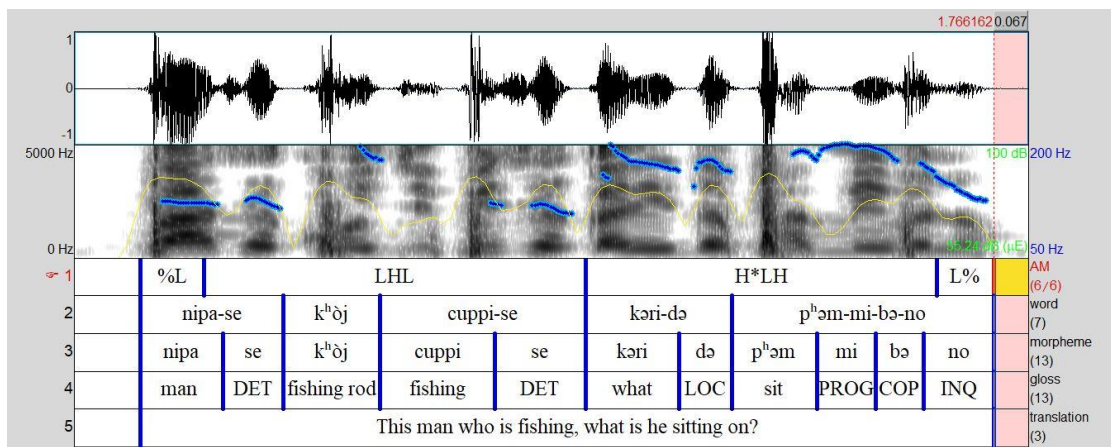
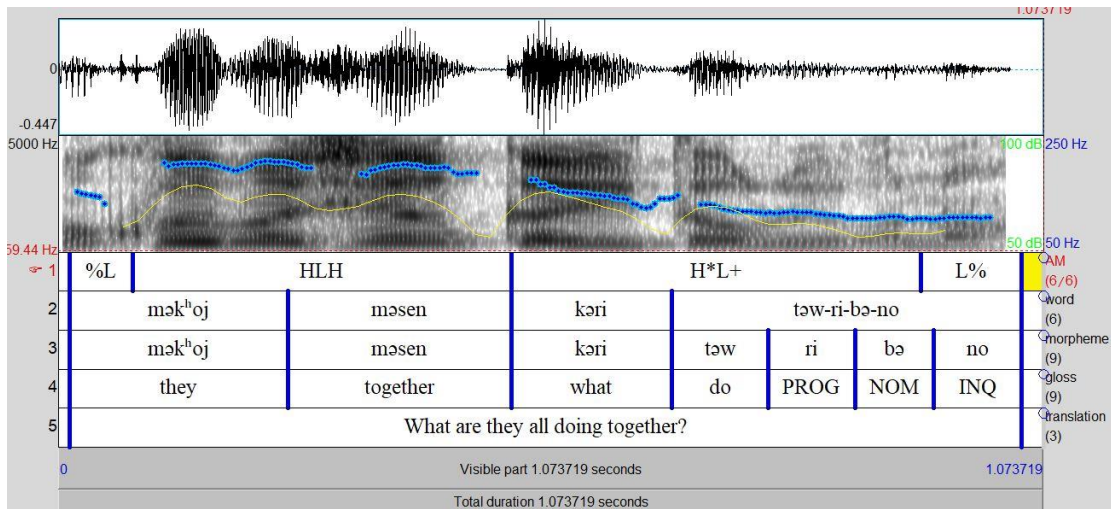
6. People waiting at the bus stop.



Appendix III

Interrogative Sentences





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