Table 5. Common interjections

Interjection	Gloss
əs	'Oh hell!'
ah, ho, um	'Well...'
ihé	'How unfortunate/awful!'
ihé	'By the way.../It's just that...'
iš	'Wonder of wonders!'
i? i?	'My, my!' (expresses disapproval)
e?	'Of course, sure it will!'
həyma	'How can that be!' (expresses surprise or sadness)
héra	'That's dumb of you!'
ho	'Hey!'
se	'Hark!'

3.5 Enclitics

Verbs, nouns and noun phrases, subordinate sentences, and root sentences can be affixed by enclitics. These enclitics, described in detail in section 7.3, signal meanings such as interrogative mood, inclusiveness/exclusiveness, the attitude of the speaker towards a proposition or place the constituent in a larger discourse context (such as marking a constituent as shared information). Interrogative sentences are signalled by an interrogative enclitic that occurs with a noun, noun phrase or nominalized clause. Other sentence types, such as the imperative and declarative, are formed through suffixation of inflectional markers to verbs. Details are given in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4
Grammatical relations and information structure

In this chapter I discuss how grammatical relations are indicated in Meithei and what the role of morphological case marking is in indicating these relations. As in many related languages, such as Lahu (Matisoff 1973b) and Lisu (Hope 1974, Li and Thompson 1976), no reference is made in Meithei syntax to the relations Subject, Agent and Object.[28] Instead, Meithei is what Dixon (1991, 1994) refers to as a "pure" language, where noun phrases are marked according to their semantic role in a given instance of use of a verb. In terms of Foley and Van Valin's (1984: 124) classification of inter-clausal syntax, Meithei is not a "reference-dominated" language where distinctions between grammatical relations and semantic roles are significant, but a "role-dominated" language, where such distinctions are not.

I provide evidence that notions such as subject and object are not necessary in the description of Meithei clause structure. I show how verbs in Meithei subcategorize for argument(s) with a specific semantic role indicated through morphological marking. I also show how surface morphological marking is often obscured through the overlay of a system of pragmatic marking which deletes or replaces semantic role markers with pragmatic markers, and/or manipulates word order for pragmatic effect. I will then describe how morphological case markers indicate the case of peripheral noun phrases.

4.1 Phrase structure

The following section will demonstrate that there is no asymmetry between the arguments of a predicate in Meithei. Unlike English where the subject is external to the verb phrase (immediately dominated by S) and the direct object is internal to the verb phrase (immediately dominated by V), in Meithei all the arguments of a verb are projections of S. In this section evidence will be given to support this "flat" structure analysis of Meithei.

4.1.1 The verb phrase as a constituent

In languages that exhibit an asymmetry between the external argument and the arguments in a verb phrase, there are syntactic rules or co-referential constituents that refer specifically to the verb phrase constituent. For example, in

English *did too* refers to the entire verb phrase *thou he would run* in the following sentence:

(1) a. *John thought he would run and Bill did too.*

Such verb phrase anaphors do not exist in Meithei. In sentences equivalent to (1a), the verb must be repeated in the second clause.

(1) b. *Johnnə nánthoknábə hótnərəmmí*
John -nə nán -thok -nábə hótnə -ləm -í
John -CNTR escape -OUT -IN ORDER TO try -EVD -NHYP
John to escape tried

əməsuŋ Bilsu hótnərəmmí
ə -mə -suŋ Bil -su hótnə -ləm -í
ATT -one -ALSO Bill -ALSO try -EVD -NHYP
and also Bill too tried
'John tried to escape and Bill did too.'

As noted in Bhat (1991: 150), another piece of evidence against a verb phrase constituent in Meithei is that there is no adjacency requirement between the theme noun phrase and verb. For example, the theme is adjacent to the verb in (1c), but the goal is adjacent to the verb in (1d).

(1) c. *Ramnə Tombədə layriktu pírəmmí*
Ram -nə Tombə -tə layrik -tu pí -ləm -í
Ram -CNTR Tombə -LOC book -DDET give -EVD -NHYP
Ram to Tomba that book gave
'Ram gave that book to Tomba.'

d. *Ramnə layriktu Tombədə pírəmmí*
Ram -nə layrik -tu Tombə -tə pí -ləm -í
Ram -CNTR book -DDET Tombə -LOC give -EVD -NHYP
Ram that book to Tomba gave
'Ram gave that book to Tomba.'

4.1.2 Subjects in complements

A characteristic of infinitival clauses is that they are subjectless. Thus in English the subject of the complement, *John*, is omitted in *John wants to go*. On the other hand, a direct object cannot be omitted from a complement: so, in

John want to catch the lizard, the lizard can not be omitted. In Meithei, as in English, the argument of an infinitive complement may also be omitted as seen in (2a).

(2) a. *John čátpə pammí*
John čát -pə pam -í
John go -NOM like -NHYP
John to go likes
'John$_i$ wants e$_i$ to go.'

Additionally, and unlike English, patient arguments of complement clauses may be deleted. In (2b) the recipient of 'beating' is omitted; in (2c) the recipient of 'teach' is omitted; and in (2d) the recipient of 'shoot' is omitted.

(2) b. *phúroy háydúnə thádokʔe*
phú -loy háy -túnə thá -thok -lə -e
beat -NPOT say -ING release -OUT -PERF-ASRT
will not beat thus released
'Without giving (him) a beating (someone) let him go.'

c. *nəŋnə liŋgwistiks təmbibədə*
nəŋ -nə liŋgwistiks təm -pi -pə -tə
you -CNTR linguistics teach -RECIP -NOM -LOC
you linguistics to teach

əy núŋáy
əy núŋay -í
I happy -NHYP
I am happy
'When you teach (me) linguistics I am happy.'

d. *Tombənə Raju noŋməynə*
Tombə -nə Raju noŋməy -nə
Tomba -CNTR Raju gun -INST
Tomba Raju with gun

kapčáy háyrəmmí
kap -čə -í háy -ləm -í
shoot -SELF -NHYP say -EVD -NHYP
shoot said
'Tomba said that Raju shot himself with a gun.'

In fact, arguments may be freely deleted in Meithei: see (2e) and (2f) where it is shown that a sentence may consist of just a verb.

(2) e. *hátkhre*
hát -khi -lə -e
kill -STILL -PERF -ASRT
'He killed him.'

f. *čáre*
čá -lə -e
eat -PERF -ASRT
'I've eaten.'

Thus the actor argument of a subordinate clause, even when not coreferential with the argument of the main clause, can be omitted as in (2g-h).

(2) g. *təwribəge* *háybədu* *əy khəŋŋí*
təw -li -pə -ke háy -pədu əy khəŋŋ -í
do -PROG -NOM -OPT say -DDET I know -NHYP
wanting to do that I know
'I know what you are doing right now.'

h. *əydi* *čátkhibənə* *pámmí*
əy -ti čát -khi -pə -nə pám -í
I -DLMT go -STILL -NOM -INST want -NHYP
I being already gone want
'I want you to be gone already.'

From examples (2a-h) we can conclude that arguments have equal status with regard to whether or not they can be omitted in complement structures.

4.1.3 Subjects in nominalization

In nominal constructions, the external argument takes genitive marking in English.

(3) a. *It is good that John amused the children with his stories.*
b. *John's amusing the children with his stories is good.*

In Meithei a nominalized clause is formed through morphological marking on the verb which heads the clause to be nominalized; marking on the arguments of the verb is the same whether the arguments occur in a sentence or a nominalized construction.

(3) c. *əŋáŋsinmə* *layrik* *təmniŋdribəsi*
əŋáŋ *siŋ* -nə layrik təm -niŋ -tə -li -pəsi
child -GPL -CNTR book learn -WISH -NEG -PROG -DCOMP
the children book not wanting to study
'the children's not wanting to study'

Bhat (1991: 145) also points to nominal clauses formed through the derivational prefixes *khu-* (e.g. *khutká* 'manner of climbing' from *ká* 'climb' and *mə-* (e.g. *məča* 'small one' from *ča-* 'small' and *məčát* 'method of walking' from *čát* 'walk'.[29]

(3) d. *mánə* *čiŋdə* *káy*
má -nə čiŋ -tə ká -í
he -CNTR hill -LOC climb -NHYP
he to hill climbs
'He climbed the hill.'

e. *mági* *čiŋgi* *khuka* *phə̃jəde*
má -ki čiŋ -ki khu -ka phə̃jə -tə -e
he -GEN hill -GEN NOM -climb good -NEG-ASRT
his of hill climbing not good
'His way of climbing the hill is not good.'

In these constructions as well, one argument is not singled out over another for special treatment: both the agent and goal arguments are in the genitive case.

4.1.4 Pronominal and anaphoric coreference

Consider the English sentences in (4a-c). These sentences show that a certain structural relationship has to hold between *himself* and its antecedent. First, the antecedent must precede the pronoun: (4a) is grammatical whereas (4b) is not. Second, the pronoun must be "within reach" of the antecedent it is referentially linked to. Thus (4a), where the pronoun is in the same clause as its antecedent, is grammatical but (4c), where the pronoun is in the complement, is ungrammatical.

(4) a. *John knows himself.*
b. **Himself John knows.*
c. **John$_i$ thinks that Mary knows himself$_i$.*

These facts are expressed in the theory of Government and Binding (Chomsky 1982: 188) by binding principles which state, in part, that an *anaphor* must be *bound* in its *governing category*. The term 'anaphor' refers to noun phrases like *himself* or *each other*. We can assume for the point being made here that the governing category of the pronominal is the minimal clause containing it.[30]. In a structure as shown in Figure 1, the subject position is said to "bind" the object position because the antecedent and the pronominal are co-indexed (referentially linked to each other) and because the subject position "c-commands" the object position. C-command is defined by van Riemsdijk and Williams (1986: 142) as follows:

C-command: A c-commands B if and only if the first branching node dominating A also dominates B and A does not itself dominate B.

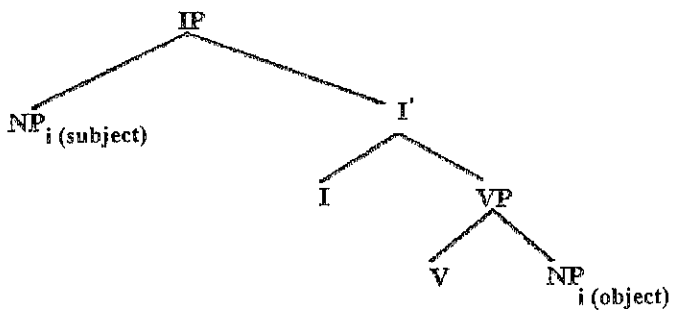

Figure 1. $NP_{(subject)}$ binds the $NP_{(object)}$

Significantly, the binding relationship is not symmetric since the subject position c-commands the object position but the object position does not c-command the subject position. So (4a) is grammatical because the anaphor is bound in its governing category; (4b) is ungrammatical because the anaphor binds the antecedent not vice versa and (4c) is ungrammatical because there is no antecedent in the governing category of the anaphor to bind it; that is, the intended antecedent is too far away.

Consider also (4d) and (4e): (4d) shows that a pronominal noun phrase, in this case the pronoun *him*, cannot be coreferential with a noun phrase in the same clause. In Binding theory this is expressed as the principle that a pronominal must be free in its governing category. Thus (4e) is grammatical whereas (4d) is not since in (4e) the pronominal is not co-indexed with a noun phrase in the same clause.

(4) d. *$John_i$ ws him_i.
e. $John_i$ *thinks that Mary knows* him_i.

If the Binding theory is valid for languages that exhibit an asymmetry between subject and object position, it follows that in languages that do not exhibit this asymmetry, anaphors and pronominals will not necessarily have the same structural relationship with their antecedents. Using examples (4f-i), I will show that this is the case in Meithei.

In Meithei a pronominal may be co-indexed to a noun phrase in the same clause. In (4f), just as in English, the pronoun *mábu* 'him' must be free: it can either refer to *Tomba* or have an arbitrary reference but it cannot refer to *Raju*.

(4) f.

Rajunə		*mábu*		*noŋməynə*		*kapkhí*		
Raju	-nə	má	-pu	noŋməy	-nə	kap	-khi	-í
Raju	-CNTR	he	-PAT	gun	-INST	shoot	-STILL	-NHYP
Raju		him		with gun		already shoot		

háynə		*Tombənə*		*háykhí*		
háy	-nə	Tombə	-nə	háy	-khi	-í
say	-INST	Tomba	-CNTR	say	-STILL	-NHYP
that		Tomba		had said		

'$Tomba_i$ had said that $Raju_j$ had shot $him_{i/k}$ with a gun.'

This restriction, however, can be overcome: if the verbal affix *-čə* 'V for the sake of self' occurs with the verb of the subordinate clause, then *Raju* can serve as the antecedent for the pronoun (see (4g)).

(4) g.

Tombənə		*Rajunə*		*mábu*	
Tombə	-nə	Raju	-nə	má	-pu
Tomba	-CNTR	Raju	-CNTR	he	-PAT
Tomba		Raju		him	

noŋməynə		*kapčəbə*			*pámmí*	
noŋməy	-nə	kap	-čə	-pə	pám	-í
gun	-INST	shoot	-SELF	-NOM	like	-NHYP
with gun		to shoot self			wanted	

'$Tomba_i$ wanted $Raju_j$ to (self-)shoot him_j with a gun.'

From examples (4a-g), I conclude that in Meithei a pronominal is not necessarily 'free' in its governing category.

The Binding Theory states that anaphors are bound in their governing category. In Meithei there are three types of data where this is not the case: (1) an antecedent can precede or follow the anaphor, (2) there are long distance reflexives, and (3) emphatic reflexives are not bound.

The c-command relationship does not hold between the anaphor and its antecedent in (5b), (6b) and (7b) since the anaphor occurs before the noun phrase and it is the anaphor that binds the noun phrase it is co-indexed with.

(5) a. *Johnnə* *məsábu* *úǰərəmmí*
John -nə mə -sá -pu ú -čə -ləm -í
John -CNTR 3P -body -PAT see -SELF -EVD -NHYP
John himself saw self
'John (self-)saw himself.'

b. *məsábu jonnə úǰərəmmí*
'John saw himself.'

(6) a. *Tombənə* *məthəntá* *phúzáy*
Tombə -nə mə -thən -tá phú -čə -í
Tomba -CNTR 3P -lone -EX beat -SELF -NHYP
Tomba himself beats
'Tomba hit himself.'

b. *məthəntá Tombənə phúzáy*
'Tomba hit himself.'

(7) a. *John* *məsáməkə* *pərikhya* *pas* *təwgəni*
John mə -sá -mək pərikhya pas təw -kə -ni
John 3P -body -ONLY test pass do -POT -COP
John self test pass will be doing

háynə *tházáy*
háy -nə tházə -í
that -INST believe -NHYP
that believes
'John thinks that he is going to pass the exam.'

b. *r 'háknə* *layrik* *kánnə* *páy*
mə -hák -nə layrik kán -nə pa -í
3P -here -CNTR book hard -ADV read -NHYP
he book intense read
'He studied very hard.'

mərám *ədunə* *məsánə*
mə -lám ə -tu -nə mə -sá -nə
NM -path ATT -ddet -INST 3P -body -CNTR
reason then himself

pərikhya *pas* *təwgəni* *háynə* *tházáy*
pərikhya pas təw -kə -ni háy -nə thájə -í
test pass do -POT -COP that -INST believe -NHYP
test pass doing that that believe
'For that reason (he) thinks that (he) himself will pass the exam.'

Note that (5b) and (6b) were elicited in isolation.[31] However, my consultant indicated (7b) would only be possible in extended discourse. To get a true picture of the distribution of anaphors it is necessary to look at their distribution both in discourse as well as in sentence grammar: in the sequence of sentences presented in (7b) the anaphor has its antecedent in the previous sentence, not in the clause in which it occurs.

The Binding theory is also challenged by the presence of long-distance reflexives in Meithei where a reflexive is not bound in its governing category. In (8a) the reflexive *məsámək* 'himself' does not have its antecedent in the minimal clause in which it occurs, i.e. 'that himself won't pass the exam'.

(8) a. *Johnnə* *Tombəgidəmək* *nizárábəsu*
John -nə Tomba -ki -təmək nizə -ləbə -su
John -CNTR Tomba -GEN -PRECISE pray -HAVING -ALSO
John for Tomba even having prayed

məsáməkti *pərikhya* *pas* *təwroy*
mə -sá -mək -ti pərikhya pas təw -loy
3P -body -ONLY -DLMT test pass do -NPOT
self test pass will not
'As John$_i$ (spent all his time) praying for Tomba, he$_i$ won't pass the exam.'

Meithei also exhibits 'emphatic' reflexives which violate the c-command constraint since in these constructions the pronouns are free (8b) or have an antecedent in another clause (8c).

(8) b. *Johnnə* *məsáməknə* *pərikhya* *pas*
John -nə mə -sá -mək -nə pərikhya pas
John -CNTR 3P -body -ONLY -CNTR test pass
John himself test pass

təwhənbiyu *háynə* *nizáy*
təw -hən -pi -u háy -nə nizə -í
do -CAUS -REC -IMP that -INST pray -NHYP
doing that prays
'John prays thus, "Please let me pass the exam".'

c. *Johnnə* *pərikhya* *pas* *təwgəni* *háynə*
John -nə pərikhya pas təw -kə -ni háy -nə
John -CNTR test pass do -GEN -COP that -INST
John test pass will do that

məsáməknə *tházáy*
mə -sá -mək tházə -í
3P -body -each believe -NHYP
himself believes
'John believes that (he) himself will pass the exam.'

Bhat (1991: 147) uses examples of long-distance reflexives (see his example 147: 112a-113) as part of his argument that Meithei does not have an external argument. I am not sure how this supports his thesis since the phenomenon of long-distance reflexives also occurs in languages with subjects (e.g Dutch, German and Russian (Van Riemsdijk and Williams 1986: 283).

To restate the point being made in this section: languages with a clause structure similar to English exhibit restrictions concerning pronominals and anaphors as stated by the Binding theory. Since Meithei does not have the same clause structure as English, the Binding theory does not make the appropriate predictions for Meithei anaphora.

4.1.5 Extraction from subject

Subject position can be distinguished from object position in that the possibility of extracting from subject position is more restricted than from object position. Thus, as illustrated in the following English examples taken from Kiss (1988), where it is possible to question an object from the complement (9a) but not the subject (9b).

(9) a. *Who$_i$ did you say that they called in e$_i$ first?*
b. **Who$_i$ did you say that e$_i$ went in first?*[32]

In Meithei, however, it is possible to question either argument of a subordinate clause. Thus in (9c) the goal is questioned and in (9d) the theme is questioned.

(9) c. *nəŋnə* *puthorəkkəni*
nəŋ -nə pu -thok -lək -kə -ni
you -CNTR bring -OUT -DISTAL -POT -COP
you will bring here

háybədu *kərino*
háy -pədu kəri -no
say -DCOMP what -INQ
said that what is it
'What is it that you will be bringing?'

d. *əsuk* *théŋnə* *lak?ibəsibu*
ə -suk théŋ -nə lak -li -pəsi -pu
ATT -all late -ADV come -PROG -DCOMP -ADVR
all late this coming

kənanone
kəna -no -ne
who -INQ -SI
who is it
'Who is (it) that has come so late?'

4.1.6 Subjects in imperative constructions

Typically imperative constructions require a 2nd person actor. Thus in the English sentence *Wash!*, a second person actor is the understood subject. The person of the patient argument, however, is not restricted. In this way, the subject is given special status with regard to its semantic role and person in imperative constructions.

In Meithei, a verb with imperative inflection may subcategorize for an actor argument; in this case the actor must refer to second person. Thus, the actors in (9e) are possible but the first person actors in (9f) are not.[33]

(9) e. *nəŋ / nəkhoy čák čánu*
nəŋ / nə -khoy čák čá -nu
you 2P -hpl rice eat -PROBH
'You/ you all don't eat rice!'

f. **əykhoy/ *əy/*má/*məkhoy čák čánu*
əy -khoy əy má mə-khoy čák čá -nu
I -hpl I he/she 3P-hpl rice eat -PROBH
we I he/she/ they rice eat
'Don't eat rice'

Unlike English, however, the semantic role of the understood or omitted argument is not restricted to actors. For example in (9g-i) the argument is a patient.

(9) g. *pátlu*
pát -u
ulcer -IMP
'May you suffer from scabies!'

h. *khəllo*
khəl -o
wise -SOLCT
'I wish you to be wise!'

i. *núŋŋayyu*
núŋ -ŋay -u
in -like -IMP
'Be happy!'

Meithei has two other imperative like constructions: supplicatives, with which a speaker pleads a course of action where the speaker will be participant (best translated as 'Let us V'); and permissives, where the speaker grants permission for some 2nd or 3rd person to carry out some action. First, there is no restriction on the person of the actor argument in such constructions. For example, although supplicatives usually have 1st person plural actors, a 1st person singular actor is also possible when the construction occurs as an embedded indirect question, with the meaning 'I was wondering whether I should V'.

(9) j. *əmə čásirə əni čásirə*
ə -mə čá -si -lə ə -ni čá -si -lə
ATT -one eat -SUP -INT ATT -two eat -SUP -INT
one shall I eat two shall I eat

əhum čásirə təretmək
ə -hum čá -si -lə təret -mək
ATT -three eat -SUP -INT seven -ONLY
three shall I eat each seven

loynə čátho?əge
loy -nə čá -thok -lə -ke
all -ADV eat -OUT -PRO -OPT
all want to eat up
'(Saying to himself), 'Shall I eat one, shall I eat two, shall I eat three,' (he) ate all seven up.'

Also, as seen in example (9k), an unspecified second person argument can be urged to allow some action, which is to be performed in conjunction with the speaker, to occur. (9l) is an example of the permissive construction. In this instance, the argument that occurs with the verb marked by the permissive is a theme; however, the required argument of a permissive is not restricted to a single role. It may be a theme as in (9l) or a patient as in (9m).

(9) k. *əygə čətsi*
əy -kə čət -si
I -ASS go -SUP
I too let's go
'Let's go together!'

l. *əynə* *má* *phə́msənu* *háy*

əy	-nə	má	phém	-sənu	háy	-í
I	-CNTR	he	place	-PERMIT	said	-NHYP
I		him	let sit		said	

'I told him to sit down.'

m. *má núŋŋaysənu*

má	núŋ	-ŋay	-sənu
he	in	-like	-PERMIT

he let be happy
'May he be happy!

4.1.7 Lack of passive

There are certain tests for subjecthood which cannot be carried out in Meithei. In languages like English, the passive construction singles out the subject for special treatment: the subject of an active sentence appears as an oblique argument in the passive counterpart. Since there is no passive construction in Meithei, this type of singling out of an argument is not available.[34] In fact, the lack of passive in Meithei can be seen as a consequence of the fact that the semantic roles that a verb subcategorizes for are fixed and cannot be manipulated by the syntax. This is the same conclusion that Kiss (1988: 34) arrives at to explain the lack of passive in Hungarian, which she says, "is a natural consequence of the fact that the target of nominative assignment is already fixed -- on a thematic basis -- in the lexicon."

4.1.8 Lack of agreement

Many languages might exhibit person, number or gender agreement between the verb and the subject, giving the subject noun phrase, as opposed to other arguments of the verb, a special status. This test for subjecthood is also not possible in Meithei since there are no person, number or gender agreement phenomena between the verb and its arguments.

4.1.9 Conclusion

Thus arguments of a verb have equal status in Meithei. Evidence for this claim is that: (1) there are no rules which specifically refer to the verb phrase constituent, (2) there is no adjacency requirement between the verb and its arguments, (3) there is no restriction on omission of arguments in complements, (4) arguments in nominalization are not singled out for special case marking, (5) the semantic role of the understood argument of imperative and imperative-like sentences is not restricted, and (6) the distribution of pronominals and anaphors shows that Meithei is structurally different from languages where principles stated in Binding theory are applicable.

4.2 Case marking

Clauses in Meithei are constructed of a verb and its arguments. I will first describe case marking on the core arguments that a verb subcategorizes for. Case marking on peripheral arguments is discussed in section 4.4.

As shown in Table 1, a verb may subcategorize for an agent, actor, experiencer/goal, patient, or theme argument. Table 1 also lists the enclitics used to indicate a semantic role.

Table 1. Argument types

agent	instigator of action	*-nə*
actor	doer of action	*-∅*
experiencer/goal	entity at/towards which action is expressed	*-tə*
path	location through which an entity moves	*-∅*
patient	most affected by action	*-pu*
theme	affected/transferred by state or action	*-∅*

Predicates fall into classes where members of a class exhibit similar subcategorization frames requiring arguments with the same semantic roles. This analysis follows the general strategy proposed in Foley and Van Valin (1984)[35] for describing clause structure.

Predicates may be distinguished on the basis of whether they are states or non-states. State predicates are either equational *(be X)* or locational *(be on X, be at X)*, and subcategorize for a theme (10a,b) or an experiencer/goal (10c) or path (10d).[36]

(10) a. *əŋáŋsi* *ŋəwre*
əŋáŋ -sí ŋəw -lə -e
child -PDET white -PERF -ASRT
child became white
'The child became fair.'

b. *čésidi* *ŋəppí*
čé -si -ti ŋəppi -í
paper -PDET -DLMT rough -NYHP
this paper is rough
'This paper is rough.'

c. *məŋóndə* *əsəwbə* *yamnə* *ləy*
mə -ŋón -tə ə -saw -pə yam -nə ləy -í
3P -to -LOC ATT -anger -NOM lot -ADV be -NHYP
to him anger a lot there is
'He is very angry.'

d. *má kabə* *čiŋdoldu* *yamnə* *waŋŋí*
má ka -pə čiŋ -thon -tu yam -nə waŋ -í
he climb -NOM hill -name -DDET much -ADV tall -NHYP
he one climbed that hill very is tall
'The hills over which he climbed are very tall.'

A non-state verb may describe an activity or the instigation of an activity. Activities may refer to unintentional actions (*laugh, cry*); a motional activity (*dance, fall*); or an activity that is under the control of an actor (*kiss, hit, give*). Verbs that signal an unintentional (11a) or motional activity (11b) subcategorize for a single theme argument.

(11) a. *má* *kəppí*
má kəp -í
he cry -NHYP
'He cried.'

b. *má kəythéldəgi* *həlləmmí*
má kəy -thél -təgi həl -ləm -í
he grain -display -ABL return -EVD -NHYP
he from the market returned
'He returned from the market.'

Non-state verbs where an actor is in control of the action may subcategorize for two or three arguments. Two argument predicates subcategorize for an actor and theme argument as in (12a), an actor and patient as in (12b), or an actor and experiencer/goal as in (12c).

(12) a. *əy* *part* *ləyrukhini*
əy part ləy -lu -khi -ni
I parts buy -ADIR -STILL -COP
I spare parts will buy there
'I will buy spare parts there.'

b. *əŋáŋsi* *mábu* *íllí*
əŋáŋ -si má -pu ín -í
child -PDET he -PAT push -NHYP
this child him pushed
'This child pushed him.'

c. *əy* *Ramdə* *nuŋsí*
əy Ram -tə nuŋsi -í
I Ram -LOC love -NHYP
I to Ram love
'Ram is loved by me.'

In (12a), the semantic role of the arguments, which are not morphologically marked, is clarified through the animacy hierarchy given in (13). When a sentence has a human and non-human argument, then the human argument is the actor; when the arguments are animate non-human and inanimate, then the animate one is the actor. Bossong (1985, 1991) has pointed out that the closely related language Mikir also marks patients only when they are human or animate. He notes that this pattern of marking, which he calls *Differential Object Marking*, is present in many of the world's languages.

(13) humans > animate non-human > inanimate

Non-state, volitional-activity, three-argument predicates subcategorize for an actor, patient and experiencer/goal (for example *show X to Y* (14a,b)) or actor, theme and experiencer/goal (for example *give X to Y* (14c)).[37]

(14) a. *əynə* *Maridə* *nupa*
əy -nə Mari -tə nu -pa
I -CNTR Mary -LOC person -male
I to Mary boy

məčádubu *útpí*
mə -čá -tu -pu út -pi -í
3P -small -DDET -PAT see -RECIP -NHYP
to the small one show
'The little boy was shown to Mary by me.'

b. *mánə* *Tombəbu* *Chawbədə* *takʔí*
má -nə Tombə -pu Chawbə -tə tak -í
he -CNTR Tomba -PAT Chaoba -LOC point -NHYP
he Tomba to Chaoba point
'Tomba was pointed out to Chaoba by him.'

c. *Tombədi* *layriktu* *Tombidə* *pí*
Tomba -ti layrik -tu Tombi -tə pí -í
Tomba -DLMT book -DDET Tombi -LOC give -NHYP
Tomba that book to Tombi gave
'Tomba gave that book to Tombi.'

A final class of non-state verbs are causatives, which are composed of the derivational marker *-hən* 'causative' and a verb root: for example, *čáhənbə* 'cause to eat' where *čá-* means 'eat'. Causative verbs have a characteristic argument structure since they are the only ones which subcategorize for an agent and a patient.[38]

(15) a. *məhákna* *əŋáŋbu* *káphəllí*
mə -hák -nə əŋáŋ -pu káp -hən -lə -í
3P -here -AGN you -PAT cry -CAUS -PERF -NHYP
he child cause to cry
'He made the child cry.'

b. *əynə* *Meribu* *nókhəlləmmí*
əy -nə Meri -pu nók -hən -ləm -í
I -AGN Mary -PAT laugh -CAUS -EVD -NHYP
I Mary cause to laugh
'I caused Mary to laugh.'

c. *Tombənə* *məhákpu* *čáthənkhre*
Tombə -nə mə -hák -pu čát -hən -khi -lə -e
Tomba -AGN 3P -here -PAT go -CAUS -STILL -PERF -ASRT
Tomba to him already caused to go
'Tomba has already caused him to go.'

Three-argument causative verbs subcategorize for an agent, a patient and a theme (16a-c) or an agent, a patient and an experiencer/goal (16d). With causative verbs, patients are most affected and themes are secondarily affected by the action.

(16) a. *əynə* *Tombəbu* *ləybáktə* *marbəldu*
əy -nə Tombə -pu ləy -pák -tə marbəl-tu
I -AGN Tomba -PAT land -broad -LOC marble-DDET
I Tomba on the ground the marble

thádəthəlləmmí
thá -thət -hən -ləm -í
release -PARTAF -CAUS -EVD -NHYP
caused to drop
'I made Tomba drop the marble on the ground.'

b. *əynə* *Tombəbu* *səgol* *tóŋhəlləmmí*
əy -nə Tombə -pu səgol tóŋ -hən -ləm -í
I -AGN Tomba -PAT horse ride -CAUS -EVD-NHYP
I Tomba horse cause to ride
'I made Tomba ride the horse.'

c. *məpanə* *daktərbu* *mági*
mə -pa -nə daktər -pu má -ki
3P -male -AGN doctor -PAT he -GEN
his father to doctor his

məčá *nupidu*
mə -čá nu -pi -tu
3P -small person -FEM -DDET
small that female

layyeŋhəllí
lay -yeŋ -hən -í
disease -look -CAUS -NHYP
treated
'His father makes the doctor treat his daughter.'

If an agent intends to affect an entity by causing that entity to perform some action, then that entity is a patient. Thus in *John caused Harry to kiss Sally*, Harry is a patient. The agent, however, might be more concerned about the effect that the instigated action will have on the entity which will be affected by the action. In this case, *Harry* is only a vehicle through which *Sally* is acted upon, i.e. *Harry* is an experiencer/goal and *Sally* is a patient.[39] Compare the morphological marking in (16c) with that in (16d).

(16) d. *məpanə* *Tombədə* *mágí*
mə -pa -nə Tombə -tə má -ki
3P -male -AGN Tomba -LOC he -GEN
father through Tomba his

məčá *nupibu*
mə -čá nu -pi -pu
3P -small person -FEM -PAT
small that person

layeŋhəllí
lay -yeŋ -hən -lə -í
disease -look -CAUS -PERF -NHYP
treated
'Her father caused his daughter to be treated by Tomba.'

Four-argument causative verbs such as *cause to give* subcategorize for an agent, patient, theme and goal. In the case of this verb the four arguments would be: the one who instigates the giving, the one is made to do the giving, the entity transferred, and the person who receives the entity.

(17) a. *əynə* *Rambu* *Shyamdə*
əy -nə Ram -pu Shyam -tə
I -AGN Ram -PAT Shyam -LOC
I Ram to Shyam

pəysa *píhəlləmmí*
pəysa pí -hən -ləm -í
pəysa give -CAUS -EVD -NHYP
money cause to give
'I made Ram give the money to Shyam.'

In (17b) the patient in omitted; in (17c) the patient and theme are omitted.

Table 2. Classification of argument structure of Meithei verbs

states: equational or locational	be small or be on top see (10a-d)	(theme) or (experiencer/goal) or (path)
activities not under the control of the actor	laugh, cry see (11a)	(theme)
activities under the control of the actor: motional	return, climb see (11b)	(theme)
activities under the control of the actor (two-argument)	push, hit, buy see (12a-c)	(actor, patient) or (actor, theme) or (actor, goal)
activities under the control of actor (three-argument)	show X, give X see (14a-c)	(actor, patient, recipient/ goal) or (actor, theme, recipient/goal)
causative (two-argument)	make X cry see (15a-c)	(agent, patient)
causative (three-argument)	make X break Y see (16a-d)	(agent, patient, theme) or (agent, experiencer/goal, patient)
causative (four-argument)	make X give Y to Z see (17a-c)	(agent, patient, goal, theme)

(17) b. *məpanə* *məčádə* *layrik* *pahəllí*
mə -pa -nə mə -čá -tə layrik pa -hən -í
3P -male -AGN 3P -small -LOC book read -CAUS -NHYP
father to son book cause to read
'The father had the book read through his son (to someone).'

c. *Ramnə* *Shyamdə* *líhəlləmmí*
Ram -nə Shyam -tə lí -hən -ləm -í
Ram -AGN Shyam -LOC narrate -CAUS -EVD -NHYP
Ram to Shyam caused to narrate
'Ram had (a story) narrated through Shyam.'

4.3 Information structure

Table 2 summarizes the arguments that classes of verbs subcategorize for and the default morphological marking that appears with these arguments. When pragmatic information is signalled, morphologically-encoded grammatical information is often obscured: a system of pragmatic marking may delete an existing semantic role marker, delete and replace the semantic role marker with one of the enclitics listed in (18), add one of the enclitics listed in (18) to a semantic role marker, and/or change canonical word order. In this section I will identify the pragmatic values and the formal devices used to indicate those values on an argument.

(18)

-tə́	exclusive
-ti	delimitative
-tu	distal
-nə	contrastive
-pu	adversative
-si	proximate
-su	inclusive

4.3.1 Contrastiveness

A noun phrase may receive one of three types of contrastive focus depending on whether the enclitic *-nə* 'contrastive', *-ti* 'delimitative' or *-tə́* 'exclusive' is used.[40] Examples (19a-c) contrast an unmarked actor argument with actors marked by one of these three markers. Although the unmarked *əy* does not

contribute additional pragmatic information, *əydi* opposes the actor's action with possible action of others; *əynə* indicates that out of a group of people no one else but the actor is a candidate in doing V; and *əydə́* indicates that although others might be expected to do V, they do not (only the actor chooses to do V).

(19) a. *əy čə́tkəni*
əy čə́t -kə -ni
I go -POT -COP
'I will go.'
(Used, for example, as a reply to a inquiry as to who wants to participate in an outing).

b. *əynə čə́tkəni*
'It's going to be I who goes (and not the others).'

c. *əydi čə́tkəni*
'I'm going (in spite of the fact that you won't accompany me).'

d. *əykhəktə́* *Rambu* *nuŋsí*
əy -khək -tə́ Ram -pu nuŋsi -í
I -UPTO -EX Ram -PAT love -NHYP
only I Ram love
'Only I love Ram (the others do not love him).'

Since the enclitics exemplified in (19b-d) are not semantic role markers, they can occur on arguments other than actors. Thus a patient argument, whose semantic role is indicated by the marker *-pu*, may be marked by a pragmatic information marker:

(20) *əybunə* *Ramnə*
əy -pu -nə Ram -nə
I -PAT -CNTR Ram -CNTR
I Ram

nuŋsirəbədi *phágədəwni*
nuŋsi -lə -pə -ti phá -kə -təw -ni
love -PRO -NOM -DLMT good -POT -OBLG -COP
if love would be good
'If Ram (not Chaoba) loved me (and not Sita), it would be good.'

Additionally, it is possible for the patient marker to be omitted, as in (21), where only pragmatic markers occur on arguments.

(21) a. *əynə* *Ramdə́* *nuŋsí*
əy -nə Ram -tə́ nuŋsi -í
I -CNTR Ram -EX love -NHYP
I only Ram love
'I (as opposed to you) love only Ram.'

b. *əydi* *Ramnə* *nuŋsí*
əy -ti Ram -nə nuŋsi -í
I -DLMT Ram -CNTR love -NHYP
I Ram love
'Ram loves me (over all possibilities).'[41]

c. *əŋáŋsi* *húy* *čík?í*
əŋáŋ -si húy čík -í
child -PDET dog bite -NHYP
child dog bite
'The child bit the dog.'

d. *əykhəktə́* *Ramsi* *nuŋsí*
əy -khək -tə́ Ram -si nuŋsi -í
I -UPTO -EX Ram -PDET love -NHYP
only I this Ram love
'I am the only one who loves this man Ram.'

4.3.2 *Definiteness*

When the speaker assumes that the referent of an argument can be identified by the listener, the argument can be marked for definiteness. Definiteness is indicated by either the proximate or distal determiner (see section 3.5), as in (22a) where the actor is definite and (22b)-(22d) where the patient is definite.[42]

(22) a. *Tombədu* *layriktu* *Tombidə* *píde*
Tombə -tu layrik -tu Tombi -tə pí -tə -e
Tomba -DDET book -DDET Tombi -LOC give -NEG-ASRT
that Tomba that book to Tombi did not give
'Tomba did not give that book to Tombi.'

b. *əy* *Ramsi* *nuŋsine*
əy Ram -si nuŋsi -ne
I Ram -PDET love -SI
I this Ram love
'You know, I love this man Ram.'

c. *əysi* *Ramnə* *nuŋsí*
əy -si Ram -nə nuŋsi -í
I -PDET Ram -CNTR love -NHYP
I Ram love
'I am loved by Ram (not by anyone else).'

d. *Jonnə* *Tombədu* *phúrəmmí*
Jon -nə Tomba -tu phú -ləm -í
John -CNTR Tomba -DDET beat -EVD -NHYP
John that Tomba seems to have beaten
'It is John who beat Tomba.'

It is possible for a contrastive or delimitative marker to co-occur with a marker of definiteness. For example, in (23a,b), the speaker is viewing an array of pictures, and points to a picture of *Ram* and says that he/she loves *this* Ram and no other.

(23) a. *əydi* *Ramsinə* *nuŋsí*
əy -ti Ram -si -nə nuŋsi -í
I -DLMT Ram -PDET -CNTR love -NHYP
I this Ram love
'(Out of all of them) I (am the one who) loves this Ram.'

b. *əysi* *Ramsinə* *nuŋsí*
əy -si Ram -si -nə nuŋsi -í
I -PDET Ram -PDET -CNTR love -NHYP
I this Ram love
'This man Ram (not Chaoba or Tomba) loves me.'

4.3.3 *The adversative marker -pu*

The adversative marker, homonymous with the patient marker, signals that the *-pu* marked noun phrase is ill-fated in being acted upon or that the verb is unexpected, unanticipated, or unfortunate. Thus in (24a), if I were expected to

row a boat, I could answer that contrary to the requester's information, I did not know how to row a boat.

(24) a. *əybu* *hi* *honbə* *həytene*
əy -pu hi hon -pə həy -tə -e -ne
I -ADVR boat row -NOM proficient -NEG -ASRT -SI
I boat to row am not proficient
'(But unfortunately), I don't know how to row boats.'

b. *əybu* *Ramsi* *nuŋsine* *kəmdəwsigé* *háy*
əy -pu Ram -si nuŋsi -ne kəmdəw -si háy -ke
I -ADVR Ram -PDET love -SI how -PDET say -OPT
I this Ram love how this want to say
'(Woe to me that) I love Ram, how can I want this!'

c. *əynəbu* *Ramsi* *nuŋsirəbədi*
əy -nə -pu Ram -si nuŋsi -lə -pə -ti
I -CNTR -ADVR Ram -PDET love -PRO -NOM -DLMT
I this Ram if love

phágədəwni
phə́ -kə -təw -ni
good -POT -OBLG -COP
it would be good
'(If only) I loved Ram, that would be convenient.'

I assume that *-pu* is not the patient case marker in (24). Of course, there are languages where both the case or semantic role and the pragmatic value of an argument is signalled by the same marker (for example, the Japanese accusative doubles up as an emphatic marker (Bloch 1969: 52)). Although it is most probably the case in Meithei that the adversative marker *-pu* is derived from the patient marker *-pu*, there are two pieces of evidence that in synchronic grammar these are two distinct homophonous markers. First, adversative *-pu* may be attached to a nonpatient noun phrase as in (24a-d); second, *-pu* can occur twice in a noun phrase, once as the patient marker, and once as a pragmatic marker as in (24e).[43]

(24) d. *mənjóndəbu* *kənanə* *kəri* *háygəni*
mə -ŋjón -tə -pu kəna -nə kəri háy -kə -ni
3P -to -LOC -ADVR who -CNTR what say -POT -COP
to him who what will say
'To him, who will say what? (implies that nobody will say anything to him)'

e. *əybunəbu* *Sekmay* *čə́tlu* *háy*
əy -pu -nə -pu Sekmay čə́t -u háy -í
I -PAT -CNTR -ADVR Sekmay go -IMP say -NHYP
I Sekmay go! said
'(Too bad), he ordered me (not you) to go to Sekmay.'[44]

Similarly, the adversative marker may be attached to peripheral arguments that are already case marked. Thus in (24f), adversative *-pu* occurs with the genitive marker and in (24g) with the associative marker. See section 4.4 for case marking with peripheral arguments.

f. *mágibu* *sóydərəbədi*
má -ki -pu sóy -tə -lə -pə -ti
he -GEN -ADVR mistake -NEG -PRO -NOM -DLMT
for him if not wrong

phə́re
phə́ -lə -e
good -PRO -ASRT
is good
'With him, if nothing goes wrong it is good (implies that something will probably go wrong with him).'

g. *mágəbu* *kənanə* *čə́tkəni*
má -kə -pu kəna -nə čə́t -kə -ni
he -POT -ADVR who -CNTR go -POT -COP
with him who will go
'With him, who would like to go?' (implies that no one wants to go with him.)

4.3.4 *Word order and ambiguity*

Word order also encodes pragmatic information in Meithei. Arguments may be moved to post-verbal position (reminiscent of right dislocation in French, English and elsewhere, sometimes called an *afterthought*) in order to reintroduce given information that has not been talked about for a while. This is illustrated in (25a).

(25) a. *háybədəy* *kəppe* *Səkuntəlase*
háy -pə -təgi kəp -e Səkuntala -si
say -NOM -ABL cry -ASRT Shakuntala -PDET
as a result of that cried this Shakuntala
'As a result of that (she) started crying, that Shakuntala.'

Bhat (1991) states that sentence initial position in Meithei is grammaticalized[45] so that if there is no morphological marking to indicate which argument is actor, the sentence initial argument will be interpreted as actor. This is certainly the preferred interpretation of arguments in sentence initial position (see (14c) and (23a,b)). The argument in sentence initial position, however, even when morphological marking is not present to disambiguate the role of the arguments, does not have to be actor. Thus (25b-d) are ambiguous.

(25) b. *əydi* *Ramnə* *phúniŋŋí*
əy -ti Ram -nə phú -niŋ -í
I -DLMT Ram -CNTR beat -WISH -NHYP
I Ram wish to beat
'It is Ram (not Chaoba) who wants to beat me (over all of you).' or
'It is Ram (not Chaoba) that I (over all of you) want to beat.

c. *əŋáŋdi* *Tombəsinə* *phúy*
əŋáŋ -ti Tombə -si -nə phú -í
child -DLMT Tomba -PDET -CNTR beat -NHYP
child Tomba beat
'This Tomba (out of all the others) beats children.' or
'This child beats this Tomba (and no one else).'

d. *əydi Ram nuŋsí*
'Ram loves me (over all others).' or
'I (over all others) love Ram.' (see (21) for gloss)

Furthermore, ambiguity may arise from the homophony of the contrastive and agentive markers. For example, since arguments may be freely dropped, it is unclear if the agent or recipient has been omitted in (25e), so that Tomba may be the goal or the agent as explained in (i) and (ii).

(25) e. *Tombədunə* *layriktu* *nupase*
Tomba -tu -nə layrik -tu nu -pa -si
Tomba -DDET -i/ii book -DDET person -male -PDET
that Tomba that book the man

puhəllí
pu -hən -í
carry -CAUS -NHYP
cause to carry

(i) If *-nə* is the agentive marker the interpretation is: 'Tomba caused that book to be carried to the man (through somebody)'.

(ii) If *-nə* is the contrastive marker the interpretation is: '(Someone) caused the man to carry that book to Tomba (and not anyone else).'

Thus, discourse factors -- such as the saliency of the first argument -- favor interpretation of the first argument as subject; however, this is not a categorical rule in Meithei syntax.

The disambiguation of the role of an argument is not a primary concern in related languages either. In Burmese, marking of arguments follows similar principles as in Meithei; for example, the semantic role or contrastive value of a noun phrase determines what marking occurs on it (Johnson 1995, DeLancey 1995). Arguments can occur without any marking, but Johnson notes that the idea of "ambiguity avoidance" is not the primary principle determining the use or non-use of case markers. Rather, discourse factors like new topic (which occurs with marking) or continuing topic (which is unmarked) are significant to optionality of marking. See also Johnson (1992) and Wheatley (1982).

4.3.5 Restrictions on pragmatic marking

Semantic role markers can be replaced by pragmatic markers with all predicate types. Examples of where this occurs with state and two-argument predicates are given in (19)-(25). Examples with three-argument predicates and causative verbs are given in (26) and (27) respectively.

(26) a. *Tombədi* *layriktu* *nupasinə*
Tombə -ti layrik -tu nu -pa -si -nə
Tomba -DLMT book -DDET person -male -PDET-CNTR
Tomba that book the man

pírəmmí
pí -ləm -í
give -EVD -NHYP
gave
'The man gave that book to (this, rather than the other man named) Tomba.'

b. *Tombədi* *layriktu* *Tombisinə*
Tombə -ti layrik -tu Tombi -si -nə
Tomba -DLMT book -DDET Tomba -PDET -CNTR
Tomba that book this Tombi

píkhrəbədi *yáy*
pí -khi -lə -pə -ti yá -í
give -STILL -PRO -NOM -DLMT agree -NHYP
if give agree
'Tomba (opposed to the rest) has no objection to giving this (opposed to others named Tombi) Tombi that book.'

c. *Ramnə* *Tombidə* *ləy* *thárəmmí*
Ram -nə Tombi -tə ləy thá -ləm -í
Ram -CNTR Tombi -LOC flower send -EVD -NHYP
Ram to Tombi flower sent
'Ram sent the flowers to Tombi.'

d. *Tombidi* *layriktu* *Ramsu* *pí*[46]
Tombi -ti layrik -tu Ram -su pí -í
Tombi -DLMT book -DDET Ram -ALSO give -NHYP
Tombi that book Ram also gave
'Tombi also gave the book to Ram.'

When two or more arguments of a verb are human, they must be marked by either semantic or pragmatic marking. Such a restriction, determined by number of and humanness of arguments, cannot be motivated by a grammatical marking system where one would expect structurally determined rules, but is well motivated when viewed in terms of interpretation. To facilitate interpretation the pragmatics require a minimum amount of information to differentiate the status of arguments.

In sentences with causative verbs, non-agent arguments may occur without semantic role marking but must minimally be marked with pragmatic markers (26e,f). Agent marking is usually not manipulated by the pragmatic marking system, and if an agent is not omitted it will occur with its semantic role marker. Sentences like (26g), however, are marignally acceptable if enough context is provided: in this case, there might be a photo album open with a picture of the agent being pointed out by the speaker.

(26) e. *Cawbənə* *əŋáŋdu* *ŋəwhəlləmmí*
Chaoba -nə əŋáŋ -tu ŋəw -hən -ləm -í
Chaoba -AGN child -DDET white -CAUS -EVD -NHYP
Chaoba the child caused to become white
'Chaoba caused that child to appear fair (by powdering her face).'

f. *Tombənə* *layriktu* *nupadunə*
Tombə -nə layrik -tu nu -pa -tu -nə
Tomba -CNTR book -DDET person -male -DDET -AGN
this Tomba that book the man

pahəlləmmí
pa -hən -ləm -í
read -CAUS -EVD -NHYP
made to read
'The man made Tomba here read that book.'

(26) g. *nupasi* *layriktu* *Tombədu*

nu	-pa	-si	layrik	-tu	Tombə	-tu
person	-male	-PDET	book	-DDET	Tomba	-DDET
that man			that book		that Tomba	

píhəlləmmí

pí	-hən	-ləm	-í
give	-CAUS	-EVD	-NHYP

caused to give

'This man made that Tomba give that book (to someone).'

4.3.6 Volitionality

A final fact needs to be addressed: all descriptions of Meithei postulate a nominative case *-nə*, obliterating the important distinction between the agentive *-nə*, which does mark case, and the homophonous contrastive marker *-nə* which does not. The reason for this is that traditional grammars, which are written either on the pattern of Sanskrit or Latin, expect a predictable case paradigm. Educated native speakers consistently insert the purported nominative case marker *-nə* on actor arguments in elicitation. This is an artifact of traditional grammars since *-nə* does not occur in texts with more frequency than any of the other pragmatic markers discussed in this section.

Recent descriptions such as Bhat and Ningomba (1986b), building on native scholars' interpretation of Meithei grammar rather than on textual material, also believe that there is a nominative case marker in Meithei, simply noting that *-nə* is optional in sentences with noncausative verbs and that it can be used on non-actor arguments. Bhat (1991) does address the optionality issue by saying that *-nə* is used only when the action of the actor is volitional; however, it is easy to find sentences where this is not true. For example, in (27), the *-nə* marked actor refers to a daughter-in-law drowning (quite unintentionally) in a pond. It is also possible to find sentences where the subject does exercise control over an activity but is not marked by *-nə* (see (26d) above).

(27) *mənáw* *nupinə* *púkhrídə*

mə	-náw	nu	-pi	-nə	púkhrí	-tə
NM	-small	person	-FEM	-CNTR	pond	-LOC
sister-in-law					in the pond	

iráknərágə

i	-lak	-nə	-lágə
water	-power over	-INST	-AFTER

while drowning

mətəynə *únə* *únə*

mə	-təy	-nə	ú	-nə	ú	-nə
3P	-relative of opposite sex	-CNTR	see	-INST	see	-INST
brother-in-law			upon seeing			

upay *ləytənə* *yeŋdúnə* *láy*

upay	ləy	-tə	-nə	yeŋ	-túnə	ləy	-í
means	be	-NEG	-INST	see	-ING	be	-NHYP
means	not having			see		is	

'While the sister-in-law was drowning in the pond with only the brother-in-law to see it, there would be no means for her to be saved (since he could not touch her).'

4.4 Case marking on peripheral noun phrases

Noun phrases that are not needed to fulfill the argument structure of a verb may appear with one of the following case markers: locative *-tə*, instrumental *-nə*, associative *-kə* and ablative *-təgi*. In this section, I will describe and exemplify these case markers.

4.4.1 Locative case

The locative marker may be used to express direction, quantity, or duration.

(28) a. *tha* *əmədə*

tha	ə	-mə	-tə
month	ATT	-one	-LOC

'for one month'

b. *51%* *khəktə*

51%	khək	-tə
51%	upto	-LOC

'up to 51%'

c. *yumdə* *mí* *məri* *láy*
yum -tə mí məri ləy -í
house -LOC men four be -NHYP
in house people four be
'Four people live in this house.'

d. *kuntərettə* *thórək?əni*
kun -təret -tə thók -lək -lə -ni
twenty -seven -LOC out -DISTAL -PROX -COP
on the 27th will come out
'will return on the 27th'

4.4.2 *Ablative case*

The ablative marker is used to express direction of movement from a point in space.

(29) a. *mánə* *Nuyarktəgi* *Jaipurdə* *čáłkhí*
má -nə Nuyark -təgi Jaipur -tə čét -khi -í
he -CNTR New York -ABL Jaipur -LOC go -STILL -NHYP
he from New York to Jaipur already went
'He went from New York to Jaipur.'

The ablative may also indicate the source of transfer of material objects or ideas.

(29) b. *əynə* *məsi* *Bildəgi* *táre*
əy -nə mə -si Bil -təgi tá -lə -e
I -CNTR nm -PDET Bill -ABL hear -PERF -ASRT
I it from Bill heard
'I heard it from Bill.'

c. *Johnnə* *ók* *əmə* *Bildəgi*
Jon -nə ók ə -mə Bil -təgi
John -CNTR pig ATT -one Bill -ABL
John pig a from Bill

láyrək?əmmí
láy -lək -ləm -í
buy -DISTAL -EVD -NHYP
seems to have bought
'It seems that John bought a pig from Bill.'

4.4.3 *Genitive case*

The genitive case indicates possession on the possessor.

(30) a. *məsi* *əygi* *yumni*
mə -si əy -ki yum -ni
nm -PDET I -GEN house -COP
this my house is
'This is my house.'

b. *əŋáŋgisi* *sidə* *thámge*
əŋáŋ -ki -si si -tə thám -ke
child -GEN -PDET pdet -LOC place -OPT
for this child here will keep
'I will keep the child's (food) here.'

Note that a noun phrase marked by the genitive case may be further marked by the locative or the associative. In these instances, the meaning of the case markers is compositional.

(30) c. *mígigə* *əygigə* *manəl?e*
mí -ki -kə əy -ki -kə man -nətte
man -GEN -ASS I -GEN -ASS agree -not
between these men's and between my do not agree
'There are differences in opinion between these men and myself.'

d. *əykhoy* *ŋəraŋ* *Tombəgidə* *čátləmmí*
əy -khoy ŋəraŋ Tombə -ki -tə čát -ləm -í
I -hpl yesterday Tomba -GEN -LOC go -EVD -NHYP
we yesterday to Tomba's went
'Yesterday we went to Tomba's (house).'

4.4.4 Associative case

The associative marker is used to indicate that the action has been performed in conjunction with another person (31a). When more than one argument is marked with the associative, the action is reciprocal (31b).

(31) a. *məhák* *Tombəgə* *skul* *čátkhəre*
mə -hák Tomba -kə skul čát -khi -lə -e
3P -here Tomba -ASS school go -STILL -PERF -ASRT
he with Tomba school has gone
'He has gone to school with Tomba.'

b. *Ramgə* *Sitagə* *khátnərəmmí*
Ram -gə Sita -gə khát -nə -ləm -í
Ram -ASS Sita -ASS fight -RECIP -EVD -NHYP
Ram with Sita with fought with each other
'Ram and Sita fought each other.'

4.4.5 Instrumental case

The instrumental marker, indicates the noun phrase with which (32a) or through which (32b,c) some action is performed. LaPolla (1994) points out that in many Tibeto-Burman languages the instrumental and agentive markers are homophonous. In his view, this may point to the instrumental marker being used as an agentive marker through a metaphorical extension of its primary meaning (a concept developed in DeLancey 1989a), leading to a distinct marker through grammaticalization of the extended use as an agentive.

(32) a. *əynə* *thán* *əmənə* *háydu* *kháy*
əy -nə thán ə -mə -nə háy -tu kháy -í
I -CNTR knife ATT -one -INST fruit -DDET cut -NHYP
I knife with a that fruit cut
'I cut the fruit with a knife.'

b. *čithise* *məkhutnə* *pírəmmu*
čithi -si mə -khut -nə pí -ləm -u
letter -PDET nm -hand -INST give -EVD -IMP
this letter by hand give
'Hand deliver this letter!'

c. Question: Answer:
kərinə *eroplennə*
kəri -nə eroplen -nə
what -INST aeroplane -INST
'By what means (did you travel here)?' 'By aeroplane.'

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that Meithei exhibits a flat phrase structure. The grammatical status of the arguments that a predicate subcategorizes for is indicated through semantic role markers which can be manipulated through a system of pragmatic marking. In the default case the correct interpretation of the status of arguments in a Meithei sentence can be read off of semantic role markers and the observance of an animacy hierarchy. Since, however, the pragmatics can delete and/or replace these markers, interpretation involves a knowledge of the pragmatic marking system (meaning of overt pragmatic markers, conditions under which semantic role markers can be deleted, word order and stress). To some extent the pragmatic system makes recovery of grammatical relations difficult so that sentences may often have more than one interpretation. In these cases the larger discourse context must be used to recover the intended meaning.