(32) a. *kuntra*

    kun   -tǝra

    twenty -ten

    'thirty'

b. *čárǝbra*

    čá   -lǝ   -pǝ   -lǝ

    eat -PERF -NOM -INT

    'Have you eaten?'

2.6.6 *Alternation of vowels with schwa*

Vowels may alternate with *ǝ* on the surface. This occurs most often in suffixes (see (33a) and (33b)), but may also occur in roots (see (33c) and (33d)).

(33) a. *oysinnu*

    oy -sin -u

    be -IN   -IMP

    'may it be'

b. *oysǝnnu*

c. *tǝlǝb* 'salary'

d. *tolob* 'salary'

The writing system of Meithei encodes only the lexical rules that have been described here. Thus neither the effects of Flapping or the *k* to *ʔ* rule show up in written Meithei. Thus, although in normal conversation and in elicitation situations speakers will implement all lexical and post-lexical rules, the more educated speaker will be able to provide two variants of a word: forms where post-lexical rules have applied and the equivalent forms where these rules have not applied. Children who have not yet learned to read and write cannot make these distinctions. Furthermore, according to Th. Harimohon Singh, children often have to be taught the composition of morphemes that have been obscured through fast speech phenomena.

Chapter 3
Grammatical preview

This chapter is an overview of the morphosyntax of Meithei; it introduces the structures and key concepts that will be discussed in detail in Chapters 4–9. It contains a discussion of phrase structure rules, phrasal categories, major and minor lexical categories, and inflectional and derivational affixal categories.

3.1 Phrase structure of the main clause

There is no evidence in Meithei for a verb phrase constituent (see Chapter 4 for arguments); thus, the Meithei clause consists of a verb (V) and the arguments (i.e. noun phrases) this verb subcategorizes for. (1a, b) are the phrase structure rules which derive root sentences in Meithei.

(1)   a.   S   → NP* V

        b.   NP* → NP NP NP...

As reflected in phrase structure rule (1b), the asterisk which follows the noun phrase indicates (following the convention used in Hale 1983) that the verb may occur with any number of noun phrases. There is no particular order imposed on the arguments; instead, word order is determined by pragmatic factors (see Chapter 4 for details). The maximum number of noun phrases that may occur with a verb is restricted by the subcategorization frame of that verb (see section 4.2). Since Meithei allows for the omission of arguments, the minimum number of noun phrases that may occur with a V is zero.

To be grammatical, a sentence must consist of an inflected verb, that is, a verb root and an inflectional suffix. All inflectional suffixes are illocutionary mood markers which indicate sentence type (e.g. declarative, optative, imperative, etc., see Chapter 5 for details). As shown in Figure 1, the inflectional marker may be preceded optionally by three derivational categories.

First level derivation consists of eight suffixes that describe the extent to which an agent desires or intends to affect some object and the direction and manner in which an action is performed. Second level derivation consists of suffixes that have meanings such as 'comitative', 'reciprocal', 'V for someone other than self', 'V for sake of self', 'causative', 'wish to V', 'V to excess', 'V habitually or repeatedly', 'V in the nick of time', 'V ahead or behind expected time', 'indirect evidence', 'proximal', 'distal', 'action away from speaker',

'negative' and 'prospective aspect'. Third level derivatio. .onsists of suffixes that signal other kinds of modality and aspect, such as 'potential', 'non-potential', 'necessity', 'obligation, 'probability', 'intention', 'progressive', 'perfect.' Details about the ordering and co-occurrence of these derivational markers is provided in Chapter 7. Meithei verb morphology does not indicate number, person, gender or pronominal agreement between the verb and its arguments.

There are two derivational prefixes: an attributive prefix which derives adjectives from verbs and a nominalizing prefix which derives nouns from verbs.

(Derivational Root (1st level   (2nd level   (3rd level   Inflection
prefixation)   derivation) derivation)   derivation)

Figure 1. Schematic representation of Meithei verb morphology

A noun may be optionally affixed by derivational morphemes indicating gender, number and quantity. A noun may have one of 5 semantic roles: agent, actor, patient, recipient/goal, theme. Actor and theme roles are not indicated morphologically, while all other semantic roles are indicated by an enclitic. For pragmatic effect, semantic role markers can be omitted or replaced by enclitics which mark contrastiveness or definiteness. Peripheral arguments may be suffixed by enclitics indicating ablative, genitive or associative case. Finally, a noun may be prefixed by a pronominal prefix which indicates its possessor. The Meithei noun has the structure given in Figure 2.

(pronominal prefix) Root (Gender) (Number) (Quantifier) (Case)

Figure 2. Schematic representation of Meithei noun morphology

An noun phrase may consist of a noun followed by derivational and inflectional morphology or of a noun and adjectives, numerals and/or quantifiers. The order of these constituents within the noun phrase is relatively free.

(2)   a. NP   → N (Adj*) (Num/Quant)

As reflected in phrase structure rule (2a), an noun phrase may consist of either a numeral or quantifier, but not both. Also, a noun phrase may consist of one or more than one adjective. P. Madhubala Devi (1979: 157) provides (2b) to show that up to three adjectives can occur in a noun phrase. Although in theory this number can be extended ad infinitum, in natural speech it is rare for more than one adjective to occur in a given noun phrase.

(2)   b. əpikpə   əmubə   əsónbə
ə   -pik   -pə   ə   -mu   -pə   ə   -són   -pə
ATT   -small -NOM ATT -black -NOM att -weak -NOM
small   dirty   weak

əŋáŋdu   kəppi
əŋáŋ -tu   kəp -li
child -DDET   cry -PROG
that child   is crying
'A small, dirty, weak boy is crying'

Adjectives which specify color, shape, quantity and ordinality may be moved after the head noun. Thus in (2c) the ordinal can occur before and in (2d) after the head noun; the specification of size can occur before the noun as in (2e), or after the noun as in (2f).

(2)   c. ənisubə   məčá   nupidu
ə   -ni   -su   -pə   mə -čá   nu   -pi   -tu
ATT   -two -ALSO -NOM NM -small person -FEM -DDET
second   small   female
'the second daughter'

d. məčá nupi ənisubədu

e. əčəwbə   učéktu   phəjəy
ə   -čaw   -pə   učék -tu   phəjə   -í
ATT   -big   -NOM bird -DDET   beauty   -NHYP
big   that bird   is beautiful
'That big bird is beautiful.'

f. učék əčəwbədu phəjəy

Thus when more than one adjective occurs, the adjectives may occur in a sequence, as in (2g), or may occur on either side of the head noun.

(2)   g. əmubə   učék əčəwbə
ə   -mu   -pə   učék ə   -čaw -pə
ATT   -black -NOM bird ATT   -big -NOM
black   bird big one

```
əmə          payri
ə      -mə  pay   -li
ATT    -one fly   -PROG
one         if flying
'A big black bird is flying.'
```

The preferred order for possessive adjectives (which are formed by the suffixation of the genitive marker on the possessor noun) is to the left edge of the noun phrase. According to P. Madhubala Devi (1979: 153), the possessive adjective may also be ordered freely with the other adjectives in the noun phrase.

```
(2)   h. Tombəgi         ənisubə
         Tomba -ki   ə    -ni   -su    -pə
         Tomba -GEN ATT  -two  -ALSO  -NOM
         Tomba's          second
```

```
      məčá       nupidu                 phə̃jə́y
      ɯə  -čá    nu    -pi   -tu        phə̃jə -í
      nɯ  -small person -FEM -DDET      beauty -NHYP
      small       that female           is beautiful
      'Tomba's second daughter is beautiful.'
```

```
      i. ənisubə Tombəgi məčá nupidu phə̃jə́y
```

An adjective can be focused on by moving it out of the noun phrase altogether and placing it at the end of the sentence. The extraposed adjectives are preceded by a pause, here indicated by a comma.

```
(2)   j. yénsáŋ     khərə  purək?u,
         yénsáŋ     khərə  pu    -lək   -u
         vegetables some   carry -DISTAL -IMP
         vegetables some   bring here,
```

```
      yumdəgi          əhəw             əhəwbə
      yum   -təgi   ə    -haw      ə    -haw   -pə
      house -ABL    ATT -tasty     ATT -tasty  -NOM
      from the house, tasty        tasty
      'Bring some vegetables from your house, the tasty tasty ones.'
```

Although ordinals may occur to the right or left of the head noun, numerals may occur only to the right of the head noun.

```
(2)   k. phi     tə,...si
         phi     tərა -si
         cloth   ten  -PDET
         cloth   this ten
         'these ten (pieces of) cloth'
```

Quantifiers may occur to the left of the noun. Thus compare (2j) with (2l).

```
(2)   l. khərə    isiŋdu                  purək?u
         khərə  i    -siŋ   -tu         pu   -lək   -u
         some   water -GPL  -DDET       carry -DISTAL -IMP
         some   water                   carry from there
         'Bring me some water.'
```

When an adjective and quantifier occur before the noun, the quantifier must precede the adjective.

```
(2)   m. khərə    čawbədə              maykrokəmpyutər
         khərə  čaw  -pə    -tu       maykrokəmpyutər
         some   big  -NOM   -DDET     microcomputer
         some   big that              microcomputer
         'some of those big microcomputers'
```

The following orders are not attested in my data: QUANT-N-ADJ; ADJ-QUANT-N; and ADJ-N-QUANT.

3.2 Phrase structure of subordinated sentences

As will be shown in Chapter 6, there are three ways to subordinate a sentence. First, a nominalized clause has the internal structure represented in (3a) and it is formed through the suffixation of the nominalizer -pə to a non-inflected verb as illustrated in (3b).

```
(3)   a. S_nom  →    (NP*) V-nominalizer
```

```
      b. ŋádu          phábə
         ŋá   -tu       phá  -pə
         fish -DDET     catch -NOM
         that fish      to catch
         'to catch fish'
```

The nominalized clause is used in relative clause formati in a relative clause, which is a type of noun phrase, the relativized argument occurs to the right of a nominalized verb as in (4a). The phrase structure rule which gene- rates relative clauses is given in (4b).

(4) a. *kolom   páyrəbə   nipa*
     kolom   páy -lə   -pə   ni   -pa
     pen   hold -PROX -NOM person -MAS
     pen   one who held   boy
     'the boy who held the pen'

   b. NP → S$_{nom}$ N

Second, nominalized clauses are used to form complements. This is reflec- ted in the phrase structure rules given in (5).

(5) a. S   →   S' V
    b. S'   →   S$_{nom}$ (COMP)
    c. S'   →   S QUOT

As shown in (5b), a complement consists of a nominalized clause and a com- plementizer. A quotative can be used as complementizer when a sentence is subordinated, as shown in the phrase structure rule (5c). An example of a complement with a suffixal complementizer is given in (5d). An example with a quotative complementizer is given in (5e).

(5) d. *isiŋ   thə́kpədu*
     i   -siŋ   thək   -pədu
     water -GPL   drink -DCOMP
     water   that drinking
     'from that drinking water'

   e. *məhákŋə   thoyre*
     mə   -hák   -nə   thoy -lə   -e
     3P   -here -CNTR   win -PERF -ASRT
     she   had won

     háybəsi   Tombinə   khəŋŋí
     háy -pəsi   Tombi -nə   khəŋ -í
     say -DCOMP   Tombi -CNTR   know -NHYP
     that   Tombi   knew
     'Tombi knew that she had won.'

Finally, an adv ial clause can be derived through the suffixation of clausal subordinators to a nominalized clause. The phrase structure rule which is used to generate adverbial clauses is given in (6). An example is given in (7) where the clausal subordinator is the locative marker *-tə*.

(6) AdvP → S' CS

(7) *əykhoydə   lakpədə*
    əy   -khoy -tə   lak   -pə   -tə
    I   -hpl -LOC   come -NOM. -LOC
    to our place   upon coming home
    'when coming to our place'

The formal aspects of subordination are described in Chapter 6 and the function of various types of subordinated clauses is described from a pragmatic and epistemological perspective in Chapter 9.

3.3 Major lexical categories

In this section I will discuss the lexical categories which participate in the phrase structure described so far. I distinguish between an "actual" and a "potential" lexicon for Meithei.[20] The actual lexicon consists of an unordered list of underived roots and affixes and lexicalized forms. Each lexical entry in the actual lexicon consists of specifications about the phonological shape of the lexical item, what lexical category it belongs to and what its meaning is. On the other hand, the output of the potential lexicon consists of words created through productive morphological processes.

In the actual lexicon, roots may be bound (those that must be affixed by further morphology to be free-standing forms) or free. Nouns and verbs from the actual lexicon can be distinguished on formal grounds in that bound roots are verbs and free roots are nouns. They can further be distinguished since the inflectional and derivational possibilities for each of these classes come from affixes that belong to mutually exclusive sets (see Chapter 7). In the potential lexicon, adjectives, adverbs and nominal forms can be derived from verb roots and stative verbs can be derived from noun roots.

3.3.1 Nouns

Nouns can be distinguished from other lexical categories on morphological grounds. For example, nouns but not verbs can be suffixed by gender, number or case markers. Proper nouns and common nouns are free standing forms. A large number of nouns are borrowed from Assamese, Bengali, English and Hindi. A sample of these is given in Appendix 1.

3.3.1.1 Pronouns: personal and possessive

The singular personal pronouns are *əy* 'I', *nəŋ* 'you' and *má* 'he/she'. Possessive pronouns are formed through the suffixation of -*ki* 'genitive' on these personal pronouns: *əygi/nəŋgi/magi yum* 'my/your/his or her house'. The possessive pronominal prefixes *i-*, *nə-* and *mə-* are the first person, second person and third person possessive prefixes, respectively. These may be affixed to kinship terms or inalienably possessed nouns.

(8) a. *imít*   'my eye'
     b. *nəkhóŋ* 'your foot'
     c. *məpa*   'his grandfather'
     d. *məyum* 'his house'[21]

The first person possessive prefix is more restricted in use than the second or third person possessive prefixes since it appears only with kinship terms: so, **iyum* for 'my house' is ungrammatical but must be expressed as *əygi yum*. There are also certain taboos on the use of the second person possessive with kinship terms. N. Promodini Devi (1989a) reports that *nəŋgi nəmá* 'your mother' is impolite; the socially acceptable form is the idiomatic sequence *nəŋgi imá* which literally means 'your my mother'.

The choice between the use of a prefixed noun, such as *ipa* 'my father', or the genitive and the prefixed noun, such as *əygi ipa* 'my father', is determined by discourse factors: *ipa* is used when the father being spoken about has already been the topic of the conversation, while *əygi ipa* is used at the first mention of father. This use of the genitive and prefixed possessive is the only evidence of pronominal agreement in Meithei.

(9) a. *əygi*   *irəybák*
        əy   -ki   i -ləy -pák
        I   -GEN   1PP -land -width
        'my country'

b. *nəŋgi*   *nəča*   *əykhoydə*
   nəŋ -ki   nə -ča   əy -khoy -tə
   you -GEN   2P -small   I   -hpl -LOC
   your   your younger sister   to our home

lakpədə   *əynə*   *čák*   *čáhənkhí*
lak -pə -tə   əy -nə   čák   čá -hən -khi -í
come -NOM -LOC   I -AGN   rice   eat -CAUS -STILL -NHYP
upon visiting   I   food   already caused to eat
'During the course of your younger sister's visit to our house I made her eat.'

c. *mági*   *məpa*   *ləykhirəmdre*
   má -ki   mə -pa   ləy -khi -ləm -tə -lə -e
   he -GEN   3P -father   be -STILL -EVD -NEG -PERF -ASRT
   his   his father   already not alive
   'When I got there his father was already dead.'

As shown in Table 1, personal pronouns may be plural or dual. The plural is indicated by *khoy* 'this and others like this'. The dual is -*bani*, which is a frozen form composed of *ni*, the root for 'two', and -*ba*, probably the nominalizer -*pə*. The pronouns dealt with in this section are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. The singular, plural and dual pronouns

	Singular	Plural	Dual
First Person	*əy* 'I'	*əykhoy* 'we'	*ibani* 'we two'
Second Person	*nəŋ* 'you'	*nəkhoy* 'you all'	*nəbani* 'you two'
Third Person	*má* 'he/she'	*məkhoy* 'they'	*məbani* 'them two'

3.3.1.2 Pronouns: indefinite

Indefinite pronouns are also lexicalized forms composed of a question word (see section 5.6) which may be followed by -*su* 'also' (as in 10a,b) or the sequence *kumbə* composed of -*kum* 'like, kind of' and -*pə* 'nominalizer' (see 10c).

(10) a. *kərisu*   b. *kənasu*   c. *kərigumbə*
     kəri -su   kəna -su   kəri -kum   -pə
     what -ALSO   who -ALSO   what -LIKE   -NOM
     'nothing'   'anything'   'something'[22]

A question word may also occur with the numeral *mə* 'one', which functions as an indefinite article: this is seen in (10d) with a verbal question word (i.e. a question word suffixed by the inquisitive marker -*no*, see Chapter 6). (10d) can be opposed to (10e): in (10d) the pronoun refers to a specific person who is seen but not identified, whereas (10e) refers to an non-specific entity whose presence can only be inferred (through the result of some action, for example).

(10) d. *kənanomə*   e. *kənagumbə*   *əmə*
     kəna -no   -mə   kəri -kum -pə   ə   -mə
     who -INQ   -one   what -LIKE -NOM ATT -one
     'someone'   'someone'

The fact that indefinite pronouns are lexicalized forms is borne out by the morphology that can follow indefinite pronouns: the question word-numeral or question word-enclitic-numeral sequence may be suffixed by the verbal negative marker -*tə* (see 10f, g). The resulting form is apparently a noun since it may be further suffixed by a case marker (see 10h). The negative marker cannot be affixed to other nouns.

(10) f. *kənamətə*   g. *kərimət?ə*   h. *kənamət?ədə*
     kəna -mə -tə   kəri -mə -tə   kəna -mə -tə   -tə
     who -one -NEG   what -one -NEG   who -one -NEG -LOC
     'nobody'   'nothing'   'to nobody'

3.3.1.3 Pronouns: relative

As noted in section 3.3 the strategy for creating relative clauses in Meithei is to place the relativized noun directly after a nominalized clause; there is no relative pronoun to mark the relative clause. An additional but rarely exploited strategy for creating a relative clause involves using a question word as a rela-

tive pronoun (in conjunction with a quotative) to head the relative clause. See section 6.1.2.3 for description and examples.

3.3.1.4 Pronouns: demonstrative

The determiners -*si* 'proximate'[23] and -*tu* 'distal' are stems that function as enclitics. -*si* indicates that the object or person being spoken of is near or currently seen or known to be near, even if not viewable by the speaker, or is currently the topic of conversation; -*tu* signifies something or someone not present at the time of speech or newly introduced in the conversation. There are two pronouns based on these stems: *ədu* 'it (there)' and *əsi* 'it (here)' where *ə*- is the attributive prefix. The determiner may occur either as an independent pronoun or encliticized on the noun phrase with no difference in meaning (P. Madhubala Devi 1979: 158). Compare (11a) with (11b) and (11c) with (11d).

(11) a. *nupidu*   *əygi*   *mərúpni*
     nu   -pi   -tu   əy -ki   mərúp   -ni
     person -FEM -DDET   I -GEN   friend   -COP
     that woman   my   friend is
     'That woman is my friend.'

   b. *nupi*   *ədu*   *əygi*   *mərúpni*
     nu   -pi   ə   -tu   əy -ki   mərúp   -ni
     person -FEM ATT -ddet   I -GEN friend   -COP
     woman   that   my   friend is
     'That woman is my friend.'

   c. *ləy*   *əŋáŋbədu*   *phəjəy*
     ləy   ə   -ŋáŋ -pə   -tu   phəjə -í
     flower ATT -red -NOM -DDET   beauty -NHYP
     flower that red   is beautiful
     'The red flower is beautiful.'

   d. *ləy*   *əŋáŋbə*   *ədu*   *phəjəy*
     ləy   ə   -ŋáŋ -pə   ə   -tu   phəjə -í
     flower ATT -red -NOM ATT -ddet   beauty -NHYP
     flower red   that   is beautiful
     'The red flower is beautiful.'

Section 6.6.4 also discusses the use of the pronoun *ədu* use... ...s a conjunction.

Two other demonstrative pronouns based on *si* and *tu* are *məsi* 'this' and *mədu* 'that' (see section 7.2.1.4 for further description of *mə-* which derives nouns from verbs).

(12) a. *mədu*   *əy tháʃədedə́*

mə	-tu	əy thá	-čə	-tə	-e	-tə́
NM	-ddet	I believe	-SELF	-NEG	-ASRT	-EX
that		I self do not believe				

'I do not believe it.'

b. *məsi*   *kərəmbə mígino*

mə	-si	kərəmbə	mí	-ki	-no
NM	-pdet	which	man	-GEN	-INQ
this		whose	man's is it		

'Whose is this?'

This set of demonstrative pronouns can be suffixed by case markers like other nouns. However, the meaning signalled by the resulting forms is idiosyncratic: the proximate and distal meanings are lost and *mədu* and *məsi* act like sentence adverbs or conjunctions. Table 2 gives a list of the most common forms of the demonstrative pronouns with *mə-* found in my corpus and the meanings they signal. Chapter 6 provides a discussion of the function of these pronouns as clausal subordinators.

Table 2. List of demonstrative pronouns with *mə-* and case markers

Pronoun	With marker		Gloss
mədudə	-tə	'locative'	'upon this/that, then'
məsidə	-tə	'locative'	'regarding this/that'
mədugi	-ki	'genitive'	'of this/that'
məsigi	-ki	'genitive'	'for this/that'
mədunə	-nə	'instrumental'	'because of that'
məsidəgi	-təgi	'ablative'	'because of this'
mədubu	-pu	'adversative'	'but'

The demonstrative pronouns can be used as resumptive pronouns. The functional difference between *mədu* and *ədu* in these forms is not clear since they are freely interchangeable.

(13) a. *layrik*   *nə́mbəgi*   *wáphə́mdo*

layrik	nəm	-pə	-ki	wá	-phə́m	-tu
book	press	-NOM	-GEN	topic	-place	-DDET
book	for publishing			that topic		

mədu   *hánnə*   *əmuktə*   *khə́nnəsi*

mə	-tu	hán	-nə	ə	-muk	-tə	khə́n	-nə	-si
NM	-ddet	first	-ADV	ATT	-once	-LOC	think	-RECIP	-SUP
that		already		once again			discuss		

'That plan to publish my book, let's get to that discussion once more.'

b. *Asamdə*   *čə́tke*   *háynə*   *ninləmbəni*

Asam	-tə	čət	-ke	háy	-nə	nín	-ləm	-pə	-ni
Assam	-LOC	go	-OPT	say	-INST	wish	-EVD	-NOM	-COP
to Assam		want to go		that		wanted			

ədu   *ŋə́mdre*

ə	-tu	ŋə́m	-tə	-lə	-e
ATT	-ddet	able	-NEG	-PERF	-ASRT
that		was not able			

'(I) wanted to go to Assam, but that didn't work out.'

Whereas *ədu* and *mədu* occur after the referenced noun phrase, the forms *əsi* and *məsi* occur before the referenced noun phrase. Again, the functional difference between *əsi* and *məsi* is not clear since the pronouns are freely interchangeable (P. Madhubala Devi 1979: 149).

(13) c. *əsi*   *ləysi*   *phə́ʃə́y*

ə	-si	ləy	-si	phə́ʃə	-í
ATT	-pdet	flower	-PDET	beauty	-NHYP
it		this flower		is beautiful	

'This flower is beautiful.'

d. *məsi*   *əŋáŋsi*   *nuŋsí*

mə	-si	əŋáŋ	-si	nuŋsi	-í
NM	-pdet	child	-PDET	love	-NHYP
this		this child		is sweet	

'This child is sweet.'

.3.3.1.5 Pronouns: emphatic

The possessive pronominal prefix may be affixed to the root *sá* 'body' to form pronouns emphasizing that the subject of the verb is a particular person or thing and no one or nothing else: *isánə* 'by myself' *nəsánə* 'by yourself' and *məsánə* 'by him/her/itself'. The use of emphatic pronouns is illustrated in the opposition between (14a) and (14b).

(14) a. *əy   čák   thóŋbə   loyjəre*

    əy   čák   thóŋ -pə   loy   -čə   -lə   -e

    I   rice   cook -NOM   finish -SELF -PERF -ASRT

    I   rice   to cook   finish for self

    'I finished cooking.'

    b. *əy isánə   čák   thóŋbə*

      əy i   -sá   -nə   čák   thóŋ -pə

      I 1P -body -CNTR rice   cook -NOM

      I myself   rice   to cook

    loyjəre

    loy   -čə   -lə   -e

    finish -SELF -PERF -ASRT

    finish for self

    'I did all the cooking by myself.'

When an emphatic pronoun is used with an inanimate subject, the verb is a process verb.

(14) c. *čési   məsánə   thájəbəni*

    čé   -si   mə   -sá   -nə   thá   -čə   -pə   -ni

    paper -PDET 3P   -body -CNTR thick -SELF -NOM   -COP

    this paper   itself   is thick

    'The paper became thick by itself.'

Another emphatic pronoun of this sort is a lexicalized form consisting of either the first or third person possessive prefix and *thəntá*, from *thən* 'lone, single' and *-tá* 'exclusive'.

(14) d. *əy   it₁   tánə   čák   thóŋbə*

    əy   i   -thən -tá   -nə   čák   thóŋ   -pə

    I   1P -lone -EX   -CNTR rice   cook   -NOM

    I   myself   food   to cook

    pháwbə   loyre

    pháw   -pə   loy   -lə   -e

    already -NOM   finish -PERF   -ASRT

    already   have finished

    'I finished the cooking by myself (before you did).'

3.3.1.6 Numerals[24]

The numerals are nouns (with the possible exception of 1–3 which morphologically resemble adjectives). 1 to 8 are composed of a stem and a prefix, 9 and 10 are compounds.

Table 3. Manipuri numerals

əmə	1	təramathoy	11	kuntra	30
əni	2	təranithoy	12	niphú	40
əhúm	3	tərahúmdoy	13	yaŋkhəy	50
məri	4	təraməri	14	húmphu	60
məŋa	5	təraməŋa	15	húmphútəra	70
təruk	6	təratəruk	16	məriphú	80
təret	7	təratəret	17	məriphútəra	90
nipan	8	təranipan	18	čamə	100
məpan	9	təraməpan	19	čəni	200
təra	10	kun	20		

The prefixes have an established Proto-Tibeto-Burman ancestry but not all of these are used productively in the synchronic grammar of Meithei. The numerals 1, 2 and 3 consist of the attributive prefix *ə-* and the roots *mə* '1', *ni* '2' and *húm* '3'; 4 and 5 consist of *mə* 'one', and the root *li* '4' and *ŋa* '5'. 6 and 7 and 10 consist *tə* (of whose origin I am unsure), and *luk* '6', *let* '7' and *la* '10'. 8 and 9 are signalled as 2 minus 10 and 1 minus 10 respectively, where *pan* means 'subtract' and *mə* and *ni* are the roots for '1' and '2' respectively. The numerals 11, 12 and 13 consist of *təra* '10' and *thoy* 'exceed, excel': thus eleven is *təra* '10'+ *mə* '1' and *thoy* 'excel'. The *thoy* is dropped for the numerals from

14 to 19. The even numbers 40, 60, and 80 are created ˇˇrough multiplication of juxtaposed numbers, following a vigesimal system: t.…s *niphú* '40' is *ni* '2' times *phú* '20'; *húmphú* '60' is *húm* '3' times '20' and *məriphú* '80' is *məri* '4' times '20'.

The odd numbers 30, 50, 70 and 90 are an addition or/and division of two juxtaposed numerals. Thus *kuntra* '30' is *kun* '20' plus *tara* '10'; *yaŋkháy* '50' is *yaŋ* '100' which is divided in half as signalled by *kháy* 'divide'; *húmphútara* '70' which is *húm* '3' times one score plus *tara* '10' and *məriphútara* from *məri* '4' times one score plus *tara* '10'.

In 20 through 90 the multiplier comes before the added number but in 200 and upwards the multiplier comes after the added number. Thus *čəni* '200' from *čə* '100' and *ni* '2'.

Ordinal numerals are adjectives, derived through the affixation of the attributive prefix *ə-* and the nominalizer *-pə* to any numeral with *-su* 'also': thus *ənisubə* 'second one'. The only exception to this is *əhánbə* 'first' with which *-su* does not occur.

3.3.2 Verbs, adjectives, and adverbs

As was stated above, verb roots are listed in the actual lexicon and are bound forms. A verb may be a free standing word if it is minimally suffixed by an inflectional marker. Verb roots may also be used to form verbal nouns, adjectives and adverbs. Verbal nouns are formed through the suffixation of the nominalizer *-pə* to a verb root. Thus *čət* 'go' becomes *čətpə* 'to go, going'.

3.3.2.1 Adjectives

An adjective is derived through the affixation of the attributive derivational prefix *ə-* to a verbal noun. For example, the adjective *əčəwbə* 'big' is derived from the stative verb *čaw* 'be big': thus, *əčəwbə mí* 'big man' where *mí* is 'man'.[25] This prefix can be found in many of the languages of the Tibeto-Burman family. For example, Lepcha has a stressed variant *a-* which is used to derive adverbs from adjectives and Kachin, just as Meithei, has a *ə-* prefix to derive adjectives from verbs (Lehman 1976: 21).

Adjectives may appear before or after the nouns they modify, as seen in (15a,b). See section 6.1.2.5 for further discussion of this point.

(15) a. əwaŋbə			nupa ədu		iroyri		
ə	aŋ	-pə	nupa ə	-tu	i	-loy	-li
ATT	-tall	-NOM	man ATT	-ddet	water	-bath	-PROG
tall			man that		swimming		

'The tall man is swimming.'

b. *nupa əwaŋbə ədu iroyri*

Possessive adjectives are formed through the suffixation of the genitive marker *-ki* to the possessor of a noun (see section 3.3.1.1).

3.3.2.2 Adverbs

Manner adverbs are formed through the suffixation of *-nə* 'adverbial' to a verb root: for example, *loynə* 'completely, all' from *loy* 'complete, finish'. A manner adverb can be negated with the suffixation of the negative *-tə* before it is adverbialized with *-nə*: thus *wánə* 'sadly' becomes *wádənə* 'not sadly'. Locative adverbs are derived through the prefixation of *mə-* 'noun marker' to noun or verb roots.

Table 4. Derived locative adverbs in Meithei

Root	gloss	Adverb	gloss
khá	'south'	məkhá	'below, underneath'
khóŋ	'foot'	məkhóŋ	'at the foot'
tuŋ-	'be in back'	mətuŋ	'behind'
tón-	'be on top'	mətón	'at the tip'
nák-	'be adjacent'	mənák	'next to'
nuŋ-	'be in'	mənuŋ	'inside'
thək-	'be up'	məthəktə	'on top of, above'
thóŋ-	'be next to'	məthóŋ	'before, in front of'
məy	'tail'	məməy	'at the end'
pán	'bank'	məpán	'outside'

The meaning of a verb root is metaphorically extended when used as a locative adverb. For example, the root *khá* 'south' is used to mean 'below' or 'underneath' in the corresponding locative adverb *məkhá*. A representative list of locative adverbs along with the roots they are derived from is given in Table 4.

...temporal adverbs are frozen compounds. For example, *ŋasi* today, *ŋəraŋ* 'yesterday' and *həyeŋ* 'tomorrow' are most likely bimorᵖhemic although the meaning of the individual roots is not clear. Similarly, although (16a) is not considered bimorphemic by speakers, it is composed of recognizable Meithei verb roots.

(16) a. *həwǰik*

    həw -čik

    begin -sever

    'now'

A limited number of verb roots undergo zero derivation to function as adverbs and with this function appear as free forms. For example the verb *hek* 'pluck, pick' functions as an adverb to indicate 'just, precisely V'. In these cases, I assume that there are two lexical listings in the actual lexicon for the item *hek*, one as a verb and the other as an adverb.

(16) b. *hek láyrəkpəni*

    hék ləy -lək   -pə   -ni

    just buy -DISTAL -NOM -COP

    'just bought from there'

Adverbs may occur in a sequence in sentences. In this case, the order of adverbs determines their semantic scope. This sequence must occur to the left of the verb but does not necessarily have to be adjacent to the verb.

(16) c. *əy henna yamna čáy*

    əy hen -nə yam -nə čá -í

    I   more -ADV lot   -ADV eat -NHYP

    I   more   very   ate

    '(I've eaten) a bit more (than you).'

(16) d. *əy yamna henna čák čáy*

    əy yam -nə hen -nə čák čá -í

    I   lot   -ADV more -ADV rice eat -NHYP

    I   very   more   rice ate

    '(I've eaten) a lot more rice (than you).'

3.4 Minor lexical categories

The three minor lexical categories of Meithei are quantifiers, numerals and interjections. These are considered minor categories because these lexical items are closed sets which express meanings most often encoded by affixal morphology.

3.4.1 Quantifiers

Most quantifiers in Meithei are lexicalized forms consisting of the unproductive prefix *khV-*[26] (where the vowel can be *ə*, *i*, or *u*). These are *khərə* 'some' which indicates an indeterminate amount as in (17a); *khitáŋ*[27] 'ever so little, a particle' (composed of *khit* 'a little' and *táŋ* 'exclusive') of some tangible material as in (17b); and *khəjiktə* which indicates a short amount of time as in (17c).

(17) a. *satrə khərəna*

    satrə khərə -nə

    student some -AGN

    'by some students'

  b. *isiŋ khitáŋ purə?u*

    i   -siŋ khit -táŋ pu -lək   -u

    water -GPL little -EX   bring -DISTAL -IMP

    water   ever so little bring here

    'Bring me a little bit of water.'

  c. *čák khəjiktə   əmuktə*

    čák khə -čik -tə ə -muk -tə

    rice a while -sever -LOC ATT -once -LOC

    rice for a while   once again

    čáhənkho

    čá -hən -khi -o

    eat -CAUS -STILL -SOLCT

    cause to continue eat

    '(Will you), wait a while so that he can eat.'

These quantifiers can be combined as in *isiŋ khərə khitáŋ purə?u* 'Bring me just a little bit of water' (see (17a,b) above for gloss) where *khərə* and *khitáŋ* are used to emphasize the minuscule amount of water to be brought.

The quantifier *khərə* can also be used as an adverb as in (17d).

(17) d. *əynə*   *mábu*   *khərə khəŋŋí*

əy	-nə	má	-pu	khərə	khəŋ	-í
I	-CNTR	he	-PAT	some	know	-NHYP
I		him		some	know	

'I know him a little bit.'

A final quantifier with the *khV*- prefix is *khudiŋ* 'everyone' (17e).

(17) e. *satra* *khudiŋmək*   *təwbədi*   *nətte*

satra	khudiŋ	-mək	təw	-pə	-ti	nətte
student	each	-ONLY	do	-NOM	-DLMT	is not
student	each and everyone		that doing			is not

'...it isn't that each and every student does it.'

Other quantifiers that consist of a verb root and the adverbial marker *-nə* are *yamnə* 'very, a lot', *loynə* 'every', and *pumnə* 'all'. When used as quantifiers, *loynə* and *pumnə* must be affixed by *-mək* 'only'. See section 7.3.4 for examples and further discussion.

3.4.2 Postpositions

Two postpositions occur with singular pronouns: *-hák* 'at', which indicates an actor that is near the place of speech and *-ŋóndə* 'to' which refers to a goal that is distant from the speech event or the source of action. The probable source for *ŋón* is what DeLancey (1984: 62) calls a locative noun. He notes that locative nouns often function as dative or locative postpositions; for example, *naŋ* 'interior' in Tibetan, is used to mean 'inside'. This Tibetan form, *naŋ*, as well as Hayu *noŋ* 'locative' and Nocte *naŋ* 'locative, dative/ accusative', are obviously cognate with Meithei *-ŋóndə*, which is most likely a lexicalization of a locative noun *-ŋón* and the locative marker *-tə*. The origin of *-hák* might be *hák* which is a productive stem in Meithei meaning 'body', as in *hákthóŋ* 'confidant' where *hák* is compounded with the stem *thóŋ* 'near'. *-hák* or *-ŋóndə* may be used with the first person singular pronoun to indicate the amount of control the speaker has over the action expressed by the verb: when *-hák* is used the speaker is pointing out the inclusion of self in current activity; when *-ŋóndə* is used the speaker indicates that he/she is undergoing some action that is not under his/her control.

(18) a. *·hák*   *čə́tkhregé*

əy	-hák	čət	-khi	-lə	-e	háy	-ke
I	-here	go	-STILL	-PERF	-ASRT	say	-OPT
I		want to have gone					

I will go now (lit: I want to say, I am gone).

b. *layriktu*   *əyŋóndə*   *pirəmde*

layrik	-tu	əy	-ŋón	-tə	pí	-ləm	-tə	-e
book	-DDET	I	-to	-LOC	give	-EVD	-NEG	-ASRT
that book		to me			not give			

'That book was not given to me.'

-hák is commonly omitted in casual speech styles but is used in the writt[en] language and in more formal speech styles (N. Promodini Devi 1989: 22). T[he] forms *nəhák* and *məhák*, rather than the bare pronouns, are considered 'mo[re] polite' probably since they are associated with written and formal speech styl[es]. According to N. Promodini Devi, it is possible for a speaker to utilize t[he] choice between a bare pronoun form and a pronoun marked with *-hák*, refle[c]ting a semantics for pronouns much like that described for French, Germ[an] and Italian in Brown and Gilman (1960). For example, *nəhák* may be used [to] indicate the speaker's respect or social distance with the addressee where *naŋ* may be used to indicate the speaker's disrespect or intimacy with the a[d]dressee. This accounts for why *-hák* is often described as an honorific or marker of respect (Ch. Yashawanta Singh 1984 and P. Madhubala Devi 197[?] among others), however, I do not adopt this analysis since *-hák* also occu[rs] with the first person pronoun.

3.4.3 Interjections

The lexical items in this category, which is defined on the semantic similarity [of] its members, all express strong emotion. Some of these are composite form[s] where one syllable is identifiable as the exasperative enclitic *-hé* (see sectio[n] 7.3 for further discussion) and the second syllable is not identifiable as a pr[o]ductive affix or stem.

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