International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)
E-ISSN: 2582-2160 ● Website: www.ijfmr.com ● Email: editor@ijfmr.com

Numerals in Barman Thar

Primly Baruah

Research Scholar, Department of Linguistics, Assam University, Silchar

Abstract

This paper presents a detail of the numeral system in Barman Thar, a highly endangered Tibeto-Burman language of Assam. The numeral formation in Barman Thar is primarily decimal and compounding. Classification of numerals are: cardinal, ordinal, fractional, multiplicative, approximative, distributive, collective, indefinite and restrictive. Both affixation and reduplication in used here to construct complex numerals. This paper contributes to the documentation of this lesser-known Tibeto-Burman language.

Keywords: Barman Thar, numeral system, compounding.

Introduction

Barman Thar is a lesser-studied Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Assam spoken by the Barman Kachari Community. Particularly spoken in the districts of Baksa and Udalguri of Assam and also in some parts of Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh. The linguistic vitality of Barman Thar is threatened due to various factors like: domination of regional languages like Assamese and Bodo. According to UNESCO's language endangerment criteria, factors such as intergenerational transmission, and attitude of the speakers play a crucial role in language shift. Assamese is also used by them as their medium of instruction. One more factor that contributes to the endangerment of this language is prestige-driven language shift, they choose to speak Assamese over Barman Thar.

The study of numeral systems provides valuable insights into the morphology of a language, especially in under-documented languages. This study describes the numeral system of Barman Thar by classifying and illustrating each type of numeral used in the language. The formation processes involve compounding, suffixation, prefixation, and reduplication.

Numeral System of Barman Thar

The value of numerals appears to be purely decimal type. However, compounding is the morphological process used to form higher numerals in Barman Thar. Numerals in Barman Thar can be classified as:

1. Cardinal Numerals
2. Ordinal Numerals
3. Fractional numerals
4. Multiplicative Numerals
5. Approximative Numerals
6. Distributive Numerals
7. Collective Numerals
8. Indefinite Numerals
9. Restrictive Numerals

1. Cardinal Numerals

Cardinal Numbers are basically counting numbers.

In Barman Thar, Cardinal numerals can be further classified into two types:

a. Basic Numerals
b. Compound Numerals

a. Basic Numerals

The numerals from one/1 to 9/ nine are considered as the basic numerals. The basic numerals in Barman Thar are illustrated below:

Value	Gloss	Numerals
1	One	Goisa
2	Two	Gini
3	Three	gitʰam
4	Four	Brui
5	Five	Zakou
6	Six	Seja
7	Seven	Sini
8	Eight	sɛt
9	Nine	ʧugu
10	Ten	ʧikhaŋ

It can be mentioned that morpheme -ʧi represents 'ten' which is used to form multiples of ten, such as giniʧi i.e.,'two × ten';

gitʰamʧi i.e.,'three × ten'

bruiʧi i.e 'four×ten'; etc.

b. Compound Numerals

In addition to basic numerals, numerals in Barman Thar are also formed by compounding. Compound numerals are formed by juxtaposition of two or more free morphemes. These formations are head-initial ordering and morpheme reduction is also seen here.

Compound numerals in Barman Thar can be classified into the following categories:

1. Additive Compound Numerals
2. Multiplicative Compound Numerals

Additive Compound Numerals

Additive Compound Numerals are formed by compounding the basic numerals from one/1 to 9/nine. In Barman Thar, higher numerals usually precede the lower numerals. The head sits to the left of the compound word. The morpheme -khaŋ is dropped from ʧikhaŋ '10' onwards to form the numerals 11, 21, 31, 41, 51, 61, 71 and so on. The suffix '-ou' is being dropped from zakou 'five' to form higher numerals.

Consider the following examples:

Barman Thar Cardinal Number	**Gloss**
ʧi-goisa (10+1=11)	eleven

ʧi-gini (10+2=12)	twelve
ʧi-gitʰam (10+3=13)	thirteen
ʧi-brui (10+4=14)	fourteen

The number twenty in Barman Thar is giniʧi i.e., 'two × ten'. The formation of numerals from 21/ twenty-one to twenty-nine/ 29 are illustrated below:

Barman Thar Cardinal Numbers	**Gloss**
giniʧi-goisa (20+1=21)	twenty-one
giniʧi-gini (20+2=22)	twenty-two
giniʧi-gitʰam (20+3=23)	twenty-three
giniʧi-brui (20+4=24)	twenty-four
giniʧi-zak (20+5=25)	twenty-five

The number thirty in Barman Thar is tʰamʧi 'three × ten'. The formation of numerals from 31/ thirty-one to 39/ thirty-nine are illustrated below:

Barman Thar Cardinal Numbers	**Gloss**
tʰamʧi-goisa (30+1=31)	thirty-one
tʰamʧi-gini (30+2=32)	thirty-two
tʰamʧi-gitʰam (30+3=33)	thirty-three
tʰamʧi-brui (30+4=34)	thirty-four
tʰamʧi-zak (30+5=35)	thirty-five

The number forty in Barman Thar is bruiʧi 'four× ten'. The formation of numerals from 41/ forty-one to 49/ forty-nine are illustrated below:

Barman Thar Cardinal Numbers	**Gloss**
bruiʧi-goisa (40+1=41)	forty-one
bruiʧi-gini (40+2=42)	forty-two
bruiʧi-gitʰam (40+3=43)	forty -three
bruiʧi-brui (40+4=44)	forty -four
bruiʧi-zak (40+5=45)	forty -five

Multiplicative Compound Numerals

Multiplicative Compound Numerals like twenty/20, thirty/20, forty/40, fifty/50, sixty/60, seventy/70,

eighty/80 and ninety/90 are formed by multiplication of basic numerals × ten. As mentioned earlier here, ten is represented as ʧi. The formation of numerals from 20/twenty to 90/ ninety are illustrated below:

Barman Thar Cardinal Numbers	**Gloss**
giniʧi (2×10=20)	Twenty
tʰamʧi (3×10=30)	Thirty
bruiʧi (4×10=40)	Forty
zakʧi (5×10=50)	Fifty
sejaʧi (6×10=60)	Sixty
siniʧi (7×10=70)	Seventy
sɛtʧi (8×10=80)	Eighty
ʧuguʧi (9×10=90)	Ninety

The formation of numerals from ‘one hundred/100’ to two lakh/200000 is illustrated below:

Barman Thar Cardinal Numbers	**Gloss**
rizisa (100×1=100)	One hundred
rizigini (100×2=200)	Two hundred
rizigitʰam (100×3=200)	Three hundred
rizibrui (100×4=400)	Four hundred
rizizak (100×5=500)	Five hundred

It is to be noted that morpheme -sa is used to form only in one hundred and one thousand. It is also to be noted that prefix goi has been dropped to form higher numerals like 100, 1000 and 100000. For the numeral one/1 goisa, the prefix goi- is being dropped and -sa is only used to form higher numerals. And the rest of the numerals are formed by multiplication of the century root rizi with the corresponding basic numerals. The formation of thousand and lakh is illustrated in the following examples:

Barman Thar Cardinal Numbers	**Gloss**
hazalsa (1000×1=1000)	One thousand
hazalgini (1000×2=2000)	Two thousand
laksa (100000×1=100000)	One lakh
lakgini (100000×2=200000)	Two lakhs

2. Ordinal Number System

Like any other Tibeto-Burman numerals, Barman Thar too has both Cardinal and Ordinal Number System. Ordinal forms are derived using suffixes, -ni, such as gitʰam-ni 'third', brui-ni 'fourth', etc. gudi 'first' and ginni 'second' are lexicalized. The formation of ordinal numbers is illustrated below:

Barman Thar Cardinal Numbers	**Gloss**
Gudi	First
Ginni	Second
gitʰam-ni	Third
brui-ni	Fourth
zakou-ni	Fifth

3. Fractional Number System:

Fractions are used to represent part whole. It can be divided into two parts: Monomorphemic Fraction and Dimorphemic Fractions.

The formation of fractional numeral is illustrated below:

a. Monomorphemic Fraction:

Barman Thar Cardinal Number	Gloss
ad ɛk	Half

b. Dimorphemic Fraction:

In Barman Thar it is formed by adding -bantʰau in the middle.

Barman Thar Cardinal Numbers	**Gloss**
gitʰam bantʰau goisa	one-third
brui bantʰau goisa	one fourth
zak bantʰau goisa	one fifth

4. Multiplicative Numerals

In barman Thar multiplicative numerals are denoted by suffixing the morpheme samau before the base numeral. The formation of fractional numerals is illustrated below:

Barman Thar Cardinal Numbers	Numerals
goisa-samau	Once
gini-samau	Twice
gitʰam-samau	Thrice
brui-samau	Four times
zak-samau	Five times
seja-samau	Six times
sini-samau	Seven times
sɛt-samau	Eight times
ʧugu-samau	Nine times
ʧikhaŋ-samau	Ten times

5. Approximative Numerals

In Barman Thar, reduplication of bɔgla bɔglou can be observed which marks approximate quantities. The formation of approximative numerals is illustrated below:

Barman Thar Cardinal Numbers	**Gloss**
bɔgla bɔglou gitʰama	approx.three
bɔgla bɔglou ʧikhaŋne	approx ten
bɔgla bɔglou rizisane	approx hundred

6. Distributive Numerals

In Barman Thar, a distributive numeral is formed by using post-nominal particles. The formation of distributive numerals is illustrated below:

Barman Thar Cardinal Numbers	**Gloss**
gitʰam-a gizib	three fans each
brui-ne kʰad	four baskets each
zak-ne dɔmdɔma	five elephants each

7. Collective Numeral

In Barman Thar, collective numeral is formed by adding the morpheme zura after the base numerals.

Barman Thar Cardinal Number	Gloss
goisa zura	a pair

8. Indefinite numerals

In Barman Thar, indefinite numerals are adjectives which express vague quantities. The prefixing of -ba can be observed, except in one word, i.e., ziku ba-goisa ‘anyone’. Here, -ba is inserted in the middle. The formation of Indefinite numerals is illustrated below:

Barman Thar Cardinal Numbers	**Gloss**
ba-kʰaniba	some/few’
ba-ŋkʰal	Many
ziku ba-goisa	Anyone

9. Restrictive Numerals

In Barman Thar, restrictive numerals are formed by prefixing maŋa to the cardinal numerals. The formation of Restrictive numerals is illustrated below:

Barman Thar Cardinal Numbers	**Gloss**
maŋa goisa	Only one
maŋa gini	Only two
maŋa gitʰam	Only three

Conclusion

The numeral system of Barman Thar is structurally rich and demonstrates morphological processes. From simple numerals to complex approximative and distributive types, the language uses compounding, affixation, and reduplication. The lexicalization of ordinal numbers in Barman Thar shows the existence of compound forms which shows a coherent number paradigm. The unique morphological strategies such as the dropping of morphemes (e.g., -khaŋ in tens and -ou in fives), the insertion of suffixes like -ni and -samau, and the use of classifiers and reduplication shows the grammatical richness of the language. These features not only align with patterns observed in other Tibeto-Burman languages (Matisoff, 2003; DeLancey, 2011) but also exhibit language-specific innovations.This study contributes to both descriptive linguistics and understanding of this highly endangered language. Documentation of such numeral systems is essential for linguistic preservation and comparative analysis within the language family.

References

1. Joseph, U. V., & Burling, R. (2001). Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area, 24(2).
2. Lyons, J. (1981). Language and Linguistics: An Introduction. Cambridge University Press.
3. Thurgood, G., & LaPolla, R. J. (2003). The Sino-Tibetan Languages. Routledge.
4. Matisoff, J. A. (2003). Handbook of Proto-Tibeto-Burman: System and Philosophy of Sino-Tibetan Reconstruction. University of California Press.
5. DeLancey, S. (2011). Morphological Typology of Sino-Tibetan. Linguistic Typology, 15(2), 391–402.
6. Matisoff, J. A. (2003). Handbook of Proto-Tibeto-Burman: System and Philosophy of Sino-Tibetan Reconstruction. University of California Press.
7. DeLancey, S. (2011). Morphological Typology of Sino-Tibetan. Linguistic Typology, 15(2), 391–402.