

## MODES OF GREETING IN MEITEILON-BURMESE-ENGLISH

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### ABSTRACT

The primary goal of this paper is to explore and examine the modes of greeting in English- Meiteilon-Burmese languages. This paper tries to focus on the function of modes of address which comprises of noun and or verb phrases. The noun phrase may be the honorific form, professional titles, figurative usage, names or personal pronoun and the function of verb phrase observed in one particular speech events, that of greetings. The verbal part is accompanied by non verbal behavior which is equally important. The study also shows gestures as an inseparable aspect of the act of greeting. These three languages shows an explicit expression of honorific terms used by the people which tell the nerve of the internal behavior in the society.

**Key words:** phatic communion, figurative, addressee, intimate, honorific, superior-inferior.

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### INTRODUCTION

Meiteilon, also known as Manipuri language is a Tibeto-Burman language. It is spoken in the state of Manipur and also in the adjoining North-Eastern states of India. It borders Myanmar to the east, Mizoram to the south, Nagaland to the north and Assam to the west and north-west. This state can claim a geographically unique position, since it virtually is the meeting point between India and south-east Asia. English and Meiteilon are the state languages. Burmese belongs to the southern Burmish branch of the Tibeto-Burman sub- grouping under the Sino-Tibetan language family. Burmese is the official language of Myanmar. Myanmar lies in Mainland south-east Asia, bordered by India in the northwest, Bangladesh and the Bay of Bengal in the west, the Andaman sea in the southwest, China in the north and Laos and Thailand in the east. English belongs to the Germanic languages of the Indo-European language family. It is spoken as a first language by the majority populations the United Kingdom, the United states, Canada, Australia, Ireland, New Zealand and a number of Caribbean nations; moreover, it is an official language of almost sixty sovereign states. It is the third most common native language in the world, after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish (Ross, 2005). Because, English is so widely spoken, it has often been referred to as a world language, the lingua franca of the modern era. Typologically, the basic word order of these three languages are Subject-Object-Verb for Meiteilon and Burmese whereas Subject-Verb-Object for English.

Greeting is one of the uses of language engaged in initial encounters. "Malinowski has given the name phatic communion as a technical term to denote the type of socially necessary idle chatter" (Robins 1986). Indeed, phatic communion is used for establishing an atmosphere or maintaining social contact rather than for exchanging information contained in a greeting phrase. Greetings can occur in verbal and /or non verbal forms, depending upon the situation. If the interlocutors are known to each other than a greeting can start by asking about their health, profession, happiness or food. How one addresses or speaks to a person depends on his or her age and social status. It depends on the type of social relationship between the speaker and the addressee. That is the more equal and intimate the speaker is to him, the more he would call him by name and the less equal and more distant he is to him, the more he would call him with title of address. Thus, two forms of speech are reflected in the society; they are i) honorific and ii) normal form of speech. In a society, how one addresses or speaks to a person depends on certain parameters, namely, age difference, sex difference, social status and the nature of relationship i.e. intimate-non intimate; formal-informal; kin- non-kin etc.

In Meiteilon and Burmese there are no stereotyped expressions for greeting like hello! hi!, good morning, good-evening as in English. Greeting is the domain –appropriate behavior which results from a combination of the trio: the domain –appropriate places, the domain-appropriate times (or occasions) and the domain- appropriate persons (Misra 2003). The present paper attempts to study the function of modes of address such as use of Honorific forms, Professional titles, Figurative usage, Names and the function of verb phrase observed in one particular speech event, that of greetings.

In Meiteilon, greeting comprises of noun and or verb phrases. Noun phrase may be the modes of address which may be honorific, names/personal pronoun or figurative usage. Noun phrase (NP) with gesture of nodding and smiling at the addressee is a common form of greeting, e.g. oja 'teacher!', k<sup>h</sup>ura, 'uncle(paternal)!'. Again, using only a verb phrase for greeting is also possible under one condition i.e. of similar age or status or if the addressee is younger than the speaker, e.g. kəɾəm-təu ri 'How are you?', nuŋai-ri-ko 'Hope everything is fine' .

Under the honorific form of speech the polite marker –pi ~ -bi is suffixed to the verb. Other polite speech marker like the reflexive suffix-cə ~ -jə are used to specify the degree of politeness the speaker intends to express toward the encountered person. To form a very formal request form, it is necessary to use polite forms (Yashawanta, 2000). The normal form is commonly spoken based on factor like the degree of familiarity including kin- non-kin relation.

A high degree of similarity is also observed in Burmese as that of Meiteilon. Both the languages share common forms of greetings like a question such as "have you eaten?" or "where are you going?" But, these forms of greetings are not used to someone new or stranger. In Burmese the word mingalaba 'auspiciousness to you (literally- it's a blessing)' is the standard greeting. Another similarity between these two languages is observed in gesture form like nodding, smiling for greeting. Nowadays, to greet each other with a handshake is very common.

Some examples such as u ba 'Mr./respected Ba!', daw mya 'elder sister Mya!', etc. are Noun phrases (NP) with gesture of nodding and smiling at the addressee for greeting. Whereas ne-kaun-yéh-là 'how are you?', min-gala-ba 'auspiciousness to you (literally- it's a blessing)', etc. are Verb phrases for greeting. In Burmese, when meeting a stranger, the first thing one says is mingalaba, literally 'it's a blessing'. The common form of greeting for those who are well known to each other may be ne kaun yéh là 'How are you?'

One of the unique characteristics found in Burmese is the usage of first and second personal pronoun in the formal speech. Based on the sex, the terminology also changes i.e. women should use s<sup>h</sup>in 'you' when addressing someone, and cəma 'I' whereas for men should use k<sup>h</sup>əmya 'you' and cəno 'I'. These words are appropriate for most situations but should not be used in addressing monks.

As Meiteilon and Burmese belong to the same family, i.e. Tibeto-Burman family, they share linguistically and culturally much in common. English on the other hand differ in many aspects. It's common to use different greetings depending on whether you greet a friend, family or a business associate. There are also greetings that are used with people you do not know very well. Introductions are the first phrases we say when we meet someone new. It is common to greet the person with "How do you do?/ pleased to meet you"

the correct response is "How do you do." In English, there are different ways to greet people in formal and informal situations, e.g. Good day Sir / Madam (very formal), Good morning, etc. for formal greeting and 'Hi / hello', 'How are you?', etc. for informal greeting. It is common to use a special greeting used just for that occasion on special days, holidays and other special occasions.

Examples:

| Greetings                             | Occasions                   |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Happy birthday!                    | Birthdays                   |
| 2. Congratulations!                   | Wedding / Anniversary       |
| 3. Merry Christmas!                   | Special Holidays            |
| 4. Congratulations on your promotion! | Special Occasions           |
| 5. Have a good journey.               | Long Trips, Vacations, etc. |

Burmese and Meiteilon do not have greetings for departing such as 'Goodbye', 'Good night', etc. as in English. Instead, cə tcə rage/yə wjə rage 'May I take your leave (literally)' with the response lenbiro 'Yes, please (literally)' from the addressee. Similarly, for Burmese, twa-ba-oun-meh 'I am leaving now' with the response kaun-ba-bi 'Ok, please go (good bye)'.

2.0 Modes of address: The mode of address in Meiteilon and Burmese consists of a NP which may consist of a single noun or pronoun or consist of a group of words. The noun may be an honorific term, figurative term, name (proper noun or common noun) or professional title. Some nouns in modes of address of Meiteilon are formed by compounding of noun, adjective or verbal roots e.g. mithuŋ-len → mi 'person (noun root)' + thuŋ-'arrive (verb root)' + -len 'special (adjective root)' → 'chief guest'. Similarly, in Burmese s<sup>h</sup>aya-won → s<sup>h</sup>aya 'teacher (noun root)' + won 'medicine (noun root)'. The term s<sup>h</sup>aya (male)/ s<sup>h</sup>aya-má (female) literally means teacher but as it is a term of respect, visitors of all occupations may find that this is the way they are addressed. Semantically in English also we do find such types of compounding, such as chief guest.

The modes of address may be classified into four categories. They are i) Honorific forms, ii) Professional titles, iii) Figurative usage and iv) Names.

2.1 Honorific forms: The honorific dimension is introduced to account for the differentiation of the personal pronoun in certain languages, not in terms of their reference to the role of the participants in the situation of utterance, but in terms of their relative status or degree of intimacy.

Meiteilon shows an explicit expression of honorific terms used by the people which tell the nerve of the internal behavior in the society. The usage of honorific should be based firstly on the situational setting namely; a) The place of greeting, i.e. home, university, temple or public places, b) Time of greeting or occasion i.e. occasion of sorrow or happiness; secondly on the participant's social identity: age, sex, education, class or status; and thirdly, on the nature of relationship between the interlocutor: formal-informal, kin- non kin, superior-inferior, intimate-non intimate. Yet, in Meitei society, we do find that superiors also speak in polite forms to the inferiors who are elders because due respect are shown to them. It is commonly considered to be cultured for those who use polite forms of speech irrespective of age, status or situational setting factor. The followings are some common honorific forms used nowadays.

For example:

1. ikaikhum-nə-jə-rə-bə 'honorable (M)'
2. ikaikhum-nə-jə-rə-bi 'honorable (F)'
3. mithuŋ-len 'chief guest'
4. əhəl ibuŋŋo 'enlighten senior'
5. oja ibuŋŋo 'enlighten master/teacher'

The salutation addressed to a high-ranking person may comprise of polite term of address besides the title and the name. The name begins with connotation of gender i.e. ikai khumna-(jə)-ra-bə/bi or shri/shrimati/kumari (for unmarried); and the last name may be meitei/meetei/singh (for Hindus) in case of male and leima or chanu(unmarried) and devi (for Hindus) in case of female. The last name indicates the religion i.e. Meitei marup/Sana-məhi lainiŋ/Pakhəŋbə-lainiŋ (indigenous religion) uses meitei/meetei (male)/leima or chanu (female) where chanu refers to unmarried while hindus uses Singh (male)/Devi (female).

The honorific terms of address used by the royals or royal descendants (commonly known as RK's) are different from the commoners or normal form. Some aspects of differentiation between the RK terms and normal forms are the terms of address while referring their elders the honorific *-si* is suffixed to the kin terms, e.g. *i-ma-si* (used for RKs), *i-ma* (normal) 'mother'.

But, certain exceptional cases like *yamburj* 'elder brother' in RK's term and commoner's is *tadə*. The term *paburj-sənəkhwa* 'father' was conventionally restricted to a king (i.e. in the RK groups) and his immediate relatives, such as his brothers. It may be noted that the honorific suffix-*si* is never used in terms for younger kin in ego's generation or descending generations (Pramodini 1989). In some of the well-to-do families, parents now teach their children to address them by honorific forms. They are respectively called by their children *paburj* 'father' instead of *baba* or *pabə*. In contemporary royal descendants young children address their parents by the normal form of address *i-ma* 'mother' instead of *i-ma-si* indicating closeness or solidarity rather than distance or power.

Some honorifics at the level of noun, pronoun shows extra or higher honorifics depending on the participants (the greeter and the greeted) as follows:

Nouns:

|    | Higher honorific forms | Normal     | Gloss     |
|----|------------------------|------------|-----------|
| 6. | <i>luk</i>             | <i>cak</i> | 'rice'    |
| 7. | <i>səŋgai</i>          | <i>yum</i> | 'house'   |
| 8. | <i>caithəbəirujəbə</i> |            | 'bathing' |
| 9. | <i>leŋsinbə cəŋbə</i>  |            | 'enter'   |

Interestingly, there are also verbal forms of honorific derived by the suffixation of nominalizer *-bə~pə* to the verb.

Verbal forms:

|     | Higher honorific forms | Normal | Gloss      |
|-----|------------------------|--------|------------|
| 10. | <i>phan-bə thək-pə</i> |        | 'to drink' |
| 11. | <i>leŋ-bə cət-pə</i>   |        | 'to go'    |
| 12. | <i>ha-bə ca-bə</i>     |        | 'to eat'   |

The above stated higher honorific forms of noun or verb cannot co-occur with the normal form of noun or verb: as in the following sentences cited in (Yashawanta 2000)

- 13. *luk ha-bi-ro* 'please have your meal'
- 14. *cak ca-bi-ro* 'please have your meal'
- 15. *səŋgai-də leŋ-bi-ro* 'please go to the house'
- 16. *yum-də cət-pi-ro* 'please go to the house'
- 17. \* (a) *cak ha-bi-ro*
- \* (b) *luk ha-bi-ro*

The sentences 42 (a) and (b) are unacceptable, because of a constraint that the noun or verb of higher honorific forms cannot follow the noun or verb of the normal form and vice versa. Greeting serves a great variety of purposes such as to express respect; the social customs and to be sociable. Nowadays, the words which have a connotation of respect like *nakhuya thambal* 'at your feet' or loan word *coron*; *khaŋcet- nəmphaŋ* 'dress' is normally referring to God and Goddess.

Burmese society is also very much similar to that of Meitei/Manipuri. For the Burmese, how one addressee or speaker to person depends on his age and social status. When addressing a monk, a special form of speech must be used e.g. while speaking to monks by a male speaker, the honorific *dəbɛɛ d* 'honorable disciple' is used and the honorific *dəbɛɛ d-ma* 'honorable disciple' is used by female speaker. The term 'u', 'daw', 'ko', etc. are used in front of the proper name or kin name as honorifics (Wheatley, 2003). There are some more examples given below:

|     | Honorific          |                            | Usage                     |
|-----|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 18. | <i>ashin phəyà</i> | 'lord (second person)'     | Used for monks & nobles   |
| 19. | <i>bo/ bogyok</i>  | 'Commander/General/Leader' | Used for military officer |
| 20. | <i>maurj</i>       | 'brother'                  | To address young boys     |

|     |          |               |                         |
|-----|----------|---------------|-------------------------|
| 21. | saya     | 'teacher'     | Used for male teacher   |
| 22. | sayama   | 'teacher'     | Used for female teacher |
| 23. | sayadaw' | royal teacher | Used for senior monk    |

In Burmese, there are also verbal forms of honorific derived by the suffixation of polite marker -ba to the verb.

Examples:

|     |       |                   |
|-----|-------|-------------------|
| 24. | ci-ba | 'please! look at' |
| 25. | ca-ba | 'please, eat'     |
| 26. | la-ba | 'please, come'    |

English society is much different from both Meitei/Manipuri and Burmese. In English the broad rule for forms of address is that those who are intimates address each other with given first-name terms e.g. George and Sue, whereas those who are acquaintances use a title and family name, the last-name terms e.g. Mr Jones, Mrs/Ms/Miss Smith. Strangers are addressed with the titles, Sir (male), Madam (female) in more or less formal situations. This rule has, however, many refinements and exceptions.

Between strangers who are social equals, there are no polite forms of address in general use. Certain forms are used in limited circumstances, such as 'Ladies and gentlemen', 'Sir and Madam', 'Friends', etc. are widely used as titles of respect, even for acquaintances, particularly those of more advanced years than the speaker, including in some traditional groups by children to any adult.

It has been common for males to address each other by surname alone like, 'Good to see you, Brown!', or, affectionately, 'Brown, my dear chap, it's good to see you!' in the public places like clubs, etc. In casual situations, men of all classes and backgrounds may employ strong, even taboo expressions affectionately.

In Britain, royal and noble titles have been in use since the Middle Ages, often involving complex conventions of address and precedence. The followings are the honorific titles used for royal families.

|     | Title                  | Remarks   |
|-----|------------------------|---|
| 27. | Your Majesty           | For king and queen  |
| 28. | Your Royal Highness    | For kings and queen   |
| 29. | His/Her Royal Highness | For members of royal family                                 |
| 30. | Lord/lordship          | younger sons of dukes & marquesses                          |
| 31. | Lady                   | For wives of lords, knights, daughter of dukes & marquesses |
| 32. | Sir                    | For knights   |

When the highly formal 'Your Majesty/Excellency/Holiness/Eminence', etc., are used, the style is usually oblique, e.g. 'Would Your Majesty care to honour us with a few words?'

2.2 Professional titles: In olden days Meitei has its own professional titles, but it seems that those titles are already replaced by the borrowed foreign terms. This is in fact due to the drastic change in the socio political system of modern Meitei society. Manipur was a kingdom before merging to the Indian dominion in 1949. Since then the change in the lifestyle, system of governance, system of education make a new beginning of a culture though its core remains intake. New terms which were not available before had to be used by borrowing from the source. Another interesting phenomenon was to introduce phrase or idioms of foreign languages e.g. Sanskrit/Bengali (in slightly olden days), Hindi/English during speech is found to be very common amongst the educated people to highlight them as educated/enlighten people. These are some possible reason for the replacement of various professional titles. The followings are some professional titles. Some olden/archaic professional titles:-

|     |               |                               |
|-----|---------------|-------------------------------|
| 33. | maicəu        | 'scholar/enlighten one'       |
| 34. | selunjbə '    | accountant/cashier'           |
| 35. | pakhəŋ-lak-pə | 'head of youth affair (male)' |
| 36. | lanjiŋ-purel  | 'commander general'           |
| 37. | əmai-bə/bi    | 'priest/priestess'            |

Some modern professional titles:-

|     |   |  |                  |
|-----|---|--|------------------|
| 38. | oja   |  | 'teacher/master' |
| 39. | daktər (academic and medicine)              |  | 'doctor'         |
| 40. | prophesar                                   |  | 'professor'      |
| 41. | sar (any male official or professional)     |  | 'sir'            |
| 42. | medam (any female official or professional) |  | 'madam'          |

Burmese have their respective profession titles (Okell, 1969). Some common professional titles are given below. Use of phrases or idioms for professional title is also quite common, e.g. saya wun 'master medicine' literally doctor.

|     |          |                            |                           |
|-----|----------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 43. | saya     | 'teacher'                  | Used for male teacher     |
| 44. | saya-ma  | 'teacher'                  | Used for female teacher   |
| 45. | sayadaw  | royal teacher              | Used for senior monk      |
| 46. | saya-wun | 'doctor'                   | Used for male/female      |
| 47. | bogyok   | 'Commander/General/Leader' | Used for military officer |
| 48. | kăhtiká  | 'lecturer'                 | Used for male/female      |

In Britain, there is unique system of using professional titles e.g. the academic title Professor (Prof.) is restricted to holders of a professorial chair. In the military, titles for ranks are regularly used as forms of address, e.g. Captain and the title may be used along with surname. Similarly, titles for the clergy may be used in addressing them, e.g. Father Brown, Sister Bernadette, etc. Conventionally, most of the professional titles used in the modern days in various countries are derived from Britain or the United States.

2.3 Figurative usage: Kin terms are used figuratively in Meitei society for the purpose of stressing some particular quality associated with kin. They may be employed momentarily, as when an old woman is addresses as abok 'grandmother' in order to imply intimacy and age difference and when icanupa 'son' or icanupi 'daughter' is used to underline the seniority of the speaker. Again, the word ibunjo 'my dear (male)' and ibemmə 'my dear (female)' may be used to address younger ones in polite form or it may be used as honorific suffixes. Figurative usages may be particular to a given relationship, as when children are encouraged to address friends of their parents who adopt an avuncular role as ine/nene/ənti (aunty) or khura/kaka/əŋkəl (uncle). In short, it implies a quality of behavior than a status, fraternity rather than the kin relationship to the person addressed. In Meiteilon there are also kin terms which are used as term of address reflecting the degree of respect and politeness leading to honorific and normal form in greeting. They are illustrated below.

| Honorific      | normal        | Gloss         |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|
| pabuŋ          | pabə/baba     | father        |
| ima-ibemmə     | ima           | mother        |
| pabuŋ-hən      | ipən/baji     | elder uncle   |
| khura-ibunjo   | khura         | younger uncle |
| indol-ibemmə   | indol/indomca | younger aunt  |
| tamo/taybuŋ-ŋo | tadə          | elder brother |

Similarly, the kin terms are also used figuratively in Burmese. For deference in the case of older women terms like do-do 'aunty', əma 'elder sister', etc. and for older male of father's generation kin terms like əphei 'father', ù 'uncle' are normally used; likewise the terms tuma 'niece', thămì 'daughter', mauŋ 'younger brother', etc. are used for addressing younger persons. In Burmese the usage of kin terms as figurative is simply indicating relationship terms or as a personal reference only unlike in Meiteilon where there are honorific and normal forms of kin terms which are employed as figurative as discuss above.

As in other languages, English also use Kinship terms as figurative. The terms are similar as those used within families, e.g. Father, Grandfather, Grandmother, Mother. Interestingly, in the British upper classes, Mama and Papa (stress on second syllable) for father and mother is commonly used. According to region and class, there is also variations in usage of kin terms such as Dad/Daddy, Mom/Momma/Mum/Mammy/Mommy/Mummy; Pa/Pop/Poppa, etc. It is to be noted that Father, mother, brother, sister have been extended beyond the family for religious purposes and to express fellowship.

2.4 Names: Names considered here may be proper names e.g. Tomba, Chaoba, Thonglen, Khamba etc. or common names e.g. m̄rup/itau/bhai (where bhai is borrowed word) 'friend/pal', som/ədom 'you (marked), n̄hak 'you [slightly marked than n̄ 'you (unmarked)]'. Names are used when the interlocutors are of same age or the addresser is older than the addressee. But, names are also used by younger persons to older persons along with an honorific title when there is a need of more specification; e.g. tamo tombə 'brother Tomba'. Here the person Tomba may or may not be the actual brother of the addresser. Similarly, a student of younger age to his/her teacher as oja/sar m̄nglem 'teacher/sir Manglem' is also acceptable in the society.

The personal pronoun som/ədom 'you (polite)' is used to a person who is non-intimate or a stranger to the addresser.

Example:

- |     |                               |                        |
|-----|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| 49. | ədom-bu t̄ramnə okc̄ə-ri '(I) | Welcome you (polite)'. |
| 50. | som nuŋai-bi-ri-ko            | 'How are you?'         |

In Burmese, first and second personal pronoun differ from each other in the degree of respect and politeness implied, reflecting a formal or familiar relationship and the relative status and age of the speaker and hearer. Some are also differentiated by the sex of the speaker.

|                | Personal pronoun | Sex of speaker | Degree of politeness |
|----------------|------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| First person:  | ŋa 'I'           | either M/F     | familiar, impolite   |
|                | c̄naw 'I' M      | polite         |                      |
|                | c̄má 'I' F       | polite         |                      |
| Second person: | niñ 'you'        | either/F       | familiar, impolite   |
|                | kh̄myà 'you'     | M              | polite               |
|                | shin 'you'       | F              | polite               |

Burmese use appropriate titles and pronouns when addressing each other. For addressing male person, the polite form 'u' is place in front of the name, e.g. u myint myint 'Respected/Mr. Myint Myint'. It is also used in case of a government official or somebody of high social status. Again for addressing a female or a female official, 'daw' is placed in front of the name e.g. daw mya 'Respected/Mrs. Mya'. When addressing to a male of the same age and social status, 'ko' is used in front of the name, e.g. ko nyo 'brother Nyo'. In case of female, 'má' is used instead, e.g. ma mya 'sister Mya'. For younger male, 'ko/mauŋ' is used; whereas 'má' for younger female.

Examples:

- |     |         |                     |
|-----|---------|---------------------|
| 51. | u ba    | 'Mr./respected Ba!' |
| 52. | daw mya | 'elder sister Mya!' |
| 53. | u lay   | 'respected uncle!'  |

In the case of English also for addressing people at the intimately personal end, actual names may not be used at all. The forms of address tend instead to be terms of endearment e.g. baby, darling, honey or expressions of derision dickhead, idiot, stupid, usually hostile and dismissive, but sometimes affectionate. At the impersonal end, such forms of address as sir and titles (bare or with surname) may be used, for instance Excuse me, Sir; Doctor (bare or with surname), Captain (bare or with surname), etc.

It is worth to mention that Meiteilon and Burmese have the honorific form of second personal pronoun unlike in English.

3.0 Function of Verb phrases in greeting: Apart from the noun phrase (NP), verb phrase (VP) can also shows the function of greeting. Usually it is a statement of asking or requesting something with politeness. At many

time a verb phrase without a title of address for greeting is also possible under one condition i.e. of similar age or status only. In this case the title of address is supposed to be understood between the interlocutors. In polite form of speech the polite markers –pi~ -bi, -cə~ -jə are suffixed to the main verb. Thus the role of suffixation of these polite markers indicates whether the greeting is honorific or normal form of speech. Sometimes, an affirmative statement, though its intrinsic meaning is asking something, is used as greeting e.g. *leŋbi-rək-le*. Its meaning is '(you) have come', but the understood meaning here is 'Have you arrived (polite)?'. Here the root *leŋ*- 'move' is used for 'go/come' in terms of polite form. Similarly, if someone greets another by saying *nunjai* '(you) are happy/well' is to mean 'Are you well?'. The followings are illustrative examples of some commonly used verb phrase of greetings.

|     | Marked (politeness)         | Unmarked (normal)            | Literal meaning                     |                      |
|-----|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 54. | <i>nunjai-bi-ri-bra</i>     | <i>nunjai-ri-bra</i>         | 'Are you well?'                     |                      |
|     | The possible answer:        |                              |                                     |                      |
| .   | <i>nunjai-jə-ri</i>         | <i>nunjai-ri</i>             | '(I) am well'                       |                      |
| 55. | <i>əna-əyek yaw-de-ko</i>   | <i>əna-əyek yaw-bi-de-ko</i> | 'Is (everybody) in good health?'    |                      |
|     | The possible answer:        |                              |                                     |                      |
|     | <i>yaw-jə-de</i>            | 'Yes, (everybody) is fine'   |                                     |                      |
| 56. | <i>cak ca-bi-rə-bra</i>     | <i>cak ca-rə-bra</i>         | 'Have (you) eaten rice/(meal)?'     | The possible answer: |
|     | <i>ca-jə-re ca-re</i>       | '(I) have eaten'             |                                     |                      |
| 57. | <i>kəmdəw-bi-ri</i>         | <i>kəmdəw-ri</i>             | 'How are(you) ?'                    |                      |
|     | The possible answer:        |                              |                                     |                      |
| 58. | <i>cətcərage/yəwɔjərage</i> | <i>cət-lage</i>              | 'May I take your leave (literally)' |                      |
|     | The possible answer:        |                              |                                     |                      |
| .   | <i>leŋbiro cətlo</i>        | 'Yes, please (literally)'    |                                     |                      |

The answers to these questions can be quite vague; the questions are not meant to be intrusive. In the above examples words in parenthesis indicates understood.

A common greeting, which we may hear people calling out from the roadside, is:

59. *kəday-də-no/kədom-də-no* 'Where are you going?'

The possible answer:

*əsi-də* 'Just around here'

Otherwise to be more specific, common replies are:- *bazaar-də* 'to the market' OR *Imphal-də* 'at Imphal' etc. Alternatively, one may be asked if s/he is going home, or where s/he has come from.

Example:

60. *nəŋ yum cət-lə-drə* 'Are you going home?'

The possible answer:

*cət-khi-roi* 'Not yet'

One of the phatic communion especially to stranger is simply by asking "key-no əmatə hay-ge(normal)/kərigumba əmatə hay-jə-ge (polite)" 'may I have a word (with you)'. The reply is "tak-pi-yu/hay-bi-yu (polite)" or "ya-ni (normal)" which means "yes! Please".

Similarly, in Burmese also many verb phrases are used in the form of greetings. The followings are some example.

61. *twa-ba-oun-meh* 'I am leaving now'

The response is *kaùn-ba-bi* 'Ok, go (good bye)'.  
62. *ne-kaùn-yéh-là* 'how are you?'

The response is *kaùn-ba-deh* 'Fine'

63. *min-gala-ba* 'auspiciousness to you (literally- it's a blessing)'

The response is *min-gala-ba* 'auspiciousness to you (literally- it's a blessing)'

4.0 Non-verbal honorific form: Meitei, Burmese and English people share a common feature in gesture or non-verbal behavior. The verbal part is accompanied by non-verbal behavior which is equally important. The non-

verbal behavior that comes first is a smile in conversation opening. A smile may convey a greeting or consent also. A smile is synonymous with English basic greeting like hello! or hi!. Again, among friends or colleagues handshake is common.

#### CONCLUSION

The present paper has clearly demonstrated the function of modes of greeting in the three languages i.e. Meiteilon-Burmese-English. It shows the tradition and values, manners or etiquettes in their societies. It also shows how greetings enrich social interactions among both related and unrelated participants. It also discussed the similarities and dissimilarities found in the two different language families. Since, Burmese and Meiteilon share same family, there is a close relationship in terms of linguistically and culturally for both societies. In English, there are no second personal pronoun honorific terms as in Meiteilon and Burmese. One unique characteristic found in Burmese is the distinction of male and female speaker for first and second person respectively. The present research findings have also given many insights in understanding the complexities of everyday speech of the three languages.

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