Western Tamang (WT), a major dialect of Tamang, exhibits typologically interesting structural properties in the domain of nouns in contrast to Eastern Tamang (ET). Like in ET, the common nouns in WT are marked for gender, number, classifier and relational functions by specific markers. Unlike Himalayish languages and like ET and other Bodish languages, WT does not exhibit agreement between the subject and the verb in terms of gender and number. However, WT differs from ET, especially, in the domains of number, case markings and case syncretism.

Keywords: Grammatical gender, number, classifier, case inflections and case syncretism

1. Introduction

This paper presents a preliminary analysis of the structural properties of nouns in Western Tamang [tdg] from a functional-typological perspective. Western Tamang (WT, henceforth) is a major dialect of Tamang, other being Eastern Tamang (ET, henceforth) (Eppele et al., 2012). Nouns, major lexical categories-major classes in WT, are insightfully characterized by semantic, structural (morphological) and syntactic properties (Givón, 2001:49). Semantically, the nouns are defined as the most time stable, most complex, the most concrete, spatially the most compact and countable lexical category (Givón, 2001:51). WT also exemplifies such nouns as yuŋba ‘rock’ doŋbo ‘tree’, la ‘mountain’, dim ‘house’. Structurally, the nouns (i.e., common nouns) in WT, like in ET, are marked for gender, number, classifier and relational functions by specific markers. Unlike Himalayish languages and like ET and other Bodish languages, WT does not exhibit agreement between the subject and verb in terms of gender and number. However, WT differs from ET, especially, in the domains of number, classifiers, case markings and case syncretism.

This paper is organized into seven sections. Section 2 deals with gender system in WT. In section 3, we examine the number whereas in section 4 we discuss classifiers in WT. Section 5 deals with case marking in WT. In section 6, we discuss case syncretism in WT. Section 7 summarizes the findings of the chapter.

2. Gender

Similar to the other Tamangish languages such as Tamang (Paudel, 2006; Mazaudon, 2003), Gurung (Glover, 1974), Chantyal (Noonan, 2003) and Dongwang (Bartee, 2007), WT has a very restricted grammatical gender.Unlike in Nepali, gender is not marked in the verbal complex in WT. However, in a few pairs of generic nouns, WT makes a distinction between male and female morphologically. The male/masculine nouns are marked by the suffixes such as -wa, -ka, -ga, and -ya and whereas the female/feminine nouns are indicated by the suffixes -ni, -ma and -gi in WT as in (1).
WT also makes a distinction between male and female lexically in a few pairs of nouns as in (2).

(2) a. apa ‘father’ ama ‘mother’
b. apakola ‘man’ amakola ‘woman’
c. ajyo ‘elder brother’ ale ‘younger brother’
d. memegren ‘maternal grandfather’ mamgren ‘maternal grandmother’
e. meme ‘paternal grandfather’ mam ‘paternal grandmother’
f. ken ‘father-in-law’ sume ‘mother-in-law’
g. m̃a ‘brother-in-law’ nana ‘elder sister’
h. babu ‘uncle’ abausu ‘auntie’
i. ajyo ‘elder brother’ caŋ ‘sister-in-law’
j. ale ‘younger brother’ jọtaŋaŋ ‘sister-in-law’
k. aŋa ‘younger sister’ m̃a ‘brother-in-law’
l. asyaŋ ‘maternal uncle’ aŋi ‘maternal aunt’
m. babu ‘uncle’ abausu ‘aunt’
.n. abren ‘big uncle’ anren ‘big aunt’
o. babu ‘uncle’ abausu ‘aunt’
p. m̃a ‘older brother-in-law’ caŋ ‘older sister-in-law’
q. m̃a ‘younger brother-in-law’ caŋ ‘younger sister-in-law’
r. r̃embo ‘husband’ mriŋ ‘wife’
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>s.</th>
<th>ja</th>
<th>‘son’</th>
<th>ja-me</th>
<th>‘daughter’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>t.</td>
<td>kon</td>
<td>‘male cousin’</td>
<td>kon-ye</td>
<td>‘female cousin’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>u.</td>
<td>syaŋbo</td>
<td>‘wife’s brother’</td>
<td>asucani</td>
<td>‘wife’s sister’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v.</td>
<td>kon</td>
<td>‘grandson’</td>
<td>kon-ye</td>
<td>‘granddaughter’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w.</td>
<td>rawaba</td>
<td>‘he-goat’</td>
<td>ramodom</td>
<td>‘she-goat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>x.</td>
<td>glapkola</td>
<td>‘young bull’</td>
<td>myecakola</td>
<td>‘young cow’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is to be noted here like ET, WT does not exhibit agreement between the subject and verb in terms of gender.

### 3. Number

In WT, in common with other Bodish languages, the number is also not a grammatical category (Noonan, 2003). In other words, the verb does not agree with the number of any arguments (i.e., subject in the clause). ET exhibits two morphological categories of the nouns in terms of number: singular and plural (Yonjan-Tamang, 2016). However, WT exhibits three morphological categories of the nouns in terms of number: singular, dual, and plural. Singular nouns are unmarked as zero but the dual and plural nouns are marked by the suffix 

\[-\text{i}i\]

and

\[-\text{ma}\]

respectively as in (3).

\[(3)\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a.</th>
<th>m\text{h}i-\text{i}i</th>
<th>man-DU</th>
<th>m\text{h}i-\text{ma}</th>
<th>man-PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>mye-\text{i}i</td>
<td>cow-DU</td>
<td>mye-\text{ma}</td>
<td>cow-PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>a\text{i}yo-\text{i}i</td>
<td>brother-DU</td>
<td>a\text{i}yo-\text{ma}</td>
<td>brother-PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>ta\text{ŋ}lo-\text{i}i</td>
<td>pot-DU</td>
<td>ta\text{ŋ}lo-\text{ma}</td>
<td>pot-PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>bu-\text{i}i</td>
<td>field-DU</td>
<td>bu-\text{ma}</td>
<td>field-PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>a\text{ŋ}pakla-\text{i}i</td>
<td>boy-DU</td>
<td>a\text{ŋ}pakola-\text{ma}</td>
<td>boy-PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>dim-\text{i}i</td>
<td>house-DU</td>
<td>dim-\text{ma}</td>
<td>house-PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h.</td>
<td>a\text{ŋ}makola-\text{i}i</td>
<td>woman-DU</td>
<td>a\text{ŋ}makola-\text{ma}</td>
<td>woman-PL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>whoen-\text{i}i</td>
<td>cloth-DU</td>
<td>whoen-\text{ma}</td>
<td>cloth-PL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In examples (3a-i) the nouns are marked by the suffix 

\[-\text{i}i\]

for duality and by

\[-\text{ma}\]

for plurality in WT.

### 4. Classifiers

Numeral classifiers are not the common features of the Bodish groups of the languages (Noonan, 2003). WT, like the Himalayish languages, also employs numeral classifiers. Moreover, unlike many South-Asian languages including the Himalayish languages, WT makes use of numeral classifiers exclusively for human nouns or pronouns. As in other Bodish languages, such numeral classifiers post-modify the nouns in WT (Noonan, 2003). The human nouns are morphologically marked by the suffix

\[-\text{ma}\]

as in (4).

\[(4)\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a.</th>
<th>m\text{h}i gima k\text{h}a-\text{ja}</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>m\text{h}i gi-\text{ma} k\text{h}a-\text{ji}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>man one-CLF come-PFV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

'One man arrived.'

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\[1\] In Western Tamang, \text{ji} lexically refers to the cardinal number ‘two’.
In examples (4a-c) the human nouns are enumerated by gi ‘one’, som ‘three’, and ŋis ‘seven’, respectively. The numeral to which the classifier suffix -ma is attached post-modifies the human nouns in WT as in ET. The non-human nouns can be modified by the numerals; however, such numerals are not marked by the classifier as in (5).

(5) a. lipce nakagi tʰajim caji
    lipce naka-gi tʰa-jim ca-ji
    after cock-one kill-SEQ eat-PFV
    ‘They killed a cock and ate.’

b. huju lipce ra-gi kʰru-jim sobala
    huju lipce ra-gi kʰru-jim so-ba-la
    that after goat-one bathe-SEQ do-NMLZ-GEN
    ‘After that they bathed a goat.’

In example (5a) naka ‘cock’ and in (5b) ra ‘goat’ are enumerated as the non-human nouns. Thus, they are left unmarked by the classifier -ma. However, in ET both human and non-human nouns are marked for classifiers. The human nouns are marked by -mʰendo and non-human ones by -gör (Yonjan-Tamang, 2016: 78).

Apart from the morphological classifier -ma, WT uses a number of ‘pseudo-classifiers’ for mensurality and sortality as in (6).

(6) a. sya dumbai gi ‘One piece of meat’
    meat piece one

b. mär tunco gi ‘One lump of ghee’
    ghee lump one

c. siŋ ga gi ‘One piece of wood’
    wood piece one

d. dal dadu gi ‘One morsel of porridge’
    porridge morsel one

e. ken poncu gi ‘One scoop of rice’
    rice scoop one

f. cata dyeka gi ‘One lump of salt’
    salt lump one

g. cʰi muṭ’a gi ‘One bundle of grass’
    grass bundle one
h. amba cailoga gi ‘One grain of mango.’
   mango grain one
i. cinäi cəunani gi ‘One spoon of sugar’
   sugar spoon one
j. ƞe tɔoppa gi ‘One drop of milk’
   milk drop one
k. sunlanəl nam gi ‘One stalk of straw’
   straw stalk one

The examples (6a-k) show that the ‘pseudo-classifiers’ consist of different lexical classifiers. Such classifiers are also followed by the numerals in WT. Moreover, such ‘pseudo-classifiers’ also post-modify the nouns in WT.

5. Case marking

Like ET, WT exhibits a consistently ergative-absolutive case marking system. Such system is governed by the principle of transitivity which primarily codes the syntactic distinction between the transitive and intransitive clauses (Givón, 2001:208). In WT, the subject of the transitive clause displays ergative case marking. However, the direct object of the transitive and the subject of the intransitive clause share the absolutive case marking as in (7).

(7) a. Transitive clause
   ƞa ƞe pukɔri secji
   1SG-ERG snake-ABS kill-PFV
   ‘I killed a snake.’

b. Intransitive clause
   ƞa ƞe-ci
   1SG-ABS laugh-PFV
   ‘I laughed.’

In example (7a) the subject of the transitive clause is marked by the ergative marker -je while the direct object of the transitive clause in (7a) pukɔri ‘snake’ and the subject of intransitive clause in (7b) are zero-marked. WT also exhibits other relational functions as well. They are instrumental, dative, benefactive, genitive, comitative, ablative, possessive, locative, allative, inessive and path. It also presents case syncretism like other Bodish languages (Noonan, 2006). Table 5.1 presents case the inflections and their relational functions they mark in WT and ET.
### Table 5.1: Case inflections and their relational functions in WT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relational functions</th>
<th>Case inflections WT</th>
<th>Case inflections ET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolutive</td>
<td>-φ</td>
<td>-φ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ergative</td>
<td>-je~-ce</td>
<td>-se</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>-je~-ce</td>
<td>-se</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dative</td>
<td>-da~-ʈa</td>
<td>-da</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefactive</td>
<td>-da~-ʈa</td>
<td>-da</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td>-la</td>
<td>-la</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comitative</td>
<td>-tŋ~-dŋ</td>
<td>-t’en</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ablative</td>
<td>-je</td>
<td>-gyam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessive</td>
<td>-da~-ʈa</td>
<td>-da</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locative</td>
<td>-ri, and -ʈi</td>
<td>-ri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allative</td>
<td>-kyor</td>
<td>-whona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inessive</td>
<td>-naŋ</td>
<td>-nyapri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path</td>
<td>-cele</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5.1 Ergative

The case inflections -je and -ce, which mark ergative case in WT, are morphophonologically conditioned in WT. The allomorph -ce is affixed to the noun stem ending in the voiceless sound. The allomorph -je is used following the voiced sound as in (8).²

(8) a. m DXGI -je c. nŋa -je
    man -ERG 1SG -ERG
    b. ram -je d. lok -ce
    Ram -ERG Lok -ERG

In examples (8a-c) the nominals are marked by the allomorph -je because each nominal in (8a-c) ends in the voiced sounds. This phenomenon may be formally presented as in (9).

(9) /-je/ → l-ce/ X___#

Where, X refers to any voiceless segment at the word final position. These case inflections, viz., -je and -ce are used to mark different relational functions in WT.

WT does not exhibit split-ergativity. Irrespective of tense-aspect or person, the case inflections, -ce and -je obligatorily mark the subject of the transitive clause as in (10).

---

²In Tipling variety, -ce is consistently used for marking ergative case in WT; however, in Borang (Dhading) and Bungtang (Nuwakot) the ergative case is marked by -je and -ce. In eastern dialect of Tamang, it is marked by -se only.
In examples (10a-d) all the subjects of the transitive clauses, irrespective of tense-aspect or person, are marked by the ergative suffix -je or -ce.

5.2 Instrumental

The case inflections -ce~je are also affixed to the nouns to code implements, i.e., a tool, inanimate or not, by which an agent accomplishes an action as in (11).

In examples (11a-c) the case inflections -ce~je mark the instrumental case in the nouns in WT. The allomorphy rule given in (9) applies in the instrumental case as well.
5.3 Dative

The dative case is marked by the inflection -da/-ta in WT. In an ergative-absolutive language like WT, the patients or direct objects are not theoretically overtly marked. However, in WT, the human patient nouns or direct object nouns in a transitive clause are marked by the case inflection -da as in (12a-b).

(12) a. ɳata krenji
    ɳa-ta kren-ji
    1SG-DAT hungry.feel-PFV
    ‘I am hungry.’

b. jaje jameda ch ekpa
   ja-je jame-da c\textsuperscript{h}ek-pa
   son-ERG daughter-DAT bit-NPFV
   ‘The son bits the daughter.’

In example (12a) ɳa ‘I’ and in (12b) jame ‘daughter’, both human patient pronoun and nouns, are marked by the case inflection -da and ta. Such marking is referred to as dative and anti-dative marking (Dryer, 1986).

5.4 Benefactive

The case inflection -da\textsuperscript{s} also used to mark the nominals which are benefited by the action of the agent as in (13).

(13) a. amaje jada ken waji
    ama-je ja-da ken wa-ji
    mother-ERG son-BEN rice feed-PFV
    ‘The mother fed the rice to the son.’

b. apaje jame da ta ɲapinji
   apa-je jame-da ʈa-ɲa pin-ji
   father-ERG daughter-BEN money give-PFV
   ‘The father gave money to the son.’

In example (13a) the benefactive nominal ja ‘son’ and in (13b) jame ‘daughter’ are marked by the case inflection -da\textsuperscript{s} in WT.

5.5 Genitive

The case inflection -la is used to mark the genitive case in WT as in (14).

(14) a. jala dim muba
    ja-la dim mu-ba
    son-GEN house EXIST-NMLZ
    ‘The son has his house.’

\textsuperscript{3}It is not easy to define the phonological environment of the use of -da or -ta in WT.
In example (14a-c) the case inflection -la marks the genitive case in WT.

5.6 Comitative

The case inflection -diŋ/-tiŋ is used to express accompaniment as in (15).\(^4\)

(15) a. ja ŋadiŋ nu:-ba
   ja ŋa-diŋ nu:-ba
   son 1SG-COM sleep-NMLZ
   ‘The son sleeps with me.’

b. ŋa apatiŋ yamburi ŋiba
   ŋa apa-tiŋ yambu-ri ŋi-ba
   1SG father-COM kathmandu-LOC go-NMLZ
   ‘I go to Kathmandu with my father.’

c. ŋa rodiŋ dimri ŋiba
   ŋa ro-diŋ dim-ri ŋi-ba
   1SG friend-COM house-LOC go-IMPFV
   ‘I go to the house with my friend.’

In examples (15a-c) the case inflection -diŋ/-tiŋ is used to mark the comitative case in WT.

5.7 Ablative

The case inflection -je also marks the ablative case in WT as in (16).

(16) a. ŋa nuwakotje yamburi yuji
   ŋa nuwakot-je yambu-ri yu-ji
   1SG Nuwakot-ABL Kathmandu-LOC come-PFV
   ‘I came to Kathmandu from Nuwakot.’

b. dimje ja ŋiji
   dim-je ja ŋi-ji
   house-ABL son go-PFV

\(^4\)The phonological environment for -diŋ/-tiŋ is not easy to define.
c. *nuvakot gyamje gʰantya laktiba yamburi*

Nuwakot road-ABL hour-five take-NMLZ

Kathmandu-LOC

'It takes five hour from Nuwakot to Kathmandu.'

In examples (16a-c) the case inflection -je has been used to mark the ablative case in WT.

### 5.8 Possessive

The case inflections -da and -ta are also used to mark the possession in the clause as in (17).

(17) a. *ramda kitap muba*

Ram-POSS book have-NMLZ

‘Ram has a book.’

b. *ŋata kitap arẽ*

ISG-POSS book NEG-have

‘I do not have any book.’

In example (17a-b) the case inflections -da and -ta mark the possessive case in WT.

### 5.9 Locative

The case inflections -ri and -ṭi are primarily used to mark the locative case in WT as in (18). In Tipling variety, it is exclusively marked by -ṭi. However, in other varieties, -ṭi is solely used to mark the surface location. In MagarKaike, such location is marked by -go (Regmi, 2013).

(18) a. *kitab ṭebulṭi muba*

book table-LOC EXIST-NMLZ

‘The book is on the table.’

b. *ja dimri muba*

son house-LOC EXIST-NMLZ

‘The son is in the house.’

In example (18a-b) case inflections -ṭi and rī mark the locative case.

### 5.10 Allative

The case inflection -kyor marks the allative case in WT as in (19).
In examples (19a-b) the case inflection -kyor is used to mark the allative case in WT.

5.11 Inessive

The case inflection -naj marks the inessive case in WT as in (20).

(20) ŋa dimnaŋ ti-ba
   1SG house-INES sit-NMLZ
   'I stay inside the house.'

ŋa-la dimnaŋ woen mu-ba
   1SG-GEN house-INES cloth EXIST-NMLZ
   'My cloth is inside the house.'

In example (20a-b), the case inflection -naj is used to mark the inessive case in WT.

5.12 Path

The case inflection -cele marks the path in WT as in (21).

(21) cu gyam nuwakotcele yambu ri ti-ba
   this road Nuwakot-PATH house-LOC go-IMPFV
   'This road goes to Kathmandu through Nuwakot.'

6. Case syncretism

In Section 5, we noticed that a given relational marker may express more than one non-core relation other than its core relation. This phenomenon is referred to as case syncretism. Case syncretism is a common phenomenon in Tibeto-Burman languages (Noonan, 2003). Table 5.2 presents the patterns of case syncretism in WT.
Table 5.2: Patterns of case syncretism in WT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case inflections</th>
<th>Relational functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-φ</td>
<td>Core relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-je/-ce</td>
<td>Absolutive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ri and -ti</td>
<td>Ergative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ta/-da</td>
<td>Instrumental, Ablative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-la</td>
<td>Locative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-tín/-diŋ</td>
<td>Dative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-kyor</td>
<td>Possessive, Benefactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-naŋ</td>
<td>Genitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-cele</td>
<td>Allative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inessive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Path</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 presents the relational functions broadly classified into two categories, viz., core relations and non-core relations. By the core-relations, we simply mean those relations which are primarily coded by a given case inflection. The non-core relations simply refer to those relations which are secondarily marked by a given case inflection. The table shows that the case inflections -je, -ce, -ta, and -da mark the core relations as well as non-core relations in WT. The inflection -je primarily marks, for instance, the ergative case relation. This case inflection, secondarily, marks the instrumental and ablative case in WT. The case inflections -da and -ta are primarily used to code the dative case. Secondarily, this case inflection may be used to mark the benefactive and possessive in WT. In ET, ergative case marker -se does not secondarily mark the ablative case.

7. Summary

This paper attempted to analyze some structural properties of the nouns in WT from typological perspective. As in ET, gender is not marked in WT nouns across the board. Unlike ET, WT exhibits three morphological categories of the nouns in terms of number: singular, dual and plural. WT utilizes a combination of numeral plus classifier for the distinction of human vs. non-human nouns. In WT, only a human noun is marked. However, in ET, both are marked. Like ET, WT is a consistently ergative language. WT and ET both exhibit different functional relations. However, relational markers in WT, especially for major functional relations are different from ET. Unlike ET, WT presents a bit more complex case syncretism.

Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First person</th>
<th>INS</th>
<th>Instrumental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>MASC</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>NMLZ</td>
<td>Nominalizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3SG</td>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>COM</td>
<td>Comitative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Abbreviations

- ABL: Ablative
- ABS: Absolutive
- ALL: Allative
- BEN: Benefactive
- CAUS: Causative
- CLF: Classifier
- GEN: Genitive
- IMPFV: Imperfective
- INES: Inessive
- POSS: Possessive
- SEQ: Sequential
- SG: Singular

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