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ISBN 978-3-031-75242-1      ISBN 978-3-031-75243-8 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-75243-8>

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মা আর ভাইকে  
*Dedicated to My Mother*  
*Mrs. Chandana Saha*  
*& my younger brother*  
*Santanu Saha*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

1	First person
2	Second person
3	Third person
ACC	Accusative
ACMPL	Accomplishment
ACT	Active
AGR	Agreement
ART	Article
ASCTV	Associative
ASP	Aspect
CAUS	Causative
CL	Classifier
CMPL	Completive
COLL	Collective
COM	Comitative
CONT	Continuative
COV	Cover
DAT	Dative
DEF	Definite
DIST	Distributive
DP	Determiner phrase
DU	Dual
ERG	Ergative
INF	Infinitive
LOC	Locative
MOD	Modal
N	Noun

NEG	Negative
NFu	Non-future
NOM	Nominative
NP	Noun phrase
PA	Pluractional
PAT	Patient
PFTV	Perfective
PL	Plural
POSS	Possessive
PST	Past
RCP	Reciprocal
REC	Reciprocal
RECIP	Reciprocal
RECP	Reciprocal
REFL	Reflexive
RFL	Reflexive
SG	Singular
SIM	Simultaneous
SM	Subject marker
STAT	Stative
T	Tense
V	Verb

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# Typology of Verbal Reciprocals: An Overview

**Abstract** This book investigates three interesting questions arising from the intriguing cross-linguistic perspective of Meitei (Meiteilon) and Nyishi, two Tibeto-Burman languages spoken in the Indian states of Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh. The first question is related to developing a model for the syntax and semantics of these verbal reciprocal languages. Second, the book attempts to provide an account of the surface variations among the languages by the model. The book also tries to build an account of the co-occurrences of the nominal and verbal reciprocals in languages like Meiteilon and Nyishi. In this chapter, the author surveys various reciprocal situations and linguistic properties of reciprocals in Meitei and Nyishi. It is demonstrated that Meitei and Nyishi exhibit all six possible types of reciprocal situations. Additionally, the chapter presents diagnostics for reciprocal constructions and facts from Meiteilon and Nyishi. Both languages utilize a verbal strategy for default reciprocalization and display discontinuous reciprocity. The author argues that the reciprocal marker consists of a single suffix, as in the case of Meiteilon, and it may express several other functions following Saah (*Ghana Journal of Linguistics*, 7(2), 52–70, 2018) and Roy, Kumar, & Subbarao (2021). The reciprocal marker is composed of more than one suffix, as in Nyishi, and it does not exhibit polysemy. Furthermore, both languages can reciprocalize unaccusative and unergative verbs. In both languages, overt

distributive nominal reciprocal markers indicate strong reciprocity. Discontinuous reciprocals and conjecture verbs also exhibit strong reciprocity even without nominal reciprocal markers.

**Keywords** Reciprocal situations • Verbal strategy • Discontinuous reciprocity • Strong reciprocity

The book investigates the reciprocal constructions found in Meiteilon and Nyishi, and despite the morphological differences, proposes a uniform analysis for such constructions.

Meiteilon<sup>1</sup> or Manipuri is the official language of Manipur and it is also spoken in the Indian states of Assam and Tripura, along with Bangladesh and Myanmar. Meiteilon is a Kuki-Chin language of the Tibeto-Burman language family and Nyishi belongs to the Tani group of the same family. Nyishi is spoken in the Lower Subansiri and East Kameng districts of Arunachal Pradesh and Darrang District of Assam. The alternate names for Nyishi<sup>2</sup> are Bangni, Dafla, Daphla, Lel, Nishi, Nissi, Nishi, and Nyising.

Reciprocity in natural languages is either expressed syntactically through nominal reciprocals such as English *each other*, *one another*, Dutch *elkaar*, German *einander*, etc., or verbally in the form of affixal predicate marking in two ways: either as a single affix (e.g., Japanese, Malagasy, and Meiteilon) or by a combination of affixes (e.g., Cuzco Quechua and Nyishi).

Interestingly, in many verbal reciprocal languages, there exists an additional nominal strategy for reciprocals (albeit under certain specific conditions). For example, in Japanese the nominal reciprocal marker is *otogai*; while in Nyishi, it is *aku akuam*, whereas Meiteilon has two nominal reciprocal markers *māsen* and *əmana əmabu*. This intriguing typology raises a number of interesting questions, particularly from a generative perspective.

This book addresses three of them:

1. How are the syntax and semantics of verbal reciprocal languages to be modeled?

<sup>1</sup> Meiteilon has been recognized, as ‘Manipuri’, by the Indian Union and is included in the 8th Schedule (by the 71st amendment of the Constitution in 1992). Meiteilon has its own script named Meitei-mayek.

<sup>2</sup> As per 2001 Census population of Nyishi speakers is 211,485. In the same census, the number of speakers who returned Meiteilon as a mother tongue is 1,466,705 (excluding the population of Mao-Maram, Paomata, and Purul subdivisions of Senapati district of Manipur).

2. How is the cross-linguistic variation in verbal reciprocal languages to be captured?
3. What are the conditions in which nominal and reciprocal markers can co-occur in such languages?

This introductory chapter is intended to lay the groundwork for a discussion of these questions. Section 1.1 summarizes various reciprocal situations, while Sect. 1.2 describes the linguistic properties of reciprocal constructions. Various diagnostics for identifying reciprocal situations and constructions in verbal reciprocal languages are shown in Sect. 1.3. Section 1.6 provides an outline of the book.

## 1.1 RECIPROCAL SITUATIONS

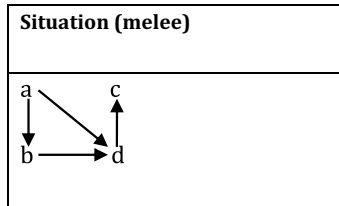
Reciprocals in natural language are linguistic representations of reciprocal situations. König and Gast (2008) identify six types of reciprocal situations proposed by *Generalized Reciprocity*, *Positive-weak Reciprocity*, *Negative-simultaneous/sequential events*, *Strong Reciprocity*, *Pairwise reciprocal*, and *Chaining of relations*. Generalized reciprocity refers to a situation where a reciprocal situation holds for participants generally as shown in (1–4).

1. The inhabitants of these islands used to eat each other. (König & Gast, 2008:4)
2. hok-nimɕe-ho niʃini məluŋ jekke    ceŋmiŋ-su-ne                      (Nyishi)  
That-time-at    Nyishi man all    know-COM-RFL-PFTV  
‘At that time all Nyishis knew each other.’

This *positive, weak Reciprocity* evokes a situation in which not every participant is required to take part in that action. With transitive predicates like *love* and *hit*, reciprocalization is satisfied as long as some participants within the group take part in the event.

3. mək<sup>h</sup>oi                      nuŋsi-nə-í                                      (Meiteilon)  
They                      love-RECP-ASP  
‘They love each other’.
4. bulə                      ɟeŋ-miŋ-su-pa                                      (Nyishi)  
They. PL                      hit-COM-RFL-CMPL  
‘They hit each other.’

5. Inhabitants of this village help each other. (König & Gast, 2008:4)  
The situation is comparable to a *melee* situation following Evans (2008).



Verbs like *hate* and *ruin* give rise to negative, simultaneous/sequential reciprocal events.

6. Paul and Mary hate/ruined each other. (König & Gast, 2008:4)

7. *bula*                      *alema-miṅ-su-ku-ma*                      (Nyishi)  
They-PL                  love-NEG-COM-RFL-ACMPL-NEG  
‘They hated each other’.

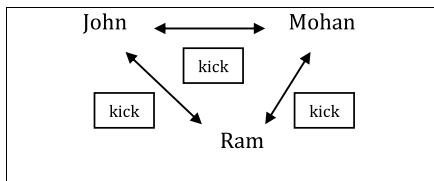
Strong Reciprocity can be derived by the formula I.

$$I. \forall x \in A \forall y \in A (x \neq y \rightarrow xRy)$$

In such situations, every participant in a reciprocal situation has to participate as shown in (8).

8. John, Mohan, and Ram kicked each other.

The schema for strong reciprocity is shown below:

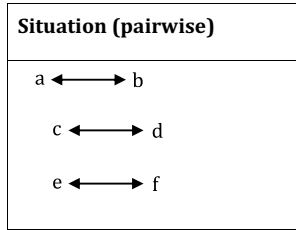


A reciprocal situation like in (8) involves a cumulation of events. Each kicking event is mapped onto the participants bearing an agent and a patient theta role. If all possible pairs satisfy this condition, then the interpretation is strong. If some possible pairs satisfy the condition, then it is a

case of weak Reciprocity. Strong Reciprocity arises with predicates like *to know*.

9. People in this house know each other. (König & Gast, 2008:4)  
 10. mək<sup>h</sup>oi əmana əmabu k<sup>h</sup>əŋ-nə-ri (Meiteilon)  
 they one-AGN one-PAT know-RECP-ASP  
 ‘They know each other.’

Another strong type of reciprocity is *Pairwise Reciprocity*, illustrated in (11) and (12). Predicates like *marry* and *lean against* evoke situations in which reciprocity holds in pairs. The schema for pairwise reciprocity is shown below following Evans (2008).



11. Many people at the party are married to each other.  
 12. mək<sup>h</sup>oi əmana əməḍə ŋa<sup>h</sup>a- nə-ri (Meiteilon)  
 They-PL one-AGN one-LOC lean-RECP-ASP  
 ‘They lean on each other.’

The *pairwise reciprocity* is indicated in Meiteilon by the nominal reciprocal *əmana əməḍə*. In Nyishi too, the nominal reciprocal evokes a pairwise strong reading.

13. bulə aku aku-ni yegin-miŋ-su-pa (Nyishi)  
 They. PL-NOM one-NOM one-COM lean against-COM-RFL-ASP  
 ‘They are leaning against each other pairwise.’

Predicates like *stack* and *follow* give rise to the formation of chaining relations. Reciprocalization takes place chain wise in such a situation, as in the schema (following Evans, 2008) below:

