

Chamling and English Possessive Pronouns: A Contrastive Analysis

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Abstract

This study aims to explore and compare the Chamling possessive pronouns with English possessive pronouns. Data on possessive pronouns in the Chamling language were collected from seven native speakers and compared to English possessive pronouns gathered from secondary sources. The contrastive analysis of Chamling and English possessive pronouns reveals differences in number, position, and gender. Chamling possessive pronoun consists of inclusive, and exclusive systems, according to the involvement of the addressees, whereas the English possessive pronoun does not have such a system. In addition, the Chamling possessive pronoun comprises singular, dual, and plural forms, however, the English possessive pronoun consists of only singular and plural systems. The number of Chamling possessive pronouns is more than that of English, with ten and six respectively. English pronouns are used in the initial position as the subject and the final position as the object of the sentences, whereas Chamling possessive pronouns never occur in these positions. In English, the third-person singular possessive pronoun has gender distinctions with "his" for masculine and "hers" for feminine. However, Chamling's possessive pronoun does not have such distinctions.

Keywords

Dual, inclusive, exclusive, possessive pronouns, possessive adjectives,

Introduction

Chamling and English languages are developed from two different language families—Sino-Tibetan and Indo-European. As a result, they have different linguistic features. They contain different grammatical systems. Consequently, they have different pronoun systems.

Nepal is a multilingual country where 124 languages are spoken as first languages (National Statistics Office, 2023, pp. 8-16). Even though, in Nepal, it is not mandatory to teach the mother tongues of all ethnic groups as compulsory subjects. Nevertheless, Nepali and English languages are taught as compulsory as well as optional subjects in Nepal. Furthermore, the most of students of Nepal learn English as a foreign language. The English language is not related to the first language of many ethnic groups. This can make it difficult for students who speak Chamling language to learn English, as their mother tongue can hinder their progress. Unfortunately, there are no additional measures in place to help these students with their English language studies. Only a few scholarly works have been done on the contrastive analysis of Chamling and English possessive pronouns. This study aims to address this issue.

Possessive pronouns are independent words. They function independently as a noun. They are used to replace nouns or noun phrases. Additionally, Green and Nelson (2009) state that “a possessive pronoun functions independently” such as in the sentence “*This book is yours*”. In this given instance *yours* is used instead of the noun phrase *your book*. Furthermore,

Quirk et al. (1985) declare that the possessive pronoun has an independent function as a noun phrase (p. 361). It takes the place of a noun in a sentence (Hoogland, 2017). In support of this claim, Bojars and Burridge (2010) assert that "possessive pronouns occur independently as full noun phrases and those that form a part of a noun phrase" (p. 55). A possessive pronoun is used to indicate ownership or to identify the person who is in possession of the object. Moreover, Aarts and Aarts (1982) claimed that "within the class of possessive pronouns can distinguish the categories of person (1st person, 2nd person, and 3rd person), number (except 2nd person), and gender (in the 3rd person singular only)" in English. (p. 51). This statement demonstrates that possessive pronouns are categorized into first, second and third persons in terms of person and according to number, possessive pronouns can be classified into singular and plural, then in terms of gender, possessive pronouns can be categorized into masculine and feminine. The instances below illustrate this concept.

I had torn her handkerchief. She tore *mine*. (First person)

I do not like her shirt. But I like *yours*. (Second person)

He called *hers*. (Third person, feminine, and singular)

He broke her nose. She broke *his*. (Third person, masculine, and singular)

We broke their motorbikes. They broke *ours*. (Plural)

Possessive pronouns have different forms considering number, gender, and person. This notion is supported by Eckersley's (2005) assertion that "The possessive pronoun changes its form according to the number and gender of the possessor" (p. 26). Furthermore, Azar (2002) states, "possessive pronouns do not take apostrophes" (p. 132).

His is a red bag.

That is mine.

That is yours.

They are always stressed. Determiners or modifiers cannot be used with possessive pronouns. They are used in sentences as the subject, object, and complement.

This is your pen. *Mine* is broken. (Subject)

Theirs will be sent tomorrow. (Subject)

That mobile set is *hers*. (Object)

The red car is *mine*. (Subject complement)

Finally, Eastwood (2002) argues, "We leave out the noun if it is clear from the context what we mean. We employ a pronoun while doing this" (p. 214). Instead of saying *my journal*, we use *mine*.

I'll just look in my book. = Mine is not with me.

That is not Hari's shirt. = His is red.

Review of related literature

Possessive words in the English language fall into two categories: independent pronouns or strong possessive words, and weak possessive words. Strong possessive words are often referred to as possessive pronouns, whereas weak possessive words are alternately referred to as determiners or possessive adjectives. Additionally, Quirk et al. (1985) claim that the "strong" set of possessive pronouns has an independent function as a noun phrase, whereas

the "weak" set has a determinative function (p. 361). Possessive determiners work only when they are used with nouns (i.e. *There is your cap.*).

Weak possessive words are not possessive pronouns. These are determiner words and function as adjectives. Thus, they are possessive adjectives.

According to Igaab and Tarrad (2019), the possessive pronouns (mine, ours, yours, theirs, his, its and hers), are used alone (p. 55) as a noun. They are independent words. Furthermore, Greenbaum and Nelson (2009) emphasized that a possessive pronoun functions independently.

This book is *yours*. (p. 47)

Börjars and Burridge (2010) stated that "Possessive pronouns occur independently as full noun phrases and those that form a part of the noun phrase" (p. 55). They function as noun phrases. Furthermore, Azar (2002) has discussed that "possessive pronouns are not followed immediately by a noun; they stand alone". They are independent words as other major grammatical categories. This concept can be justified with the following instances:

That book is hers.

These are yours.

Those are ours.

That is mine.

Moreover, he stated that possessive pronouns are not accompanied by any modifiers or determiners (Azar, 2002, p. 132). Additionally (Eckersley, 2005) declared that the possessive pronoun stands instead of the noun and they change their form according to the number and gender of the possessor (p. 26).

Hamid and Ali (2010) have attempted to determine the similarities and differences between the two dialects of Arabic: Baghdadi and Mosuli. They found that the possessive pronouns in Baghdadi Arabic are more explicit in expressing number and gender than in Mosuli Arabic. Furthermore, they have discussed three classes of Arabic possessive pronouns: real possession, semi-possession, and false possession. In Arabic, possessive pronouns are typically added to nouns to express possession. Additionally, they identify ten possessive pronouns in both dialects, and they are singular, dual, and plural in terms of number.

Aneja (1981) made a contrastive analysis of French and Hindi possessive adjectives and possessive pronouns. He found that possessive pronouns and possessive adjectives are derived from personal pronouns, and he also found that possessive adjectives and pronouns have different shapes in French, whereas in Hindi, they have identical shapes. Possessive adjectives and possessive pronouns have an additional form of polite in Hindi, whereas in French there is not. Moreover, possessive pronouns and possessive adjectives in Hindi show a distinction between closeness and distance.

Bond et al. (1996) asserted that possessive pronouns of the Japanese language are used as determiners. Moreover, they claimed that in Japanese, there is no equivalent statement with the same meaning, but in English, possessive pronouns are used as determiners. In this sense, they have forgotten the concept of possessive adjectives or determiners. In fact, English possessive pronouns are not used as determiners.

Manandhar (2009) claimed that possessive pronouns are also used in Newar to denote numbers and there are both inclusive and exclusive plural first-person possessive pronouns in Newar. Additionally, she mentioned that there are honorific and non-honorific forms of the second and third-person possessive pronouns.

Rosyara (2006) found that English has distinct forms for the possessive determiner and the possessive pronoun, whereas Doteli has the same forms for both. Furthermore, in contrast to English, Doteli makes use of both honorific and non-honorific in the second and third-person possessive pronouns, and third-person possessive pronouns in English are used differently for male and female, whereas Doteli does not have separate third-person possessive pronouns for male and female. Finally, she found that Doteli consists of more possessive pronouns than English.

Most of the reviewed literature shows that possessive pronouns and possessive determiners belong to two distinct linguistic classes. Possessive pronouns are independent words. Two different languages possess relatively distinct possessive pronoun systems. They are distinct in terms of the total number of possessive pronouns, numbers, functions and positions. After that, the same form can be used for both possessive determiners and possessive pronouns in Japanese, whereas in English possessive determiners and pronouns have separate forms. In addition, the possessive determiner and the possessive pronoun have different forms in French. The first-person possessive pronoun of Newar comprises an inclusive and exclusive system, however, English does not have. Deoteli and Newar possessive pronouns possess honorific and non-honorific forms, whereas English does not.

Methods of Study

This study employs a qualitative descriptive linguistic method followed by contrastive theory. Open-ended questionnaires were used to gather the primary data from the six native Chamling language speakers. On the other hand, secondary data on Chamling and English possessive pronouns were gathered from reliable sources, including grammar, dictionaries, and academic research papers.

After the collection of the primary data, they were codified, edited, and classified in terms of person, gender and number, then after analyzing them separately. Furthermore, the data of both languages—Chamling and English, were compared using a contrastive analysis approach. From the results of the comparison, similarities and differences were established.

Discussion and Results

The Possessive Pronouns of Chamling

The Chamling language comprises more possessive pronouns than the English language. Like English possessive pronouns, Chamling possessive pronouns are divided into first, second, and third persons, which are shown in Tables 2, 3, and 4 below.

The First-Person Possessive Pronouns of Chamling

First-person possessive pronouns are used to refer to things that are your own. The first-person possessive pronouns in the Chamling language are *āngā*, *icimo*, *ācimkā*, *imo*, and *āmkā*, which are shown in further detail in Table 2.

Table 2

The First-Person Possessive Pronouns of Chamling and English

Number	Chamling		English
	poss. Prefix	Poss. Pronoun	poss. pronoun
1si	<i>ā</i>	<i>Āngā</i>	mine
1di	<i>ic</i>	<i>Icimo</i>	ours
1de	<i>āc</i>	<i>Ācimkā</i>	ours
1pi	<i>i</i>	<i>Imo</i>	ours
1pe	<i>ā</i>	<i>Āmkā</i>	ours

(Rai, 2023)

Table 2 shows the five first-person possessive pronouns of the Chamling language. They are all formed with prefixes such as <ā>, <ic>, <āc>, and <i>. Out of them, one is singular, two dual and the other two are plural. Furthermore, dual and plural possessive pronouns are classified into inclusive and exclusive. The possessive pronouns *icimo* and *ācimkā* are inclusive and exclusive dual pronouns, respectively. Likewise, *imo* is an inclusive plural possessive pronoun, whereas *āmkā* is an exclusive one. This concept is illustrated below.

- (a) Chamling: *oko āngā tāmā*. (Singular possessive pronoun)
English: This village is mine.
- (b) Chamling: *oko icimo caikhām*. (dual inclusive possessive pronoun)
English: This class is ours.
- (c) Chamling: *ācimkā khim hoṭā*. (Rai et al., 2007) (dual exclusive possessive pronoun)
English: Our (we two) home collapsed.
- (d) Chamling: *oko imo tāmā*. (plural exclusive possessive pronoun)
English: This village is ours.
- (e) Chamling: *tyoko āmkā yu*. (plural exclusive possessive pronoun)
English: That spade is ours.

The Second-Person Possessive Pronouns of Chamling

The second-person possessive pronoun indicates that the person you are speaking to is in possession of something. The second person possessive pronouns in the Chamling language are *khāmo*, *khaicimo*, and *khainicimo*, which are shown in further detail in Table 3.

Table 3

The Second Person Possessive Pronouns of Chamling and English

Number	Chamling		English
	poss. Prefix	Poss. Pronoun	poss. pronoun
2si	<i>Kāp</i>	<i>Khāmo</i>	yours
2di	<i>Ki</i>	<i>Khaicimo</i>	yours
2pi	<i>kai</i>	<i>Khainicimo</i>	yours

(Rai, 2023)

Table 3 shows that *khāmo*, *khaicimo*, and *khainicimo* are the second-person possessive pronouns and, they receive <*kāp*>, <*ki*>, and <*kai*> prefixes respectively. The second-person possessive pronoun consists of three numbers such as singular, dual and plural.

(a) Chamling: *oko khāmo buuwākhā*.

English: This garden is yours.

(b) Chamling: *okoci khaicimo berāmāci*.

English: These cats are yours. (two persons)

(c) Chamling: *tyokoci khanicimo khipāci*.

English: Those dogs are yours. (more than two persons)

In the above-given illustrations, *khāmo*, *khaicimo*, and *khanicimo* are used as singular, dual, and plural respectively.

The Third-Person Possessive Pronouns of Chamling

According to Zheng (2021), a third-person possessive pronoun indicates that a third party is the possessor. The Chamling language consists of three third-person possessives which are given in Table 4.

Table 4

The Third Person Possessive Pronouns of Chamling and English

Chamling		English	
Number	poss. Prefix	Poss. Pronoun	Poss. Pronoun
3si	<i>m</i>	<i>khumo</i>	his/her
3nsi	<i>kic</i>	<i>khucimo</i>	Theirs

(Rai, 2023, p.)

As shown in Table 4, *khumo* and *khucimo* are the third-person possessive pronouns, and they receive <*m*>, and <*kic*> prefixes respectively. *khumo* is used to represent both masculine and feminine genders. *khucimo* is used to represent all genders just like the word "they" in English. As a result, the third person possessive pronouns of Chamling are gender-neutral pronouns.

Use of Chamling possessive pronouns:

(a) Chamling: *oko āngā dānbā*.

English: This stick is mine.

(b) Chamling: *oko imo pipā*.

English: This ox is ours.

(c) Chamling: *oko khaimo pi*.

English: This cow is yours.

(d) Chamling: *oko khumo maisi*.

English: This buffalo is his/hers.

Furthermore, the Chamling possessive pronoun is followed by a noun or noun phrase such as *āngā ākhim, imo ikhim, ācimkā khim, āmkā khim, khumo mkhim, khucimo ikhim*.

English possessive pronouns

The English language consists of nine possessive pronouns and among them four is plural pronouns and three are singular. Two are first person: mine, ours, one is second person, and three are third-person possessive pronouns. These are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Possessive Pronouns of English

	Singular	Plural
First-person	Mine	Ours
Second-person	yours	Yours
Third-person	his/hers	Theirs

(Fay, 2005, p. 43)

Table 5 shows that mine, yours, his, and hers are singular possessive pronouns, whereas ours, yours, and theirs are the plural ones. **Mine** is the first-person singular, whereas, ours is plural one. **Yours** is the second-person possessive pronoun which can be used to mark both singular and plural forms. The sense of the second-person possessive can be cleared only by the context. The first-person and second-person possessive pronouns have the same form for both masculine and feminine genders. **His, hers** and **theirs** are third-person possessive pronouns. Among them his and hers are singular, whereas theirs is plural. Third-person singular possessive pronouns have different forms for masculine—his, and feminine—hers. On the other hand, in the plural form, there is no gender distinction.

On the other hand, English also has possessive words like mine, our, your, his, her, its, and their. They are not, however, possessive pronouns. They are possessive adjectives or determiners.

Difference between possessive pronouns and adjectives

In English, possessive words consist of two categories: possessive pronouns and possessive adjectives or determiners. Possessive pronouns and possessive adjectives possess different uses and sentence placements in English. Possessive pronouns include "mine," "yours," "his," "her," "our," and "theirs," whereas possessive adjectives or determiners include "my," "your," "his," "her," "its," "our," and "their."

(a) This car is *mine*. (Possessive pronoun)

(b) This is *my* car. (Possessive adjectives)

In the first example, "mine" is employed as a possessive pronoun, whereas in the second, "my" is used as a possessive adjective. The distinction between possessive pronouns and possessive adjectives is discussed below.

- Possessive pronouns replace nouns and noun phrases, while possessive adjectives or determiners modify nouns and noun phrases.

(a) This is her car; this is *mine*.

(b) My name is Krishna, and I am looking for *my* car.

In the first illustration, the possessive pronoun "mine" replaces the place of a noun phrase to avoid repetition. In the second instance, the possessive adjective or determiner "my" is employed to modify the noun "car."

- The possessive pronouns can act as subjects or objects, whereas adjectives or determiners act as modifiers.

(a) This bag is *mine*.

(b) *My* favourite colour is red.

In the first instance, "mine" serves as an object, whereas "my" serves as a modifier in the second

- Possessive pronouns are not followed by a noun, whereas possessive adjectives or determiners are followed by a noun.

(a) Can I use *your* motorbike? *Mine* is broken.

(b) This is *my* book.

In the given examples, the word "mine" is employed as a possessive pronoun and is not followed by a noun. However, "your" and "my" are employed as possessive adjectives or determiners. They serve as pre-modifiers in sentences.

Comparison of the possessive pronouns in Chamling and English

The possessive pronouns of Chamling and English are thoroughly compared in accordance with the previous distinct interpretation and analysis of the data of both languages. The following comparisons are made between Chamling and English possessive pronouns:

Table 6

Chamling and English Possessive Pronouns

S.N.	Chamling possessive			English possessive
1	S	d	p	mine
	<i>Āngā</i>			
	i	<i>icimo</i>	<i>imo</i>	ours
	e	<i>ācimkā</i>	<i>āmkā</i>	ours
2	<i>khāmo,</i>	<i>khainicimo</i>	<i>khaimo</i>	yours
3	<i>khumo</i>			his/hers
	<i>okomo</i>			its
	<i>khucimo</i>			theirs

As shown in Table 6, the following similarities and distinctions can be elicited in the possessive pronouns of Chamling and English.

i. Similarities between the Chamling and English possessive pronouns

a. The possessive pronouns of both, Chamling and English languages are categorized under three persons such as the first, second, and third.

Chamling:

First-person: *āngā, imo, icimo, ācimkā, āmkā*

Second person: *khāmo, khainicimo, khaimo*

Third person: *khumo, okomo, khucimo*

English:

First-person: mine, ours

Second person: yours

Third-person: his, hers, its, theirs (Quirk, 2010, p. 361)

b. The third person plural possessive pronoun of Chamling *khucimo* is used for all genders and so is “theirs” in English.

(i) Chamling: *oko khucimo gothi*. (Both masculine and feminine)

English: This cow shed is theirs. (Both masculine and feminine)

ii. Differences between the Chamling and English possessive pronouns

a. The second-person personal pronoun system of Chamling consists of singular, dual, and plural systems, whereas English does not have a dual system.

a. Chamling: *oko khāmo khārādip*. (Singular)

b. English: This plate is yours.

c. Chamling: *oko khainicimo bablawā*. (Dual)

d. English: This pot is yours.

e. Chamling: *tyoko khaimo bablawā*. (Plural)

f. English: That pot is yours.

b. Table 3 shows that in Chamling *khāmo* is used for singular, *khainicimo* for dual, and *khaimo* is used for plural, whereas a form “yours” is used for the singular and plural in English.

(i) Chamling: *khāmo khodā?* (Singular)

b. English: Where is *yours*? (Singular)

c. (ii) Chamling: *khainicimo khodā?* (Dual)

d. Chamling: *khaimo khodā?* (Plural)

e. English: Where are *yours*? (Plural)

c. In Chamling, there is no gender distinction. Thus, *khumo* is used to show both male and female, whereas “his” is used to represent the masculine gender and “hers” for the feminine gender in English.

i. Chamling: *oko khumo khim*.

English: This house is his.

ii. Chamling: *oko khumo khim*.

English: This house is hers.

d. The nouns or noun phrases occur after Chamling possessive pronouns, but not after English possessive pronouns.

(i) Chamling: oko **āngā** chidyu.

English: This bowl is **mine**.

e. Chamling possessive pronouns are not used in the initial and final position of the sentences, whereas English possessive pronouns are used. Furthermore, the possessive pronouns of English can be used as subject, object, and complement.

(i) English: This is your pen. **Mine** is broken.

(ii) English: His pencil is broken. It is **yours**.

Finding

The following major findings were observed after comparing and analyzing the possessive pronouns in Chamling and English, and they are briefly discussed below:

1. The first-person possessive pronouns in Chamling include *āngā*, *icimo*, *ācimkā*, *imo* and *āmkā*, whereas English only includes the words *mine* and *ours*.
2. The second-person possessive pronoun in Chamling consists of a number distinction, with *khāmo* representing the singular form, *khaicimo* the dual, and *khainicimo* the plural, although there is no such distinction in English.
3. In Chamling *<ā>*, *<i>*, *<kāp>*, *<kai>*, *<m>*, and *<kic>* are the prefixes of the possessive pronouns, whereas in English, there is no use of any affixes for the formation of possessive pronouns.
4. In Chamling, possessive pronouns and possessive determiners are not distinguished as they are in English.
5. All possessive pronouns in Chamling are dependent. As a result, they always come before the object they possess and they can support either the subject or the object in a sentence, whereas in English all possessive pronouns are independent and appear as either the subject or the object of sentences.

Conclusion

The possessive pronoun systems of English and Chamling are compared in this study. The possessive pronoun systems of Chamling and English are not entirely similar. They contrast in terms of usage, function, number, and place in the utterances. Possessive pronouns are used to denote possession in both the Chamling and English languages. However, Chamling has more possessive pronouns compared to English. Chamling consists of ten possessive pronouns, whereas English has only six. While English only has one word for both singular and plural, Chamling contains three second person possessive pronouns to describe the singular, dual, and plural. Chamling has both inclusive and exclusive language systems that are not based on English. The possessive pronouns of Chamling are divided possessive into three categories based on number: singular, dual, and plural, in contrast to English, which only has singular and plural possessive pronouns. While the English third person singular possessive pronoun plainly demonstrates the gender distinctions such as *his* (masculine) and *hers* (feminine), the Chamling

pronoun system doesn't show the existence of the gender system. Furthermore, Chamling possessive pronouns are not used in the position of the subject, however, English possessive pronouns are used as subject, object, and complement. The Chamling possessive pronoun system displays unique features that have not received enough attention in studies of Nepali ethnic languages. As a result, this study advances the comparative and contrastive study of Nepali ethnic languages and English.

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