



Daffodil International University

Project Paper with Internship (ENG-431) Summer-2025

A Research Report on Morphological Analysis of the Mro Language

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This report is submitted to the Department of English, DIU in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of B.A. (Hon's) in English.

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August 2025

Declaration

I declare that this research work titled “Morphological Analysis of the Mru Language” is my own original work. This work has never been presented to any other degree or qualification at any university or institution whether in full or in part.

All the sources and references used in this thesis have been acknowledged and cited. If I have used any ideas, words, or work of others, I have clearly acknowledged them.

This report fulfills the requirements of the “Project Paper with Internship” (Course Code: Eng-431) under the B.A(Honors) program in English. This was completed under the supervision of Dr. Md. Mostafa Rashel, Associate Professor of Linguistics, in the Department of English at Daffodil International University.



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Humaira Khan Riha

Approval Certificate

This is to certify that **Humaira khan Riha** (ID: 213-10-782) has successfully completed the Project Paper along with Internship under my supervision. As part of this academic requirement, she has completed a research work on *Morphological Analysis of the Mro Language*

During the internship period, she consistently stayed in touch with me, followed my guidance, and shared regular updates on her progress. She demonstrated dedication, professionalism, and a strong commitment to her responsibilities.

Her efforts and successful completion of her assigned tasks highlight her academic potential and eagerness to learn. I am pleased with her performance and confidently recommend her for the viva-voce and other forms of academic acknowledgement.

I extend my best wishes for her future.



.....

Dr. Md. Mostafa Rashel
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Abstract

This thesis is about morphological analysis of the Mro language that is focused on the morphological structures of the Mro language which includes word formation processes, inflectional and derivational morphology. This analysis is based on primary field data and existing descriptive grammars. The results highlight the agglutinative nature of Mru morphology and reveal unique features such as reduplication, verb serialization, and affixation patterns, contributing to broader typological understandings of Tibeto-Burman languages.

This study shows the unique linguistic features of the Mro language through detailed examples and analysis. The data for this research paper was gathered through field visits to Bandarban where I engaged with people from the Mru community and conducted interviews.

The study explores descriptive linguistic methods to investigate morpheme types, word classes, inflectional paradigms, derivation, compounding, and reduplication. Based on primary elicitation and existing literature, this thesis contributes to the documentation and preservation of Mru, while also enriching our understanding of morphological typology in underrepresented languages. The research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of Mru morphology, shedding light on its grammatical structures and linguistic dynamics within the community. This research will contribute to both descriptive linguistics and language preservation.

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Chapter One

Description of Mru Community

1.1 Origin of Mru People:

The Mru of Bangladesh are a small ethnic community living in the hill district of Bandarban (CHT) and outside of our country they live in Myanmar. The Mru people have their own unique language and culture.

1.2 Language and script:

The Mru language is written in both Latin and the Mru Alphabet, created in the 1980s by Man Ley Mru. He created this language when he was about 19 years old. An estimated 80% of Mru are literate in the Mro alphabet. They have 31 alphabets but they do not have any vowels or consonants. Many people of their community can read and write Burmese, Bangla, English and Marma.

1.3 Religion:

Buddhism: The majority of the Mru follow Theravada Buddhism. However, many of the Mru Buddhists also practice Animism. Several scholars also observe that many of the religious practices and rituals of the Mru often lack explicit Buddhist characteristics.

Krama religion: In 1984 Manlay Mro (also known as Manlay Mru/Murong) established the "krama" faith. Krama is currently the second most followed religion among the Mru. At age twelve, Krama boys and girls participate in a coming-of-age ceremony.

Christianity: Despite the efforts of European missionaries to convert the Mru people, only a small fraction of the Mru have converted, the rest remaining Buddhists. Christianization efforts have been hindered by ongoing political turmoil within the region.

Islam: A small number of people from this community in Bangladesh have adopted Islam as their faith.

Chapter Two

Methodology and Research objective

2.1 Research Methodology:

This research used qualitative data collection and analysis techniques. This includes both primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources include literature review, articles, books, journals, records and online material related to indigenous language issues. Primary data is gathered through field visits to Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) as it is a prominent residence for numerous Mro communities.

Preliminary procedure of this research included an extensive review of all the previous works conducted on Mro language. Then the main procedure was to collect all the data available on this topic and organize those to our needs. There were guided sessions with fluent speakers to bring out specific grammatical structures and morphological forms. English and Bangla language were used for communicating with them due to the insufficient fluency of the researcher in Mro language.

There was a discussion with the key informant from the Mro community involving face to face informal interview along with audio data collection using a voice recorder. This dual-method strategy is needed for a nuanced exploration of the Mro language which will be emphasizing a qualitative analysis with a specific focus on morphological analysis. The research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic dynamics within the Mro community.

2.1 Research Objectives and Questions:

The primary objective is to document and analyze the morphological features of Mro language and to provide a description of the constituent order, tense, pronominal system as well as text analysis of Mro language. The secondary objective is to examine the syntactic structures including word order, sentence type and clause structure and to contribute to the documentation and preservation of the Mro language.

And the researcher seeks to investigate these questions: What are the morphological structures used in the Mro language particularly concerning noun and verb inflection, derivation, how does the Mro language use its word forms to show things like case, tense, number or agreement? By answering these questions this research seeks to deepen our understanding of the Mru language.

Chapter Three

Literature Review

The Mru Language has received limited attention and it remains underexplored in comparison to more widely studied languages in the region. This literature review aims to access the relevant existing works of Mru language.

The foundational work on morphology and syntax comes from David A. Peterson (2011), which remains the most comprehensive descriptive grammar of the language to date. His work outlines the basic phonology, morphology and syntactic constructions of Mru language. However, while his work is important as groundwork it still leaves room for further research for discourse level syntax of the Mru language. He underscores the urgency of linguistic documentation and the need for detailed grammatical analysis.

Rashel (2009), provides the most detailed study in his thesis, “Morphosyntactic Analysis of Mro Language”. He discusses the relationship between Mro morphology and syntax using different case markers. His study includes a description of the constituent order, grammatical categories like tense; comparative marker, pronominal system, demonstratives, adverbs, clause combination like conditional markers, reasons, time, motion, structures of question like y/n question, informal, exclamatory; case markers like noun, pronoun (relative), numeral relation to conjunction, suffix, clause/sentence level, grammatical relation (GR) as well as text analysis of Mro language. His analysis remains foundational and essential reference for any further study in this area. However, considering the language’s endangered status more extensive and field-driven research is needed. This research will build on Rashel’s findings with updated methodologies and new data of Mro texts and analysis which will help enrich the linguistic documentation and theoretical understanding of the Mro language.

Mru is often mentioned in broader typological works such as van Driem’s Languages of the Himalayas (2001), which discusses the placement of Mru within the larger Tibeto-Burman group.

Bradley (1997) discusses the broader description of Tibeto-Burman languages, placing Mro within the Lolo-Burmese subgroup and emphasizing common morphological traits such as verb-final structures and affixation. His typological observations help contextualize Mro within the larger Sino-Tibetan language.

Other surveys, such as Lewis et al. (2015) in *Ethnologies*, briefly document Mro's classification and sociolinguistic context, but do not explore morphology in depth.

Despite the valuable foundation laid by Peterson and typological studies, there is a clear gap in the integration of morpho-syntactic analysis. The current study aims to bridge this gap by analyzing Mro morpho-syntax not only as a static structure but as a system influenced by real-world usage, contact, and identity. It will contribute to both descriptive linguistics and language policy discourse in Bangladesh.

Chapter Four

Morphological Analysis of Mru language

4.1 Constituent Order:

Constituent order refers to the typical arrangements of sentence elements, especially subject, verb, object. The constituent order of the Mru language are SVO (Subject-Verb-Object) and SOV (Subject-Object-Verb). In some exceptional cases it is VOS (Verb-Object-Subject). Here are some examples -

1) I eat rice

/æŋ tʃa ham/

S V O

2) I live in Bandarban

/ æŋ ɭatkou əuami/

S V O

3) I have a younger brother

/æŋkəu naum əuai ləʊkja/

S O V

4) Everyone in my family live together

/ æŋkəu kɪmtʃak bək'bək əuai /

S O V

5) I am working

/lub tʃaŋ æŋ/

V O S [Exceptional case]

6) He is working

/ nəkəu tʃaŋ lub /

S O V

7) They are working

/kubu lub tʃaŋ/

S V O

4.2 Grammatical categories:

Tense: There are three main variations of tense and they are: present, past and future tense. In the Mru language there are distinct markers that are positioned before the verb and sometimes after the verb to indicate different tenses. The present tense is often unmarked but the past and the future tense has a tense maker. For the past tense ‘hək’ is used and ‘kouem’ is used for the future tense. For example-

1) I eat rice (Present)

/æŋ tʃa ham/

2) I finished eating rice (Past)

/æŋ ki tʃa ham hək/

3) I will eat rice (Future)

/æŋ tʃa ham kouem/

4) My name is Payong (Present)

/æŋ miŋ paɔŋ/

4.3 Pronominal System:

Pronominal systems in language are pronouns that distinguish persons, numbers and gender and politeness or formality in some languages. In the Mru language pronouns do not change for gender and politeness but it replaces pronouns for titles or kinship terms to address elders and to show respect. They don't have any specific words for any gender. Some examples of it are given below:

	<i>Singular</i>	<i>Plural</i>
1st Person	æŋ	æŋkəu
2nd Person	en	enkəu
3rd Person	nakau	kubu

Examples:

1) I live in Bandarban

/ æŋ ɹatkou əvaɪmi /

2) Everyone in my family live together

/ æŋkəʊ kɪmtʃak bək' bək əvaɪ /

3) We have a garden

/ æŋkəʊ baɡən əvaɪ /

4) I eat rice now.

/ æŋ kəmat tʃa ham /

5) They are working

/kubu lub tʃaŋ/

6) He is working

/ nəkəʊ lub tʃaŋ /

4.4 Numeral classifiers:

/ja/ = Person /buk/ = Thing

1) One /ləʊk/

2) Two /pɹɛɪ/

3) Three /ʃʌm/

4) Four /tɪli/

5) Five /tʌŋɡa/

6) Six /tɔɪʌk/

7) Ten /həʊmʊt/

8) Twenty /pɹɛəmi/

9) Hundred /kouəm/

Examples:

- 1) I have a younger brother (Person)

/æŋkəʊ naʊm əʊaɪ ləʊk ʃɑ/

- 2) Two houses (Thing)

/ pɪeɪ bʊk kɪm/

- 3) Ten girls (Person)

/ hɒmʊt ʃɑ mɪʃjʊə /

- 4) Twenty books (Thing)

/ pɪəmi bʊk bɔɪ/

4.5 Demonstratives:

Usually, every language has a clear class of demonstratives. These are normally free forms and may proceed or follow the nouns they function with (Rashel 2009:165). Demonstratives are words that show the location of the noun in relation to the speaker and listener. Mro language possesses such kind of demonstrative pronouns that have the flexibility to appear before or after the nouns they modify.

Examples

1. **Adjectival Use** (before a noun):

/mɔkə bʊk/ - this book (book near me)

/nɪmi bʊk/ - that book (book near you)

/lɔkmə bʊk/ - that book over there (book far from both)

2. **Pronominal Use** (standing alone):

/mɔkə/ - this

/nɪmi/ -that (near you)

/lɔkmə/- that (far away)

In these examples /mɔkə/ (this) and /nɪmi/ (that) are used as demonstrative pronouns.

4.6 Affixation:

Affixation is the process of adding words to a root so that it can make new words or to express grammatical functions like tense, number etc. In the Mru language there are mostly suffixes and prefixes rather than infixes and circumfixes which is unlike many Tibeto-Burman languages. The Mru language affixation is suffix based especially for tense and plurality. Prefixes are used for nominalization and derivation. Prefixes are used before the root to modify the meaning of the word.

Example

1) /setʃə/- Knife

/nasetʃə/- Baby elephant

Prefix- /na/ is used here to change the meaning of the word from Knife to Baby elephant.

Suffix: Suffixes are added after the words to modify the meaning, tense and aspect of it.

Example

1) /lub/- Work

/lub tʃaŋmi/- Worker

Here suffix /tʃaŋmi/ is added after the word /lub/ (verb) making into another word which is -worker (noun).

2) Everyone in my family live together

/ æŋkəʊ kɪm tʃak bək' bək əʊaɪ /

Here suffix /tʃak/(Plural) is added after the noun /kɪm/ (Family) for plural marking.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

This research paper shows the collective data and analysis of the linguistic and cultural aspects of the Mru community. Their language is understudied and underrepresented in comparison to more widely studied languages in the region. The Mru language has distinct characteristics and a unique tonal system. They heavily rely on the tonal match rather than grammatical rules when they use their language on a daily basis. This research paper contributes to its documentation and lays foundation for further research on linguistic aspects such as morphology, syntax, phonology, morphosyntactic analysis and also on sociolinguistics. It features agglutinative morphology, complex verb, numerical and pronominal system of the Mru language. This study shows the unique morphological features of the Mru language and emphasizes on the urgency to document and analyze this language. This will prevent the death of this language as we know the users of this language are few. To prevent this, we must learn the urgency of documenting and analyzing this language for future linguistic and cultural preservation.

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Appendix

Story : 1
Speaker : Parung Mro
Date : 10 May, 2025

1. My name is Parung Mro.
/æŋ miŋ paɪŋ miəʊ/
2. I live in Bandarban.
/ æŋ .ɪatkou əʊaɪmi/
3. I have a younger brother.
/æŋkəʊ naʊm əʊaɪ ləʊk ja/
4. Everyone in my family lives together.
/ æŋkəʊ kɪmtʃak bək' bək əʊaɪ /
5. We used to live in the hills.
/æŋkəʊ kɪmtʃak hɪŋkəɪ əʊaɪ mɪtʃbəkʔ/
6. We live on the plain site now.
/æŋ kəmat ɛdəkəɪ əʊaɪ/
7. We have a mango garden.
/ æŋkəʊ juʃəm ʃɪŋ əʊaɪ /
8. I know the Marma language.
/æŋ maɪən leɪklu ja/
9. I study English.
/æŋ ɪŋɡlɪʃ kəɪ ʃaŋ/
10. I want to go abroad.
/æŋ praŋ praŋ kəɪ maŋ kəʊmi/

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