

Contrastive study of Compounding in Tangkhul and English

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Abstract

This study aims at exploring compound word formation in Tangkhul with contrast to English. Qualitative descriptive approach is used for the study as contemporary forms of words in the two languages are analysed. Compounding accounts for one of the most productive processes of word formation in the two languages. In this study, form classes and semantic criteria are analysed. Under form classes, noun compound, verb compound and adjective compound are discussed. Endocentric and exocentric compounds are taken up under semantic criteria. Some other compound types found in the two languages like three root compounds, reduplicative, recursive, copulative, coordinate, synonym, antonym, rhyme motivated and ablaut motivated compounds are also discussed.

Key Words: Tangkhul, Compounding, Word Formation, Contrastive Study

1. Introduction

Tangkhul is a language spoken mainly by the inhabitants of Ukhrul district in Manipur, India; also called the Tangkhuls. It has around 183,998 speakers according to 2011 census. Benedict(1972) classified Tangkhul under Kuki-Naga group of Tibeto-Burman of the Sino-Tibetan language family. Shafer(1974) placed the language under Luhupa branch in Kukish section. It is an agglutinating language where morphemes play an important role. English belongs to the Indo-European language family of the Germanic branch. It is a highly inflectional language. As two entirely unrelated languages, the points of similarities and differences will be questioned in the light of compound word formation.

Compounding is defined as a process of word formation where two or more existing words are put together to form a new word. According to Snyder(2016), "A word will be called a

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‘Compound’ if it is composed of two or more other words, and have approximately the same privilege of occurrence within a sentence as do other word-level members of its syntactic category (N,V,A or P).” These combined words together form a conceptual unit stored in the mental lexicon of the users. They are syntactically inseparable; no syntactic process is allowed to refer to parts of a word. As a result, they form syntactico-semantic islands. Compounds can be inflected, affixed or have linking elements, but these processes do not affect the lexical integrity of the compounds.

This study will mainly focus on underived compound words. Compounds may be written in three different ways: a) the solid or closed form b) the hyphenated form and c) the open or spaced form, the usage depending on the choice of the writer. Both the languages are largely composed of two-word compounds though other larger compositions exist. Some questions raised in this study are- Do these languages have the same compound word formation?

What are the criteria for compounding in the languages?

2. Compounds based on form classes

According to the form class of the resultant compound, usually compounding may be subdivided into i) Compound Nouns, ii) Compound Verbs and iii) Compound Adjectives.

2.1. Compound Nouns

Nominal compounding, as a word formation process, is one of the most productive processes both in Tangkhul and English languages. The pattern of its occurrence is compared and contrasted with some examples in the following table.

Table 1.

	Tangkhul	English

[N+N]N	<p>rai(war)+k^hai(knife)=raik^hai(sword)</p> <p>hər(chicken)+ru(egg/liquid)=hər-ru(chicken egg)</p> <p>kui(head)+səm(hair)=kuisəm(head hair)</p> <p>k^hui(bee)+ru(liquid/egg)=k^huiru(honey)</p> <p>mi(person) +yur(kind)=miyur(mankind)</p> <p>sei(cow)+fīm(house)=seifīm(cow-shed)</p> <p>drak^hat^hei(grape)+kao (dried object)=drak^hat^heikao(raisin)</p>	<p>master+mind=mastermind</p> <p>head+quarter=headquarter</p> <p>neck+lace=necklace</p> <p>light+house=lighthouse</p> <p>ear+ring=earring</p> <p>glue+stick=gluestick</p> <p>wind+pipe=windpipe</p> <p>feather+weight=featherweight</p>
[N+V]N	<p>tui(word) +nəʃit(engage)=tuiənəʃit(promise)</p> <p>paŋ(hand)+jit(sway)=paŋjit(hand-writing)</p> <p>p^hei(foot)+nai(step)=p^heinai(foot-stool/mat)</p> <p>t^hei(fruit)+fui(rot)=theifui(fermented soybean)</p> <p>paŋ(hand)+mit(wipe)=paŋmit(cloth for wiping hand)</p>	<p>sun+set=sunset</p> <p>skin+care=skincare</p> <p>world+view=worldview</p> <p>blood+shed=bloodshed</p> <p>heart+break=heartbreak</p>
[Adj+N]N	<p>k^hərər(mature)+can(speech)=k^hərər-can(story)</p> <p>k^hənui(young) +t^hot(generation)=k^hənuit^hot(young generation)</p> <p>kəjaŋ(outdoor)+hən(vegetable)=kə-jaŋhən(mustard)</p>	<p>smart+watch=smartwatch</p> <p>hot+spot=hotspot</p> <p>sweet+heart=sweetheart</p> <p>broad+way=broadway</p>
[N+Adj]N	<p>kui(head)+taŋ(clear)=kuitaŋ(bald head)</p> <p>ləm(land)+haŋ(empty)=ləmhaŋ(barren land)</p> <p>mai(face) +kəʃi(bad,sad)=maikəʃi(embarrassment)</p>	
[Adj+Adj]N	<p>pəŋ(strong) +ʃəp(capable)=pəŋʃəp(strength)</p>	
[N+Adv]N	<p>wuk(stomach)+luŋ(inside)=wukluŋ/ukluŋ(heart)</p>	

[V+N]N	pəm(sit) +k ^h oŋ(bowl)=pəm ^h oŋ(chair)	pass+port=passport swim+suit=swimsuit show+room=showroom
[V+V]N	jam(flee)+kui(go in circles)=jamkui(garden) ʃok(go out)+vao(shout)=ʃokvao(a proper name)	make+believe=make-believe hover+fly=hoverfly
[V+Adv]N		take+out=lookout draw+back=drawback take+off=takeoff
[P+N]N		in+box=inbox under+ground=underground over+head=overhead
[V+P]N		lay+out=layout start+up=startup check+in=check-in

Noun as a form class is an open word class where there is no limit to the words that can be added. Consequently, this word class tends to be the most productive and abundant. NN compounding is a common strategy of word formation. Structurally, the general schema comprises the combination of two nominal stems. Here, common nouns are the most productive in both the languages. Nouns are mostly found as free morphemes. However in some cases in Tangkhul, some nouns need to be attached to a prefix *a-* in order to stand alone (eg. *akui*, *aru*, *ayur*). But this prefix is omitted when the word occurs in a compound (eg. *kuisam*, *harra*, *miyur*). We can also observe from the above table that when two nouns are joined together to form a new word, the entire meaning of the new word is carried by the second constituent; i.e., it functions as the head. The meaning of the compound noun is a specialisation of the meaning of its head. In this sense, the right-hand-head rule is applicable in both the languages.

Certain words in English can behave both as a noun and as a verb (post, stick, care, view, show). This case is also seen in Tangkhul, as for instance, *kao*, *shui* when attached with *a-* prefix behaves like a noun (*akao* ‘dried object’, *ashui* ‘rotten object’), yet it can also signify verbs when occurring in a word (*drakhatheikao* ‘raisin’, *theishui* ‘fermented soybean’).

In the case of Adj+N, the adjectives function as indicating some properties about the noun that follows. In Tangkhul however, contrary to N+N formation, here the prefix *ka-*, *kha-* is attached even during compound formation. The noun still functions as the head.

On the other hand, in N+Adj, the adjective modifies the noun and the noun functions as the head which is located on the left-hand. This shows that Tangkhul can take the left-hand constituent as its head. It is also observed that adjectives can be both inflected or uninflected when it is to occur in a compound. An uninflected adjective cannot occur as an independent word, and is therefore not a free morpheme. Thus in contrast to English, Tangkhul is sometimes constituted by bound and free morphemes.

In the case of verb+noun compounds, the noun may be either the subject or the object to the verb.

For the remaining patterns, there are few examples in Adj+Adj and N+Adv in Tangkhul and V+Adv, P+N and V+P in English.

2.2. Compound Verbs

Compound verbs are those compounds that fall under the category of verbs, i.e. they perform the functions of verbs. The elements combined here include the following:

Table 2.

	Tangkhul	English
[N+V]V	<p>sui(reason) +cip^hun(send)=suicip^hun(to black-mail) ηəcaŋ(will)+cət(torn)=ηəcaŋcət(agit-ate) məŋ(dream) +ʃiman(lost)=məŋʃiman(to dream) niŋ(mind)+cot(tired)=niŋcot(to be sorrowful)</p>	<p>photo+copy=photocopy sky+dive=skydive sight+see=sightsee hand+pick=handpick moon+dance=moon dance</p>

[V+Adv/P]V		work+out=workout break+up=breakup lay+out=layout
[Adj+V]V		skinny+dip=skinny-dip fine+tune=fine-tune
[V+V]V	<p>ruu(steal)+jeŋ(look)=ruujeŋ(peep) p^həniŋ(think) +uŋ(return)=p^həniŋuŋ(remember) p^heo(wash)+mi(give)=p^heomi(for- give) k^həlui(wrap) +k^həm(conceal)=k^həlui^həm(cover) fao(beat)+ka(go up)=faoka(beat/ hammer up something) haŋ(speak)+foŋ(out)=haŋfoŋ(speak out) kəpi(write)+foŋ(go out) +rər(capable)=kəpifoŋrər(capable of writing) p^həniŋ(think) +k^hui(take)=p^həniŋk^hui(realise) han(say)+ciŋhei(show) +mi(give)=hancitheimi(to teach)</p>	type+write=typewrite freeze+dry=frezedry stir+fry=stirfry kick+start=kickstart dare+say=daresay
[N+Adj]V	k ^h on(sound)+fi(sad)=k ^h onfi(to curse) niŋ(mind)+fi(sad)=niŋfi(to thank) k ^h əja(respect)+ fi(sad)=k ^h əjafi(to re- spect) mai(face)+fi(bad/sad)=maifi(embar- rass)	
[V+Adj]V	riŋ(live)+p ^h a(good)=riŋp ^h a(to be hap- py) ^h ei(know/see)+ŋui(wrong)= ^h eiŋui(to commit error) jeŋ(look)+fi(bad/sad)=jeŋfi(to hate)	
[P+V]V		out+live=outlive up+root=uproot over+drive=overdrive
[Adj+N]V		bad+mouth=badmouth

Verb is a productive word class in a Tibeto-Burman language like Tangkhul. The impression that VV compounds are more widely distributed in Tangkhul than English is confirmed by a glance at the data available in English and Tangkhul. VV compounds in Tangkhul may have a metaphoric meaning of the constituents used or may indicate the result of the combination of both the constituents. In addition, some verbs in this construction have the ability to reverse their meaning, eg. *hangshok* ‘speak out’, *shokhang* ‘come out and speak’. Which word precedes and which follows determines the outcome of the verb. We find quite a number of examples in N+V compounds for both the languages. There are combinations such as V+Adv/P, Adj+V, P+V, Adj+N in English not found in Tangkhul and N+Adj, V+Adj found in Tangkhul but not in English.

2.3. Compound Adjectives

Unlike English, there is no clear cut distinction between adjectives and other word classes in Tangkhul. “Tangkhul-Naga adjectives display a hybrid morphology, some nominal, some verbal.” (Ahum 1997), in that they are derived mostly from noun or verb. So this word class is very limited.

Table 3.

	Tangkhul	English
[N+Adj]Adj	niŋ(mind) +teo(small)=niŋteo(narrow minded) niŋ(mind) +kai(broken)=niŋkai(broken hearted)	water+tight=watertight knee+deep=knee deep world+wide=worldwide
[N+Adv]N		hand+some=handsome
[V+Adj]Adj	ŋəkai(to rebel/divide)+ŋi(bad/sad)= ŋəkaiŋi(disobedient/hard to divide)	

[Adj+Adj]Adj		bitter+sweet=bittersweet red+hot=redhot wide+spread=widespread
[Adv/P+Adj]Adj		up+tight=uptight over+confident=overconfident
[Adj/Adv+Past Participle]Adj		under+privileged=underprivileged well+paid=well-paid over+ripe=overripe

We find very few examples of adjective compounds in Tangkhul. English has far richer compound adjectives than Tangkhul. In contrast to N+Adj and V+Adj occurrences in Tangkhul, English has N+Adj, V+Adj as well as N+Adv, Adj+Adj, Adv/P+Adj and Adj/Adv+Past participle.

There are other form classes found in English but absent in Tangkhul, such as-

Compound preposition (into, onto)

Compound pronoun (somebody, whosoever, everyone, everybody)

Compound conjunction (whenever, as well as, insofar)

3. Compounds based on Semantic Criteria

The compounds based on their meaning and headedness are discussed below.

3.1. Endocentric Compounds

3.1.1. Right-headed Construction

Some examples of right-headed endocentric compounds where two or more words are combined and the meaning rests with the latter word are shown below.

Table 4.

Tangkhul	English
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p ^h ei(foot)+con(print)=p ^h eichon(footprint)	stop+watch=stopwatch
vanu(duck)+ru(egg)=vanuru(duck egg)	horse+shoe=horseshoe
sei(cow)+sa(meat)=seisa(cow meat/beef)	sun+burn=sunburn
at ^h ei(fruit)+ra(liquid)=at ^h eira(fruit juice)	air+port=airport
sa(animal)+ha(fur)=saha(animal fur)	arm+chair=armchair

We find that there are sufficient instances of right-headed endocentric compounds in both the languages. This means that Tangkhul and English make use of this compound type to a considerable extent.

3.1.2. Left-headed Construction

The compound type where two or more words are combined to form a word and the meaning resides in the first word is called left-headed endocentric compound. Some examples found in the two languages are given below.

Table 5.

Tangkhul	English
ʃim(house)+tuŋ(top)=ʃimtuŋ(roof)	worn+out=wornout
tui(word)+kui(head)=foreword	bride+to+be=bride-to-be
kəp ^h uŋ(mountain)+ton(top)=kəp ^h uŋton(mountain top)	push+over=pushover
paŋ(hand)+va(mother)=paŋva/thumb)	sit+up=sit-up
hər(chicken)+va(father)=hərva(rooster)	brother+in+law=brother-in-law

As in the previous case, we find quite a good amount of compounds of this type. While Tangkhul makes use of mostly nouns, English uses nouns, prepositions and inflected words for this construction.

3.2. Exocentric Compounds

Exocentric compounds are the compounds whose meanings do not reside with the words making up its constituents; the meaning rests outside the words. Some examples found in Tangkhul and English are shown below.

Table 6.

Tangkhul	English
k ^h ai(fish)+fu(dog)=k ^h aifu(frog)	walk+man=walkman
sei(cow)+ha(fur)=seiha(prayer)	blue=grass=bluegrass
k ^h u(village)+rəm(land)=k ^h urəm(journey)	short+hand=shorthand
ʃim(house)+k ^h ur(hole)=ʃimk ^h ur(family,mortar)	shin+dig=shindig
va(go)+nao(child/dim.suffix)=vanao(bird)	yellow+jacket=yellow jacket
ziŋ(heaven)+cər(white)=ziŋcər(sunlight)	dumb+bell=dumbbell

There are many other instances of such compounds. Tangkhul and English are rich in terms of the use of exocentric compounding.

4. Other Compound Types

Some other compound types found in the two languages are briefly discussed below.

4.1. Three-root Compounds

The compounds composed of more than two roots are less frequent but not rare in both the languages. Some examples of three root compounds are shown as under.

Table 7.

Tangkhul	English
mik(eye)+cən(weak)+ru(liquid/egg)=mikcən-ru(spectacles)	none+the+less=nonetheless
ʃan(waist)+nei(wrap)+ru(liquid/egg)=ʃan-neiru(belt)	mother+in+law=mother-in-law
k ^h ui(take)+ra(come)+mi(give/person)=k ^h uirami(to deliver something)	woe+be+gone=woebegone
pei(complete)+mi(give/person)+won(flower)=peimiwon(personal name)	high+way+man=highwayman
t ^h iŋ(thousand)+ciko(nine)+də(link morpheme)+kət ^h um(three)=t ^h iŋcikodəkət ^h um(nine thousand and three)	walk+in+interview=walk-in interview

It is found that most of these compounds in Tangkhul are made of nouns and verbs. Specifically in the naming of persons and counting of numerals, three or more roots are employed. In English, more than three root words are mostly employed in recursive compounds. Other word class like conjunction is also found in English.

4.2. Reduplication

The repetition of the first word to form a new word is called reduplication. Some examples are shown below.

Table 8.

Tangkhul	English
t ^h aŋ(exp)+t ^h aŋ(exp)=thaŋthaŋ(toy)	blah+blah=blah blah
tun(exp)+tun+ʃən(exp)+ʃən=tun tun ʃən	knock+knock=knock knock
ʃən(very busy)	bye+bye=byebye
t ^h iŋ(thousand)+t ^h iŋ(thousand)=t ^h iŋt ^h iŋ(thousands)	ga+ga=gaga
lək(just)+lək(just)=ləkək(without a care)	jo+jo=jojo
p ^h a(good)+p ^h a(good)=p ^h ap ^h a(a nickname)	

Taking examples of full reduplication, some commonly found reduplicated compounds words are shown for English. These words when reduplicated have the effect of enhancing the meaning of the words or may indicated child-like or playfulness. ‘Thang’ alone in Tangkhul has no meaning; except when reduplicated does it form a word. Tangkhul also makes extensive use of expressives for reduplication. Reduplication also performs the function of increasing the numeric value and showing generality. Formation of hypocoristic names is a common feature in the two languages.

4.3. Recursive Compounds

A compound may become the base for another compound formation. There is no limit to how many times this merging can take place. Some examples are shown below:

Table 9.

Tangkhul	English
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[sei(cow)+sa(meat)]+kao(dried)=seisakao(dried beef)	(ginger+bread)+man=gingerbread man
[riŋ(live)+p ^h a(good)]	(student+film)+committee=student film committee
+mi(person)=riŋp ^h ami(personal name)	(science+fiction)+writer=science fiction writer
wuŋ+[pəm(sit)]	children's+(book+club)=children's book club
+k ^h oŋ(bowl)]=wuŋpəm ^h oŋ(throne)	[{(human+resources)+research]+medical}
[k ^h əlui(to wrap)+k ^h əm(conceal)]	+centre=human resources research medical centre
+mi(give)=k ^h əlui ^h əmmi(to cover)	
[ʃa(hundred)+k ^h əni(two)]+də(link morpheme)	
+kət ^h um(three)=ʃak ^h ənitəkət ^h um(two hundred and three)	

As seen in the examples, there are both right-branching and left-branching compounds in these two languages.

4.4. Copulative Compounds

Words are sometimes joined together to make a copulative meaning. Some examples are shown below.

Table 10.

Tangkhul	English
ʃa(hundred)+məti(four)=ʃaməti(four hundred)	singer+songwriter=singer songwriter
t ^h umra(thirty)+də(link)+ʃini(seven)=t ^h umradəʃini(thirty-seven)	actor+director=actor director
kəsa(do)+ak ^h əva(leader)=kəsak ^h əva(God)	author+publisher=author publisher

In Tangkhul, almost all of the higher numerals are counted through copulative compounding. A linking morpheme 'də' is used to join these numerals. This process is also used to form other nouns like kasa akhava 'the leader of deeds/God'. Likewise in English, the two words function equally as the head of the new word.

4.5. Co-ordinate Compounds

In this kind of compounds, both the words function as the head; yet the resultant meaning lies outside the composite words. Some examples are shown below.

Table 11.

Tangkhul
sina(gold)+lupa(money)=sina lupa(wealth) ʃim(house)+lui(field)=ʃim lui(property) k ^h ərei(have)+k ^h əŋəm(proud)=k ^h ərei k ^h əŋəm(elite) kəʃən(lungi)+kəcon(shawl)=kəʃən kəcon(attire)

This form is not found in English.

4.6. Compound synonyms

In this group, synonymous words are juxtaposed to mean a general term shared by both the root words. Some examples are-

Table 12.

Tangkhul
kət ^h i(death)+kəsar(old)=kət ^h i kəsar(misfortunes like death) kək ^h ənəŋ(sorrow)+k ^h əkəza(illness)=kək ^h ənəŋ k ^h əkəza(sorrow and illness) k ^h əŋəmü(fight)+k ^h əŋəʃao(beat)=k ^h əŋəmü k ^h əŋəʃao(fighting and beating) kəzət(walk)+kəkəkar(step)=kəzət kəkəkar(goings, steps)

There are many other instances of such use in Tangkhul, which is not found in English.

4.7. Compound antonyms

In another case, two words of opposite extremes are taken together to mean the idea which encompass the two extremes.

Table 13.

Tangkhul
kəʃi(bad)+kəp ^h a(good)=kəʃi kəp ^h a(good and bad) k ^h əuŋ(coming)+k ^h əva(going)=k ^h əuŋ k ^h əva(coming and going) məyər(lad)+ŋəla(lady)=məyər ŋəla(youth) avu(mother)+ava(father)=avu ava(parents) haŋʃok(say out)+haŋzəŋ(say in)=haŋʃok haŋzəŋ(be open/frank) ŋəʃun(day)+ŋəya(night)=ŋəʃun ŋəya(day and night)

Tangkhul extensively makes use of this form which is not found in English.

4.8. Rhyme motivated Compounds

Sometimes two words which rhyme are taken together to make another word. They may or may not have meaning of its own. They are put together largely due to their rhyming capacity. Tangkhul makes use of many expressives(exp) here. Some examples are:

Table 14.

Tangkhul	English
kəʃai(eat)+kəʃək(exp)=kəʃai kəʃək	teeny+weeny=teeny weeny
zik(black)+rik(exp)=zikrik	brain+drain=brain drain
huŋ(red)+piŋ(exp)=huŋpiŋ	ragbag
sat ^h ei(do+know)+vat ^h ei(go+know)=sat ^h ei vat ^h ei(overconfident)	flower+power=flower power chick+flick=chick-flick
acəm(behaviour)+arəm(exp)=acəm arəm(behaviour and the likes)	hoity+toity=hoity toity
aku(insect)+akai(exp)=aku akai(insect and the likes)	walky+talky=walky talky
k ^h əməʃuŋ(truth)+k ^h əməroŋ(exp)=k ^h əməʃuŋ k ^h əməroŋ(truth and the likes)	hotch+potch=hotch potch
aʃui(rotten thing)+arui(exp)=aʃui arui(rotten thing and the likes)	

4.9. Ablaut motivated Compounds

Another way of forming compound words is by putting together words differentiated by their vowels. This compound type is found in English but not in Tangkhul. Some examples are:

Table 15.

English
flip+flop=flip flop
mishmash
zig+zag=zig zag
tick+tock=tick tock
pitter+patter=pitter-patter
mingle mangle
shilly+shally=shilly shally

5. Conclusion

This paper examined the similarities, dissimilarities and identities between Tangkhul and English compound word formation. They are discussed under form classes and semantic cri-

teria, including some other compounding processes found in the two languages. With respect to noun compound, noun is found to be a very productive word class in both the languages. There are similarities in terms of N+N, N+V, Adj+N combinations. We find a few examples for V+V construction. However, English is more productive for V+N. Tangkhul has additional N+Adj, Adj+Adj, N+Adv patterns while English has V+Adv, P+N, V+P additional patterns. Compound words are mostly composed of free roots in English whereas Tangkhul is sometimes constituted by bound and free roots. The right hand head rule is also applicable for both the languages.

Verb is a productive word class in a Tibeto-Burman language like Tangkhul. There are similarities in N+V and V+V patterns. English is more restricted in compound verb formation as compared to Tangkhul. There are few cases of V+Adv/P, Adj+V, P+V, Adj+N occurrences in English as contrast to N+Adj, V+Adj in Tangkhul.

Regarding adjective compound, English has far richer compound adjectives than Tangkhul. We find very few examples of adjective compounds in Tangkhul. In contrast to N+Adj and V+Adj occurrences in Tangkhul, English has N+Adj, V+Adj as well as N+Adv, Adj+Adj, Adv/P+Adj and Adj/Adv+Past participle.

Based on semantic criteria, Tangkhul and English make extensive use of Endocentric right headed compounds. Left headed endocentric compounds are more restricted in English than Tangkhul. Exocentric compounds are also employed in both the languages to a considerable extent.

In other compound types, there are similarities in terms of extended compounds like three-root compounds, reduplication, recursive, copulative and rhyme-motivated compounds. Whereas Tangkhul has the unique features of co-ordinate, synonym and antonym compounding, unique feature of English compound is ablaut motivated compound.

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