Case Markers in Hawar Dialect of Dimasa

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Abstract

Case is a grammatical category, which is used to show the relationship among different words used in a sentence. The present paper investigates the case markers in Hawar dialect of Dimasa, spoken in Cachar and Hailakandi districts of Barak Valley, which is situated in the southern part of Assam. In Hawar dialect of Dimasa, the case is realized in the form of postpositions, when these postpositions take nouns structurally form phrases. Therefore, they are called postpositional phrases. Postpositional phrases are made up of a noun phrase followed by a postposition.

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
11 : 12 December 2011
Bapan Barman, Ph.D. Scholar
Case Markers in Hawar Dialect of Dimasa   234

The North-East region of India is bounded by the political boundary of China in the North, Bhutan in the West, Bangladesh in the East and Burma (Myanmar) in the South. It comprises of eight states and the states are Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. Of these, Assam is the biggest state (as per land area) in this region consisting of Brahmaputra Valley and Barak Valley. In Assam, languages belonging to different language families are found, namely, Indo-Aryan, Austro-Asiatic (of Munda group) and Tibeto-Burman.

The Barak Valley located in South Assam has three districts under its jurisdiction and they are Cachar, Karimganj and Hailakandi. The majority people in Barak Valley speak Sylheti, a dialect of Bengali. It is the main language used for communication in the three districts of Barak Valley. The other languages used in Barak Valley, apart from Sylheti, are Dimasa, Meitei, Bishnupriya, Rajbongshi (also known as Dheyan), Rongmei, Hindi and many other minor Tibeto-Burman languages.

The Barak Valley Dimasas who are identified as Barman are highly influenced by the Hindu Bengali culture. Thus, the Barmans or Dimasas of Barak Valley maintain both Dimasa tradition as well as Hindu rituals. Thus, marriage and funeral rituals are performed by Bengali Brahmin.

The aim of the present paper is to give a description of the case markers in Barak Valley dialect of Dimasa, also known as Hawar dialect, spoken in Cachar and Hailakandi district of Assam.

2. THE LANGUAGE AND THE PEOPLE

Dimasa, belonging to Tibeto-Burman language family, is spoken in different districts of Assam namely, Nagaon, North Cachar Hills, Karbi Anglong, in Barak Valley region of Cachar and Hailakandi district. Besides Assam, Dimasa is also spoken in Dimapur sub-division of Nagaland. The estimated population of Dimasa according to Census of India 2001 is 1,10,976.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
11 : 12 December 2011
Bapan Barman, Ph.D. Scholar
Case Markers in Hawar Dialect of Dimasa   235

Dimasa tribe, which belongs to Indo-Mongoloid Kachari group, is found in North East region of India. G.A. Grierson in his *Linguistic Survey of India*, Vol. II, Pt. II. classifies Dimasa under the Bodo (Boro) of the Bodo-Naga division of the Assam-Burmese section of the Tibeto-Burman group of the Sino-Tibetan or Tibeto-Chinese speech family. Robert Schafer classifies Dimasa under the western units of Barish branches of Barik division of the Sino-Tibetan family. In the classification given by Paul Benedict (1972), Dimasa is included under Bodo-Garo group of Tibeto-Burman Branch of Sino-Tibetan family.

Dimasa is the name of the language and also the name of the community. Literally the meaning of the word 'Dimasa' is 'the children of the great/ big river'. There are different opinions regarding the origin of the word 'Dimasa'. According to Sir Edward Gait, Dimasas were known as 'Timisa' to the Ahoms which is a corrupted form of Dimasa. According to Sonaram Thaosen (1994) the Dimasas were known as Bodosa before their arrival in Dimapur. In his opinion Dimasa refers to the people inhabiting the bank of the river Dhansiri and in Dimasa language, the Dhansiri river is called Dima. Mrs. Nirupama Hagzer (1972) opines that it has been a tendency among the Dimasas to introduce themselves by adding 'sa' meaning 'children' to the place of their habitation, so, the word 'Dimasa' is derived from 'Dimapursa', the people who lived in Dimapur.

Dimasas had their capital at Dimapur. After the invasion by Ahom at Dimapur the Dimasas shifted their capital to Maibang in North Cachar Hills. However, the Dimasas could not stay for long at Maibang. A lethal assault from the Jayantia King forced the Kachari King to shift his capital to Khaspur in plains of Cachar. After the assassination of the last Dimasa Kachari King Gobin Chandra in 1830 A.D. there was no successor for the Kachari throne. The Kachari kingdom was annexed by a proclamation to the British East India Company's territory on 14th Aug, 1832.

3. **CASE**

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
11 : 12 December 2011
Bapan Barman, Ph.D. Scholar
Case Markers in Hawar Dialect of Dimasa   236

Case is considered to be an inflectional category, basically of nouns and pronouns, which typically marks their role in relation to other parts of the sentence. It is used in the analysis of word classes (or their associated phrases) to identify the syntactic relationship between words in a sentence through such contrasts as nominative, accusative, etc. (Crystal 1980:47). It is a way of showing the grammatical relationship between words and phrases and each case is associated with a range of meanings.

From the traditional grammarians' point of view, seven cases can be recognized in Hawar dialect of Dimasa and the case markers are used as postpositions. The seven cases are: nominative, accusative, dative, genitive, instrumental, locative and ablative.

3.1. Nominative Case

In the Barak Valley dialect of Dimasa, the nominative case has no overt marker and it is syntactically used as the subject of an intransitive verb. It is realized as zero morph. For example:-

   (i) /bo -Ø   rəzap -du/

        he -Nom. sing -Pre.

        'He sings'.

   (ii) /aŋ -Ø   məkʰam zi –ma/

        I -Nom. rice   eat -fut.

        'I will eat rice'.

In the above mentioned sentences, /bo/, /aŋ/ are pronouns and subjects of the intransitive verbs /rəzap –du/ and /zi –ma/ respectively and there is no overt case marker.

3.2. Accusative Case

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
11 : 12 December 2011
Bapan Barman, Ph.D. Scholar
Case Markers in Hawar Dialect of Dimasa   237

It is the case of the direct object of the verb. When the noun refers to a particular thing or person, the accusative case marker /-kʰe/ is suffixed. For example:-

(i) /aŋ   laisi -kʰe   kʰəma -kʰa/

    I   book -Acc. lose   -Past

    'I lost the book'.

(ii) /bo   alu -kʰe   do -ba   səgaŋha/

    he   cat -Acc. beat -Past earlier

    'He beat the cat earlier'.

In the above sentences, the nouns /laisi-kʰe/, /alu-kʰe/are the direct object of the verbs /kʰəma -kʰa/ and /do -ba/ respectively.

In case of non-particular noun, the accusative case is realized as zero morph. For example:-

(ii) /aŋ   laisi -Ø   brai -kʰa/

    I   book -Acc. buy -Past

    'I bought book'.

(iii) /bo   tʰaizu -Ø   zi -kʰa/

    he   mango -Acc. eat -Past

    'I ate mango'.

3.3. Dative Case

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
11 : 12 December 2011
Bapan Barman, Ph.D. Scholar
Case Markers in Hawar Dialect of Dimasa   238

The dative case is associated with the act of giving. In the case of indirect object of a verb, it is marked by /-ne/. For example-

(i) /ram -ne   hon   ri/

   Ram -Dat. biscuit   give

   'Give biscuit to Ram'.

(ii) /aŋ bo -ne   laisi   ri -kʰa/

    I   he -Dat. book   give -Past

   'I gave him a book'.

Dimasa has two dative markers /-tʰene/ and /-ne/. /-tʰene/ occurs with first person (singular, plural) & with second & third person (singular) whereas /-ne/ occurs with noun and pronoun as well as with second and third person plural. /ne/ can also be used with first person pronoun both singular and plural but when /-ne/ is used with first person pronoun both singular and plural /aŋ/, /zuŋ/ and second person singular pronoun /nuŋ/, the velar nasal /ŋ/ is dropped. For example-

(iii) /bo   a -ne   ri   ri -kʰa/

    he   I -Dat. cloth give -Past

   'he gave cloth'.

(iv) /zu -ne   gandu   ri/

    we -Dat. pillow   give

   'give us pillow'.

(v) /bo nu -ne   laisi   ri -kʰa/

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
11 : 12 December 2011
Bapan Barman, Ph.D. Scholar
Case Markers in Hawar Dialect of Dimasa   239

he you -Dat. book give -Past

'he gave you the book'.

Second person plural

(vi) /aŋ nisi   –ne   tʰaizu   ri –ma/

I   you (pl.) Dat. mango give –Fut.

'I shall give mango to you (pl.)'.

Third person plural

(vii) /busi -ne   tʰaizu   ri/

they -Dat. mango give

'give mango to them'.

The use of /-tʰene/. For example:-

(viii) /bo aŋ -tʰene ri   ri -kʰa/

he I -Dat.   cloth give -Past

'he gave me the cloth'.

(ix)   /zuŋ -tʰene makʰam ri/

us -Dat. rice   give

'give us rice'.

(x)   /bo -tʰene ri/

he -Dat. give

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
11 : 12 December 2011
Bapan Barman, Ph.D. Scholar
Case Markers in Hawar Dialect of Dimasa   240

'give him'.

(xi) /aŋ nuŋ -tʰene kʰusi ri -du/

    I you -Dat. work give -Pre.

'I give you the book'.

3.4. Genitive Case

It indicates the possessive relationship of the noun or pronoun. So, it reflects a possessor – possessed relationship. Genitive is marked by marker /-ni/. When /-ni/is used with the first person pronoun both singular and plural /aŋ/, /zuŋ/ and the second person singular pronoun /nuŋ/ the velar nasal /ŋ/ is dropped. For example:-

(i) /a -ni no/

    I -Gen. house

    'my house'.

(ii) /zi -ni no/

    us -Gen. house

    'our house'.

(iii) /nu -ni laisi/

    you-Gen. book

    'your book'.

Second person plural

(iv) /nisi -ni no/

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
11 : 12 December 2011
Bapan Barman, Ph.D. Scholar
Case Markers in Hawar Dialect of Dimasa   241

you(pl.) -Gen. house

'yours house'.

Third person singular

(v) /bo -ni   no/

he -Gen. house

'his house'.

Third person plural

(vi) /busi -ni   no/

they -Gen. house

'their house'.

(vii) /alu -ni   kʰermai/

cat -Gen. tail

'cat's tail'.

(viii) /ram -ni   bubi/

Ram -Gen. sister

'Ram's sister'.

3.5. Instrumental Case

The instrumental case indicates the instrument used in carrying out some action identified by the verb. It is marked by post-posing /-zaŋ/. For example:-

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
11 : 12 December 2011
Bapan Barman, Ph.D. Scholar
Case Markers in Hawar Dialect of Dimasa   242

(i)　/aŋ ruwa -zaŋ wa　　dain -kʰa/

　　I　axe　-Ins. bamboo cut -Past

　　'I cut the bamboo with an axe'.

(ii)　/bo ruŋ -zaŋ　tʰaŋ -kʰa/

　　he boat -Ins. go -Past

　　'he went by boat'.

3.6. Locative Case

The locative case indicates the location of the event/action identified by the verb. It is expressed by post posing /-ha/. For example:-

(i)　/aŋ no -ha　　tʰaŋ –ma/

　　I house -Loc. go　-Fut.

　　'I shall go home'.

(ii)　/dao nakʰasao -ha bur -du/

　　bird sky　　-Loc. fly -Pre.

　　'the bird flies in the sky'.

3.7. Ablative Case

It specifies the point in space to where the subject is transferred at the culmination of the action identified by the verb. It is the case of separation from the source in performing the action mentioned by the verb. The ablative case is marked by marking /-nipʰraŋ/ or /-nisiŋ/ to the noun and both are in free variation. For example:-

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
11 : 12 December 2011
Bapan Barman, Ph.D. Scholar
Case Markers in Hawar Dialect of Dimasa　　　　　　　　　　　　　　243

(i) /bo op^{h}is -nisiŋ p^{h}ai -k^{h}a/

he office -Abl. come -Past

'he came from office'.

(ii) /bo op^{h}is -nip^{h}raŋ p^{h}ai -k^{h}a/

he office -Abl. come -Past

'He came from office'.

(iii) /aŋ ram -nip^{h}raŋ laisi mai -k^{h}a/

I Ram -Abl. book get -Past

'I got book from Ram'.

(iv) /aŋ ram -nisiŋ laisi mai -k^{h}a/

I Ram -Abl. book get -Past

'I got book from Ram'.

4. Conclusion

From the description and explanation given above, it becomes clear that the Barak Valley dialect of Dimasa manifests a neat system of realization of cases. The case forms are obtained in Hawar dialect by adding the case suffixes to the base, which is equal to the nominative case form. All the case markers in Barak Valley dialect of Dimasa are post-positional. So, Hawar dialect as a dialect of SOV language maintains the characteristics that Greenberg (1963) has attributed to SOV language that language with normal SOV order are post-positional.

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com
11 : 12 December 2011
Bapan Barman, Ph.D. Scholar
Case Markers in Hawar Dialect of Dimasa   244

Colophon

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com
11 : 12 December 2011
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Case Markers in Hawar Dialect of Dimasa   245

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Language in India www.languageinindia.com
11 : 12 December 2011
Bapan Barman, Ph.D. Scholar
Case Markers in Hawar Dialect of Dimasa   246