Case Markers in Tiwa Language: A Brief Study

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Abstract

Case is an important category of grammar. It is an inflected form of noun and pronoun which is used to show the relationship among different words used in a sentence. The present paper investigates the case marker in Tiwa language spoken in Assam. In this language, case is realized by the addition of case ending used as post positions. Therefore, they are called postpositional phrases. Postpositional phrases are made up of a noun phrase followed by post position.

1. Introduction

The North-eastern region is known for its diversity as different tribes live in this region for centuries together. This region of India is bounded by the political boundary of China in the north, Bhutan in the west, Burma in the east and Bangladesh

in the south. It is comprised of eight states and they are Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikhim and Tripura.

Assam is the major state of the region. Tiwa is also one of the tribes of Assam, of Mongoloid origin. In a linguistic perspective, the Tiwa language belongs to the Bodo-Naga sub-group of Tibeto-Burman group of Sino-Tibetan language family. In older linguistic literature, they were known as Lalung. However, the native speakers call themselves as Tiwa, while the name Lalung was used only by the non-Tiwas.

In Tiwa language, 'Ti' means water and 'wa' means superior. The Tiwas originally inhabited the region of Tibet but the origin of their migration to the plains is yet to be traced and known. They followed the course of the river Brahmaputra and settled on the plains. They introduced themselves as Tiwa to the eager and curious non-Tiwas of the plains. The very name Lalung was given by the non-Lalungs.

2. Language and People

Linguistically, the Tiwa language belongs to Bodo-Naga sub-group of Tibeto-Burman group of Sino-Tibetan language family. They have close affinities with other constituents of the Bodo group like Bodo, Dimasa, Kok borok, Garo, Rabha, Hajong etc. Tiwa is mainly spoken in the districts of Nagaon, Morigaon and Kamrup of Assam. They are also found in small scattered areas of Karbi Anglong, Lakhimpur and Jorhat districts of Assam and some areas of Jowai sub-division of Jowai districts of Meghalaya.

The Tiwa language is found only in spoken form and is spoken among the Tiwa people only. Some of them have lost their language because of the influence of Assamese language. According to G.A. Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India* (Vol. III Part II), this language belongs to the Bodo group under the Bodo-Naga section of Tibeto-Burman language family. U.V. Joseph and Robbins Burling in *The Comparative Phonology of Boro-Garo Languages* (2006) describe the inventory of phonemes and phonological features of the Tiwa language. M. Balwan's *Outline of Lalung Grammar* (1975) gives a little bit of information of Tiwa grammar.

The aim of this present paper is to have a detailed study of case markers found in Tiwa language spoken in different parts of Assam.

3. Case

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, dative, etc. (D. Crystal1980: 47). It is the way of showing the grammatical relationship between words and phrases. Case is associated with a range of meanings.

From the traditional grammarians' point of view, seven cases can be recognised in Tiwa. The seven cases are nominative, accusative, dative, genitive, locative, instrumental and ablative.

3.1. Nominative Case

The most common function of the nominative case is to mark the subject in a sentence. The subject of an intransitive verb receives zero /ø/ markers in Tiwa to indicate general sense. For example:

i.   /libiŋ-ø   pʰi-do/

        man-Nom.   come-Pres.

        Man comes.

ii.   /aŋ-ø   čai -tʰaido/

        I-Nom.   eat.-Pres.Prog.

        I am eating.

iii.   /sita-ø   nitʰawa   kʰorla/

sita- Nom.　　beautiful　　girl

Sitau is (a) beautiful girl.

iv.　　/ram-ø　　　　aŋ-e　　asa/

ram-Nom.　　I-Gen.　uncle

Ram is my uncle.

However, Tiwa has one nominative case marker /lo/. This nominative case marker /lo/ is always used as suffix with the nouns. For example:

/raju-lo　　　　kʰrom　ri-tʰaido/

raju-Nom.　　　work　do- Pres.Prog.

Raju is doing the work.

3.2. Accusative Case

It marks a word as being the object of a verb. So, a noun or a pronoun is said to be in the accusative case when it is the direct object of a verb. This case is marked by /-go/. For example:

i.　　/ram　lai-go　　　pre-dom/

ram　book- Acc.　buy-Past.

Ram bought the book.

ii.　　/pe　　　　masu-go　　　pʰodal-dom/

s/he　　　　cow-Acc.　　beat-Past

S/he beat the cow.

However, the accusative case is always marked by /ø/ in Tiwa when it refers to a non-particular things or person:

iii.　　/pe　lai-ø　　　　pre-dom/

s/he   book-Acc.   buy-Past

S/he bought (the) book.

iv.   /pe   ti-ø   nuŋ-dom/

        s/he   water-Acc.   drink- Past

        S/he drank (the) water.

v.   /aŋ   mai- ø   čai-dom/

        I   rice-Acc.   eat-Past

        I ate rice.

3.3. Dative Case

The basic role of dative case is to distinguish the recipient of something given, transferred, etc. (Mathews 1997:85). It usually expresses the indirect object relationship as well as a range of meaning, which is similar to the meaning expressed by English 'to' or 'for'. The dative markers in Tiwa are /-a/ and /-na/.

Let us consider the following sentences:

i.   /raja-ø   aŋ-a   patʰra-go   os-dom/

        raja-Nom.   I-Dat.   news-Acc.   give-Past

        Raja gave me information (news).

ii.   /pe-na   os/

        he/she-Dat.   give

        Give to him.

iii.   /gopal-ø   hari-na   kutʰi-go   os-dom/

        gopal-Nom.   hari-Dat.   fruit-Acc.   give-Past

        Gopal gave the fruit to Hari.

iv.   /ram-ø   kʰum-go   pe-na   osdom/

        ram-Nom.   flower-Acc.   he-Dat. give-Past

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Ram gave the flower to him.

The above examples show that when the recipient ends with vowel, /na/ is used and if it ends with consonant /-a/ is used.

3.4. Genitive Case

This case indicates the possessive relationship of the noun or pronoun. So, basically it reflects a possessor- possessed relationship. The genitive case in Tiwa is expressed by adding the case markers /e/ and /ne/. In this language, the case marker is added to the pronoun and noun class of words. For example:

i.   /aŋ-e   pʰa/
        I -Gen.   father
        My father

ii.   /ram-e   tap/
        ram-Gen.   knife
        Ram's knife

iii.   /krom-e   marad/
        jungle-Gen.   animal
        Jungle's animal

iv.   /krai-ne   libiŋ/
        village-Gen.   man
        Village's man

The above examples show that when the noun/pronoun ends with a vowel, /-ne/ is used and if it ends with a consonant /-e/ is used.

3.5. Locative Case

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The locative case generally marks the location with both the spatial and temporal reference. This case indicates the location of the event / action identified by the verb. Apart from this, it is also used to serve to locate something. The locative case is marked by /o/ and /ao/ in Tiwa. For example:

i. /masu-ø   padar-o   ghas   čai-tʰaido/
    cow-Nom.   field-Loc.   grass   eat-Pres.Prog.
    The cow is grazing in the field.

ii. /libiŋ-ø   krai-ao   tʰao/
     man-Nom.   home- Loc.   live-Pres.
     Man lives in the village.

iii. /ram-ø   kudul-o   sikai-tʰaido/
     ram-Nom.   room-Loc.   read-Pres.Prog.
     Ram is reading in the room.

The above examples show that when the location marking word ends with a vowel, /-ao/ is used and if it ends with a consonant /-o/ is used.

3.6. Instrumental Case

The instrumental case indicates the instrument that is used in carrying out the action identified by the verb. Therefore, this case relates the instrument to the sentence. The instrumental case in Tiwa is expressed by the addition of case marker to the object. The objects may be material and human or non-human beings. It is marked by /-re/ in Tiwa. For example:

i. /pe   yakʃi   ya-re   ʃida/
    s/he   left   hand-Inst.   write-Pres.
    S/he writes with left hand.

ii. /pe   čubu-go   tʰokani-re   pʰodal-dom/

s/he snake-Acc.   stick-Inst.   beat-Past

S/he beat the snake with the stick.

iii.   /kolom-re   ʃida/

pen-Inst.   write-Pres.

Write with pen.

3.7. Ablative Case

The basic role of the ablative case is to indicate movement away from some location (Mathews 1971: 1). It specifies the point in space to where something is transferred at the culmination of the action identified by the verb. Therefore, the ablative is the case of separation from the source in performing the action mentioned by verb. This case is realized as /e-pʰana/ and /ne-pʰana/ and these case markers act as a post position as in the following examples:

i.   /pe   opis-e-pʰana   pʰi-ga/

he/she   office-Abl.   come-Pres.perf.

He/she has come from office.

ii.   /lai-ø   pʰaŋ-e-pʰana   ko/

leaf-Nom   tree- Abl.   fall-Pres.

Leaf falls from the tree.

iii.   /ti-ne-pʰana   bemar   hoŋo/

water-Abl.   disease   happen-Habit

Disease breaks out from water.

iv.   /na   patʰo-ne-pʰana   pʰido/

you   where-Abl.   come-Pres.

Where from are you coming?

/e-pʰana/ is used after consonant and /ne-pʰana/ is used after vowel ending words.

From the above discussion it becomes clear that Tiwa manifests a neat system of realisation of cases. All the case markers in Tiwa are postpositional. The case forms are found by adding case suffixes to the base.

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