

Case Assignment in Khoibu
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1.0 Introduction

This study undertakes a description of case marking and its semantic role in *Khoibu (Uipo)*, an endangered Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Machi sub-division of Chandel district, Manipur, which is 64 km. away from Imphal and lies in the south-eastern part of Manipur at 24°40' N Latitude and 93°50' E Longitude and its neighbors are Myanmar (Burma) on the south, Ukhrul district on the east, Churachandpur district on the south and west, and Thoubal district on the north¹. The language is spoken by around 2,800 speakers. The literal meaning of this tribe is derived from 'khoi' and 'pu', where 'khoi' means 'bee' and 'pu' means 'owner'. Thus the term refers to the speakers of this language as the ones who own 'bee', 'beehives' and 'honey' in the indigenous land of Khoibu territory. As none of the latter classifications on Tibeto-Burman make any attempt to relate Khoibu with other group, as per Grierson's linguistic survey of India, this language belongs to the Naga-Kuki sub group of Tibeto-Burman family. The present study will try to show the different case marking in Khoibu. The study is not intended to provide an exhaustive discussion of all theories about case and its assignment. The study is limited within the framework of descriptive approach.

Key words: Khoibu, Tibeto-Burman, Case, Nominative-Accusative

2.0 Case

Case is "a grammatical category 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, 2008). In the words of traditional grammarians case is the relation in which a noun stands to some other word or change of the form (if any) by which this relation is indicated by grammatical relation as well as the change of forms.

There are seven cases in Khoibu. The nominative *-nə* is homophonous with the instrumental *-nə*. The following table shows the Khoibu case markers. Khoibu is nominative-accusative and it has seven cases namely nominative *-nə*, accusative *-ti*, dative *-nən*, instrumental *-nə*, locative *-ran*, associative *-pui* and ablative *-rei*. The nominative *-nə* is homophonous with the instrumental *-nə*. In Khoibu the nominative *-nə* is obligatorily mark with the subject of compound

¹ There are eight Khoibu villages in Manipur viz. Khoibu Khullen, Biyang, Yamolching, Nungourok, Khamsing, Salemram, Thalle and Thawai. All the villages are confined to the Chandel district only. Among the villages, Khoibu-Khullen is the oldest village. Some amount of Khoibu population is also found in the pockets of Imphal city, Manipur.

sentences, or if the event expressed by the transitive verb is non-habitual; universal truth. The dative case maker *-nən* is also marked for the recipient of the abstract things. The instrumental case marker is used to indicate instrument that the agent uses while carrying an activity. The instrumental case is marked by *-nə* which is homophonous with the nominative case.

Khoibu Case Markers

| Nominative | Accusative | Dative | Instrumental | Locative | Associative | Ablative |
|------------|------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| <i>-nə</i> | <i>-ti</i> | <i>-nən</i> | <i>-nə</i> | <i>-raŋ</i> | <i>-le/pui</i> | <i>-rei</i> |

2.1 Nominative -nə

In Khoibu the subject of a transitive clause is assigned a nominative case by *-nə* which is optional as in (1) below.

1. a) *a-(nə)* *tom-ti* *kə-tən*
 3SG-(NOM) Tom-ACC V.PRX-beat
 ‘He beats Tom.’

As seen in the following examples the subject of transitive verbs are obligatorily assigned nominative by *-nə* if

- a. A sentence is a complex sentence as in (2 a) or
 b. If the event expressed by the transitive verb is non-habitual as in (2 b) or universal truth as in (2 c).

2. a) *a-nə* *tom-ti* *kə-tən* *cəmin*
 3SG-NOM Tom-ACC V.PRX-beat and
ram-nə *Mani-ti* *kə-tən*
 Ram-NOM Mani-ACC V.PRX-beat
 ‘He beats Tom and Ram beats Mani.’

- b) *pulis-nə* *mukəcə-ti* *kə-cur*
 police-NOM thief-ACC V.PRX-arrest
 ‘Police arrest the thief’.

- c) *kəni-nə* *kərt^hel-rei* *kə-t^hok*
 sun-NOM east-ABL V.PRX-rise
 ‘The sun rises from the East’

The subject of intransitive verbs never assigned nominative case as shown in the following examples.

Intransitive Verb

- c. a) *a* *kə-ip*
 3SG V.PRX-sleep
 ‘He sleeps.’
- b) *na-sə* *kə-cəp*
 baby-DET V.PRX-cry
 ‘The baby cries.’
- c) *a* *kə-cou*
 3SG V.PRX-tall
 ‘He is tall.’
- d) *a* *kə-ηao*
 3SG V.PRX-fool
 ‘He is fool.’

The nominative *-nə* is not marked to the subject or agent when the action is a routine activity even when if the verb is transitive (3 a) and (4 a). In such a case if the subject is marked with nominative *-nə*, then the routine activity is recast as unusual or noteworthy as in the following example (4 b) and (5 b).

4. a) *a* *boηka* *sa-kə-nei*
 3SG basket make-V.PRX-PRG
 ‘He is making basket.’
 (Lit: Making basket is a routine activity for the subject.)
- b) *a-nə* *boηka* *sa-kə-nei-ne*
 3SG -NOM basket make-V.PRX-PRG-DECL
 ‘He is making basket.’
 (Lit: Making basket is not a routine activity for the subject.)
5. a) *tom* *kou-noi*
 Tom V.PRX-dance
 ‘Tom dances.’
 (Lit: Tom always dance or he is a dancer.)
- b) *tom-nə* *kou-noi-ne*
 Tom-NOM V.PRX-dance-DECL
 ‘Tom dances.’
 (Lit: Tom is does not know to dance.)

2.2 Accusative Case -ti :

For both animate and inanimate direct object accusative *-ti* is assigned.

Animate DO

6. a) *nei* *tom-ti* *kə-tʰi*
1SG Tom-ACC V.PRX-love
'I love Tom.'
- b) *nei* *ram-ti* *kə-tən*
1SG Ram-ACC V.PRX-beat
'I beat Ram.'

Animate Non-human DO

7. a) *nei* *tə-həl-ti* *kə-tən*
1SG DEM-cow-ACC V.PRX-DECL
'I beat the cow.'
- b) *tom* *ui-ti* *kou-mətʰui*
Tom dog-ACC V.PRX-kick
'Tom kicks the dog.'

Inanimate DO

8. a) *tom* *ball-ti* *kə-roi*
Tom ball-ACC V.PRX-carry
'Tom carries ball.'
- (b) *ram* *ciʰi-ti* *kou-məyer*
Ram letter-ACC V.PRX-write
'Ram writes letter.'

Animate non-human IO

9. *tom* *ram-ti* *həlpui-sə* *tən-kə-yər*
Tom Ram-ACC cow-DET beat-V.PRX-let
'Tom let Ram to beat the cow.'

Animate IO

10. *nei* *ram-nən* *tom-ti* *kə-mut*
1SG Ram-DAT Tom-ACC V.PRX-show
'I introduced Tom to Ram.'

Inanimate IO

11. *nei* *ram-ti* *ciʰi-sə* *pa-kə-yər*

1SG Ram-ACC letter-DET read-V.PRX-let
 ‘I let Ram to read the letter.’

2.3 Dative Case –nən

The dative case is the case of the indirect object of the verb and is expressed by *-nən* in Khoibu. The object marked case for dative can be the recipient of a speech action as illustrated by the following examples.

12. a) *ŋei meri-nən lailik k^hei kə-pi*
 1SG Marry-DAT book one V.PRX-give
 ‘I give one book to Marry’.
- b) *koukəreŋ-pa-nən sərka-nə on kə-paŋ*
 poor-man-DAT government-NOM money V.PRX-help
 ‘The government gives money to the poor.’
- c) *tado-nən pinky-nə par k^hei kə-pi*
 Tado-DAT Pinky-NOM flower one V.PRX-give
 ‘Pinky gives a flower to Tado.’

The dative case maker *-nən* is also marked for the recipient of the abstract things as shown in the example below.

13. a) *oca-nə porwa-nən rəmol kə-sən*
 Teacher-NOM student-DAT knowledge V.PRX-impart
 ‘The teacher imparts knowledge to the students.’
- b) *a-nu-nə a-canəpa-nən kou-rəca*
 3SG-mother-NOM 3SG-son-DAT V.PRX-advice
 ‘The mother advices her son.’

2.4 Instrumental Case -nə

The instrumental case marker is used to indicate instrument that the agent uses while carrying an activity. The instrumental case is marked by *-nə* which is homophonous with the nominative case.

14. a) *ŋei-(nə) wa-nə ro kə-sat.*
 1SG-(NOM) axe-INS bamboo V.PRX-cut
 ‘I cut bamboo with axe.’
- b) *ŋei wa-nə ro kə-sat cəmin*
 1SG axe-INS bamboo V.PRX-cut and
tom-nə horai-nə kə-ren

Tom-NOM saw-INS V.PRX-cut
 'I cut bamboo with axe and Tom cut the bamboo with saw.'

The instrumental *-nə* is also used to denote some cause of states as in the (15 a. b. and c).

15. a) *a noŋsət-nə ləra*
 3SG heat(sun)-INS tire
 'He is tired with heat.'
- b) *a noŋ yui-nə dokrə*
 3SG rain water-INS wet
 'He is wet with rain water.'
- c) *a kətlun-nə kə-na*
 3SG fever-INS V.PRX-ill
 'He is ill of fever.'

2.5 Locative Case -raŋ

The locative case indicates the location of an object or event. It is marked by *-raŋ*.

16. a) *ŋei candel-raŋ kə-ca-uŋ*
 1SG Chandel-LOC V.PRX-go-FUT
 'I will go to Chandel.'
- b) *mosyel lou-raŋ cukicak kə-liŋ*
 Mosyel field-LOC maize V.PRX-plant
 'Mosyel plants maize at his field.'
- c) *ŋei-nə tebəl-raŋ lailik-yao-sə kə-k^hou*
 1SG -NOM table-LOC book-PL-DET V.PRX-keep
 'I keep the books on the table.'

2.6 Associative Case -pui

The associative case denotes the action which has been performed in association with another. Associative case is marked by the suffix *-pui*.

18. a) *ŋei tom-pui sinema kə-t^hui kə-ca*
 1SG tom-ASS cinema V.PRX-watch V.PRX-go
 'I go with Tom to watch the cinema'.
- b) *tom meri-pui kou-ŋan*
 Tom Marry-ASS V.PRX-fight
 'Tom fought with Marry.'

2.7 Ablative Case -rei

The ablative marks the NP as expressing the source location. The ablative case is marked by *-rei*.

19. a) *ŋei ə-nənrei on kə-p^ha*
 1SG 3SG-ABL money V.PRX-got
 'I got money from him.'
- b) *t^həŋwən-rei noŋ kə-ru*
 sky-ABL rain V.PRX-fall
 'The rain falls from the sky.'

Conclusion

From the present study, it can be sum up that the nominative case in Khoibu is optional in the subject of transitive clauses whereas if the statement is a complex sentence or the event expressed by the transitive verb is non-habitual or universal truth the nominative case is obligatory. And, the nominative case is never assign to the subject of intransitive clauses which is of great interest to be study. Again, nominative *-nə* is not marked to the subject or agent when the action is a routine activity even when if the verb is transitive. In such a case if the subject is marked with nominative *-nə*, then the routine activity is recast as unusual or noteworthy. For both animate and inanimate direct object accusative *-ti* is assigned. The object marked case for dative can be the recipient of a speech action in Khoibu. The dative case is the case of the indirect object of the verb and is expressed by *-nən* in Khoibu. The object marked case for dative can be the recipient of a speech action. The instrumental case marker is used to indicate instrument that the agent uses while carrying an activity. The instrumental case is marked by *-nə* which is homophonous with the nominative case in Khoibu and instrumental *-nə* is also used to denote some cause of states. As the study is a preliminary of its kind there are still more scope to be dig out in the future.

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