

Case and Post-Position in Sukte (Salhte)

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Abstract

Sukte is an undocumented language spoken by one of the tribes of Manipur. The term 'Sukte' is derived from the word sokte a compound word sok 'to go southwards' and te 'plural suffix indicating person' which literally means people of the southwards or lowland. Salte is the alternate name of the language. It is mainly spoken in Churachandpur District of Manipur. Linguistically, Salte belongs to Kuki-Chin group of the Tibeto-Burman family of languages (Benedict, 1972). It is closely related to many other Kuki-Chin group of languages namely Paite, Chorai, Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Ranglong, Rangkhoh, etc.

Keywords: Sukte, Tedim-Chin, Kuki-Chin, Tibeto-Burman, Manipur, Case.

1. Introduction

Sukte is one of the unwritten, undocumented and undescribed languages of Manipur spoken by tribe in the same name. The Sukte is the name of the language and community. The term Sukte is derived from Sokte in the form of compounding such as sok 'to go down or southward' and te 'the plural suffix roughly indicating persons' literally 'people of the southward or low land'. This language is placed under the Kuki-Chin group of Tibeto-Burman sub-family of languages (Grierson, 1903). It is closely related to many other languages or dialects of Kuki-Chin group of languages namely Baite, Chorai, Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Guite, Kaipeng, Ranglong, Rangkhoh, etc. except Manipuri and are mutually intelligible with Chothe, Gangte, Guite, Simte, etc. Sukte is primarily spoken in Moreh sub-division of Chandel district and New Lamka-G, Simbuk, Tanglon(T), Tonglon(P), Rakwal, Sum Cheavum, Tanggnum, Pangzwl, Lanka, Singhat, Suangdai, behiang, Behiang(T), Suangphuk and Tingkangphai villages of Churachandpur district of Manipur. Officially, the same tribe is enlisted as Salhte in the Constitution of India. But they are commonly referred to as Tiddim Chin by neighbouring communities in Manipur; however, they prefer to call themselves as Sukte. The total population of Sukte (Salhte) in Manipur was 1905 according to 2001 Census report of Manipur.

Typologically, Sukte is a tonal language. Gender distinction in Sukte is determined on the natural recognition of sex i.e., gender is not grammatically marked in this language. Sukte exhibits the typical feature of the Kuki-Chin languages as subject-verb agreement is present for different persons. Sukte is a verb final language, with dominant SOV word order.

The present paper is an attempt to explore the case and postposition of Sukte language spoken in Churachandpur district of Manipur.

1. Case and Postposition in Sukte (Salhte)

As many other Tibeto-Burman languages, case relations in Sukte are expressed by means of post positions. Case relation in Sukte is expressed by postposing the case markers to the nouns or pronouns. Undoubtedly, the same case markers are used both animate and inanimate nouns. Generally, case markers are not marked for number and gender of the nouns in Sukte.

The cases in Sukte are described below.

- (i) Nominative case
- (ii) Accusative case
- (iii) locative case
- (iv) Genitive case
- (v) Instrumental case
- (vi) Associative case
- (vii) Ablative case
- (viii) Dative case

1.1 Nominative Case

The nominative case usually indicates the subject of the sentence. In Sukte, the nominative case is expressed by the suffix *in*. These can be seen in the following examples:

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| (1) | <i>kei-in</i> | <i>vəsə</i> | <i>kə</i> | <i>mu</i> | <i>hi</i> | |
| | I -NOM | bird | 1SG | see | DECL | |
| | 'I see the bird.' | | | | | |
| (2) | <i>ko-in</i> | <i>vəsə</i> | <i>kə</i> | <i>mu</i> | <i>u?</i> | <i>hi</i> |
| | we-NOM | bird | 1PL | see | PL | DECL |
| | 'We see the bird.' | | | | | |
| (3) | <i>əmə?-in</i> | <i>vəsə</i> | <i>ə</i> | <i>mu</i> | <i>hi</i> | |
| | he/she - NOM | bird | 3SG | see | DECL | |
| | 'He/She sees the bird.' | | | | | |

However, it is not obligatory that every agent of the sentences should be occurred with nominative case marker *in*. This can be explained from the following examples:

- (4) *nəŋ zi ə? nə pai hi*
 you market LOC 2SG go DECL
 ‘You go to the market.’
- (5) *ram ləmka ə? ə pai hi*
 Ram ləmka LOC 3SG go DECL
 ‘Ram goes to Lamka.’
- (6) *kei bu? kə ne hi*
 I rice 1SG eat DECL
 ‘I eat rice.’

1.2 Accusative Case

The accusative case is primarily used for denoting the direct object of the transitive verb. In Sukte, the accusative case is unmarked. This is one of the typological features of Sukte language.

- (7) *john in mary ə ŋai hi*
 John NOM Mary 3SG love DECL
 ‘John loves Mary.’
- (8) *ram in boŋ ə sat hi*
 Ram NOM cow 3SG beat DECL
 ‘Ram beats cows.’
- (9) *ko vəsə kə mu u? hi*
 we bird 1PL see PL DECL
 ‘We see bird.’
- (10) *kei-in sai k^hət kə mu hi*
 I-NOMElephant one 1SG see DECL
 ‘I see an elephant.’

1.3 Locative Case

In Sukte, the locative suffix is used to indicate the location of an object or event. The locative case in Sukte is expressed by the suffix *ə?* as exemplified in the following examples:

- (11) *əmə? op^his ə? ə pai hi*
 she/ he office LOC 3SG go DECL
 ‘She/ He goes to office.’
- (12) *kei in ə? kə om hi*
 I house LOC 1SG present DECL
 ‘I am in the house.’
- (13) *nəŋ buəl ə? nə pai ta hi*

- you hillock LOC 2SG go PST DECL
 ‘You went to the hillock.’
- (14) *ram ləmka ə? ə pai hi*
 ram ləmka LOC 3SG go DECL
 ‘Ram goes to Lamka.’

1.4 Genitive Case

The genitive case in Sukte is expressed by the marker *i* to indicate the possession of a thing or a person. Besides, genitive in Sukte is also formed by adding the pronominal prefixes *kə*, *nə* and *ə* to the noun as can be seen in the following examples:

- (15) *hi? merry-iin hi*
 this Merry-GEN house COP
 ‘This is Merry’s house.’
- (16) *huə john-i ui hi*
 that John-GEN dog COP
 ‘That is John’s dog.’
- (17) *ram-i bəs kʰət nei hi*
 Ram-GEN bus one have DECL
 ‘Ram has one bus.’
- (18) *əmə? kei kə pa hi*
 he I 1SG father COP
 ‘He is my father.’
- (19) *john nəŋ nə təpa hi*
 john you 2SG son COP
 ‘John is your son.’
- (20) *tombi əmə? ə nu hi*
 tombi he 3SG mother COP
 ‘Tombi is his mother.’

1.4 Instrumental Case

This case is used to denote the instrument with which the action is performed. The instrumental case is expressed by the case suffix *to?* as exemplified in the following examples:

- (21) *əmən namsau to? vok ə tʰət hi*
 he-NOM knife INST pig 3SG kill DECL
 ‘He kills a pig with a knife.’
- (22) *əmən hei to? guə ə attən hi*
 he-NOM axe INST bamboo 3SG cut DECL

- ‘He cut bamboo with an axe.’
 (23) *kei in səhaŋ tʰəu to? kə tʰət hi*
 I NOM tiger gun INST 1SG kill DECL
 ‘I kill tiger with a gun.’

1.5 Associative Case

The function of associative marker *to?* is used to denote an individual or object, in whose association the agent is carrying out an activity. Consider the following examples.

- (25) *tomba to? caoba ə kisual u? hi*
 tomba ASS chaoba 3PL fight PL DECL
 ‘Tomba and Chaoba fight each other.’
- (26) *kei zi ə? əmə? to? kə pai hi*
 I market LOC he ASS 1SG go DECL
 ‘I go to the market with him.’
- (27) *əmə? to? kə pai hi*
 he ASS ISG go DECL
 ‘I go with him.’
- (28) *əmau to? kə pai kʰom u? hi*
 they ASS ISG go together PL DECL
 ‘I go with them.’
- (29) *əmau to? kə tu kʰom u? hi*
 they ASS ISG sit together PL DECL
 ‘I sit with them.’

1.6 Ablative Case

The ablative case indicates the source from which the movement/ action takes place. It is indicated by the morpheme *pən*.

- (30) *əmə? siŋkuŋ pən ə kiə hi*
 he tree ABL 3SG fall DECL
 ‘He falls from tree.’
- (31) *in-tuŋ pən əmə? ə hoŋ tuək suk hi*
 house-top ABL he 3SG DIR jump down DECL
 ‘He jumps from the top of the house.’
- (32) *ladakh pən Buddhist in tʰugen hi*
 ladakh ABL Buddhist NOM speak DECL
 ‘Buddhist from Ladakh speaks.’
- (33) *siŋte? te siŋ pən ə kiə u? hi*

leaf PL tree ABL 3PL fall PL DECL
 ‘The leaves fall from the tree.’

1.7 Dative Case

The dative case relationship is associated with the act of giving . The most typical function of the dative case is that of the recipient. In other words, the dative is indirect object of transitive verb. In sukte, the dative case is expressed by the suffix *kiangə?* as illustrated in the following examples.

- (34) *john-in merry kiangə? laibu k^hətə piə hi*
 John-NOM Merry DAT book one 3SG give DECL
 ‘John gives Merry a book.’
- (35) *kei-in əmə? kiangə? leŋt^hei ni? kə piə hi*
 I-NOM he/she DAT pineapple two 1SG give DECL
 ‘I give him/ her two pineapples.’
- (36) *kei-in əmə? kiangə? epelgə? tom kəpiə hi*
 I-NOM she DAT apple few 1SG give DECL
 ‘I give a few apples to her.’
- (37) *ram-in əmau kiangə? hai təmpi ə piə hi*
 Ram-NOM they DAT mango many 3SG give DECL
 ‘Ram gives many mangoes to them.’

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