Structure of Noun Phrase in Manipuri – A Study of Complex Structure

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Abstract

This paper highlights the structure of noun phrases in Manipuri. For the convenience of analysis, noun phrases are distinguished into two types - simple noun phrases and complex noun phrases. The present discussion focuses on the second type of noun phrases - the complex noun phrases. An attempt is made to study how noun phrases work at the level of phrase and clause. In genitive constructions, the possessor nouns precede the possessed nouns. The conjunctive suffixes are used in pairs repeatedly after each noun or pronoun; conjunctive words are used in narrative and written contexts. Noun Phrases have explicit head nouns; there are headless noun phrases but this involves an understood context.

Introduction

It is a study of the more complex sorts of noun phrases– how noun phrases work within a particular clause, genitive or possessive noun phrases, conjoined noun phrases, headless noun phrases and relative clauses.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 11 November 2012
Dhanapati Shougrakpam, Ph. D. Scholar and P. Madhubala, Ph.D.
Structure of Noun Phrase in Manipuri – A Study of Complex Structure   209

I.   Noun Phrase within a particular clause

a.   Intransitive clause: Intransitive clauses have one Noun Phrase functioning as the subject and no object. In the example, the Noun Phrase əŋəŋ du 'the child' is the subject of the predicate pʰəm-mi 'sit'.

1.   əŋəŋ du   cəwkri də   pʰəm-mi

         child DET   chair LOC   sit-ASP

         The child is sitting on the chair.

b.   Transitive clause: In transitive clause both subject and object occur with the predicate.

        The Noun Phrase nupa məca ədu 'the boy' functions as the subject, while the Noun Phrase pʰurit əŋəwbə gə kʰoŋgrəw gə 'white shirt and trousers' functions as the object of the predicate set-li 'wear'.

2.   nupa məca   ədu   pʰurit   əŋəwbə gə   kʰoŋgrəw əmubə gə   set-li

         man small   DET   shirt   white and   trousers black and   wear-ASP

         The boy is wearing white shirt and black trousers.

        The subject Noun Phrase may be deleted in some transitive clauses. Here Noun Phrase əynə 'I-NOM' is deleted.

3.   əŋaŋ siŋ du   ləmpak tə   purəgə   pʰutbol   sanə-həl-li

         child-PL-DET   ground-LOC   take   football   play-CAUS-ASP

         (I) Took the children to a field and let them play football.

c.   Ditransitive clause: In ditransitive clauses, three Noun Phrases may occur with the predicate: a subject, a direct object, and an indirect object. nupa məca du ' the boy' functions as the subject, nupi məca du 'the girl' functions as the indirect object, and ləy 'flower' functions as the direct object of the predicate pi 'give' as in.

4.   nupa məca du nə   nupi məca du də   ləy   əmə   pi

         man small DET NOM   woman small DET LOC   flower   one   give

         The boy gives the girl a flower.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 11 November 2012
Dhanapati Shougrakpam, Ph. D. Scholar and P. Madhubala, Ph.D.
Structure of Noun Phrase in Manipuri – A Study of Complex Structure   210

d.   Equational clause: In an equational clause the postposition phrase may function as the subject or as part of the predicate where temporal information is drawn. noŋmayjiŋ numit tə '(on) Sunday' is the subject of the nominal predicate irabot de ni 'Irabot Day' in the equational clause 'Sunday is Irabot Day' as exemplified below.

5.   noŋmayjiŋ   numit tə   irabot   de   ni
      sunday   day LOC   Irabot   day COP
      Sunday is Irabot Day.

e.   Locational clause: The locational information acts as a specifier of the verb. The location tebəl məkʰa də 'under the table' is an essential specifier of the verb ləy 'to be' as in

6.   təbəl   məkʰa də   huy   əmə   ləy
      table   under LOC   dog   one   to be
      There is a dog under the table.

II.   Genitive or Possessive Noun Phrases

The most common way in which nouns occur as modifiers of nouns is in genitive constructions, in which it is really a Noun Phrase rather than just a noun that is modifying the head noun. The terms *genitive* and *possessive* are both used for constructions in which a noun occurs with another noun phrase denoting a possessor. The noun that is modified by the genitive noun phrase can be called the head noun or the possessed noun. In Manipuri, the possessor precedes the possessed nouns in genitive constructions as shown in (7) and (8) below:

7.   tombə gi   kar du   pʰəjəy
      tomba-GEN   car-det nice.
      Tomba's car is nice.

Here, kar 'car' occurs as the head noun. It is preceded by a possessive tombə gi 'Tomba's'.

8.   əy gi   kələm du   pi-rək-u
      my-GEN   pen-DET   give-DTC-COMD

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 11 November 2012
Dhanapati Shougrakpam, Ph. D. Scholar and P. Madhubala, Ph.D.
Structure of Noun Phrase in Manipuri – A Study of Complex Structure   211

Give my pen.

Here, kələm 'pen' occurs as the head noun. It is preceded by a possessive 'my'.

The term 'possessive' is also applied to constructions, where possession is predicted at the clause level.

9.   pʰurit   əŋəŋbə   ədu   əy-gi-ni
      shirt   red   DET   I-GEN-COP
      The red shirt is mine.

The different genitive relationships include possession or ownership, kinship relations, part-whole relations, materials and various abstract relations in different ways.

a.   Possession and ownership:
      The object Noun Phrase includes a genitive construction.
      The pronoun 'ma' he modifies the head noun səykəl 'cycle' to form the possessive construction, magi səykəl 'his cycle'. The possession is an alienable one where the relationship is conventional.

10.   məhak   ma gi   səykəl   tʰi- ri
      his   he-GEN   basket   search-ASP
      He is searching for his cycle.

b.   Kinship relations:
      In the following example, the pronoun 'ma' 'he' modifies the head noun compound 'imuŋ-mənuŋ' 'family' to form the genitive kinship construction 'magi imuŋ-mənuŋ' 'his family'. The relationship here is inalienable where the relationship is an inherent or a permanent one.

11.   tombə-nə   ma gi   imuŋ-mənuŋ də   wahən-de
      tomba-NOM   he-GEN   family   LOC   tired-NEG
      Tomba does not burden his family.

c.   Part-whole relations:

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 11 November 2012
Dhanapati Shougrakpam, Ph. D. Scholar and P. Madhubala, Ph.D.
Structure of Noun Phrase in Manipuri – A Study of Complex Structure   212

Here, the proper name Tomba modifies the head noun mək^{h}oŋ 'legs'. The part-whole relations involve an inalienable possession which is a body part as in:

12.　tombə gi　　mək^{h}oŋ　sok-y
　　　Tomba-GEN　legs　　　hurt-ASP
　　　Tomba's legs got hurt.

d.　　Materials:
　　　The pre-head modifying noun specifies the material that the head noun is made of. The noun isiŋ 'water' precedes and modifies the noun mərik 'drops' as in:

13.　məhak nə　məsa gi　　məkok tə isiŋ　　mərik　cay-səl-li
　　　he-NOM　body-GEN　head-LOC water　　drop　sprinkle-DIR-ASP
　　　He sprinkled water drops on his head.

e.　　Abstract relations:
　　　The proper name Rani is related to the abstract possession as in:

14.　rani gi　　luhoŋbə　numit
　　　Rani-GEN　wedding　day
　　　Rani's wedding day.

f.　　Referential genitives:
　　　When the referent is specific, it is particularised by the presence of the determiner 'ədu' 'that' as in:

15.　nupi　　ədu gi　　muka　sari
　　　woman　DET-GEN　silk　saree
　　　That woman's silk saree.

g.　　Non- referential genitives:
　　　When the referent is non-specific, the genitive marker is attached to the nominal possessor as in nupi gi 'woman's' (meaning the class of woman).

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 11 November 2012
Dhanapati Shougrakpam, Ph. D. Scholar and P. Madhubala, Ph.D.
Structure of Noun Phrase in Manipuri – A Study of Complex Structure　　　213

16.   nupi gi   muka   sari

woman-GEN   silk   saree

The woman's silk saree.

Function of Genitives:

a.   Genitive constructions with nominal possessors.

The genitive construction is bounded in the case of body parts and abstract qualities of the mind showing human possession.

17.   tombə gi   məkʰoŋ

Tomba-GEN   leg

Tomba's leg

18.   tombə gi   wakʰəl

Tomba-GEN   idea

Tomba's idea

19.   tombə gi   məwoŋ

Tomba-GEN   way

Tomba's nature.

The possessiveness in case of others excluding human possessions can be indicated with or without the genitive construction.

20.i.   yen gi   məkʰoŋ

chicken-GEN   leg

Chicken's leg.

20.ii. yen   məkʰoŋ

chicken   leg

Chicken's leg.

21.i.   sən gi   məməy

cow-GEN   tail

Cow's tail.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 11 November 2012
Dhanapati Shougrakpam, Ph. D. Scholar and P. Madhubala, Ph.D.
Structure of Noun Phrase in Manipuri – A Study of Complex Structure   214

21.ii. sən   məməy

          cow   tail

          Cow's tail.

22.i.   kʰuŋup ki   məri

          shoe-GEN   lace

          Shoe lace.

22.ii. kʰuŋup   məri

          shoe   lace

          Shoe lace.

b.   A nominal possessive co-occur with demonstrative with a genitive marker attached to it. Here, ədugi 'that' is used in the sense of identifying a particular book belonging to Tomba.

23.   tombə gi   ədu gi   layrik

          Tomba-GEN   DET-GEN   book

          Tomba's that book.

c.   The genitive construction shows not a genitive of origin but a descriptive genitive (the kind of milk obtained from a cow) or a subjective genitive (the cow provided the milk).

24.   sən gi   səŋgom

          cow-GEN   milk

          cow's milk.

d.   In post-position phrases, complex genitive constructions are often seen where the object Noun Phrase consists of a "possessed" localizer noun head and a Noun Phrase "possessor". The localizer noun mənuŋ-də 'inside' is possessed by the Noun Phrase ləykol 'garden' to form the post-position object ləykol mənuŋ-də 'inside the garden'.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 11 November 2012
Dhanapati Shougrakpam, Ph. D. Scholar and P. Madhubala, Ph.D.
Structure of Noun Phrase in Manipuri – A Study of Complex Structure   215

25.　　ləykol mənuŋ-də　　nupi　　məca　　ani　　laydhibi　　sa-nə-ri

garden inside-LOC.　　woman　　small　　two　　doll　　play-PRG-ASP

The two girls are playing dolls inside the garden.

e.　　Genitive construction can be expanded by derived nouns that modify the possessor. The modifying word intervenes between the possessor and the possessed noun.

26.　　nupa　　pʰətəbə gi　　məyum

man　　bad-GEN　　house

The bad man's house.

f.　　Noun Phrase can be expanded by using the possessive or genitive marker to nouns that precede the head noun, indicating possession.

27.　　jon gi　　məpa gi　　məmanəbə gi　　layrik

John-GEN　　father-GEN　　friend-GEN　　book

John's father's friend's book.

g.　　Noun Phrase formed by using possessive marker can be expanded to an infinite length by using possessive markers. The Noun Phrases thus formed would sound absurd if they got too long as in:

28.　　jon gi　　məpa gi　　məmanəbə gi　　mənaw nupa gi　　nupi gi

John-GEN　　father-GEN　　friend-GEN　　brother-man-GEN　　woman-GEN

məpa gi　　layrik

father-GEN　　book

John's father's friend's brother's wife's father's book.

III.　Conjoined Noun Phrases

Most languages allow Noun Phrases that are formed by conjoining or co-ordinating two noun phrases. Noun Phrases may consist of two or more constituent Noun Phrases that are linked by a conjunction.

a.　　Use of the connective suffix – su…su, gə…gə, ne…ne, rə~lə…rə~lə:

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 11 November 2012
Dhanapati Shougrakpam, Ph. D. Scholar and P. Madhubala, Ph.D.
Structure of Noun Phrase in Manipuri – A Study of Complex Structure　　216

Connective suffix occur in pair and connect the grammatically equal clauses. They are attached to the noun and they occur repeatedly with every noun or pronoun or phrase or clause.

a.i.   Coordinate Phrase:

Examples:

29.   tombə su   cawbə su   lak-kəni

Tomba-CONJ   chaoba-CONJ   come-ASP

Tomba and Chaoba will both come.

30.   tombə ne   cawbə ne   lak-kəni

Tomba-CONJ   chaoba-CONJ   come-ASP

Tomba and Chaoba will both come.

31.   tombə gə   cawbə gə   lak-kəni

Tomba-CONJ   chaoba-CONJ   come-ASP

Tomba and Chaoba will both come.

32.   isiŋ lə   yu rə   tʰək-li-du

water-CONJ   wine-CONJ   drink-PRG-DET

Is it water or wine that you are drinking?

a.ii.   Possessive Phrases:

Examples:

33.   nupa gi   ka gə   nupi gi   ka gə   toŋŋan-li

man-GEN   room-CONJ   woman-GEN   room-CONJ   different-ASP

Man and woman have different rooms.

34.   nupa gi   pʰirol su   nupi gi   pʰirol su   yol-li

man-GEN   dress-CONJ   woman-GEN   dress-CONJ   sale-ASP

Man and woman's dress are sold.

35.   əŋaŋ gi   pʰurit ne   əhəl gi   pʰurit ne   pu-rək-u

child-GEN   shirt-CONJ   old-GEN   shirt-CONJ   bring-DTC-COMD

Bring shirt both for children and for old.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 11 November 2012
Dhanapati Shougrakpam, Ph. D. Scholar and P. Madhubala, Ph.D.
Structure of Noun Phrase in Manipuri – A Study of Complex Structure   217

a.iii.   Adjectives:

Examples:

36.   əpʰawbə   nupa   əmə gə   əpʰawbə   nupi   əmə gə   lak-ləm-mi

famous   man   one-CONJ famous   woman   one-CONJ   come-SQL-ASP

A famous man and a famous woman came.

37.   əpətpə   həynəw ne   əpətpə   komla ne   hun-dok-kʰo

rotten   mango-CONJ rotten   orange-CONJ   throw-DIR-COMD

Throw the rotten mango and rotten orange.

38.   əmunbə   həynəw su   əsəŋbə   həynəw su   hek-lək-u

ripe   mango-CONJ   green   mango-CONJ   pluck-DTC-COMD

Pluck both ripe and unripe mangoes.

b.   The connective words like ədudəgi 'then', mərəmdunə 'because' conjoin two clauses that signal causal or logical connection. These words are used mainly in narrative and written context and not in day to day usage.

39.   hənubi ədu tum-kʰre   ədudəgi   huranbə   ədu   cəŋ-lək-le

old woman DET sleep-ASP CONJ   thief   DET   come-DTC-ASP

The old woman slept then the thief enters.

40.   nupa məca du   yamnə   ŋaw-y   mərəmdunə   bordiŋ də   tʰəm-kʰre

man small DET   very   mad-ASP   CONJ   boarding-LOC   keep-ASP

The boy is put in the boarding because he is naughty.

IV.   Headless Noun Phrases

Noun Phrases that function as subjects or objects have head nouns that can be drawn explicitly. However, Noun Phrases sometimes lacks a head noun. This is possible only when the noun that is not overtly expressed is understood both by the speaker and the hearer i.e. when the speaker is referring to something they can identify.

Different types of constructions which lack a head noun, that is noun phrase with only modifying words are drawn as below:

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12 : 11 November 2012
Dhanapati Shougrakpam, Ph. D. Scholar and P. Madhubala, Ph.D.
Structure of Noun Phrase in Manipuri – A Study of Complex Structure   218

a.   The Noun Phrase consists of an adjective plus a determiner.

41.   əmubə   ədu   pi-rək-u

       black   DET   give-DTC-COMD

       Give that black one.

42.   əpʰəbə   ədu   pu

       good   DET   take

       Take the good one.

b.   The adjective occurs with a possessive (which is also possible when the adjective is modifying a noun) and determiner.

43.   ma gi   əmubə   ədu   tum-mi

       he-GEN   black   DET   sleep-ASP

       His black one is sleeping.

44.   nəŋ gi   əsəŋbə   ədu   set-lu

       you-GEN   green   DET   wear-COMD

       Wear your green one.

c.   The adjective occurs with numeral, demonstrative and a verb form with a command suffix. The statement thus formed expresses a kind of order or command. Adjectives here are used semantically to denote a set of words on the basis of their meaning, regardless of their grammatical properties.

45.   pʰəjəbə   əni   ədu   pu-rək-u

       beautiful   two   DET   bring-DTC-COMD

       Bring that two beautiful ones.

46.   pʰətəbə   əmə du   hun-dok-kʰo

       bad   one DET   throw-DIR-COMD

       Throw the bad one.

47.   segaybə   əmə du   sijənə-<u>nu</u>

       tear   one DET   use-PHMK

       Don't use the torn one.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 11 November 2012
Dhanapati Shougrakpam, Ph. D. Scholar and P. Madhubala, Ph.D.
Structure of Noun Phrase in Manipuri – A Study of Complex Structure   219

48. nəmtʰibə əmə du   ləŋ-tʰok-kʰo

    stink   one DET   throw-DIR-COMD

    Throw the stinking one.

49. satʰibə   əni ədu   pu-rək-kənu

    danger   two DET   bring-DTC-PHMK

    Don't bring those two dangerous ones.

d.   The Noun Phrase consists of a derived adjective, determiner and a coordinate conjunction.

50.i.   əwaŋbə   ədu gə   unə-rək-y

        Tall   DET-CONJ   meet-DTC-ASP

        Met with the tall one.

50.ii. əpikpə   ədu gə   unə-rək-pra

        small   DET-CONJ   meet-DIR-QMK

        Did you meet with the small one?

51.i.   əcəwbə   ədu su   pu-rək-y

        big   DET-CONJ   bring-DTC-ASP

        Brought the big one too.

51.ii. ətʰibə   ədu su   yaw-bra

        ugly   DET-CONJ   participate-QMK

        Did the ugly one participate?

52.   pʰəjəbə   ədu bu   lak-pra

       nice   DET-CONJ   come   DIR-QMK

       Has the nice one come?

Here, ədusu 'also/even' and ədugə 'and' can be used both for asserting a statement and questioning an action for confirmation; ədubu 'that one' can only be used in questioning an action.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 11 November 2012
Dhanapati Shougrakpam, Ph. D. Scholar and P. Madhubala, Ph.D.
Structure of Noun Phrase in Manipuri – A Study of Complex Structure   220

e.   Possessor Phrases without a noun to function as noun phrases. Here, in the second part of the compound statement, the head noun is deleted and the comparative marker –nə is placed after the possessor phrases.

53.i.   jon gi   kar   du   pʰəjəy
           John-GEN   car   DET   nice
           John's car is nice.

53.ii.   tombə gi   kar nə   jon gi   kar dəgi   hennə   pʰəjəy
           Tomba-GEN   car-COMP John-GEN   car ABL   more   nice
           Tomba's car is nicer than John's.

53.iii. jon gi   kar du   pʰəjəy ədubu tombə gi nə   əmuk   hennə   pʰəjəy
           John-GEN car DET nice   CONJ   Tomba-GEN-COMP EMPH   more   nice
           John's car is nice but Tomba's is nicer.

The head noun kar 'car' is deleted in the second part of the statement after tombə gi 'Tomba's'.

54.i.   jon gi   yum   impʰal də   ləy
           John-GEN   house   Imphal-LOC   to be
           John's house is at Imphal.

54.ii.   tombə gi   yum   jiri də   ləy
           Tomba-GEN   house   Jiri-LOC   to be
           Tomba's house is at Jiri.

54.iii. jon gi   yum impʰal də   ləy   ədugə tombə gi nə   jiri də   ləy
           John-GEN house Imphal LOC to be and   Tomba-GEN-COMP Jiri LOC to be
           John's house is at Imphal and Tomba's is at Jiri.

The head noun yum 'house' is deleted in the second part of the statement after tombə gi 'Tomba's'.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 11 November 2012
Dhanapati Shougrakpam, Ph. D. Scholar and P. Madhubala, Ph.D.
Structure of Noun Phrase in Manipuri – A Study of Complex Structure   221

f.   Noun Phrases without nouns can be used in contexts that are relatively infrequent, when the speaker does not know what the thing is. Here, the adjective is functioning as a noun as exemplified below.

55.   məhak nə   kərigumbə   əcəwbə   əməgə   kərigumbə   məca   əməgə
        he NOM   something   big   and   something   small   and

        ciŋ mətʰək tə   tʰeŋnərək-y   ədugə   əcəwbə du   leŋ-lək-y
        mountaintop-LOC   meet-DIR-ASP and   big-DET   move-DIR-ASP

        He saw something big and something small on the mountain top and then he saw the big one moving.

56.   tombə nə   kənagumbə əwaŋbə əməgə kənagumbə əpikpə əməgə tʰeŋnə-rək-y
        Tomba-NOM someone tall   one   someone   small one   meet-DTC-ASP

        Tomba met with someone tall and someone small.

V.   Relative clause

Relative clause is used when the reference of a noun cannot be clarified satisfactorily by any determiner. It is a sentence that is embedded into a noun phrase, and marked in some way as subordinate to the particular noun for which clarity of reference is sought.

In Manipuri, relative clause is used in a restrictive sense. It is formed by addition of the nominalizer (NZR) - pə~bə to the embedded verb and a determiner (DET)-du (ədu)~do(ədo)~si(əsi)~se(əse) is used as a correlative marker.

a.   In relative clause with nominalizer - pə~bə, the verb of the embedded clause is not a finite verb but a nominalised form.

57.i.   məkʰoy nə   ləykol də   ləy   tʰa-ri
        they-NOM   garden-DET   flower   plant-PRG

        They are planting flowers in the garden.

57.ii. ləy siŋ   ədu   pʰəjəy
        flower-PL   DET   nice

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 11 November 2012
Dhanapati Shougrakpam, Ph. D. Scholar and P. Madhubala, Ph.D.
Structure of Noun Phrase in Manipuri – A Study of Complex Structure   222

The flowers are nice.

57.iii. məkʰoy   nə   ləykol də   tʰa-ri-bə   ləy siŋ   ədu   pʰəjəy

they   NOM   garden-LOC   plant-PRG-NZR   flower-PL   DET   nice

The flowers that they are planting in the garden are nice.

b.   Relative clause with quotative has a relative marker (subordinate marker) 'haybə' (factive) which is formed by combining the verbal root hay 'to say' and the nominalizer bə. The verb of the embedded clause is a finite verb.

58.i.   tʰoybi nə   ədurgulab pam-mi

Thoibi-NOM   rose   want-ASP

Thoibi wants roses.

58.ii.   ədurgulab ədu si də   sat-le

Rose   DET here-LOC   bloom-ASP

Roses are blooming here.

58.iii.   tʰoybi nə   pam-mi   hay-bə   ədurgulab ədu   sidə   sat-le

Thoibi-NOM   want-ASP to say-NZR   rose-DET   here   bloom-ASP

The roses that Thoibi wants are blooming here.

c.   Relative clause is also formed by the interrogative word and the verb in the embedded clause is a nominalized form.

59.i.   məhak   kədaydəno əmə   ləy

he   somewhere DET   to be

He is staying somewhere.

59.ii.   məpʰəm   ədu   əy   kʰəŋ-ŋi

place   DET   I   know-ASP

I know the place.

59.iii.   məhak nə   ləybə   məpʰəm   kədaydəno   əy   kʰəŋ-ŋi

he-NOM   stay   place   where   I   know-ASP

I know the place where he lives.

Language in India www.languageinindia.com
12 : 11 November 2012
Dhanapati Shougrakpam, Ph. D. Scholar and P. Madhubala, Ph.D.
Structure of Noun Phrase in Manipuri – A Study of Complex Structure   223

d.   Relative clauses can modify head nouns. The subject head noun nupi məca 'girl' is modified by the relative clause pʰurit əŋəŋbə gə iskət əmubə gə setpə.

60.   nupi məca   pʰurit əŋaŋbə gə iskət   əmubə gə   setpə du ca   tʰək-y
          woman small   shirt   red-CONJ skirt   black-CONJ wear-DET tea drink-ASP
          The girl wearing red shirt and black skirt is having tea.

e.   There are cases in which there are two relative clauses embedded to a matrix sentence. When two relative clauses are there, only the nominalized verbal form of the second statement remains. The verbal form is then embedded into the first nominlalized statement. The relativized clause thus formed by combination of the two relative clauses nupi məca məsəm saŋbi du nə paybə 'the girl with long hair is holding' acts as a modifier of the Noun Phrase sanəpot tu 'the toys' in the matrix sentence as exemplified below.

61.i.   nupi   məca   ədu   məsəm   saŋ-ŋi
          woman   small   DET   hair   long-ASP
          The girl has long hair.

61.ii.   nupi   məca   ədu   sanəpot   pay
          woman   small   DET   toys   hold
          The girl is holding toys.

61.iii. sanəpot tu   nupa məca   mənak tə   pʰəmbə du də   pi
          toys-DET   man small   near-LOC   sit -DET-LOC   give
          Give the toys to the boy sitting nearby.

61.iv.   nupi məca   məsəm   saŋbi du nə   paybə   sanəpot tu   nupa məca
          woman small   hair   long DET-NOM   hold   toys-DET   man small
          mənak tə   pʰəmbə du də   pi
          near-LOC   sit-NZR-DET-LOC   give
          The girl with long hair gives the toys to the boy sitting near her.

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Dhanapati Shougrakpam, Ph. D. Scholar and P. Madhubala, Ph.D.
Structure of Noun Phrase in Manipuri – A Study of Complex Structure   224

Conclusion

This paper is essentially an exploratory analysis of the structure of Complex Noun Phrase in Manipuri. These preliminary findings will hopefully serve as a basis for advancement of further studies.

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Abbreviations

ABL	: Ablative
ASP	: Aspect
COMD	: Command
COMP	: Comparative
CONJ	: Conjunction
COP	: Copula
DET	: Determiner
DIR	: Directional
DTC	: Deictic
EMPH	: Emphatic
GEN	: Genitive
LOC	: Locative
NEG	: Negative
NOM	: Nominative
NZR	: Nominalizer
PHMK	: Prohibitive Marker
PL	: Plural
PRG	: Progressive
QMK	: Question Marker
SQL	: Sequential

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Structure of Noun Phrase in Manipuri – A Study of Complex Structure   225

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12 : 11 November 2012
Dhanapati Shougrakpam, Ph. D. Scholar and P. Madhubala, Ph.D.
Structure of Noun Phrase in Manipuri – A Study of Complex Structure   226