Abstract

In this paper, an attempt will be made to give a description of the case marking system in Mao. Case is an important inflectional category of noun. It shows the syntactic correlation between the noun and the verb and between two nouns in a syntactic unit i.e. in the case of genitive for example, ṣiḥi loir ‘my book’. Cases are also indicates the grammatical functions in a greater phrase or clause such as role of subject, direct object and possessor etc. In this language, there are seven (7) types of case suffixes i.e. - no ‘Agentive marker’, - ye ‘Accusative marker’, - no ‘Instrumental marker’, - li / - hi ‘Locative marker’, - ji ‘Genitive marker’, - hino / -lino ‘Ablative marker’, and - hi ‘Associative marker’, respectively. All these markers play a vital role in the construction of syntactic structure.

1. Introduction

The present paper is to describe about the Mao case system. Mao is a language of the Naga-Kuki groups of Tibeto-Burman language family and it is spoken mainly in the Senapati district, the Northern part of Manipur. It is 104 km far away from Imphal by road on the National Highway no.39. It is one of the oldest hill stations of Manipur and its area is blessed with a rich flora and fauna. They live a simple life very close to nature. The total population of Mao tribe is 69,131 according to the 2001 census report. Ethno culturally, Mao is with the Nagas of Nagaland being closely related to the Angami Nagas (P.P Giridhar, 1994).

There are some scholars observed that, Mao include in the Naga-Kuki group of Tibeto-Burman language family by G.A.Grierson (1903). Benedict P.K (1972) described that Mao belongs to the Naga group of Sino-Tibetan language family. And Robert Shafer (1974), also describe Mao as in the Luhupa unit in the Eastern branch under the old kukish section of Burmic division of Sino-Tibetan. According to Scott Delancy (1987), Mao belongs to the Naga group under the Assam-Burmese section of the Tibeto-Burman language family.
2. Review of Literature

More than thirty three (33) Tibeto-Burman languages are found in Manipur. Out of these languages a few of them are officially recognised. The Mao language is one of the Naga-Kuki groups of Tibeto-Burman language family. It is very closely related to the Western Naga language of Nagaland. There are a few written works on Mao language i.e ‘Mao Naga Grammar’ by P.P.Giridhar (1994). In his work, he mention about phonology, morphology and syntax respectively. Another work on Mao language is ‘Mao phonology’ a dissertation paper under Manipur University by Th. Jamuna Devi (1991). In her dissertation, she discussed only phonological part. Daniel.M (2008), he also had written about the ‘Socio-cultural and religious life of Mao Naga Tribe’.

3. Case

The term case refers to inflectional marking and typically, case marks the relationship of a noun to a verb at the clause level or of a noun to an ad position (preposition or post position) or another noun at the phrase level. In some language like English has largely lost its case system, although case distinctions can still be seen with the personal pronouns: forms such as I, he, and we are used in the role of subject e.g ‘I kicked the ball’ while forms such as me, him and us are used in the role of object e.g John kicked me.

“Case is a grammatical category used in analysis of word classes to identify the syntactic relationship between works in a sentence through such contrast as nominative, accusative etc” - David crystal, 1985. “Cases are inflected form of nouns, which fit them for participation in key construction relative to verbs” - Charles F. Hockett, 1970. Case is a grammatical category which is established on two counts, (i) syntactic correlation between the substantives and the verb and (ii) between two substantives in a syntactic unit. In this analysis, there are seven (7) case markers in Mao. They are as below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAO</th>
<th>GLOSS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-no</td>
<td>Agentive</td>
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<tr>
<td>-ye</td>
<td>Accusative</td>
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<tr>
<td>-no</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
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<tr>
<td>-ji</td>
<td>Genitive</td>
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<tr>
<td>-li/hI</td>
<td>Locative</td>
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<tr>
<td>lino/hino</td>
<td>Ablative</td>
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<tr>
<td>-hi</td>
<td>Associative</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3.1 Nominative case

When a noun or a pronoun is used as the subject or a verb, it is said to be nominative. The nominative marker in Mao is formed by adding ‘–no’ suffixes to the noun or pronoun.

Examples:

(i) tombə no caoə dao a
   tomba+AGENT chaoba beat+ S.A.
   ‘Tomba beats chaoba’.

(ii) ram no kofi so a.
    ram+AGENT coffee drink+S.A.
    ‘Ram drinks coffee’.
In the above examples show that the nominative marker –no is added to the subject or noun and it gives the meaningful sentence.

3.2 Accusative case
When a noun or pronoun is object to a verb, it is said to be accusative. The accusative case marker is denoted by adding ‘–ye’ suffix to the object.

Examples:
(iii) әi niye lise a
       I+ACC love+S.A.
       ‘I love you’.
(iv) әi t’oibiye ijapa a
       I Thoibi+ACC like+S.A.
       ‘I like Thoibi’.
(v) әino k’ehoye otuno sot’ore
       I+AGENT snake+ACC stone+INST kill+PERF.
       ‘I killed the snake with a stone’.

3.3 Instrumental case
The instrumentality of an object with reference to an action is expressed by instrumental case marker ‘-no’ which is homophonous to nominative case. It is formed by adding suffix -no to the noun of instrument.

Examples:
(vi) әino oprano ona torur a
       I+AGENT needle+INST cloth stitch+S.A.
       ‘I stitch the cloth with a needle’.
(vii) meri cit’e kolomno rur a
       Marry letter pen+INST write+S.A.
       ‘Marry writes a letter with a pen’.

3.4 Genitive case
The genitive marker in Mao is ‘-ji’ which is used to denote possessiveness or to express belongings. It is formed by adding genitive suffix ‘-ji to the personal pronoun.

Examples:
(viii) aiji lairar
       I+GEN book
       ‘My book’.
(ix) niji morur
     You+GEN cattle
     ‘Your cattle’.

3.5 Locative case
The place of location of an object or event is expressed by locative case marker. It is formed by adding ‘-hi/-li’ to the direct object.

Examples:
(x) pfo bajarhi tare
He market+LOC go+PERF  
‘He went to market’.

(xi) әи delihi tawe  
I Delhi+LOC go+PROG  
‘I am going to Delhi’.

(xii) әино ramli lairәr pi ni a  
I+AGENT ram+LOC book give+M.D+S.A  
‘I wish to give a book to Ram’.

(xiii) kosali usoti pi o  
Cat+LOC fish+DET give+COMD  
‘Give the fish to cat’.

In the above examples (x) & (xi) the locative marker ‘-hi’ is added to the inanimate object or proper noun but in example (xii) & (xiii) the locative marker ‘-li’ is added to the personal pronoun or animate object only.

3.6 Ablative Case

The Ablative suffix ‘-hino/-lino are used in the spatial starting point of a direction or motion, source and expulsion etc. The suffix –hino is added to the proper noun or inanimate object and suffix –lino is added to the personal pronoun or animate object.

Examples:

(xiv) әи mikirhino bu re  
I Imphal+ABL come+PERF  
‘I came from Imphal’.

(xv) әино kurihino uso cәco a  
I+AGENT river+ABL fish catch+S.A  
‘I catch fish from the River’.

(xvi) әи pfolino lairәr fu ni a  
I he+ABL book take+M.D+S.A  
‘I wish to take book from him’.

3.7 Associative Case

The associative marker is used to denote that the action has been performed in conjunction with another person’s whether one or both members. It is formed by adding suffix ‘-hi’ to the direct object.

Examples:

(xvii) әи tombәhi bajәr tare  
I Tombа+ASS market go+PERF  
‘I went to market with Tombа’.

(xviii) әи nihi lairәr pәrole  
I You+ASS book read+UNRL  
‘I will read a book with you’.
4. Conclusion

In the above descriptions, Mao case marker have been clearly identified and explained either morphologically or syntactically which is deemed inadequate in a number of ways. The case system is fully retained the grammatical suffixes of a language. It reflects the grammatical function performed by a noun or pronoun in a phrase, clause or sentence but it does not existed one to one correspondence between cases and grammatical function they express. So, case is a property or feature shared by all the language of the world. It’s played a vital role in the construction of syntactic structure.

5. Abbreviation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agentive</td>
<td>AGENT</td>
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<td>Instrumental</td>
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<td>Genitive</td>
<td>GEN</td>
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<td>Ablative</td>
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<td>Associative</td>
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<td>Simple Aspect</td>
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<td>Perfective</td>
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<td>Progressive</td>
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<td>Unrealised Aspect</td>
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<td>Mood</td>
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<td>Determiner</td>
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<td>Command</td>
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References