Case and Case-like Postposition in Surjapuri

Md. Shahzad Alam, M.A, Ph.D. Scholar

Introduction

Surjapuri is one of the 26 languages grouped under Hindi with 1.2 million speakers. It is a lesser known language which has not flourished in terms of language and literature as well as its documentation. There is also a controversy regarding the grouping of this language - whether it is to be marked as a dialect of Maithili or that of Bengali. According to International Encyclopedia of Linguistics, VI, 2nd Edn., it may be a dialect of Maithili. Till now Census of India has kept this language under the Hindi umbrella. However, from its vocabulary and also from the viewpoint of the location of the language speakers it could be preliminarily stated that Surjapuri bears close resemblances to languages like Maithili, Bengali, Bhojpuri, Rajbanshi and Assamese. The paper attempts to throw some light upon the inflecting nature vis-à-vis the syntactic and semantic functions of case and postpositions of Surjapuri.

Inflecting Nature

Surjapuri exhibits an inflecting nature. Thus, it bears enough scope to have an interesting glance at the case inflection system as well as the postpositions which seem to be like
those used in other Indo-Aryan languages. Case or case-marking is a morpho-syntactic
device or mechanism that is used to indicate who is doing what to whom. In Harris and
Campbell’s (1995:89) formulation, ‘cases develop from postpositions when the
postposition is felt to be so closely connected to its attribute noun that together they are
re-interpreted as one word …’

**Layers of Forms with Case-like Functions**

In New Indo-Aryan (NIA) languages we observe a rapid increase in use and
grammaticalization of new post positions. In order to go with a systematic approach, so
far as Surjapuri language is concerned, we take the model of “layers of forms with case-

There are at least three layers with case-like functions typically made up of ‘inherited
synthetic, new agglutinative and quasi-analytic elements’. Depending upon language, the
function of a marker in a given layer is carried to a different layer. For example, the
agentive function in Layer II post-position –ne in Hindi is indicated by Layer I in Sindhi
and Kashmiri. However, descriptions have recognized either two layers of affixes and
one of post-positions, or one layer of affixes and two layers of post-positions.

Like Hindi, Bengali, and Rajbanshi, it is difficult in Surjapuri also to determine whether a
single layer of case marking is affixal or adpositional. Therefore, following the Indo-
Aryan inheritance, the case marker in Surjapuri is basically suffixed to the stem.

However, in our further discussion we shall evaluate how the “morphological status of
the markers may vary from bound morphemes (case-suffixes), tightly connected to the
nominal stem, to free morphemes (postpositions).

**Masica’s Three Layers**

As posited by Masica, following are the three layers [Layer I affixes are inherited, with
varying degrees of phonological reduction and changes of function, from OIA or MIA
(Apabhramsha) and attach directly to the stem. Layer II which are either suffixes or
analytic particles, are usually mediated by a Layer I element and attach to the base
indirectly. Layer III elements are mediated by a Layer II element] of case marking
postposition constructions in Surjapuri.
### Layer I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Marking Category</th>
<th>Category 1</th>
<th>Category 2</th>
<th>Category 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominative (Ø)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locative (-t/-ot)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive (-r/-er)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Layer II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Marking Category</th>
<th>Category 1</th>
<th>Category 2</th>
<th>Category 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dative-Accusative (-k/-οk)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental-Ablative (sε/ dε)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental (hat)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Layer III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Marking Category</th>
<th>Category 1</th>
<th>Category 2</th>
<th>Category 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Locative pər ‘upon’,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uprət ‘upon’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pɪt∫’ut ‘behind’,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>boglət ‘beside’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Layer III elements are external to the NP marking under Masica’s scheme. Along with the syntactic criterion, Masica also gives a semantic criterion for distinguishing Layer II from Layer III elements: A layer III element is semantically more specific, e.g. as compared with a more diffuse Locative on Layer II or perhaps Layer I. Layer III typically mediates such concepts as ‘on top of’, ‘under’, ‘behind’, ‘inside of’, ‘near’ etc. (1991:235). The Layer II postpositions show no properties which can be taken as sufficient criteria for case-hood. They only serve to mark grammatical functions, including the function of subject.

1. **Case**

1.1 **Nominative case:** One modern view is that it represents noun as a ‘concept pure and simple’ (Juret 1926:16), that the nominative form is the case of pure reference (de Groot 1956:189). The nominative case in Surjapuri, is inherent i.e. the marker is φ. The noun performs the grammatical function of a subject like-

   i) *It may act as the subject of a copulative sentence.*
ii) May also be used as the subject of a transitive or an intransitive sentence where the subject is also an agent.

e.g. a) t\(\text{ut}\) b\(\text{hat}\) k\(\text{ha}\) t\(\text{ij}\)-i
   you sg.(nom.) rice eat aux.-pres.-2sg.
   ‘You (sg.) eat rice’

   b) h\(\text{omra}\) k\(\text{et-\text{\text{-}}}\) kam k\(\text{or-va}\) d\(\text{za}\) t\(\text{ij}\)-i
   we-nom field-loc. work do-inf. go aux-pres.-1p.
   ‘We go to work in the field.’

2. Dative-Accusative

The dative case is aligned with the accusative in that both express the goal of an event (Blake 2001:39). In Surjapuri, the NP in the dative-accusative case generally performs the grammatical function of Direct Object and Indirect Object. The dative-accusative case can be merged into one category since the markers (-\(k/-\text{\text{-}}k\)) are the same for both dative (recipient) and accusative (patient). It is phonologically dependent on the stem, in that after stem-final vowels the marker is -\(k\), but after stem-final consonants the morpheme requires the epenthetic vowel -\(\text{\text{-}}\), hence the allomorph -\(\text{\text{-}}k\).

Masica (1991) maintains the absence of the accusative case in NIA, which I reproduce here:

The Object is not distinguished from the subject by case marking in many NIA languages... Both may be in the Nominative. Unlike Sanskrit there is generally no distinctive Accusative case in NIA. Historically, the Indo-Aryan Accusative merged with the Nominative... This is not to say that Objects are always bereft of case marking. They may take it, in the form of the Dative marker (in the absence of an Accusative: the marker is often called a Dative-Accusative as a result). Its functions, however, are often more pragmatic than syntactic. That is, in the case of non-human nouns, it generally indicates a "definite" object, that is, one that is already known; in the case of human nouns, it stresses their Patienthood, a marked status (human nouns normally being Agents). In languages with other means of marking definiteness... the first of these functions is minimalised. (ibid: 365).
Human and direct animate/inanimate objects are generally marked with dative-accusative case.
e.g.

**Dative**

i) ram-ɔk gussa os -ɪl
    ram-dat. angry come aux.-pst.
    ‘Ram got angry’

ii) ənɪl-ɔk inam du-val gel
    anil-dat award give-cause go-pst.
    ‘Anil was awarded’

iii) to-k ek -tə kɔlɔm du -mũ
    you-dat one-cl. pen give fut.1sg.
    ‘I will give you a pen’.

**Accusative:**

i) aləm ek kʰan kɪtab-ɔk pɔɾʰ -ɪl
    alam(nom.) one cl. book acc. read aux.pst.
    ‘Alam read a book.’

ii) muj ram-ɔk dʒən tʃʰ-u
    i-nom. ram-acc. know aux.-pres.-1sg.
    ‘I know Ram.’

2. **Genitive case**

The genitive case is a case of possessor which is marked by the suffixes -r/-er. After stem-final vowels the morpheme is -r, and after stem-final consonants it is -er. The suffixes -r/-er are the ‘characteristic’ case-endings for genitive, similar to Bengali.

i) rʊm-er lok-la
    rome-gen. man –pl.
    ‘Men of Rome’
ii) panir-er pəhīja-da
paneer -gen. wheel -cl.
‘Wheel of cheese’

The case marker attaches to the noun classifier or plural marker. However, if the phrase is modified by a demonstrative or numeral, the noun classifier or plural attaches to the modifier, while the genitive is linked to the NP.

i) pʰləm-da -r mod3u
film -def/cl.-gen. title
‘The title of the film’

ii) mūj bərə lok-la-r idʒdʒət kər tʃʰ-u
i-nom. big person-pl.-gen. respect do aux.-pres-1sg.
‘I respect elders.’

4. Locative case

The locative case expresses the idea of location of an action. When the stem is open syllabic, it takes –t to denote locative case, whereas in case of closed syllabic, it takes the form -ɔt. Semantically, it also provides semantic map of not only direction of location, but also implies as something within the enclosed space when it refers to personal pronoun.

e.g.

i) tʃəul bəsti-da- t bət-al gɛl
rice -nom. village-def.-loc. distribute-caus. go-lsg.
‘The rice was distributed in the village’

ii) uəhəj kʰet-ɔt halbəh -a tʃʰ-ɛ
he -nom. field in-loc. plough prog. aux.-pres-3sg.
‘He is ploughing (in) the field’

Some of the main semantic notions expressed by locative postpositions are –

i) Location within or inside something
mor bʰitr-ət gussa bʰər-al tʃʰ-ε
I-pos. inside-pp. anger filled-cuas. aux.-pres-1sg.
‘I am filled with anger.’

**ii) Price of a thing**

duṛ- dā kələm dəs təka-r
two-cl. pen 10 Rs.- gen.
‘Two pens for Rs.10/’

**iii) Duration**

mūj duṛ gʰənta-t kɨtab kʰan pətʰ -nu
i-nom. two hour-pp. book cl. read -pst.1sg.
‘I read the book in two hours.’

Surjapuri also bears these kinds of postpositions or postpositional compounds like-

upr-ət ‘upon’
bəgl-ət ‘close’
bʰitr-ət ‘inside’
bəhar-ət ‘outside’
ntʃʰ an -ət ‘below’

**5. Ablative-Instrumental case**

The case marker sə/də (optional) is common to both instrumental and ablative cases, the difference being that, ablative refers to ‘motion away from’ and instrumental denotes ‘by means of’. Certain instrumental/agentive clitics are evident in Surjapuri. The markers –
də[of Magadhan origin is likely to be the conjunctive participle form of the verb di-‘give’;d-ie(ne) (lit. ‘by giving’) də] and –sə (possibly Hindi loan) are used with non-nominates. However, according to Ramawatar Yadav, “From a strictly grammatical perspective …there is no motivation for postulating an ablative case distinct from the instrumental. … ” (pg. 88, A Reference Grammar of Maithili, Ramawatar Yadav”. There was a syncretism of the ablative-instrumental distinction, which occurred in a number of Indo-European languages, where the two cases came to be used interchangeably before
the formal distinction was lost. Moreover, Bloch is also of the opinion that instrumental and ablative cases express cause, separation and comparison.

**Ablative**

i) əhmad ədəθ-dəa əse pani əṭḥ-al
   Ahmad river-cl abl. water fetch aux.-pst.
   ‘Ahmad fetched water from the river,

ii) ḫjam maṭ̣i-la hat ḳh an əde əṭḥ-al
    shyam mud pl. hand cl. abl. lift aux.-pst.
    ‘Shyam lifted the mud from the hand’

**Instrumental**

i) sīta əṭ̣ḥak ṭsōku ḳh an əde əṭ̣e əd-əl
   sita him knife cl. ins. cut give pst-perf.
   ‘Sita injured him with a knife’

ii) ram ədəl əse maṭ̣ əmar -əl
    Ram net with fish catch aux.-pst.
    ‘Ram caught the fish with the net.’

In certain constructions -əse expresses the notion of connection/proximity in general. The two ‘multi-valued’ postpositions –k/–ək (dat.-acc.) and –əse (abl.-ins.) are involved in the expressions of motions towards the limit and departure from it.

Several instrumental/agentive clitics or post positions are found to be used in contemporary Surjapuri. There could be different interpretations of it, which are discussed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Interpretation</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Manner</td>
<td>müj əṭ̣ṭḥa əse līḳh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Surjapuri</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>mastār-ṭa pʰīlosopʰi-r</td>
<td>I wrote well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>teacher-cl philosophy-gen.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bare bol-īl.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>about speak-aux-pst</td>
<td>‘The teacher spoke about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>philosophy.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>gorom 40c tok bɔ̃ he</td>
<td>Temperature rouse up to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>heat 40c upto rise gel.</td>
<td>40c.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>aux.-pst</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrument</td>
<td>kulhaṭṭ kʰan de lakṭṭ</td>
<td>‘Cut wood with the axe.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>axe-nom cl. ins. wood katā cut</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cause</td>
<td>uɔ̃har gʰɔ̃ dʒa-va-r</td>
<td>Everybody was happy with his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>his home go-ger.-gen.</td>
<td>going home.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>uɔ̃de kɔrɛ sɔbkoī reason ins.pp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>all kʰus tʃʰ-īl. happy cop.pst.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Everybody was happy with his</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>going home.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td>mas-ṯa-t pəɾoṭṭn se</td>
<td>Fish is filled with protein.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fish-cl-loc. protein abl.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>bʰɔɾ-al tʃʰ-ɛ fill pst-cuas aux.prst.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path</td>
<td>kam uɔ̃ha-r hate</td>
<td>Work was done by him.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>work his-gen. through-pp kɔr-al</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>gel go-cuas. aux.pst</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>uɔ̃hāj mor se s/he-nom. my abl.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case</td>
<td>Example</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexive</td>
<td>muñ ṭkʰan kam nūdžē</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td>kukur ṭa hēmar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antagonism</td>
<td>vohar sege lōrēmar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is, however, also possible that the clitic *le* is a conjunctive participle form of the verb *li-* 'take';

l-ie(ne) 'take-conj.ptcl' (lit. 'by taking'), as in:

\[\text{vahā}j \ \text{ṭkʰan} \ \text{kītab} \ \text{mor} \ \text{ḥat} \ \text{sē} \ \text{ṭjʰ} \ \text{rae} \ \text{lī} \ \text{-le.} \]

s/he this book me hand from-abl. snatch take aux-pst.
‘s/he has snatched this book from me.’

\[\text{bīhan} \ \text{sē} \ \text{panī} \ \text{ḥo} \ \text{ṭjʰ-ē} \]

morning from rain prog. aux-prst.
‘It has been raining since morning.’

The ablative-instrumental is used in complex postpositional constructions such as:
The ablative is used in comparative and superlative constructions.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{The ablative can be used as an instrumental clitic in place of the instrumental } & \text{de} \\
\text{prox. cl. knife all knife from-pp. sharp cop.-pres} & \text{This knife is sharpest of all.}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{The ablative can be used as an instrumental clitic in place of the instrumental } & \text{de} \\
\text{rem.cl house prox.cl. house from -pp. big cop.-pres.} & \text{That house is bigger than this house}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{I bought sweets with the money that you gave me.}'
\end{align*}
\]

**Other postpositions**

**Terminative post position**

The terminative (term.) clitic \(\tau k\) is used to convey the terminal point of a state of affairs, either in terms of location, time or amount.

i) kolkata \(\text{se} \) dilli \(\tau k\)

Kolkata from pp. Delhi till

‘from Kolkata to Delhi’
ii) 

\[ \text{vohak os-ua hol-tan lektin obh} \text{i tok ni os-} \]
\[ \text{s/he come-inf. supposed but now until neg. come-perf.3p} \]
\[ \text{‘s/he was supposed to come but has come till now.’} \]

iii) 

\[ \text{tok kom-se-kom dut so se tin so } \text{taqa} \]
\[ \text{you at least two hundred from three hundred money} \]
\[ \text{mok duva tsohi} \]
\[ \text{me should give} \]
\[ \text{‘You should give me at least two to three hundred’} \]

**Temporal post position**

The temporal postpositions \( k^b \text{una} ‘\text{during’ and bad ‘after’ occur after nouns} \)
\[ \text{verbs and adverbs Occasionally bad ‘after’ attaches to the head without the genitive case} \]

\[ \text{kot-khuna mok lag t}\text{j}^h-e \text{ ke dzhomin k}\text{han} \text{ tsopta t}\text{f}^h-e \]
\[ \text{Some-time me feel aux-pres-1sg that earth cl. flat cop.-pres-3p.} \]
\[ \text{‘Sometimes I feel that the earth is flat’} \]

\[ \text{son-ua-r} \text{ bad} \]
\[ \text{liten -ptcl-gen. after} \]
\[ \text{‘After listening’} \]

\[ \text{t}\text{borok dine-r bad} \]
\[ \text{some day-gen after} \]
\[ \text{‘After some days’} \]

\[ \text{kutf dine-r bad} \]
\[ \text{some day-gen after} \]
\[ \text{‘After few days’} \]

The temporal postposition \( kore ‘advl’ occurs after temporal adverbs. It never requires \)
\[ \text{genitive case marking on the adverb.} \]
Roaming at night is dangerous.

The causal postposition ‘उद्योग’ is attached to the nonfinite verb with the genitive case.

Everybody was happy with his going home.

Purpose is marked with the postposition ‘ते’ ‘for; in order to’ and is found in conjunction with verbs.

This shirt is for Ram.

Several other postpositions need mentioning. The following postpositions attach to the phrase head with the genitive case.

‘on behalf of’

‘just like’

In addition, the following postpositions attach to the head without the genitive case.

a) ‘throughout’

he/she was ill throughout the year

b) ‘as if’
The postposition bīna 'without' attaches to the head with the genitive except when it functions as an adverb, in which case it precedes the head

The nominal expressions (Noun Phrase) with post-positions function similar to a morphological form in Surjpuri, which is also evident in other Indo-Aryan languages. In other words, the syntactic function of a nominal cannot recognize a case from the form/morphological marker unless it is analyzed on the basis of the related meaning of the segments (markers) in the sentence. Sometimes a suffix could be added to the nominal, though in other cases it is inherent.

Looking from a syntactic point of view though it seems easy to mark out the case forms but if studied semantically, Surjpuri language maintains multiple functions like

definiteness, plurality and case. A bound morpheme added to the nominal can function in a different way other than what convention of a language says. However, one can look into this area carefully before coming to a conclusion that a particular marker may function in a number of ways, often left unnoticed.
References


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