Case and Case-like Postposition in Surjapuri

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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

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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-like function" put forward by Colin P. Masica (1991:230-248).

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 (Apabhramsa) 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.

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		category 1	category 2	category 3
Layer I				
	Nominative (Ø)	✔		
	Locative (-t/-ɔt)	✔	✔	
	Genitive (-r/-er)	✔		
Layer II	Dative-Accusative (-k/-ɔk)	✔		
	Instrumental-Ablative(sɛ/ dɛ)	✔	✔	
	Instrumental (hatɛ) 'through'		✔	
Layer III	Locative pɔr 'upon', ʊprɔt 'upon' pɪtʃʰut 'behind', boglɔt 'beside'			✔

Inflexional Case Marking Category 1   Analytical Case Marking Categories 2 & 3

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.*

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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) tʊɪ   bʰat   kʰa   tʃʰ-i

      you sg.(nom.)   rice   eat   aux.-pres.-2sg.

      'You (sg.) eat rice'

   b) həmra   kʰet-ɔt   kam   kor-ʋa dʒa tʃʰ-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/-ɔk*) 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 *-ɔ*, hence the allomorph *-ɔk*.

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).

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Human and direct animate/inanimate objects are generally marked with dative-accusative case.

e.g.

Dative

i)   ram-ɔk gʊssa   os   -ɪl
       ram-dat. angry   come aux.-pst.
       'Ram got angry'

ii)   ənɪl-ɔk ɪnam   dʊ-ʋal   gɛl
       anil -dat award   give-cause   go-pst.
       'Anil was awarded'

iii)   to-k   ek -ṭa kɔlɔm dʊ   -mũ
       you-dat one-cl. pen   give fut.1sg.
       'I will give you a pen'.

***Accusative*:**

i)   aləm   ek kʰan   kɪtab–ɔk   pɔɽʰ –ɪl
       alam(nom.) one cl.   book acc.   read   aux.pst.
       'Alam read a book.'

ii)   mʊj   ram-ɔk dʒan 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'

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ii) pənɪr–er   pəhĩja–ɖa

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)   pʰɪləm-ɖa -r   modʒu

   film   –def/cl.-gen.   title

   'The title of the film'

ii)   mũj   bɔɽɔ   lok-la-r   ɪdʒdʒət   kɔr 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 -ɔ*t*. 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)   tʃəʋl   bəstɪ–ɖa–t   bəʈ-al   gɛl

   rice -nom.   village-def.-loc.   distribute-caus.   go-1sg.

   'The rice was distributed in the village'

ii) ʋəhãj   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*

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mor   bʰɪtr-ɔt   gʊssa bʰər-al   tʃʰ-ɛ
    I-poss.   inside-pp. anger filled-cuas.   aux.-pres-1sg.
    'I am filled with anger.'

ii) *Price of a thing*

    dʊɪ- ɖa kɔlɔm dɔs ʈaka-r
    two-cl. pen   10   Rs.- gen.
    'Two pens for Rs.10/'

iii) *Duration*

    mũj   dʊɪ gʰənʈa-t   kɪtab kʰan pɔʈʰ   -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-

    ʊpr-ɔt 'upon'
    bəgl- ɔt 'close'
    bʰɪtr-ɔt 'inside'
    bəhar-ɔt 'outside'
    nɪtʃʰan -ɔt 'below'

5. *Ablative-Instrumental case*

The case marker sɛ/dɛ (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 – *dɛ*[of Magadhan origin is likely to be the conjunctive participle form of the verb *di-* 'give':*d-ie(ne)* (lit. 'by giving')> *dɛ*)] and –*sɛ* (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

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the formal distinction was lost. Moreover, Bloch is also of the opinion that instrumental and ablative cases express cause, separation and comparison.

Ablative

    i) əhməd nədɪ-ɖa sɛ pani   ʊʈʰ -al
       Ahmad river- cl abl. water fetch aux.-pst.
       'Ahmad fetched water from the river,

    ii) ʃjam maʈi-la   hat   kʰan dɛ   ʊʈʰ-al
        shyam mud pl. hand   cl.   abl. lift aux-pst.
       'Shyam lifted the mud from the hand'

Instrumental

    i) sɪta ʊəhak tʃəku kʰan   dɛ   kaʈɛ   dɪ -le
      sita   him   knife cl.   ins. cut   give pst-perf.
      'Sita injured him with a knife'

    ii) ram   dʒal sɛ   matʃ   mar   -ɪl
       Ram   net   with   fish   catch   aux.-pst.
       'Ram caught the fish with the net.'

In certain constructions -*sɛ* expresses the notion of connection/proximity in general. The two 'multi-valued' postpositions –*k/-ɔk* (dat.-acc.) and –*sɛ* (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.

Case	Interpretation	Example
Instrumental	Manner	mũj ətʃtʃʰa sɛ lɪkʰ I(nom) good-advl.write

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		-nu. aux.-pst. 'I wrote well.'
	Theme	mastər-ʈa pʰɪlosopʰɪ-r teacher-cl philosophy-gen. barɛ bol-ɪl. about speak-aux-pst 'The teacher spoke about philosophy.'
	Time	gɔrɔm 40c tɔk bəɽʰe heat 40c upto rise gɛl. aux.-pst 'Temperature rouse up to 40c.'
	Instrument	kʊlhaɽɪ kʰan dɛ ləkɽɪ axe-nom cl. ins. wood kaʈ cut 'Cut wood with the axe.'
	Cause	ʊəhar gʰɔr dʒa-ʊa -r his home go-ger.- gen. ʊədʒe kɔrɛ sɔbkoɪ reason ins.pp all kʰʊs tʃʰ-ɪl. happy cop.pst. 'Everybody was happy with his going home.'
	Content	mas-ʈa-t pəroʈɪn sɛ fish-cl-loc. protein abl. bʰər-al tʃ ʰ-ɛ fill pst-cuas aux.prst. 'Fish is filled with protein.'
	Path	kam ʊəha-r hatɛ work his-gen. through-pp kɔr-al gɛl . go-cuas. aux.pst 'Work was done by him.'
	Comparison	ʊəhãj mor sɛ s/he-nom. my abl.

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		bəʈʰɪja tʃʰɛ better cop.-pres. 's/he is better than me.'
	Reflexive	mũj ɪkʰan kam nɪdʒɛ i-nom. this work myself kɔr -nu do-perf pres. perf 'I have done this work myself.'
	Association	kʊkʊr ʈa həmar dog-nom. cl. us satʰɛ rɔh tʃʰ-ɛ with-pp. live pres.- aux. 'Dog lives with us'
	Antagonism	ʋəhar seŋge lərəɪmar him/her with fight na kɔr neg. do-imp. 'Do not fight with him/her.'

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:

ʋahã̃j ɪkʰan kɪtab mor   hat   sɛ   tʃʰɪrae lɪ   -le.
s/he   this   book me   hand   from-abl. snatch take   aux-pst.
's/he has snatched this book from me.'

bɪhan   sɛ   pani hɔ   tʃʰ-ɛ
morning from   rain prog. aux-prst.
'It has been raining since morning.'

The ablative-instrumental is used in complex postpositional constructions such as:

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purəb -er   bhɪtɪ   sɛ
east – gen.   towards   from (abl)
'from the direction of the east'

gɔʈla pʰul   sɛ   uɖa pʰul   mok   ətʃtʃʰa   ləg-ɔ   tʃʰɛ
all   flower from pp. that flower me   good   apply(like)-prog. aux.-pres.
'Among all flowers I like that flower'

The ablative is used in comparative and superlative constructions.

ɪ-khan tʃəku gɔʈla   tʃəku sɛ   dʰariʋala   tʃʰɛ
prox. cl. knife all   knife from-pp.   sharp   cop.-pres
'This knife is sharpest of all.'

ʋ-khan gʰɔr ɪ-khan gʰɔr sɛ   bɔɽɔ tʃʰɛ
rem.cl house prox.cl. house from -pp. big   cop.-pres.
'That house is bigger than this house'

The ablative can be used as an instrumental clitic in place of the instrumental dɛ

dʒəɪla pəisa tʋɪ   mok dɪ -lɔ   ʋəhɪla pəisa sɛ   muj
those   money you   me give auc-pst those   moey abl.-ins i-nom.
mɪʈʰa   kɪnɛ ən- nu
sweets   buy   bring aux-pst-1sg.
 'I bought sweets with the money that you gave me.'

Other postpositions

Terminative post position

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

i)   kolkata sɛ   dɪlli tɔk
      Kolkata from pp.   Delhi till
      'from Kolkata to Delhi'

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ii)   ʋəhak   os-ʋa   hol-tən   lekɪn əbʰɪ tɔk   ni   os-ɛ
      s/he   come-inf. supposed   but   now until   neg. come-perf.3p
      's/he was supposed to come but has come till now.'

iii)   tok   kɔm-sɛ-kɔm dʋɪ   sɔ   sɛ   tɪn   sɔ   ʈaka
      you   at least   two   hundred from three   hundred   money
      mok dʋʋa   tʃəhi
      me   should   give
      'You should give me at least two to three hundred'

Temporal post position

The temporal postpositions *kʰuna* 'during' and *bad* 'after' occur after nouns
verbs and adverbs Occasionally bad 'after' attaches to the head without the genitive case

      kɔɪ-kʰuna   mok ləg   tʃʰ-ɛ   kɛ   dʒəmɪn kʰan   tʃəpʈa   tʃʰ-ɛ
      Some-time me   feel   aux-pres-1sg that   earth   cl.   flat   cop.-pres-3p.
      'Sometimes I feel that the earth is flat'

      sʋn-ʋa-r   bad
      liten -ptcl-gen.   after
      'After listening'

      tʰorok dɪne-r   bad
      some day-gen after
      'After some days'

      kʋtʃ   dɪne-r   bad
      some day-gen after
      'After few days'

   The temporal postposition kɔrɛ 'advl' occurs after temporal adverbs. It never requires
genitive case marking on the adverb.

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rat   kɔrɛ   əkʰlɛ   gʰʊmna   kʰətra   tʃʰɛ
night   at-pp.   alone   roaming   dangerous   cop.-pres
'Roaming at night is dangerous.'

The causal postposition 'ʋədʒəh' is attached to the nonfinite verb with the genitive case.

ʋəhar gʰɔr dʒə-ʋa-r   ʋədʒəh kɔrɛ sob-goɪ   kʰus   tʃʰ-ɪl.
his/her home go-part.-gen. cause from   all   happy cop.-pst.
'Everybody was happy with his going home.'

Purpose is marked with the postposition tɛnɛ 'for; in order to' and is found in conjunction with verbs.

ɪ-ɖa   saʈ   ram-er   tɛnɛ tʃʰɛ
prox.def. shirt   ram-gen.   for   cop.-pres
'This shirt is for Ram.'

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

bʰɪtɪ sɛ   'on behalf of'
mɔn dɪ   'just like'

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

a)   goʈan-ɖa   'throughout'

ʋəhãj goʈan-ɖa   sal   bɪmar tʃʰ-ɪl
he/she throughout-def. year   ill   cop.- pst
'he/she was ill throughout the year'

b)   dʒəɪ kɪ kɔm ''as if'

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ʋəhãj eji-kɪsəm rɔh tʃʰɛ   dʒəɪ kɪ kɔm kɛ   ʋəhãj radʒa tʃʰɛ
he   like this stay aux.-pres   as   if   he   king cop-pres
's/he stays as if s/he (is) a king.'

 The postposition bɪna 'without' attaches to the head with the genitive except when it functions as an adverb, in which case it precedes the head

mũj   kɔlɔm-er bɪna   likʰ-ʋa   ni   pam
 i-nom. pen   gen. without write-ind. neg. can
'I cannot write without pen.

mor bɪna   kam kʰan kʰɔtɔm ho-ʋa   ni   pa-be.
Me   without   work cl. finish   aux. ind. neg. do aux-fut.
'work will not be done without me.'

The nominal expressions (Noun Phrase) with post-positions function similar to a morphological form in Surjapuri, 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, Surjapuri 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.

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