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Negation in Khasi

Bashisha Shabong, Ph.D. Scholar

Abstract

Khasi has /-im/ as the negative marker. It has two phonologically conditioned shapes. /-m/ after a vowel and /-im/ after a consonant. They occur as a free word. The negative imperative marker /wat/, usually precedes the verbal construction.

1. Introduction

The term 'Khasi' stands for both the tribe and the language. Khasi belongs to one of the five sub-groups of Mon-Khmer family of languages. It is spoken in the district of Khasi Hills in the state of Meghalaya. As per the census of India 2011 the total population of Meghalaya is 2,964,007 of which male and female are 1,492,668 and 1,471,339 respectively.. Total area of Meghalaya is 22,429 sq. km. Density of Meghalaya is 132 per sq. km which is lower than national average 382

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per sq. km. In 2001, density of Meghalaya was 103 per sq. km, while nation average in 2001 was 324 per sq. Km.

2. Khasi language

Khasi has SVO order. This order displays an interesting aspect of agreement. It is between the subject and the verb (predicate) of the same clause. Having SVO order means that the subject occurs first in a sentence. However the agreement markers occur preceding the nouns. When there is a pronoun as the subject, these agreement markers themselves function as personal pronouns. In a possessive construction, the genitive maker follows the head noun. So, the prepositions precede the nouns

As far as various dialects of Khasi are concerned, the Langrin Khasi dialect is mostly spoken in West Khasi hills that follows SVO order which is the standard one but the same dialect spoken in Mawkyrwat block on the whole also follows the SVO order but with little differences such as VS or VOS. Bhoi and Jirang dialects of Khasi language are mostly spoken in East Khasi hills in Nongpoh block which use the standard word order.

The Langrin dialect also behaves similarly to a large extent, though there are some differences between this dialect and the other dialect of Khasi language. The word order in this variety is intriguing and complex as well as inconclusive, due to the limited data. Nongtung is mainly spoken in East Khasi hills-Umsning block. In this dialect, if an object is not present, but has a subject which could be either a pronoun or a noun, then the word order is VS. If an object is present then the order could be either VOS/VSO.

It can be said that the various dialects of Khasi language, namely standard Khasi Langrin, Bhoi, Nongtung and Lyngngam show extent of diversity found amongst them mainly from the word order point of view. Among the five varieties, Standard Khasi, Langrin and Lyngngam are similar

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whereas Bhoi and Nongtung are very different. Lyngngam though is similar to the first, is quite different in various other aspects.

3. Land and the People

Tribal people make up about 85 percent of Meghalaya's population. However in some interior reaches of the Garo Hills, the percentage of tribal population is as high as 97%. The Khasis are the largest group, followed by the Garos. These were among those known to the British as "hill tribes". Other groups include the Jaintias, the Koch and the Hajong, Dimasa, Hmar, Kuki, Lakhar, Mikir, Rabha etc.. About fifteen percent of the population is defined as non-tribal; these include about Bengalis and Assamese. Meghalaya is one of three states in India to have a Christian majority; the other two (Nagaland and Mizoram) are also in the north-east of India.

Meghalaya currently has 7 districts. These are: East Garo Hills, East Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills, Ri-Bhoi, South Garo Hills, West Garo Hills and the West Khasi Hills.

The East Garo Hills district was formed in 1976 and has a population of 317,618 as per 2011 census. It covers an area of 2603 square kilometres. The District Headquarters are located at Williamnagar, earlier known as Simsangiri.

The East Khasi Hills district was carved out of the Khasi Hills on 28 October 1976. The district has covers an area of 2,748 square kilometres and has a population of 824,059 as per the 2011 census. The headquarters of East Khasi Hills are located in Shillong.

The Jaintia Hills district was created on 22nd February 1972. It has a total geographical area of 3819 square kilometres and a population 392,852 as per the 2011 census. The district headquarters are located at Jowai. Jaintia Hills district is the largest producer of coal in the state. Coal mines can be seen all over the district.

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The Ri-Bhoi district was formed by further division of East Khasi Hills district on 4th June 1992. It has an area of 2448 square kilometres. The total population of the district was 258,380 as 2011 census. The district headquarters are located at Nongpoh. It has a hilly terrain and a large part of the area is covered with forests. The Ri-Bhoi district is famous for its pineapples and is the largest producer of pineapples in the state.

The South Garo Hills district came into existence on 18th June 1992 after the division of the West Garo Hills district. The total geographical area of the district is 1850 square kilometres. As per the 2011 census the district has a population of 142,574. The district headquarters are located at Baghmara.

The West Garo Hills district lies in the western part of the state and covers a geographical area of 3714 square kilometres. The population of the district is 642,923 as per the 2011 census. The district headquarters are located at Tura.

The West Khasi Hills district is the largest district in the state with a geographical area of 5247 square kilometres. The district was carved out of Khasi Hills District on 28th October 1976. The district headquarters are located at Nongstoin with a population of 385,601 as per 2011 census.

4. Culture and Society

One of the unique features of the State is that a large majority of the tribal population in Meghalaya follows a matrilineal system where lineage and inheritance are traced through women. The Khasi and Jaintia tribesmen follow the traditional matrilineal norm, wherein the "Ka Khadduh" (khatduh) (or the youngest daughter) inherits all the property and acts as the caretaker of aged parents and any unmarried siblings. However, the male line, particularly the mother's brother, may indirectly control the ancestral property since he may be involved in important decisions relating to property including its sale and disposal. The tribal people of Meghalaya are therefore a part of what may be the world's largest surviving matrilineal culture. According to

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India's National Family Health Survey, Meghalaya is the state where parents have shown the least interest to have a male child - 73% less than the national average.

5. Negative in Khasi

David Crystal says 'Negative or Negation is a process or construction in grammatical and semantics analysis which typically expresses the contradiction of some or all sentence's meaning'. Some languages use more than one article to express negation. Khasi has two phonologically conditioned shapes.(i) /-m/ after a vowel and (ii)/-im/ after a consonant. Negative marker in Khasi usually occurs before the tense marker, but in case of future tense, it occurs after the tense marker.

5.1. In case of present tense the negative marker occurs before the verb.

1. u-m ba:m

he-neg. eat

'He does not eat'

2. ka-m tre?

she-neg. want

'She does not want'

3. ki-m le?

they-neg. do

'They do not do'

5.2. In case of past tense, Khasi negative markers /im/ occurs before the tense marker, /šim/ (a sub-ordinate negative markers) is used with it.

4. ka-m šim la ba:m

she-neg. sub.ordinate.neg. past tense eat

‘She did not eat’

5. u-m šim la leyt

he-neg sub.ordinate.neg. past tense go

‘He did not go’

6. ki-m šim la trey

they-neg. sub.ordinate.neg. past tense work

‘They did not work’

5.3. In case of future tense the negative marker occurs after the tense marker.

7. u-n im trey

he-fut. neg. work

‘He will not work’

8. ka-n im ba:m

she-fut. neg. eat

‘She will not eat’

9. ki-n im sa?
they-fut. neg. stay

‘They will not stay’

10.ka-n im ĵinda sa?
she-fut. neg. aspect mrk. stay

‘She would not stay’

11. u-n im hap trey
he-fut. neg. aspect mrk. work

‘He will not be forced to work’

5.4. There is another negative in Khasi which is used in the sense of /im/, but in past tense only, then the past tense marker is not used. The marker is /k^hlem/

12. u khlem leyt
he neg. go

‘He did not go’

13. u khlem šim leyt
he neg. subordinate neg. go

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