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Case Markers in Liangmai

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Abstract

This research paper is intended to explore the nature of case marker in Liangmai language. Case is a grammatical category which expresses the semantic relation between a noun phrase and predicate. Case is a feature that expresses a syntactic and semantic function of the element that carries the particular case value. The case in Liangmai is affected by using suffixes. Liangmai case markers which indicates the suffixes and post positions are added to the nouns and pronouns or to the number affixes to denote case relations. While in English, the major constituents of a sentence can usually be identified by their position in the sentence, Liangmai is a relatively free word-order language. Therefore, the constituents can be moved in the sentence

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without impacting the core meaning. For example, the following sentence pair conveys the same meaning- **Wiraibou saw Akimliu**, albeit with different emphases.

1. **Wiraibou** niu **Akimliu** tu ngou ye.
wiraibou-nom-akimliu-acc saw asp

2. **Akimliu** tu **Wiraibou** niu ngou ye.
Akimliu-acc- wiraibou –nom- saw asp

The identity of **Wiraibou** as a subject and **Akimliu** as the object in the above sentences is achieved by the case markers /**niu**/ nominative and /**tu**/ accusative. Therefore, even though Liangmai is predominantly SOV in its word-order, correct case marking is a crucial part of making translations convey the right meaning. The aim of the present paper is to give a description of the case markers in Liangmai.

1.1. Introduction

Several scholars working on Liangmai or other Tibeto-Burman languages have tried to analyze the language using the models available to them through the languages known to them. This practice does not help bring out the correct description because the languages have their own specific structures. So, our main concern here shall be to emphasize the grammatical categories of case markers as found in Liangmai. The case in Liangmai is affected by using suffixes and postpositions that are added to the nouns and pronouns or to the number affixes to denote case relations. When these are used after stem, these do not affect the phonetic shape of the stem. The main cases are affixes indicating Nominative, Accusatives, Instrumental, Dative, Locative, Genitive, Ablative, Sociative and Benefactive relations.

1.2. Language and Language Area

Liangmai is the Tibeto-Burman language family spoken in the Liangmai Manipur and Nagaland. The Liangmai is officially recognized by the government of India on 22 December, 2011. The Liangmai are descendants of the second son of Kadingbou.

Liangmais are mainly found in Tamenglong headquarters, Tousem and Tamei Sub Divisions, Kampokpi, Supermaina and Tadubi of Senapati district of Manipur, Tening Sub-

division, Jhalukie, Peren, Dimapur and Kohima of Nagaland. Liangmai and Zeme are referred to collectively as Zeliang in Nagaland whereas in Manipur, they are recently recognized separately as Liangmai on 23 December 2011 by the Government of India.

1.3. The Position of Liangmai Language

In Manipur, majority of the tribal languages are not yet introduced in government educational institutions even at the primary level. Liangmai has many traditional songs, hymns, etc. but there are not many deliberately created literary works. Liangmai has not got its own script; therefore they use roman script for writing purposes.

Liangmai language has been taught up to VIII standard in government institutions both in Manipur and Nagaland. A few grammatical works have been done on Liangmai.

There are some private and government schools in Liangmai villages but so far there is no college in Liangmai dominated areas in Manipur. The medium instruction used in school is English. However, one compulsory *Lianglad* (Liangmai language) was taught at the school level.

1.4. The Inventory of Case Markers in Liangmai

Case is a grammatical category which expresses the semantic relation between a noun phrase and predicate. The case in Liangmai is affected by using suffixes. The suffixes and post-positions are added to the nouns and pronouns or to the number affixes to denote case relations and when these are used after stem, these do not affect the phonetic shape of the stem.

In Liangmai language, there are nine cases. These cases for which they are inflected may conveniently be named as – Nominative, Accusative, Instrumental, Dative, Locative, Genitive, Ablative, Sociative and Benefactive. And their case markers are as follows:

1. Nominative - /niu/
2. Accusative - /tu/
3. Instrumental- /niu/
4. Dative - /leŋ/
5. Locative - /gə/~/ləm/

- | | | |
|----|--------------|--------------------------|
| 6. | Genitive- | /gu/ |
| 7. | Ablative - | /gəsu/,/gəniu/ ~ /ləmsu/ |
| 8. | Sociative- | /saisui/ |
| 9. | Benefactive- | /leŋ/ |

1.5. Functions of Case Markers

1. The **nominative case** indicates the subject of a finite verb: ‘*I killed snake*’ /*I niu kaniu tu kam sak ye/*
2. The **accusative case** indicates the direct object of a verb: ‘*I love him*’ /*I niu pa tu marai ye/*
3. The **instrumental case** indicates an object used in performing an action: ‘*I killed a dog with a knife*’ /*I niu tathi tu chaheng niu kam sat ye/*
4. The **dative case** indicates the indirect object of a verb: ‘*I give him money*’ /*I niu pa leng rangkang pi ye/*
5. The **locative case** indicates a location: ‘*We live in Delhi*’ /*aliu Delhi ga lung ye/*
6. The **genitive case**, which roughly corresponds to English possessive case and preposition *of*, indicates the possessor of another noun: ‘*we have a book*’ /*Aliu gu ariak bamme/*
7. The **ablative case** indicates movement *from* something, or *cause*: ‘*He has gone home from the school*’/ *pa ariakky gasu paki lam wang mide/*, ‘*where from you are coming*’ /*nang de lamsu wang lo/*
8. The **Sociative case** expresses the accompanying relationship (with, along with). ‘*He is coming with us*’/ *pa aliu saisui wang ye/*
9. **Benefactive case** denotes the being in whose interest the action indicated by the verb is done. ‘*I bought new shirt for my wife*’/ *I niu anou leng tiang kasanbo luk/liu wang ye/*

1.6. (a) Nominative Case

The most widely acceptable function of the nominative is to mark the subject of the sentence. This is the case which expresses the subject. This occurs with the verbs whether they are transitive or intransitive. This case is expressed by **/niu/**.

Example:

1. i niu patu kəmsət-de
i nom. him killed past.
'I killed him'
2. Josep niu basi tiu ye
josheph nom. mango eat asp.
'Josheph eats mango'
- 3) mətom niu piuriaŋ tiu ye
cow nom. grass eat asp.
'Cow eats grass'
- 4) pa niu ram tu məsen ye
he nom. ram acc. like asp.
'He likes Ram'

1.7. (b) Accusative case

The noun which is directly affected by the action of the verb is called accusative case. This case denotes mainly the direct object of the transitive verb. In Liangmai language, the accusative case is marked by the suffix **/tu/**. Accusative marker in this language is completely obligatory.

Examples are as follows:

- 5) i patu luŋsa ye
i he/she acc. love asp.
'I love him'
- 6) i əpui tu məsen ye
i my mother acc.like asp
'I like my mother'
- 7) pa niu zon tu dəp ye
he nom zon acc. beat asp.
'He beats John'

Accusative marker **-tu** is used to the object role of a noun or pronoun.

Examples

- 8) i čəluɪ tu məsen ye
i song acc. like asp.
'I like song'
- 9) ram niu kəniu tu kəmsat ye
ram nom. snake ass. kill asp.
'Ram kills snake'
- 10) i niu pa tu məsen ye
I nom. he/she acc. like asp.
'I like him'

1.8. (c) Instrumental case

The instrumentality of an object with reference to an action is expressed by instrumental case marker. Instrumental case marker is homophonous to nominative marker. This instrumental case is expressed by **/niu/**. Examples are as follow:-

- 11) i niu thiŋnə tu čəgənmi niu kep sat ye
i nom. bird acc. gun inst. shoot kill asp.
'I killed a bird with a gun'
- 12) i niu təthi tu čəheŋ niu kəmsat ye
I nom. dog accu. knife inst. kill asp.
'I killed a dog with a knife'
- 13) pa məri niu siŋbəŋ hui ye
he axe inst. tree cut asp.
'He cuts tree with an axe'
- 14) ram niu jesi tu kəčai niu dəp ye
ram nom. jesi acc stick inst. beat asp.
'Ram beats Jesse with a stick'
- 15) i niu čəheŋ niu alu phəŋ ye
I nom. knife inst. potato cut asp.
'I cut potato with a knife'

- 16) Daniel niu məri niu siŋbaŋ hui ye
 daniel nom. axe inst. tree cut asp.
 ‘Daniel cuts tree with an axe’
- 17) čalikəsembopiu hai təniaŋ niu čəli təliu ye
 potter det clay inst. pot made asp.
 ‘The Potter makes the pot with clay’

1.9. (d) Dative case

Dative case is the case of the indirect object of the verb and it is usually associative with the act of giving. In the case, the animate being is affected by the verb state or action. It is realized as /leŋ/

1. i niu paleŋ rəŋkəŋ pi ye
 i nom him rupee give asp
 ‘I give him money’
2. əpiu niu əleŋ rəŋkəŋ ləŋkhai ye
 my father nom me ruppe send past
 ‘My father has send me money’
3. I niu paleŋ kəbak pi ye
 i nom him pig give asp
 ‘I give him pig’
4. pa niu əliu leŋ čəpiu pi ye
 He nom us dat. medicine give asp
 ‘He gave us medicine’
5. nə gu rouri əleŋ pi lo
 you gen. pen me dat pi imp
 ‘Give me your pen’

In above examples /leŋ/ is dative case in this language.

1.10. (e) Locative case

The place of location of an object or event is expressed by locative case. In Liangmai locative markers are /gə~/ /ləm/. It is not obligatory.

Examples are as follow:

- a) tebəl gə əriak khət bəm me
table loc. book one prog. asp.
‘A book is on the table’
- b) əliu tamei gə wəŋ ye
we. tamei loc. come asp.
‘We are coming to Tamei’
- c) i naiməčəŋ inson puŋ mənju gə tət le
I everyday morning hour five loc. go asp.
‘Every morning I go to walk at 5 O’ clock’
- e) tethi khət čəki kəma gə bəmme
dog one house front loc. prog.asp.
‘A dog is in front of the house’.
- f) imbuŋ luŋ -gə intiaŋ khət bəmme
almirah in loc. shirt one prog. asp.
‘A shirt is in the almirah’
- g) pa dənai nagalen ləm təd le
he yesterday nagalen loc go past
‘He went to nagaland yesterday’
- h) peter sonnai delhi ləm təd ne
peter tomorrow delhi loc go fut
‘Peter will go to Delhi tomorrow’

It is to be noted here that /gə/ is used in specific or particular area whereas /ləm/ used for wide or vast area, for examples:- /təbel ri gə/ ‘on the table’ but never used /təbel ri ləm/.

2.1. (f) Genitive case

The genitive case typically expresses a possessive relationship of noun or pronoun. The genitive case suffix is realized as /gu/. Examples are as follows:

- a) ə-gu əriak khət bəm me
my gen. book one prog asp.

- ‘I have a book’
- b) pa gu bengia wi ye
he/she gen. handwriting good asp.
‘His handwriting is good’
- c) uise aliu gu čəki ye
that we gen.house asp
‘That is our house’

2.2 (g) Ablative case

The ablative case maker is used to express separation, expulsion, source and direction of movement from one to another. The ablative case suffixes are realized as /gəsu/ ~ /ləmsu/. /gəsu/ used at the particular or specific point whereas /ləmsu/ used at the vast domain area. Examples are as follows:

- a) čəmik gəsu mikdui luəŋ kiu ye
eye abl. tear fall down asp.
‘Tears fall from the eye’
- b) tiŋgen ləmsu tiŋriu kiu ye
sky abl. rain fall asp.
‘Rain falls from the sky’

The ablative case marker /ləmsu/ ~ /gəsu/ is used to express out of or away from a source and direction of movement from one to another. It specifies the point in space to where something is transferred at the culmination of the action identified by the verb. Therefore, the ablative is the case of separation from the source in performing the action mentioned by the verb. This case is realized as /ləmsu~gəsu/ and it acts as a post-position as in the following examples:-

- a) məluəŋ ləmsu tədui luəŋ kiu ye
hill abl. water fall down asp.
‘Water is falling from the hills’
- b) pa čəlu gəsu paki- ləm wəŋmi-ne

he/she paddyfield abl. house locative gone past

‘He has gone home from the field’

c) nəŋ de ləmsu wəŋ lo

you what abl. com imp.

‘Where from you are coming’

2.3. (h) Sociative case

The Sociative case expresses the accompanying relationship (e.i. with, along with). This marker is /saisui/ is used in the sense of accompanying someone or used in sense of going together.

1. pa əliu saisui wəŋ ye

he we soc. come-esp

‘He is coming with us’

2. i əpiu saisui tət le

i my father soc. go asp

‘I went with my father’

3. pa niu ə-saisui wəŋ ye

he nom.my soc. come asp

‘He comes with me’

4. pa əsaisui lu čəlen len ye

he my soc. dance asp

‘He dance with me’

5. i əpiu saisui lu kohima tət ye

i my father soc. kohima go past

‘I went to Kohima with my father’

2.4. (i) Benefactive case

This case denotes the being in whose interest the action indicated by the verb is done. This case functions in a sentence to express the notion “for the benefit of”. Benefactive case marker in Liangmai is expressed by /leŋ/.

Examples

1. I niu ə-nao leŋ tiaŋ kəsənbo liu-ye
i nom. my wife benef. shirt new buy asp
‘I bought new shirt for my wife’
2. I niu əna leŋ ginpui liu ye
he nom. my son benef. ball buy asp
‘I bought ball for my son’
3. əpiu niu əleŋ čəp hitop luk wəŋ ye
my father nom. my benef. shoes come buy asp
‘My father bought a pair of shoes for me’
4. paniu əleŋ skuter liuwang ye
he nom my benef. scooter buy past
‘He bought a scooter for me’

In the above examples /leŋ/ is the benefactive case.

2.5. Conclusion

In this paper we explored the nature of the case structure in Liangmai. From the description and explanation given above, it becomes clear that Liangmai manifests a neat system of realization of cases. The case in Liangmai is affected by using suffixes. Liangmai case markers which indicates the suffixes and post positions are added to the nouns and pronouns or to the number affixes to denote case relations. While in English, the major constituents of a sentence can usually be identified by their position in the sentence, Liangmai is a relative free word-order language. The case markers in Liangmai are postpositional. So, Liangmai as a SOV language maintains the characteristics that Greenberg (1963) has attributed to SOV language that language with normal SOV order are post-positional.

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