

Case Marking in Lairamlo: A Preliminary Investigation

Aheibam Linthoingambi Chanu, Ph.D. Research Scholar

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Abstract

The present paper attempts to describe the case marking in Lairamlo, mainly spoken in Chandel district of Manipur. Lairamlo is a dialect of Tangkhul, a tribal language of Manipur which belongs to the Kuki-Chin-Naga subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman sub family of languages (*Grierson's LSI*, 1903). Tangkhul has a large number of dialects which are mutually unintelligible to each other. As in many other Tibeto-Burman languages and dialects, case relation in the dialect is expressed by means of postpositions. Lairamlo has eight types of case namely (i) nominative, (ii) accusative, (iii) dative, (iv) instrumental, (v) locative, (vi) genitive, (vii) associative, and (viii) ablative.

Keywords: Lairamlo, Tangkhul, Tibeto-Burman, Manipur, Case marking.

1. Introduction

Lairamlo is one of the dialects of Tangkhul, a tribal language of Manipur. Tangkhul belongs to the Kuki-Chin-Naga sub-group of Tibeto-Burman family (*Grierson's LSI*, 1903). Tangkhul has a large number of dialects which are mutually unintelligible to each other. Arokianathan (1987) noted that there are 219 Tangkhul villages and each village has its own dialect or speech form name after the village and they can't communicate to each other in their own dialects. However, they use one common language. That language is known as Standard Tangkhul. So Lairamlo is a dialect of Tangkhul which is spoken by the Ringpam people in Ringpam or Momlo-Ringpam village in the Machi sub-division of Chandel District of Manipur, which is about 40 kilometers away from Imphal. Lairamlo is also spoken in other two villages in Manipur namely Lairam Khullen in Ukhrul District and Merry Land in Chandel District of Manipur. The term Ringpam is a compound word *riŋ* 'alive' and *pəm* 'land' which literally means 'living land'. In the Ringpam village, the total number of Lairamlo speakers is estimated about 540 and numbers of houses found in the same village are around 104. Ringpam have their heritage language and culture which have been inherited from their forefathers. However, they do not have their own script and literature.

2. Typological Overview of Lairamlo

- (i) Like many other Tibeto-Burman languages/dialects, Lairamlo is a tonal dialect.
- (ii) The basic structure of syllable in Lairamlo is CV.
- (iii) Like many other Tibeto-Burman languages/dialects, Lairamlo lacks the aspirated voiced velar stops *b^h*, *d^h*, and *g^h*.
- (iv) The un-aspirated voiced velar stop *g* is very rare in the dialect as many other Kuki-Naga languages of Northeast India do.
- (v) Numeral system in Lairamlo is of decimal type. In other words, vigesimal System i.e., twenty based is totally absent in the numeral system of the dialect.

- (vi) There is no grammatical gender in Lairamlo. It has natural gender i.e., gender is determined on the recognition of natural sex. The suffix *-pe*, *-nuŋ* and *-pʰ* are used to indicate male and female irrespective of human or non-human and animate-inanimate nouns.
- (vii) Lairamlo has inclusive-exclusive distinction only in the case of first person plural pronoun for instance, *a-hante* ‘we’ (inclusive) vs. *i-hante* ‘we’ (exclusive).
- (viii) Compounding is one of the productive word formation processes in the dialect.
- (ix) Negation in Lairamlo is expressed by means of affixation particularly suffixation.
- (x) As many other Tibeto-Burman languages of Southeast Asia, Lairamlo follows the SOV order in unmarked sentences.

3. Case Marking System in Lairamlo

As many other Tibeto-Burman languages, case relations in Lairamlo are expressed by means of postpositions. Case relation in Lairamlo is expressed by post posing the case marker to the nouns or pronouns. Lairamlo has eight types of cases as summarized in the following table:

Cases	Form	Function
Nominative	<i>-ne</i>	agent
Accusative	<i>-lo, -wo</i>	experience
Dative	<i>-lo</i>	recipient
Instrumental	<i>-to, -do</i>	instrument of agent
Locative	<i>-də, -to</i>	location of participants
Genitive	<i>-we, -me, -pijəŋ</i>	possessor
Associative	<i>-hən</i>	participants
Ablative	<i>-wene</i>	source

Table no. 1 - Case markers in Lairamlo

3.1. Nominative

In Lairamlo, the nominative case is expressed by the nominative marker *-ne*. In other words, the nominative marker *-ne* is postposed to the nouns or pronouns. Consider the following examples.

- (1) *a-ne* *əŋku-wo* *kʰə-mei-we*
1SG-NOM child ACC NMZ-see-SIM
‘I saw the child.’
- (2) *nəŋ-ne* *ute-wo* *kʰə-mei-we*
2SG-NOM bird-ACC NMZ-see-SIM
‘You(sg) saw the bird’.
- (3) *ipe-ne* *kətʰiyək* *čəŋ-čət-am-me*
3SG-NOM fast enter-go-PROG-DECL
‘He is walking fast’.

- (4) *ɰ-ne* *čan-am-me*
 Dog-NOM bark-PROG-DECL
 ‘The dog is barking.’

3.2. Accusative

Accusative case is the case of the object towards which the action of the subject is directed. Accusative case is marked by the marker **-lo** and **-wo** to the direct object of a sentence. The markers **-lo** occurs with proper nouns and personal pronouns as in (5)-(7) whereas the marker **-wo** occurs with common noun as in (8)-(9):

- (5) *a-ne* *jek-lo* *lei* *kə-si-we*
 1SG - NOM jack-ACC love NMZ-love-SIM
 ‘I love Jack’.
- (6) *a-ne* *kim-lo* *kə-piyam-we*
 1SG- NOM Kim-ACC NMZ-like-SIM
 ‘I like Kim’.
- (7) *a-ne* *imiŋ-lo* *kə-t^ha-we*
 1SG 3SG-ACC NMZ-know-SIM
 ‘I know him’.
- (8) *a-ne* *ute-wo* *k^hə-mei-we*
 1SG-NOM bird-ACC NMZ-see-SIM
 ‘I saw the bird’.
- (9) *imiŋ-ne* *əŋku-wo* *k^hə-mei-we*
 3SG-NOM child-ACC NMZ-see-SIM
 ‘He saw the child’.

3.3. Dative

Lairamlo doesn’t have distinct dative case marker instead the dative/accusative case is realized by the same marker **-lo**. In other words, the marker **-lo** has homophonous functions expressing both accusative and dative cases. The same feature is found in some of the Tibeto-Burman languages of North East India namely Karbi, Kokborok, Kabonglo, etc.

- (10) *romen-ne* *a-lo* *larik* *kə-pi-we*
 Romen-NOM 1SG- DAT book NMZ-give- SIM
 ‘Romen gives me a book’.
- (11) *bimən-ne* *saran-lo* *larik* *kə-pi-we*
 Biman-NOM Saran-DAT book NMZ-give –SIM
 ‘Biman gave the book to Saran.
- (12) *lojita-ne* *k^hɰmi-inte-lo* *sələbiyəm-me*
 Lojita-NOM guest-PL-DAT served-DECL

‘Lojita served the food to the guests’.

3.4. Instrumental

In Lairamlo, the instrumental case is expressed by **-to** and **-do**. The marker **-to** occurs with noun ends with a consonant or a diphthong as in (13)-(14) and the **-do** occurs with nouns ends with a vowel as in (14)-(15):

(13) *imiŋ-ne sikʉ-we pəyoŋ-to kiyəp kə-tʰət-we*
3SG - NOM tiger-DET gun- INST shoot NMZ-kill-SIM
‘He kills a tiger with a gun’

(14) *imiŋ-ne kʰei-to tʰənotʰa kə-kʰei-we*
3SG- NOM knife- INST mango NMZ -cut-SIM
‘He cut the mungo with a knife’.

(15) *tʰiŋ-we iŋhe-do kə-du-we*
tree-DET axe -INST NMZ-cut-SIM
‘The tree is cut with an axe’.

(16) *dev-ne a-we kʰuŋkro-do citʰi kʰə-i-we*
Dev-NOM 1SG- GEN pen-INST letter NMZ-write-SIM
‘Dev wrote the letter with my pen’.

3.5. Locative

The locative case in Lairamlo is expressed by the markers **-də**, **-do** and **to-**. The marker **-do** has homophonous functions expressing both instrumental and locative cases. The marker **-to** occurs with nouns ends with diphthongs as in (17)-(18), the marker **-də** occurs with nouns ends with vowels as in (19)-(20) and the marker **-do** occurs with nouns end with consonants as can be seen in the following examples (21)-(22):

(17) *inuŋ-ne kətʰəi-to kə-cət-tum-me*
3SG-NOM market-LOC NMZ-go-IRS-DECL
‘She will go to the market’.

(18) *inuŋ-ne ló-to cət-tum-me*
3SG-NOM field-LOC go-IRS-SIM
‘She will go to the field’.

(19) *a-ne delhi-də kə-cət-tum-me*
1SG-NOM delhi-LOC NMZ-go-IRS-DECL
‘I will go to Delhi’.

(20) *pʰəru-i-we ikʰu-də cəŋ-tʰəpʰe*
snake-DET hole -LOC enter-PERF
‘The snake enters into the hole’.

- (21) *a-we fim-do p^ha-lo*
 1SG house-LOC go-IMP
 ‘Go to my house’.
- (22) *larik-wo tebəl-duŋ-do k^həla-we*
 book-DET table-on-LOC EXIST-SIM
 ‘The book is on the table’.

3.6. Genitive

The genitive case marker indicates possession on the possessor and it is realised by the three markers *-we*, *-me* and *-piyəŋ* with different distributions. The marker *-we* occurs with pronouns in object position as in (23)-(25), the marker *-piyəŋ* occurs with pronouns in subject position as in (26)-(27) and the marker *-me* occurs with noun in object position as can be seen in (28):

- (23) *he a-we fim-we*
 DEM 1SG-GEN house-SIM
 ‘This is my house’.
- (24) *a-we k^hut-inte*
 1SG-GEN hand-PL
 ‘My hands’
- (25) *inuŋ-we a-we a-nuŋ-we*
 3SG-GEN 1SG-GEN 1SG-mother-SIM
 ‘She is my mother’.
- (26) *a-piyəŋ məlakpuyet kəp^hre hədi k^həla-we*
 1SG-GEN doll beautiful two EXIST-SIM
 ‘I have two beautiful dolls’.
- (27) *a-piyəŋ a-niye-nuŋ hət^hum k^həla-we*
 1SG-GEN 1st-small-female three EXIST-SIM
 ‘I have three daughters’.
- (28) *a-ne Jon-me lariklebe-we*
 1SG-NOM John-GEN book buy-SIM
 ‘I buy a book for John.’

3.7. Associative

The associative case marker is used to denote that the action has been performed conjunction with another person. In Lairamlo, the associative case is expressed the marker by *-hən* as illustrated in the following examples.

- (29) *imiŋ-ne jek-hən kəhak cət-tum-me*
 3SG-NOM Jack-ASS watch go-IRS-DECL
 ‘He will go with Jack to watch the movies.’

- (30) *ihante əŋku-kəcuŋ-hən mələk-a-me*
 3PL child-PL-ASS play-PROG-DECL
 ‘They are playing with children’.

3.8. Ablative

The ablative case marker is used to express source of transfer of objects or ideas and direction of movement from one to another point. In Lairamlo, the ablative case is expressed by the marker *-wene* as can be seen in the following examples.

- (31) *a-ne deli-wene*
 1SG-NOM Delhi-ABL
 ‘I am from Delhi’.

- (32) *ram-ne kət^hei-wene tebəl lo-k^hə-waŋ-we*
 Ram-NOM market-ABL table buy-NMZ-come-SIM
 ‘Ram bought the tables from the market’.

- (33) *əŋku-niye-ne t^hiŋ-wene t^hiŋt^ha hiliye-am-me*
 child-small-NOM tree-ABL tree-fruit pluck-PROG-DECL
 ‘The child is plucking the fruit from the tree’

- (34) *kəsikijaŋ-do t^hiŋ-wene t^hiŋhe kəcuŋ prui-am-me*
 Winter-LOC tree-ABL leaves many fall-PROG-DECL
 ‘In winter many leaves fall from the tree’.

4. Conclusions

As many other Tibeto-Burman languages, case relations in this language is expressed by means of postpositions. The language has eight cases i.e., nominative, dative, instrumental, locative, genitive, associative, and ablative. Nominative case is optional. In the language some cases are found special characters. In accusative case there are three markers they are *-lo*, and *-wo*. It is interesting to note that the marker *-lo* occurs with proper nouns and personal pronoun in the object position and the marker *-wo* occurs with common noun in the object position. Lairamlo lacks different marker for expressing dative case and it is expressed by the marker *-lo*. Thus, the marker *-lo* has homophonous functions expressing both accusative and dative cases. The instrumental case is expressed by the markers *-to* and *-do* which have different distributions. The marker *-to* occurs with noun ends with a consonant or a diphthong and the *-do* occurs with nouns ends with a vowel. The locative case is expressed by *-də* and *-to*. The marker *-to* occur with nouns ends with diphthongs however *-də* occurs with nouns ends with vowels. Genitive case is expressed by *-we*, *-me* and *-piyaŋ*. The marker *-we* occurs with pronouns in object position however the marker *-piyaŋ* occurs with pronouns in subject position. The associative and ablative cases are expressed by markers *-hən* and *-wene* respectively.

Abbreviations

NOM = Nominative

ACC	=	Accusative
DAT	=	Dative
INST	=	Instrumental
LOC	=	Locative
GEN	=	Genitive
ASS	=	Associative
ABL	=	Ablative
SG	=	Singular
PL	=	Plural
ASP	=	Aspect
DEM	=	Demonstrative
DET	=	Determiner
FUT	=	Future tense
NMZ	=	Nominalizer
PROG	=	Progressive
PST	=	Past tense.

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Aheibam Linthoingambi Chanu
Research Scholar
Assam University, Silchar
Assam
India
linthoiaheibam77@gmail.com