Abstract

This paper investigates the typological perspective of Liangmai, a language of the Tibeto-Burman family which is spoken in the states of Manipur and Nagaland in the northeastern region of India. The language has SOV type of word order. The goal of the present paper is to examine the typological characteristics of the language in the light of Greenberg’s principles of language universals and see the features it attests to as a verb final language.

Key words: Liangmai, Tibeto-Burman, Language Universals, Agglutinative, Typology, Word Order, Tense, Aspect.

1. Introduction

Liangmai is a Tibeto-Burman (henceforth TB) language which is of the Kuki-Chin-Naga sub group (Bradley 1997). The bulk of Liangmai speaking population resides in the Tamenglong and Senapati districts of Manipur and Peren district of Nagaland. According to 2001 census the total Liangmai speaker was 34,232. It is one of the ethnic groups of the ‘Zeliangrong’, a collective term given to embrace the Zeme, Liangmai, Rongmei and Puimei under one generic term. Grierson (1903), in his Linguistic Survey of India, assigned each of the Naga language a definite place in the family of TB languages. According to him, between Angami-Naga and the Bodo languages there is a group, which he calls the Naga-Bodo group, bridging over the difference between the characteristic features of the two forms of speech, and similarly, between Angami-Naga and the Kuki languages there is another group which he calls the Naga-Kuki group. The Naga-Bodo group consists of two main languages, viz., Mikir and Kachcha Naga. Subordinate languages closely akin to but not dialects, of, Kachcha Naga, are Kabui Naga and Khoirao Naga. He did some work on ‘Kachcha Naga’ or ‘Empeo’ and ‘Kabui’ or ‘Kapwi’ and the language of specimen he used for ‘Kachcha Naga’ is Zeme and for the ‘Kabui’ he used Rongmei. May be he was not aware of the fact that ‘Kachcha Naga’ clubbed
together Zeme and Liangmai and ‘Kabui’ represent Rongmei and Puimei, and these are separate languages though closely related. In this way Liangmai was missed out and no work was done on it.

Interestingly, some vocabularies of Liangmai are found in Linguistic Survey of India Vol. III, Part II, page 480, listed under ‘Kwoireng or Liyang’. Another important point to be clarified here is that ‘Kwoireng’ and ‘Liyang’ are not the same language. The language of the Kwoireng is certainly a form of Kuki; however Liyang is a Naga language closely related with Kacha Naga and Kabui. This distinction between Kwoireng and Liyang was rightly pointed out by Grierson himself. The words used in the list are of Liyang (Liangmai), and that particular variety is now the standard variety of the Liangmai.

The goal of the present paper is to represent the typological characteristics of Liangmai in the light of the Greenberg’s (1963) principles of language universals. The language exhibits many similar characteristics with other TB language spoken in the northeastern part of India. It shares many genetic features with other TB languages, which includes phonemic tone, agglutinative verb morphology, verb derivational suffixes, nominalization, noun classifier system, lack of gender marking, Subject Object Verb (SOV) word order, aspect, rather than tense marking, and many more.

2. Basic Word Order

The basic constituent order or word order of Liangmai is SOV, i.e. the verb occurs in the final position of the sentence.

2a. Intransitive Verb: S V

1. i cʰap e
   I.1S-Nom stand Decl
   ‘I stand.’

2. pa zi mide
S/he.3S-Nom sleep Perf
‘S/he has slept.’

2b. Transitive Verb: S O V

3. pa zao sak e
   S/he.3S-Nom wine-Acc drink Decl
‘S/he drinks wine.’

4. ben-niu cʰaɡan laŋ-bam e
   Ben.3FS-Erg curry-Acc cook-Prog Decl
‘Ben is cooking curry.’

2c. Ditransitive Verb: S IO DO V

5. jon-niu ben-tu ariak pi e
   john.3MS-Erg Ben-3FS-Acc book give Decl-pres
‘John gives a book to Ben.’

6. i-niu ben-len cʰului tʰiu e
   I.1PS-Erg Ben-3FS-Dat song sing Decl-pres
‘I sing a song for Ben.’

Greenberg’s Universal 1 states that “In declarative sentences with nominal subject and object, the dominant order is almost always one in which the subject precedes the object”. The basic constituent order or word order of Liangmai sentence or a clause is SOV as we see in the constructions above. Greenberg’s Universal 4 states that “If in a language the verb follows both the nominal subject and nominal object as a dominant order, the language almost always has a case system”. The constructions above are in accordance with Greenberg’s universals 1 and 4.
3. Word Order in Different Sentence Types

3a. Declarative Sentence

In declarative sentences the basic constituent order or the word order is SOV in Liangmai.

7. i tei tiu e
   I-1PS rice eat Decl
   ‘I eat rice.’

3b. Imperative Sentence

The word order in imperative sentence is SOV.

8. òtu cʰarapen pi lo
   1PS-Dat flower give Imp
   ‘Give me flower.’

3c. Interrogative Sentence

Liangmai has interrogative pronouns viz; sou ‘who’ and de ‘what’. The question particles ma and lo are suffixed at the end of interrogative constructions. The word order in interrogative sentences is SOV and there is no obligatory position or wh-movement but scrambling of wh-word is allowed.

3c.1. Questioning the Subject: Wh OV

9. sou-niu tasiŋbaŋ hui lo
   Who-Erg tree-Acc cut Imp
   ‘Who cut the tree?’

3c.2. Questioning the Direct Object: S Wh V

10. pa-niu de din lo
    S/he-3S-Erg what say Imp
    ‘What did s/he say?’
3c.3 Questioning the Indirect Object: S DO Wh V

11. น้าธ cʰุ้ปิุ de-gasu liu lo
    you-2S-Nom medicine what-Abl buy Imp

   ‘From where did you buy medicine?’

3d. ‘Yes-no’ Questions

The word order in ‘yes-no’ questions construction is SOV. Question particle ‘ma’ is use at the end of every ‘yes-no’ questions and it is marked by rise in pitch or stress is given to the question particle.

12. น้าธ raŋkaŋ bąm ma
    you-2S-Nom money have Qpart

   ‘Do you have money?’

13. น้าธ suanai waŋ ra ma
    you-2S-Nom tomorrow come Fut Qpart

   ‘Will you come tomorrow?’

Greenberg’s Universal No. 8 states that ‘When a yes-no question is differentiated from the corresponding assertion by an intonation pattern, the distinctive intonation features of these patterns are reckoned from the end of the sentence rather than from the beginning.’ Liangmai ‘yes-no’ question construction is in accordance with the universal above.

4. Causative Sentences

A causative in Liangmai is form by two verbs. Consider the following example:

14. rina-niu ṭeŋa-tu dui pi-sak e
    Rina.3FS-Erg baby-Acc milk give-drink Decl

   ‘Rina feed the baby (with milk)’

15. i-niu pŏ-tu pi-pak e
    I.1PS-Erg 3PS-Acc give-run Decl
‘I make him run’

The verb root –pi, meaning ‘give’ function as the causative marker in Liangmai. It occurs before the main verb.

5. Negative Sentences

Negation in Liangmai is formed by suffixation of negative markers –lak and –mak to the main verb. –mak is used in realized aspect and it is associated with non-future construction.

16. jon tʰainai skul tadmak e
   John-3SM-Nom today school go-Neg Decl
   ‘John doesn’t go to school today.’

17. pa zao sakmak e
    s/he-3S-Nom wine drink-Neg Decl
    ‘He does not drink wine’

-lak is also used post verbally and this negative marker carries meaning of futurity. It is used in unrealized aspect.

18. i cʰalu täd-lak e
    I-1PS-Nom field go-Neg Decl
    ‘I will not go to the field’

19. lily cʰalui tʰiu-lak e
    Lily-3FS-Nom song sing-Neg Decl
    ‘Lily will not sing’

In case of imperative sentences, the negative particles -tu ~ -du is used after the verb to give the negative meaning of the sentence. It implies prohibition.

20. zao sak tu lo
wine   drink   Neg   Imp
‘Do not drink wine’

21. pawan   kamuksa   tu/du   lo
    time   waste   Neg   Imp
‘Do not waste time’

6. Verb

Verb roots in Liangmai are in bound forms. A verb may be a free standing word if it is minimally suffixed by an inflectional marker. It can be inflected with tense-aspect-modality markers; compounding, serial construction, reduplication etc. to name few are a very common phenomena of Liangmai verbs. Verb roots may also be used to form verbal nouns, adjectives and adverbs. However, they are not inflected for number and gender. Liangmai verb functions as the head of the predicate and is either mono-syllabic or di-syllabic. Tri-syllabic verb roots are very rare in this language. Verbs can be broadly classified into simple and complex.

6a. Simple Verb

A simple verbal root has a single morpheme and is always monomorphemic in nature. In other words they cannot be divided further into smaller meaningful units. In most cases they are monosyllabic and polysyllabic. Tri-syllabic is rare, it occur mostly with the case of compound or complex verbs. There is large number of homophones in the lexicon which has two to three potential meanings, for example, /ri/ has two potential meanings: ‘late’, and ‘hide’.

Simple roots

22. /tad/ -go
23. /waŋ/ -come
24. /pi/ -give
25. /t̥i̥/ -eat
26. /majŋ/ -climb
27. /kala/ -roll
6b. **Complex Verbs**

A complex verb refers to a form which consists of a main verb in its roots form plus a secondary verb which bears tense and agreement morphology (Bashir, 1993). It functions as a single unit even though it may consist of multiple verbs or morphemes. Some examples are given below:

28. / pæk-duak / -escape
29. / mænŋ-tao / -remember
30. / di-su / -develop
31. / wi-kʰai / -heal
32. / lu-waŋ / -bring
33. / din-tao-kʰai / -convey, remind

7. **Postposition**

Liangmai, like many other verb final language, is a postpositional language and the postposition follows head noun. Postposition in the language has the same purpose as that of case suffix. Consider the following examples:

34. tʰbol riga əriak bum e
table on-Loc book have (exist) Decl

‘The book is on the table / There is a book on the table.’

35. cʰaki luŋ-ga gut lo
house in-Loc come Imp

‘Come inside the house’

36. iniu namaiduŋ-leŋ tərua liu e
I-1PS-Erg children-Dat bread buy Decl

‘I buy bread for the children.’
Liangmai constructions above are in accordance with the Greenberg’s Universal 4:
“With overwhelmingly greater than chance frequency, languages with normal SOV order are postpositional.”

8. Genitive

The genitive case indicates ownership or possession on the possessor. The genitive marker -gu is used in Liangmai to indicate the possessor of the object.

37. ø-gu ariak pi lo
1PS-Gen book give Imp
‘Give (me) my book’

38. nə-gu ch’akuan ηouwi e
2PS-Gen horse beautiful Decl
‘Your horse is beautiful’

39. joe-gu ch’abεn di e
joe.3MS-Gen sword big Decl
‘Joe’s sword is big’

The possessive pronominal prefixes ø-, nə- and pə- is the first person, second person and third person possessive prefixes respectively. These may be affixed to kinship terms and inalienable possessed nouns like the following examples:

40. ømik ‘my eye’
41. øpiu ‘my father’
42. øji ‘my bed’
43. nəben ‘your hand’
44. nəpe ‘your grandmother’
45. nəki ‘your house’
46. pəbun ‘his/her stomach’
47. pəpui ‘his/her mother’
48. pəkuəŋ ‘his/her plate’

Both these genitive markers precede the governing noun. The genitive marker –gu is used with alienable noun whereas the pronominal prefixes are used with inalienable nouns. Greenberg’s Universal 2 says that ‘In languages with prepositions, the genitive almost follows the governing noun, while in languages with postpositions it almost always precedes.’

9. Adverbs

Adverbs precede the verb in Liangmai like many other SOV languages. Adverbial expressions normally modify the verb with respect to place, time and manner of the action referred to by the verb.

9a. Manner of the Action

In Liangmai manner adverbs are formed by suffixation of –ziu to a verb root.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>49.</th>
<th>pəcʰaki</th>
<th>kalaŋziu</th>
<th>tad</th>
<th>mide</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S/he.3PS-Nom</td>
<td>house</td>
<td>quick.Adv</td>
<td>go</td>
<td>Perf</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

‘S/he quickly went home.’

<table>
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<tr>
<th>50.</th>
<th>tina-niu</th>
<th>cʰalui</th>
<th>tənziu</th>
<th>tʰiu-bam</th>
<th>e</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tina.3FS-Erg</td>
<td>song</td>
<td>loud.Adv</td>
<td>sing-Prg</td>
<td>Decl</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Tina is singing loudly.’

9b. Locative Adverb

Adverb of place is derived through the prefixation of pa- to verbal noun roots:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>51a.</th>
<th>həŋ</th>
<th>‘be under’</th>
<th>pəhəŋ</th>
<th>‘below’, ‘underneath’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>ri</td>
<td>‘be up’</td>
<td>pari</td>
<td>‘above’, ‘on top’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>sai</td>
<td>‘be back’</td>
<td>pasai</td>
<td>‘behind’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>kʰian</td>
<td>‘be near’</td>
<td>pəkʰian</td>
<td>‘adjacent’, ‘near’</td>
</tr>
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</table>

9c. Adverb of Time

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There are lexical adverbs of time in Liangmai and they can be categorized into two types based on the time reference it makes: 1. Lexical items indicating past time like danai ‘yesterday’, kalu ‘earlier’, datʰaikum ‘last year’. 2. Lexical items indicating future time like nak ‘later’, suanai ‘tomorrow’, nanai ‘day after tomorrow’ and makum ‘next year’.

The Liangmai adverbial constructions are in accordance with Greenberg’s Universal 7: ‘In a language with dominant SOV order, all adverbial modifiers of the verb precede the verb.’

9d. Order of Adverbials

Time adverbial precedes place adverbial in Liangmai.

52. ben suanai deli-lam tadrabo e
    Ben.3FS-Nom tomorrow Delhi-Dir go-Fut Decl
    ‘Ben will go to Delhi tomorrow.’

10. Modifiers

Adjectives may appear before or after the nouns they modify in Liangmai. There is no agreement between the noun and the adjective. Greenberg’s Universal 5 says that ‘If a language has dominant SOV order and the genitive follows the governing noun, then the adjective likewise follows the noun.’

53. eʰurapen heŋbo
    flower red
    ‘A red flower.’

54. maluŋ dibo
    mountain big
    ‘A big mountain.’

55. mathabo tiŋmik
    happy day
‘A happy day.’

56. aqibo nchun
    cold night
    ‘A cold night.’

Demonstrative precedes the head noun. Referential determiner is used in this language.

57. hai cʰarapen majinbo pi lo
    this flower yellow give Imp
    ‘Give (me) this yellow flower.’

58. wi tasiŋbaŋ si di e
    that tree Det big Decl
    ‘That tree is big.’

Numeral follows the head noun and the 10+1, 10+2, 10+3, etc. system of numeral formation is followed in Liangmai.

59. ariak-kʰwaŋ khat
    book-Cla one
    ‘One book/ A book.’

60. cʰamai kʰαŋ kariu sum
    person Cla ten three
    ‘Thirteen people.’

61. kʰaui makai madai
    cow twenty four
    ‘Twenty four cows.’

Adjectives may follow or precede the head noun. Greenberg’s Universal 18 states that ‘When the descriptive adjective precedes the noun, the demonstrative and the numerals do
likewise.’ In Liangmai, demonstratives precede the noun but the numerals follow the head noun.

11. Quantifier

Quantifier follows the head noun in unmarked position.

62. ch’amai mat’hui-niu sui mide
    person all-Nom agree Perf

‘All people have agreed.’

63. paniu ch’arası pak’hianj tiu mide
    S/he.3PS-Erg fruit all eat Perf

‘S/he has eaten all the fruits.’

12. Order of Determiner, Quantifier and Noun

Determiner (D), Quantifier (Q) and Noun (N) follow the following order: D-N-Q.

Determiner precedes the noun and quantifier follows the noun.

64. hai ch’arapen pak’hianj wi e
    this flower all good Decl

‘All these flowers are good.’

65. wi ch’arası kasia pi lo
    that fruit some give Imp

‘Give (me) some of those fruit.’

13. Reduplication

Reduplication is rich in Liangmai and the used of it is very common in speech. It can be classified into complete and partial reduplication. Complete reduplication refers to the phenomenon when a single word or clause is repeated once in the same sentence without any phonological or morphological variations. It can occur in:

13a. Noun

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Kailadbou Daimai. Ph.D. Research Scholar
Typological Characteristics of Liangmai Language
66. nam nam-gu ch'alad tam e
   village village-Gen language different Decl
   ‘Each village has different language.’

67. paki ki malan mide
   3PS-house house return Perf
   ‘They have return to their home.’

13b. Wh-Question Words

   It is also found in wh-question words like de ‘what’ and sou ‘who’.
   68. wi c'haki-ga sou-sou bam lo
       that house-Loc who-who have (exist) Imp
       ‘Who are there in that house?’

   69. nagu de-de ariak bam lo
       you.2PS-Gen what-what book have (exist) Imp
       ‘What are the books you have?’

13c. Adjective

   In adjective reduplication the first is a base while the repeated form is a complete
   adjectival form.
   70. tasin-tan t'enh-t'enhbo luwan lo
       wood-Cla long-long bring Imp
       ‘Bring (me) long sticks.’

   71. c'hap'hai di-dibo kada lo
       shawl big-big choose Imp
       ‘Choose big shawls.’

13d. Adverbs

   The occurrence of adverb reduplication in sentence is as follows:
Verbal reduplication is absent in Liangmai. Repetition of verbs generally functions as adverbs.

13e. Partial Reduplication

It refers to the paired construction in which the second word is not an exact repetition of the first but is similar or related to the first word.

74. pa  tadpad-tadgut  bam  e
S/he.3PS  go out-go in  Prg  Decl

‘He is walking to and fro.’

Reduplication in Liangmai has the meanings of distributiveness, plurality and emphatics.

14. Comparative Marker

The comparative marker -bi and the superlative marker -thu follows the standard adjective:

75. pa-c\textsuperscript{h}i  su\text{\textae}  pa-kina-niu  tan-bi  e
3PS.Pos-sibling  than  3PS.Pos-sibling  strong-Comp  Decl
(elder)  (younger)-Nom

‘His younger brother is stronger than the elder brother.’

76. jon-niu  mat\textsuperscript{h}iu  rua\text{\textae}-g\text{\textae}  wi-thu  e
John.3MS-Nom  all  among-Loc  good-Sup  Decl

‘John is the best among all.’
15. Relative Clause

Relative Clauses in Liangmai are formed by the addition of the nominalizer -bo to the embedded verb and a determiner si is used with the head noun. Consider the following example:

77. [i-niu danai liu-bo] ariak-k\textsuperscript{b}waŋ si achun-k\textsuperscript{b}ug\textsuperscript{a} pi mide
   1PS-Erg yesterday buy-Nomz book-Cla Det Achun-Loc give Perf
   ‘The book which I bought yesterday has been given to Achun’

78. [Tiəŋ heŋbo ruŋ-bo] napiu si t\textsuperscript{h}ainai waŋ e
   shirt red wear-Nomz boy Det today come Decl
   ‘The boy who wears a red shirt came today’

It can be noticed from examples above that, in Liangmai, the relative clause are prenominal. The embedded clause i-niu danai liu-bo ‘(that) I bought yesterday’ precedes the head noun ariak-k\textsuperscript{b}waŋ ‘book’. Also, relative clauses in Liangmai, like other TB languages, are participial in nature.

16. Tense

The tripartite distinction of tense into past, present and future is absent in Liangmai. In this language one might say that the only tense distinction grammatically is between future and non-future. The verb form for the non-future tense is unmarked and futurity is indicated by the future marker –rab\textsuperscript{o} in Liangmai.

79. i t\textsuperscript{a}r\textsuperscript{u}a tiu ø e
   1PS-Nom bread-Acc eat NFut Decl
   ‘I eat bread.’

80. p\textsuperscript{a} ariak ken ø e
   S/he.3PS-Nom book-Acc read NFut Decl
   ‘S/he read book.’
Time adverbials play a very important role in expressing time reference in the language.

83. pa danai ariak liu-∅ e
S/he.3MS-Nom yesterday book buy-NFut Decl
‘S/he bought a book yesterday.’

84. pa tʰainai ariak liu-∅ e
S/he.3MS-Nom today book buy-NFut Decl
‘S/he buys a book today.’

85. pa suanai ariak liu-rabo e
S/he.3MS-Nom yesterday book buy-Fut Decl
‘S/he will buy a book tomorrow.’

There is no morphological marker for past and present but future is indicated by the suffix –rabo. It is the time adverbial tʰainai ‘today’ and danai ‘yesterday’ which brings out the difference between past and present. The adverbial suanai ‘tomorrow’ is optional because the future tense marker denotes the time frame clearly.

17. Aspect
Aspects are different way of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation or an event. It indicates the internal structure of an event or situation. Liangmai has three way
distinction of aspect; they are simple or indefinite aspect, progressive or imperfect aspect and perfect aspect.

17a. Simple or Indefinite Aspect
It expresses simple statement, habitual meaning and universal truth.

86. naimik-niu tiŋbaŋ-lamsu pad e
    sun-Erg     east-Abl     come     Asp
    ‘The sun rises in the east.’

87. jon əpāl tiu e
    John.3PS-Nom apple-Acc eat Asp
    ‘John eats an apple.’

17b. Progressive or Imperfect aspect: It expresses the action that is continuing.

88. pa arik ken-bam e
    S/he.3PS-Nom book-Acc read-Prg Decl
    ‘S/he is reading a book.’

89. i τarua tiu-bam e
    1PS-Nom bread-Acc eat-Prg Decl
    ‘I am eating bread.’

17c. Perfect Aspect
It indicates the completion of an action at the time of speaking.

90. i τarua tiu mide
    1PS-Nom bread-Acc eat Perf
    ‘I have eaten bread.’

91. pa skul tād mide
    S/he.3PS-Nom school go Perf
‘S/he has gone to school.’

18. Conclusions

Based on the above discussions, it can be said that Liangmai exhibits the following attributes in clause constructions; Liangmai has SOV word order, it is a postpositional language, genitive precedes the governing noun, it lacks agreement and adverbs precede verbs. In Liangmai adjectives may precede or follow noun, modifiers like demonstrative precede the head noun, however, numerals follow the head noun. Causative marker occurs before the main verb, marker of comparison follows the standard of comparison, negative markers occur post-verbal, wh-question words occurs pre-verbally whereas yes/no question marker follow the verb, relative clause is pre-nominal and indirect object precedes direct object. The language attests to most of SOV language features with few exceptions. The language is SOV and genitive precedes the governing noun but adjectives may follow or precede the noun. The demonstrative precede the noun but numerals follow the noun.

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Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ø</td>
<td>null form</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2.3.P</td>
<td>First, Second, Third Person</td>
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<tr>
<td>Abl.</td>
<td>Ablative</td>
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<td>Acc.</td>
<td>Accusative</td>
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<td>Adv.</td>
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<td>Asp.</td>
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<td>Classifier</td>
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<td>DO.</td>
<td>Direct object</td>
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<td>Imperative</td>
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<td>IO.</td>
<td>Indirect Object</td>
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<td>Locative</td>
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<td>M.</td>
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<td>Neg.</td>
<td>Negation</td>
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<td>NFut.</td>
<td>Non-Future</td>
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<td>Nominalizer</td>
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<td>Progressive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quant.</td>
<td>Quantifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S,Pl.</td>
<td>Singular, Plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sup.</td>
<td>Superlative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S,V,O.</td>
<td>Subject, Verb, Object</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Erg.-Ergative TB - Tibeto-Burman

F.- Feminine

Fut.- Future Tense

Gen.- Genitive

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References


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