CHAPTER- 5

Syntax

5.0. Syntax:

5.1. Word Order:

Word order refers to the linear sequence in which words occur in a sentence. The normal word order of Tibeto-Burman languages is SOV. Like other Tibeto-Burman languages, the Karbi language shares the syntactic feature of the family i.e., the normal order of words in an unmarked sentence is S (subject), O (object) and V (verb):

Subject (S) occurs in the sentence initial position.

Object (O) follows the subject and precedes the verbs.

Verb (V) occurs in the sentence final position.
The following sentences show the order of the words in Karbi language.

(a) /ne ča zun/

I tea drink-Pre.

S O V

‘I drink tea’

(b) /ne an čo/

I rice eat-Pre.

S O V

‘I eat rice’

(c) /la wo pitʰi-lo/

s/he bird kill-Pst.

S O V

‘S/he was killed the bird’

(d) /ne naŋ-pʰan tekloŋ-lo/

I you-Acc see-Pst

S O V

‘I saw you’
However, some sentences can occur without the subject in Karbi. The subject is optional in imperative sentence. Consider the following sentences.

(a) /laŋ  zun-tʰa/

(S) O V

water drink-Imp.

‗(You) drink water‘

(b) /dak  waŋ-oi/

(S) O V

here come-Imp.

‗(You) come here‘
Even a verb can make an imperative sentence in Karbi where the use of subject and object is not necessary. The imperative is obtained by adding /noi/ or /-tʰa/ suffixed to the verb. Consider the following examples,

(a) /iŋni-noi/  
sit-Imp.(Req)  
‘Please sit down’

(b) /klem-tʰa/  
do-Imp.(Req)  
‘Please do’

(c) /po-noi/  
pick-Imp. (Req)  
‘Please pick up

The interrogative pronoun precedes the subject if the subject is present; it is because the use of the subject is optional in interrogative sentences in Karbi. In other words, the interrogative sentences are formed in Karbi with interrogative pronoun placed before the subject.

(a) /konalo do?/  
Where is-Pre.  
Int.pron. V  
‘Where do you live?’
5.2. Constituent:

A simple sentence in Karbi consists of a noun phrase (NP) and a verb phrase (VP) as given in the following examples.

i. /arloso  dam-etlo/
   girl   go-Pst.Perf.
   NP     VP

‘The girl had gone’

ii. /arwo  keklo/
    leaf   fall-Pre.
   NP     VP

‘The leaf falls’

5.2.1. Noun phrase:

The noun phrase (NP) consists obligatory of a noun which is called the head noun and that may be followed or preceded by one or more modifiers. The modifiers which are basically optional elements may be an adjective, a case marker, a numeral and a particle. These optional elements modify the head noun in Karbi.
In Karbi, when the head noun is modified by a demonstrative and an adjective, the head noun follows these two as in the following sentences.

i. /keme a-monit/

   Good Poss.-man

   Adj. + N

   ‘A good man’

ii. /tʰɛŋpi ketʰe/

   Tree big

   N + Adj.

   ‘A big tree’

iii. /inloŋ kaŋtui/ 

   mountain high

   N + Adj.

   ‘High Mountain’

iv. / i-nut a-monit/ 

   One-Clf. Poss.-man

   Nu + N

   ‘One man’
v. /lake ket\textsuperscript{b}e t\textsuperscript{b}enpi/

this big tree

Dem. + Adj. + N.

‘This is a big tree’

vi /lake keme a-monit/

this good Poss-man

Dem. + Adj. + N

‘This a good man’

When demonstrative, numeral and adjective along with a noun occur together in a single sentence in Karbi, the head noun is preceded by the demonstrative, followed by the numeral and adjective as exemplified below.

vii. /lake i-nut keme a-monit/

This one-Clf. good Poss-man


‘This is a good man’

viii. /lake i-ron\=o alon t\textsuperscript{b}enpi/

This one-Clf. beautiful tree


‘This is a beautiful tree’
On the basis of the above mentioned examples, we can state the structure of a noun phrase in Karbi as

\[ \text{N. Phrase} \rightarrow \pm \text{Dem} \pm \text{Clf} \pm \text{Num} \pm \text{Parti} \pm \text{Clf} \pm \text{Adj} \pm \text{Case} + \text{N} \]
ii. /thur-noi/

get up-Imp.

V

‘get up’

iii. /čo-noi/

eat-Imp.

V

‘eat’

i. The verb preceded by adverb, e.g.

iv. /ladak waŋ/

here come.Pre.

Adv. + v

‘Come here’

v. /thęŋčonŋ laŋ-noi/

up look-Imp.

Adv. + v

‘Look up’

vi. /alaŋ nahokta do/

he everywhere is-Pre.
N + Adv. + v

‘He is everywhere’

ii. The verb preceded by a noun phrase e.g.

viii. /naŋ korte-ap\textsuperscript{h}an haŋ-noi/

you brother-Acc. call-Imp

NP + VP

‘Call your brother’

ix. /alaŋ ne-p\textsuperscript{h}an kelaŋ/

he I-Acc look.Pre

NP + VP

‘He looks at me’

iii. When the verb phrase (VP) has two noun phrases (NPs), NP1 is the direct object and NP2 is indirect object. The NPs must be followed by the main verb. Consider the following examples:

x. /laŋtuk-pensi laŋ wa-noi/

well-Abl. water bring-Imp.

NP1 + NP2 + V

‘Please bring water from the well’
xi. /ne-pʰan tomo tʰan-noi/

I –Dat. story tell-imp.

NP1 + NP2 + V

‘Please tell me a story’

xii. /ne nepičo-apʰan lek kimi nam-lo/

I wife-Dat. ornament new buy-Pst.

NP1 + NP2 + Adj. + V

‘I bought new ornaments for my wife’

iv. When an adverb occurs in a sentence, the verb is preceded by adverb in Karbi as exemplified in the following sentence.

xiii. /penap netum dak tʰalaj-po/

tomorrow we here stop-Fut

NP + Adv. + V

‘We will stop here tomorrow’

xiv. /Ram arniwanṭʰa skul dun/

Ram everyday school go- Pre.

NP + Adv. + N + V

‘Ram goes to school every day’
xv. \(/ne\) penab waŋ-zi/  

I tomorrow come- Fut.  

NP + Adv. + V  

‘I will come tomorrow’  

v. The verb preceded by adverb or postposition and one or more noun phrases, e.g.  

xv. \(/alaŋ kaita wo pa-t^{b}i/\)  

he always bird Caus.-die  

NP + Adv. + N + V  

‘He always kills the birds’  

xvi. \(/ne niŋkan p^{b}okep ap^{b}raŋ Guwahati dam-lo/\)  

I years fifty before Guwahati go-Pst.  

NP + Adv. + N + V  

‘I had gone to Guwahati before fifty years’  

On the basis of the above illustrated sentences the structure of the Karbi verb phrase can be stated schematically as-  

V. Phrase $\rightarrow \pm$NP1 $\pm$NP2 $\pm$Adv $\pm$Adj $\pm$N+ V
5.2.3. Adjective Phrase:

The adjective is the nucleus in an adjectival phrase. The adjective phrase consists of at least one adjective. The adjective of the adjectival phrase either precedes or follows the noun but when the adjective precedes the noun take possessive /a-/ in Karbi. Consider the following examples:

i. /oso keme/  
   child good  
   N + Adj.  
   ‘(a) good child’

ii. /keme a-oso/  
   good poss.-child  
   Adj. + N  
   ‘(a) good child’

iii. /monit iŋsam/  
    man mad  
    N + Adj.  
    ‘(a) mad man’
iv. /ŋsam a-monit/

mad Poss.-man

Adj. + N

‘(a) mad man’

v. /ketʰe a-hem/

big Poss.-house

Adj. + N

‘(a) big house’

vi. /asap a-monit miting-loŋ wanŋ-lo/

few Poss.-man meeting-Loc. come-Pst.

Adj + N + N + V

‘Only few men came to the meeting’

The structure of the adjective phrase in Karbi may be found as follows:

Adj. Phrase → ±N ± Adj ±N ± N(case) ± V

5.2.4. Adverb Phrase

The adverb in an adverb phrase modifies the verb. An adverb occurs before the verb in Karbi. Consider the following sentence.
i. /arniwaŋ^h^a  dam/
   everyday  go
   Adv.  +  V
   ‘Goes everyday’

ii. /non  warŋ-po/
    now  come-Fut.
    Adv.  +  V
    ‘Will come now’

The adverb of time carries a case along with it. In fact, the case is suffixed to the adverb of time.

iii. /penap-pensi  ne kam  klem-po/
    tomorrow  I work  work-Fut
    Adv-Abl.  +  NP  +  V
    ‘I shall work from tomorrow’

iv. /arzo-loŋ  kam  klem-naŋ-ne/
    night  work  work-Neg
    Adv-Loc.  +  NP  +  V
    ‘Do not work at night’
The adverb of place always carries a particle along with it. In fact, the particle is suffixed to the adverb of place.

v. /arlo-si   do/
   inside     is-Pre.

Adv-Part. + V

‘Is inside’

vi. /aŋsoŋ-si   do/
   above     is-Pre

Adv. Part. + V

‘Is above’

On the basis of the above examples, we can establish the structure of an adverb phrase in karbi as

Adv. Phrase→ + Adv ± Case ± particle ± NP + V

5.3. Clause:

Four types of clauses can be identified in Karbi. They are main clause, subordinate clause, coordinative clause, and conditional Clause. The main or principal clause is independent and can occur on its own in sentence. In fact, the main clause in Karbi is always identical with a simple sentence. In contrast, the subordinate clause can never occur on its own and is always dependent on the main clause.
5.3.1. Main clause:

The following are the examples of main clause in Karbi. They are basically simple sentences.

i. ne čo-zi
   I eat- Fut.
   ‘I will eat’

ii. /alaŋ čo/
    s/he eat-Pre.
    ‘S/he/ she eats’

iii. /ne čo-lo/
     I eat- Pst.
     ‘I ate’

5.3.2. Subordinate Clause:

The subordinate clause in Karbi is marked by particle /te/ and always precedes the main clause as exemplified below.

i. /arwe ṣaŋ-te ne dam-de/
   rain come-Part. I go-Neg.

Sub.Cl M.Cl

‘If it rains I will not go’
ii. /naŋ lun-te ne kan-po/

you sing-Part. i dance-Fut.

Sub.Cl M.Cl

‗If you sing I will dance’

5.3.3. Coordinative Clause:

Coordinative clause in Karbi is marked by the presence of conjunctive particles. The primary function of conjunction is to connect words, phrases, clauses and sentences. Consider the following examples.

i. / pen / ‘and’

a. /po-pen pei wan-ntlo/

father-Conj.Part. mother come-Pst.Perf.

‗Mother and father had come’

b. /ram-pen rohim dam-ntlo/


‗Ram and Rahim had gone’

c. /sita-pen gita dam-ntlo/


‗Sita and Gita had gone out’
ii. /bonta/, čita/ ‘but’

a. /alaŋ-\b^an ne kehaŋ-lo bonta alaŋ waŋ-we/

s/he-Acc. I call-Pst. but-Conj.Part. s/he come-Pre-Neg.

‘I called him/her but s/he does not come’

b. /alaŋ ča zun čita kop^i zun-ze/

S/he tea drink but-Conj.Part. coffee drink-Neg.

‘S/he drinks tea but not drink coffee’

iii. /ba/ ‘or’ or ‘either’:

It is used for disjunctive construction only which is formed by placing /ba/ between the two proposition so that they are in an ‘either…..or’ relationship.

i. /po ba pei/

father Disj.Part. mother

‘Father or mother’

ii. /gopal ba hari waŋ-po/

Gopal Didsj.Part. hari come-Fut.

‘Gopal or Hari will come’
5.3.4. Conditional Clause:

Conditional clause in Karbi is introduced by placing the conditional particle /te/ ‘if’ in the final position of the subordinate clause and the noun in the main clause takes the particle /ta/ ‘also’. In the conditional statement of the sentence, the conditional clause always precedes the conclusion without any known exception in Karbi. The following are the examples.

i. /naŋ dam-te Ram-ta waŋ-po/
   you go-Cond.Part. Ram-Part. come-Fut.
   ‘If you go Ram will also come’

ii. /alaŋ-li pi-te netum čo-po/
   s/he- Hon. give-Part. we eat- Fut.
   ‘If s/he gives we will eat’

5.4. Sentence:

The sentences in Karbi can be classified into three types, viz. (i) simple, (ii) complex and (iii) compound. These three types of classification are made at surface level structure of sentences.

5.4.1. Simple Sentence:

A sentence is simple where there is only one S at the surface phrase structure. It means that it is a construction which has only one clause, i.e., the main clause and it has at least a subject and a predicate except in imperative sentences in which the use of subject is optional. Consider the following examples:
A complex sentence in Karbi consists of one main clause and one or more subordinate clauses. In the complex sentence, the subordinate clause is introduced by subordinators (particles) which usually precede the main clause. For example,

i. /alan-li dam-te ne waŋ-po/

s/he-Hon. go-Con.Part. I come-Fut.
‘If he goes I will come’

ii. /arwezan-te Ram ke-waŋ-we-po/

‘If it is raining Ram will not come’
5.4.3. Compound Sentence:

It consists of two or more main clauses or simple sentences and these are
conjoined either by the conjunctive particle /lapen/ ‘and’ or by the disjunctive
coordinator / ba / ‘or’.

1. /ram lapen hari dam-lo/
   Ram Conj.Part. Hari go-pst.
   ‘Ram and Hari went’

This sentence is made up of two simple sentences.

/ram dam-lo/  
Ram go-Pst.  
‘Ram went’

/hari dam-lo/  
Hari go-Past  
‘Hari went’
And both the simple sentences are conjoined by the conjunctive particle /lapen/ ‘and’.

i. /hira zagirod-loŋ dam-lo lapen mina morigao-loŋ waŋ-lo/


‘Hira went to Jagiroad and Mina came to Morigaon’

ii. /nita tom lapen mira waŋ-po/

Nita Tom Conj.Part. Mira come-Fut.

‘Nita, Tom and Mira will come’

iii. /sunil mumbai ba delhi do/

sunil mumbai Disj.Part. delhi is-Pre

‘Sunil is at Mumbai or Delhi’

5.5. Negation:

The various way of negative formation in Karbi is illustrated below:

5.5.1. Negation by Negative Word:

In Karbi, the verb /do/ ‘have’ and /kalaŋ/ ‘is’ and /naŋzi/ ‘need’ indicate positive sense. The verb /awe/ ‘have not’ and /kali/ ‘is not’ and /naŋne/ ‘no need’ indicate the negative sense. In this language, /awe/and /kali/ replace the verb /do/ and /kalaŋ/ respectively to indicate negative sense. Consider the following examples:
i. /hadak metʰan do/
   there dog have-Pre.
   ‘There is a dog’

ii. /hadak metʰan awe/
   theren dog no-Pre.
   ‘There is no dog’

iii. /la čainoŋ kalanŋ/
   this cow is-Pre.
   ‘This is a cow’

iv. /la čainoŋ kali/
   this cow not-Pre.
   ‘This is not cow’

v. /ne-pʰan tʰanjka naŋi/
   I -Dat money need-Pre
   ‘I need money’

vi. /ne-pʰan tʰanjka naŋne/
   I - Dat money no need.Pre.
   ‘I need no money’
5.5.2. Negation by Reduplication:

In Karbi, the negative verb is formed by partial reduplication of phoneme. The initial phoneme of verb is repeated and the negative suffix /-e/ is added to it. Consider the following examples:

/čo/ /čo-če/
‘to eat’ ‘do not eat’
/zun/ /zun-ze/
‘to drink’ ‘do not drink’
/dam/ /dam-de/
‘to go’ ‘do not go’

But in case of bi or multi syllable verb, the negative verb is formed by repeating the first phoneme of final syllable and the negative suffix /-e/ is added to it. Consider the following examples:

/iŋzer/ /iŋzer-ze/
‘to fly’ ‘does not fly’
/iŋčam/ /iŋčam-če/
‘to cool’ ‘does not cool’
/iŋzir/ /iŋzir-ze/
‘to dissolve’ ‘does not dissolve’
5.5.3. Negation by Suffixation:

Karbi has two negative marker suffixes viz. /-e/ and /-ri/. The marker /-e/ is added to the verb that begins with a vowel phoneme and the suffix /-ri/ added to other verb to give negative meaning. Consider the following examples:

/en/       /en-e/
‘to make’   ‘do not make’
/un/       /un-e/
‘to able’   ‘unable’
/klem/      /klem-ri/
‘to do’     ‘do not do’
/zun/       /zun-ri/
‘to drink’  ‘do not drink’
/laŋ/       /laŋ-ri/
          to find out  ‘do not find out’

5.5.4. Negative Copula:

The negative copula /kali/ and /awe/ ‘not’ is used to express negative in locative predicates and possessive sentences. Consider the following examples:
5.6. Interrogative:

Interrogative in Karbi can be classified into two types, that is, **Yes-no** question which asks for the confirmation or negation of the statement, and **wh-** questions.

5.6.1. Yes-No Questions:

Yes-no question in Karbi is formed by adding the question mark /ma/ to the verb. An affirmative statement can be converted into an interrogative sentence without the question marker /ma/ but by rising intonation. This marker is optionally used when he interrogative is expressed by the rising intonation. Consider the following examples:

i. la wokak kali/

   this duck not-Pre.

   ‘This is not a duck’

ii. /Ram klem kali/

   Ram do-Pre. not

   ‘Ram is not doing’

iii. /laŋroi-loŋ ok awe/

   river-Loc. fish no -Pre.

   ‘There is no fish in the river’
i. /laŋok do/
   fish is-Pre.
   ‘There is (a) fish’

ii. /laŋok do-ma?/
    fish is-Inte.M.
    ‘Is there fish?’

iii. /laŋok do?/ (rising intonation)
     fish is-Pre.
     ‘Is there fish?’

iv. /naŋ čo-zi-ma?/
    you eat-Fut.-Inte.M
    ‘Will you eat?’

v. /naŋ čo-zi?/ (rising intonation)
    you eat-Fut.
    ‘Will you eat?’

vi. /naŋ dam-de-ma?/
    you go-Neg.-Inte.M
    ‘Don’t you go?’
vii. /naŋ waŋ-we?/ (rising intonation)

you come-Neg.

‘Do not you come?’

5.6.2. Wh-Question:

Wh-question in Karbi is formed by substituting the constituent that is being questioned by the appropriate interrogative pronouns. Consider the following examples:

i. /ne men longki/

my name longki

‘My name is longki’

ii. /naŋ men kopilo?/

you name wh-Q.M

‘What is your name?’

iii. /alaŋ Mongol/

he mongol

‘He is Mongol’
iv. /alaŋ komatlo?/

he wh-Q.M

‘Who is he?’

v. /ne kolez-loŋ dun-zi/

I college-Loc go-Fut.

‘I shall go to college’

vi. /naŋ konat dun-zi?/

you wh-Q.M go-Fut.

‘Where will you go?’

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