Chapter IV
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This Chapter discusses the case systems of the two languages, the nominative-accusative pattern in English and ergative-absolutive pattern in Manipuri. It also discusses in detail the seemingly overlap situation of postposition and case marker in Manipuri oblique cases. Finally, it examines the main differences between English and Manipuri case systems.

4.1 The role of case and case assignment

The role of case as a system of inflectional forms of a noun is to 'mark the function of an NP relative to the construction containing it' (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002). Hockett (as cited in: Mel'cuk, 1985) insists that marking subject-predicate-object relations is “the quintessence of a case-system”. Cross-linguistically, one and the same case can mark a huge variety of grammatical relations (Mel’cuk, 1985).

- nominative can mark the role of the grammatical subject (as in Latin, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, English,
Turkish, etc.), the direct object in an ergative construction (as in Georgian), etc.

- **Accusative** marks the direct object i.e., the 'patient' main object of a transitive verb; the object of a preposition, etc.

- **Dative** marks the indirect object of a verb (destination, addressee, experiencer), especially of verbs of 'giving'; an object of a preposition; the grammatical subject in the so-called affective construction.

- **Instrumental** marks the agent with the passive; the grammatical subject in the ergative construction, the object of a preposition.

- **Genitive** marks the adnominal attribute; the direct object after a negated transitive verb; the main object of some verbs; an object of a preposition and the grammatical subject in an ergative construction.

Case can be assigned in at least three different ways which are called **semantic, functional / structural / configurational, and lexical / idiosyncratic / inherent case assignment**.

**Semantic** case is assigned usually to adverbs of time or duration. **Functional / structural / configurational** case is 'what is widely referred to as regular or 'default' case marking, which results in nominative subjects and accusative objects.' (Zaenen et al. 1990).
Lexical / quirky / inherent / idiosyncratic case is specially assigned by the lexical item (verb or preposition), and depends on "the idiosyncratic lexical properties of the item these case assignments must therefore be entered in the lexicon as a part of the item's subcategorization information (Babby, 1986). It is an oblique case that is assigned lexically.

4.2 Case in English

Unlike Manipuri, whose inflectional case system consists of nine cases, present-day English is a language whose nouns are not case-marked. Only the English pronominal system can be said to have the grammatical category of case.

According to the most current view, the English noun has a two-case system: the unmarked common case (girl) and the marked genitive case (sister's). Such a view dates back as far as Jespersen (Quirk et al. 1985). There is a common case corresponding to nominative and objective in pronouns and a genitive case (Jespersen 1964). It is accepted by the contemporary grammarians (Quirk et al. 1985, Huddleston and Pullum 2002) who remark that this distinction is not really a case distinction in Present-day English, although it is a relic of a former case system (Quirk et al. 1985). On the other hand,
there are also many scholars who deny the English 's form the status of case (Mel'uk, 1985). The English case system is richer in Curme's view (1979) who gives a list of four cases: nominative, accusative, dative and genitive.

According to the traditional account, in spite of there being no inflectional distinction between the noun *boy* in the first and the second sentence, *boy* in (1a) is said to be in nominative case and in (1b) in accusative case:

(1a) The boy kissed the girl.

(1b) They saw the boy.

Unlike the nominal, the English pronominal system is inflected for case. The grammatical category of case consists of: the genitive (*my, mine, etc.*), nominative (*I, we, he, she, they, who*) and accusative (*me, him, her, us, them, whom*). Only the five personal pronouns *I, we, he, she, they* and the wh-pronoun *who* make the distinction between the latter two cases. These cases are sometimes called subjective and objective, respectively (Quirk et al. 1985). However, using these terms may create confusion. Therefore, we will follow Huddleston and Pullum (2002) and call these cases nominative and accusative. As for the dative, the present system of English pronouns has lost this case. The loss of inflectional endings has resulted in this
case dropping out of the system altogether, for it is not even retained in the personal pronoun:

(2a) We took him to the zoo. [direct object; accusative case]
(2b) We showed him the animals. [indirect object; accusative case]

Generally, in English, the nominative case is a case whose primary function is to mark the subject of transitive and intransitive clauses, while the accusative is a case whose primary function is to mark the direct object of a transitive clause. But, it should be emphasised that the nominative is not exclusively restricted to subject function, just as the accusative is not exclusively restricted to object function and not excluded from marking the subject (Jespersen 1964, Quirk et al. 1985, Huddleston and Pullum 2002). The subject of a finite clause is the only function where pronouns appear exclusively in the nominative.

(3a) I wrote a story.
(3b) *Me wrote a story.

However, when a subject of a finite clause is a coordinated NP, the pronoun forming the part of that NP can be in the accusative case in informal style. As Quirk et al. (1985) suggest the reason for it may be the idea of “object territory” (see below): the pronoun does not
immediately precede the verb, or if it does, it does not trigger verb agreement.

(4a) Him and Mary are going abroad for a holiday.

(4b) Mary and him are going abroad for a holiday.

When the subject is not the subject of a finite clause, it can either be nominative or accusative. Which case is used depends both on:

- the position of a pronoun in the sentence. As Quirk et al. (1985) suggest ‘there is a broad division of a finite clause into ‘SUBJECT TERRITORY’ (the preverbal subject position) and ‘OBJECT TERRITORY’ (which includes all noun-phrase positions apart from that immediately preceding the verb)’ and

- the style: nominative subjects are preferred in formal style, while accusative subjects are regarded as natural in informal style.

Linguists have been virtually unanimous in accepting that English has two case forms for nouns and most pronouns and three for personal pronouns.

The two forms for nouns are:
The common unmarked form i.e. common case (e.g. Ram, the boy, the boys) which is used in both subject and object positions, and

(ii) the genitive form 's which often corresponds to the of - construction (the ship's name corresponding to the name of the ship).

The three cases for personal pronouns are presented in the following paradigm:

Subjective I we he she they who
Objective me us him her them whom
Genitive my our his her their whose

II Genitive

English nouns have the marked genitive case (boy's).

(5a) What is the ship's name?

(5b) Where is the Mahatma Gandhi's statue?

The genitive is favoured by the animate nouns and certain kinds of inanimate nouns. The following four animate noun classes normally show genitive case:

(a) Personal names: Mahatma Gandhi's statue

(b) Personal nouns: the boy's new pen.
(c) Collective nouns: the government's policy
the country's economy
spectator's empathy

(d) Higher animals: the horse's tail

The following inanimate nouns also show the genitive case:

(e) Geographical and institutional names:
England's future, the school's history

(f) Temporal nouns
Today's news, a moment's thought

(g) Nouns of special interest to human activity
The body's vital drives and activities......
Broca's area, a part of the cortex related to speech.

4.3 Case in Manipuri

There is widespread disagreement among the grammarians about the number of cases in Manipuri. Thoudam (1996) recognizes nominative, accusative, instrumental, genitive, particularisation, and locative cases for Manipuri nouns. Bhat and Ningomba (1997) discusses the five primary case suffixes in Manipuri: nominative, accusative, locative, genitive and conjunctive. They discuss that de “dative”, ne “instrumental” and degi “ablative” etc are the extended

4.3.1 Manipuri case system shows ergative pattern

Although the Manipuri grammarians strongly recommend Manipuri has nominative case pattern, this thesis will disagree their views.

Ergative: Grammatical pattern in which the subject of an intransitive verb [S] receives the same morphological treatment as the object of a transitive verb [O], while the subject of the transitive verb receives different treatment [A] (Van Valin 1993).

(6a) cawba-Ø  kæphre

Cawba-ABS. cry-PERF.ASP.

Chaoba cried.

(6b) tomba-na cawba-Ø phuy

Tomba-ERG. Cawba-ABS. beat-SIM.ASP.

Tomba beats Chaoba.
Ergative pattern is obvious in such ordinary independent subject predicate constructions. The subject (S) "cawbe" of intransitive verb in (6a) receives the same morphological treatment as the object [O] "cawbe" of transitive verb in (6b).

However, there are some inconsistencies in the analysis of Manipuri case system. These inconsistencies are discussed below:

I Unmarked subject

The subject [A] of the transitive verb may not be marked overtly.

(7a) meytəy - Ø  cak-Ø  cay  
Meitei-null case  rice-null case  eat-SIM.ASP.
Meitei eats rice (habitual).

(7b) tombə-Ø  ca-Ø  thəki  
Tomba-null case  tea-null case  drink-SIM.ASP
Tomba drinks tea (habitual).

(7c) øy- Ø  cak-Ø  care  
I-null case  rice-null case  eat-PERF.ASP.
I ate rice.
The subjects of transitive verbs in the above examples are not marked overtly. Sentences 7a and 7b indicate habitual meaning. In such sentences subject is not marked.

The argument structure of verbs in (7c) and (7d) is [+animate, -animate]. These arguments are not ambiguous. We can understand that the argument [+animate] is the agent from the information present in the local elements. Thus, subjects are not marked for case overtly.

II The question of -ne

The suffix -ne can occur with the subject of intransitive verbs.

(8a) øy-ne catkæni

I- go-ASSUM.

It's going to be I who goes (and not others).

The suffix -ne in the above sentence is enclitic used to indicate contrastive values (Chelliah, 1997).
It was Tomba who cried (not others).

It was Tomba who ate the rice (not others).

It indicates that out of a group of people no one else but the actor is the candidate in the performance of the act indicated by the entire verbal predicate. Therefore -ne in the above sentence is not a case marker. Here, we note that -ne added to the subject of intransitive verb is not a case marker; therefore subject of intransitive verb remains unmarked for case.

III The question of -bu

The suffix -bu seems to be accusative marker in the following sentence.

Tomba ill-treats (specially) Cawba.
According to Sharatchandra the suffix -bu indicates specificity and it is not an accusative marker. Again, according to Chelliah (1997) it is the adversative marker or contrary to expectation.

(9b)  cak-pu    hundokle

  rice-ADVS.  throw-PERF.ASP.

  Contrary to expectation, (he /they) threw away the rice.

  From the above discussion we conclude that -bu ~ -pu is not a case marker. Since -bu is not a case marker, the object of transitive verb remains unmarked for case receiving the same treatment as the subject of intransitive verb in 6a. From the discussion I, II and III it is concluded that unlike English the case system of Manipuri shows ergative pattern.

4.3.2 Oblique cases in Manipuri

  While English has one oblique case: genitive, Manipuri has seven oblique cases. These cases are:

  instrumental -mə

  dative      -də~ -tə

  locative    -də~ -tə
associative -gə~-kə

genitive -gi~-ki

benefactive -gi~-ki

ablative -dəgi

We may ask whether the case markers are themselves P (preposition) head. In some environment it seems that the case marker is just the P head, which has been adjoined syntactically or morphologically to the nominal stem.

(10) (əy-ə) tombə-de layrik-ə pire

(I-ERG.) Tomba-DAT. book-ABS. give-PERF.ASP.

I gave Tomba a book.

Here, -də "DATIVE" seems to be both postposition as well as the case marker i.e. the P head itself is the case marker. Parenthesis indicates that the pronoun can be dropped. However, there is a reason to doubt this simple analysis. First of all, Manipuri has a number of clear postpositions. When overt postpositions do appear in Manipuri, their objects still bear a case marking suffix.
The proposition stated by the above sentences are identical in meaning. The only difference is the overt postposition appeared in 11b. Therefore, we cannot assume that -da is the postposition as well as a case marker. Again, dative -da cannot join singular personal pronouns (*ey “I", norj “you", and ma “he / she") without the postposition -rjon “to”.

(12a) *ey-de peysa-Ø pire
I-DAT. money-ABS. give-PERF.ASP.
He gave me money.

(12b) ma-ṇon-de peysa-Ø pire
she-PO.-DAT. money-ABS. give-PERF.ASP.
Somebody gave her money.
(12c) น่า*นิยม-ดํ ง ผู้ส้-ø ใจ
you-PO.-DAT. money-ABS. give-PERF.ASP.
Somebody gave you money.

In 12a *ฤ-ดํ "I-DAT" is ungrammatical so as *น่า*นิยม-ดํ "you-DAT" *

*ฤ-ดํ "he/she-DAT". In order to add dative marker -ดํ to these singular personal pronouns postposition -นํ "to" is added as in 12b. Therefore, we can state that oblique case markers are not themselves P head but occur in addition to them. When adpositions do not appear overtly we prefer to assume that the P head is null in the prepositional phrase (PP).

In line with Invisible Category Principle (Edmond’s 1987), this null P (preposition) determines the shape of the case marker inserted. Invisible Category Principle, which is a broad condition on the insertion of null and non-null variants of particular heads in the morphology. Essentially, a null head can be inserted only when its content can be recovered from the information presented in other local elements. This is intended to cover phenomenon like pro-drop where verbal agreement allows the insertion of null pronominal forms in subject position. But it also works here because the content of the noun phrase is sufficient to identify the null adposition. So in
Manipuri there are Ps that assign dative, locative, instrumental, associative, benefactive, genitive, and ablative to their complements, and yet are themselves null.

I Instrumental -nde

The instrumentality of an action is expressed by case marker -nde which is homophonous to ergative marker and contrastive marker.

(13a) (ey-∅) than-nde tilhew soy

(I-ERG.) knife-INST. onion chop-SIM.ASP.

I chop the onion with a knife.

(13b) tomba-∅ pensil-nde cithi-∅ ire

Tomba-ERG. pencil-INST. letter-ABS. write-PERF.ASP.

Tomba wrote a letter with a pencil.

II Dative marker -de

Dative marker -de is homophonous to locative marker (see in III below). It marks the nouns having the role of recipient (as of things given), beneficiary of an action, or possessor of an item.

(14a) Recipient or beneficiary:
I gave Rs 20 to Tomba.

(14b) Possessor of an item:

I have (posses) a good dictionary.

III Locative -de

It expresses location at the referent of the nouns it marks.

(i) Location of an object:

I put the book on the table.

I will go to market.
(ii) Time or period specified as location:

(15c) ay-Ø puŋ tøra-ðø lakke

I-ABS. time ten-LOC. come-mood.

I will come at 10 o'clock.

(15d) ay-Ø aperiðø lakke

I-ABS. April-LOC. come-mood.

I will come in April.

IV Associative marker - ge

It is used to denote that the action has been performed in conjunction with another person.

(16a) ay-Ø tombe-ge lakle

I-ABS. Tomba-ASSO. come-PERF.ASP.

I came with Tomba.

(16b) cawbe-Ø tombi-ge lakle

Chaoba-ABS. Tombi-ASSO. come-PERF.ASP.

Chaoba came with Tombi.

Both the members of the conjunction may also be marked by this marker.
(16c) ṣey-ɡә  tombe-ɡә  lakle

I-ASSO. Tomba-ASSO. come-PERF.ASP.

Tomba and I came.

V Genitive marker- ɡi

Genitive is used to indicate the referent of the marked noun is the possessor of the referent of another noun.

(17a) ṣey-ɡi  layrik

I-GEN. book
my book.

(17b) nәŋ-ɡi  sәgol

you-GEN. horse
your horse.

Genitive is also used to express an associative relation between the marked noun and another noun.

(18a) yum-ɡi  mәmaŋ

house-GEN. front
the front of the house.
(18b) u-gi mësa

tree-GEN. branch
the branch of a tree.

(18c) øy-gi øysøk

I-GEN. style of singing
my style of singing.

VI Benefactive marker - gi

It expresses that the referent of the noun it marks receives the
benefit of the situation expressed by the clause.

(19a) øy-Ø tombø-gi nangni

I-ABS. Tomba-BENE. speak-SIM.ASP.

I speak for Tomba.

(19b) mehak-Ø løypak-ki khelli

he/she-ABS. country-BENE. think-SIM.ASP.

He/she thinks for country.

VII Ablative marker - dei
gi

It is used to express a variety of meanings including:
in comparison of instrument

separation

source

time, etc.

(20a) nəŋgi than-degi øygi nəŋməyne henna phəy

your sword-ABL. my gun-CONT. much better

It is my gun which is much better than your sword.

(20b) 1947-de indiya-degi pakistan khaydokle

1947-LOC.India-ABL. Pakistan separate-PERF.ASP.

In 1947 Pakistan was separated from India.

(20c) tombə-dagi wari-Ø tare

Tomba-ABL. story-ABS. hear-PERF.ASP.

I heard the story from Tomba.

(20d) puŋ təra-degi sinema-Ø yəŋlini

time ten-ABL. cinema-ABS. watch-PROG.ASP.-COP

I have been watching the movie from 10 o’clock.
4.4 Conclusion

English case system shows nominative–accusative pattern for pronouns. By contrast, Manipuri case system shows ergative pattern for all nouns and pronouns. This contrast between ergative and accusative systems can be schematically represented as the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manipuri</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>absolutive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>absolutive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>ergative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Where, O = object of transitive verb (also symbolized as P for 'patient'), S = subject of intransitive verb, A = agent of transitive verb.

The examples below show English nominative–accusative case pattern:

(21a) she hits him

she-NOM. hits he-ACC.

She hits him.

(21b) she cried

she-NOM. cried.

She cried.

The examples below show Manipuri ergative–absolutive case pattern.
(22a) mēma-ne mēca-∅ nurṣi

mother-ERG. her child-ABS. love-SIM.ASP.

Mother loves her baby.

(22b) eŋŋa-∅ kəp-le

child-ABS. cry-PERF.ASP.

The child cried.

English nouns have two cases: the unmarked common case (girl) and the marked genitive case (sister's). By contrast, we have seen that Manipuri nouns and pronouns show nine cases.

The object of adposition in English is not marked for case (except genitive corresponding to of-construction: the ship's name corresponding to the name of the ship), although abstract and functional view of case still exist. By contrast, it has been indicated that the object of adposition in Manipuri is marked overtly. So Manipuri has seven oblique cases.