A Study of Some Syntactic Characteristics in War Khasi

Abstract

By

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This research work tries to study on some of the syntactic characteristics of War Khasi. This study is restricted only to War Khasi spoken in Dewsawlia village and hence data are collected from native speakers of the variety of War Khasi of Dewsawlia. The main focuses of this research work are:-

(i) To analyze and describe the case system in War Khasi and to specify the different case markers in War Khasi.
(ii) To analyze and describe the syntactic characteristics of Tense Aspect and Mood in War Khasi.
(iii) To analyze and describe the patterns of Agreement in War Khasi.

1.7 Chapter 1 of this thesis gives a brief introduction of Meghalaya. It also discusses on the genetic classification of the Khasi language and presents the introduction of War Dewsawlia and its typological classification. From this chapter we can observe the following:-

(i) Khasi has many dialects and varieties. War Dewsawlia is one of the dialects of War Khasi which is spoken in the southern part of the Khasi hills District.
(ii) Agriculture is the main source of livelihood of the people living in Dewsawlia and practice permanent cultivation. Bettle nut, bettle leaf broom and Fruits are the main crop cultivated by the inhabitants of
peoples in Dewsawlia. It is located on the southern slope of the Khasi hills and the climate is very hot in summer and mild warm in winter.

(iii) From the typological features above we can observe that War Dewsawlia share almost similar feature like the standard Khasi.

Chapter 2 presents the review of literature on some syntactic characteristics which includes case, tense, aspect, mood and agreement which has been made by different authors and linguists on the above syntactic characteristics.

From this chapter we can observe that different scholars give different views on case. Most scholars talk about the Nominative-Accusative case system and the Ergative-Absolutive case system and most of them point out that Nominative-Accusative case system is quite common when compared to ergative-absolutive case system. Most Scholars view case as the property of the head noun. However, in Generative Grammar case is seen as an abstract property of a noun or a noun phrase.

Most linguists and authors claim that English has only two tense systems i.e. past and present.

Regarding aspect most of the authors argue that English has two aspects i.e. the perfective and the progressive.

When comes to mood or modality most authors and linguists argue mood is expressed by auxiliaries which are known as modal auxiliaries.

Regarding agreement there is a parametric variation between languages in relation to agreement as Baker (2008) points out. There are languages which are very rich in agreement like French and Italian as Haegeman (1991) point outs whereas there are
languages which are very poor in agreement as English. The main agreement features listed by many scholars are the Phi Feature i.e. person, number and gender.

Chapter 3 discusses on the case system, case markers, and the phonological changes of case markers. In the analysis it was found that War Dewsawlia exhibits case forms of two types:

(i) Where case markers are morphologically attached to the nouns with distinct gender markers,

(ii) Where case markers are seen as prepositional heads occurring before the noun phrase.

The first form of case marking processes is conditioned by certain phonological processes. When we look into the first four case marking system which include accusative, dative, instrumental, and ablative we can see that all case markers end up in a vowel. For example: Accusative case marker is ja, dative marker is ha, instrumental is da, and ablative is da. On the other hand, all nouns are marked for grammatical gender. Masculine marker is u and feminine marker is ka.

Therefore, we can assume the following morphophonemic rule to take place when case markers and gender markers are juxtaposed together.

1. Fusion or coalescence

(a) Accusative case markers

ja (underlying accusative case marker) + ka (feminine gender marker) → ja or ja ka
ja (underlying accusative case marker) + u (masculine gender marker) → ju
(b) Dative case markers

ha (underlying dative case marker) + ka (feminine gender marker) \(\rightarrow\) ha or ha ka
ha (underlying dative case marker) + u (masculine gender marker) \(\rightarrow\) hu

(c) Instrumental case markers

da (underlying instrumental case marker) + ka (feminine gender marker) \(\rightarrow\) da or da ka

da (underlying instrumental case marker) + u (masculine gender marker) \(\rightarrow\) du or dau

(d) Ablative case markers

da (underlying ablative case marker) + u (masculine gender marker) \(\rightarrow\) dau

2. Glottal stop insertion

Accusative case markers

ja (underlying accusative case marker) + na (first person singular) \(\rightarrow\) ja? na
ja (underlying accusative case marker) + ci (first person plural) \(\rightarrow\) ja? ci

ja (underlying accusative case marker) + p\(^b\)ei (second person) \(\rightarrow\) ja? p\(^b\)ei

3. Deletion

Ablative case markers

da (underlying ablative case marker) + ka (feminine gender marker) \(\rightarrow\) da?

Chapter 4 discusses on some of the syntactic characteristics of Verbs which includes tense, aspect, mood and agreement patterns in the variety and also the syntactic behavior of a certain verbs according to their semantics in the sentence.

From the above analyses we observe the following:
In War Dewsawlia, **present tense** and **past tense** are not overtly marked. However, similar to Standard Khasi (Lyngdoh 2011), War Dewsawlia also exhibits two **future tense** markers: –n for immediate future and –n sa? for remote future.

There are three **aspectual** markers in War Dewsawlia naŋ for progressive or imperfective and la? for perfective, ṭun and cʰait for habitual aspect. Repetition of la? after the verb phrase or post-sententially is allowed in War Dewsawlia. However, this repetition is optional since the co-occurrence of la?₁ and la?₂ brings the meaning of emphasis upon the completion of the action.

The indicative **mood** is unmarked in War Dewsawlia, imperative is marked by ma and subjunctive is marked by da. Modality can also be expressed by the particle la? and hap and also by the auxiliary dei. la? indicates permission, possibility and ability whereas, dei and hap indicates necessity.

War Dewsawlia exhibits subject verb agreement. The verb shows agreement in **person, number** and **gender**. Determiners agree with their head noun in terms of number and gender. Adjectives also agree with their head noun in terms of PNG (person, number and gender).

In War Dewsawlia there are sets of verbs that carry sameness of meaning but are represented by different morphemes. These are used differently for different context. Moreover, one cannot replace the other since in the context where they are not allowed to occur, they becomes meaningless.