Subordination: A Perspective of Manipuri Embedded Clause Structures

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Abstract: Manipuri, being one of the Tibeto-Burman languages has a very unique place among the languages of the world. It has its own literatures and grammars and also is the richest preserver of the heritage of old literature than any other languages in Manipur, a north-eastern state of India. The present paper studies the syntactic structures regarding the various forms of embedded clauses prevailing in Manipuri. The analysis exhibits the facts that all the embedded clauses in Manipuri are constructed through the addition of nominalizer, quotative and nominalizer along with case markers. This paper also discusses structural and functional classification of embedded clauses in Manipuri. Structurally, embedded clauses are composed of by adding nominalizers, quotatives and nominalizers along with case markers. Functionally embedded clauses in a matrix sentence perform the function of nouns, adjectives and adverbs.

Subordination

Subordination is a non-symmetrical relation, holding between two clauses- an independent, capable of existing as a complete sentence and a dependent, capable of making up a grammatical sentence only when subordinated to a further clause. Subordination is between the two clauses in such a way that the dependent clause is a constituent or part of the independent clause that is, one of the parts is clearly more salient or important, while the other part is in some sense subordinate.

In subordination, one may see subordination as the ‘downgrading’ of a clause to a clause to the status of a sub-clausal unit (Quirk. et. al, 1972). The device of subordination enables one to organize multiple clause structures.

Embedded clauses

In the formation of complex sentences, a matrix clause consisting of at least an NP and a VP and an embedded clause with its various forms, takes part in the construction of Manipuri complex sentences. The embedded clause here always takes subordinators formed by case markers (like, locative -tə~-də, genitive -ki~-gi, associative -kə~gə and ablative -səgi~-dəgi), lexical subordinators (such as, pʰaubs ‘upto’ and kandes ‘at the time of’) and suffix subordinators (such as, demonstrative -ti~də, and the suffix -su).
Embedded clauses, in Manipuri are constructed by adding nominalizers to the non-inflected verbal root of the clause, quotatives after the verb of the clause and nominalizers along with case markers after the verb of the clause. Embedded clauses may be classified as structural type, that is, in terms of the elements they themselves contain and functional type, that is, the structural position they have in the super ordinate clause.

**Structural classification**

Structurally, an embedded clause in Manipuri is constructed by three basic forms. The three forms which are significant in embedded clause constructions are as follows:

i) by nominalizers suffixing to a non-inflected verb;
ii) by complementizers suffixing to the nominalized clause;
iii) by nominalizers along with case markers suffixing to the verb.

**Embedded clauses formed by nominalizers**

In Manipuri, verbs in embedded clauses are nominalized in a number of ways and they function as modifying part, or nominalized complements. The nominalizers are the suffix -\(p\omega-b\omega\) and lexical-\(jat\) ‘type’ and \(pot\) ‘thing’. The nominalizing suffix -\(p\omega-b\omega\) has a number of cognates in some Tibeto-Burman languages. This suffix reveals functional similarities with that of Lahu -‘\(ve\)’ at least as a nominalizer and as a subordinator. A language spoken in Nepal, Thulung Rai employs -\(mu\), -\(m\), -\(mim\), -\(kom\) as different nominalizers (Lahaussois, 2003). But Angami has a single nominalizing morpheme \(k\omega\)- (Herring, 1991). A Bodish language namely Chantyal employs -\(wa\) nominalizer for multifarious functional (Noonan, 1997). The formation of embedded clauses by adding nominalizers in Manipuri is illustrated as follows.

1(a). \(\eta\) lak-p\(\omega\) i \(k\Theta-h\Theta\)ni
\(\eta\) lak-p\(\omega\) i \(k\Theta-h\Theta-i\)
you come-NZR I know-ASP
‘I know your coming’.

(b). m\(\omega\)hak mi hat\(\omega\)-gi \(\text{d}\)\(\text{\ddot{e}}\)\(\text{n}\)i p\(\theta\)-\(\text{\ddot{e}}\)\(\text{\ddot{e}}\)ni
m\(\omega\)hak mi hat-p\(\omega\)-gi \(\text{d}\)\(\text{\ddot{e}}\)\(\text{\ddot{e}}\)ni
he person kill-NZR-GEN punishment get-NZR-COP
‘He got punishment for murder’.
As a fact that the structure of subordinate clauses is first nominalized with nominalizing morpheme -p~b as in 1(a), 1(b) and 1(c) and with lexical nominalizers, jat ‘type’ and pot ‘thing’ as in 1(d) and 1(e).

**Embedded clauses formed by quotatives**

Quotatives in Manipuri derived from the verb root hai ‘say’ through the addition of the suffixes such as haibə, hainə, haibodu, hairidu, hairidubusu, hainasu, hainəbu, hainədum, haidunəsə, etc. take part in the construction of embedded clauses. The quotative is used to subordinate a clause that represents statements made by someone other than the speaker or statements about the desires, wishes, or intentions of someone other than the speaker (Chelliah, 1997). Illustrative examples are given below.

2(a). ram hələke haibə o i tai

ram həl-lək-e hai-ə bo o i tə-i

Ram return-INCT-ASP say-NZR I hear-ASP

‘I hear that Ram has returned’.
(b). ramnō linguistikst āmbi hainō əi kʰəl-i
    ramnō linguistikst āmbi hai-nə əi kʰəl-i
Ram-ERG linguistics teach say-ADV I think-ASP
‘I think that Ram teaches linguistics’.

The quotatives -haibə and -hainə make complement to the subordinate clauses which already have complete sense or thought, i.e. ram hələke ‘Ram has returned’ in 2(a) and ramnə linguistikst āmbi ‘Ram teaches linguistics’ in 2(b) are the complement embedded clauses and they are made complement by the quotatives -haibə and -hainə respectively; and for this the two quotatives are treated as sentential complements.

**Embedded clauses formed by nominalizers with case markers**

The nominalizer -pə~bə along with case markers enable one to construct embedded clauses in Manipuri. The whole clause gets first nominalized and as a continuing process respective case markers are added as analyzed in the following examples.

3(a). məpa lakpədəgi caubə cenkʰre
    mə-pa lak-pə-də-gi caubə cen-kʰ-re
3PP-father come-NZR-ABL Chaoba run-DEF-PERF
‘Chaoba has run away as his father came’.

(b). hek lakpə-gə nən-gi hənəbdi du təurəbə
    hek lak-pə-gə nən-gi hənəb-da təurə-bə
just come-NZR-ASS you-GEN nature-DEM do-PROG-NZR-INT
‘Did you do as soon as you just arrive?’

It is clearly noticed from the sentences cited in (3) that the nominalizing morpheme -pə~bə along with different case markers construct various embedded clauses. It is also fact that the whole embedded clause is first nominalized and as a continuing process respective case markers are added.

Case markers such as ablative -dəgi in 3(a) and associative -gə in 3(b) are employed. Again as a nominalized clause sentences given below can be considered.
4(a).  
mi ənidu sire  
mi əni-du si-re  
person two-DEM die-PERF  
‘The two persons have died’.

(b).  
mi ənidu ḷəraŋ pʰa-kʰi  
mi əni-du ḷəraŋ pʰa-kʰi  
person two-DEM yesterday arrest-PERF  
‘The two men were arrested yesterday’.

(c).  ḷəraŋ pʰa-kʰi-bə mi ənidu sire  
ṣrəŋ  pʰa-kʰi-bə mi əni-du si-re  
yesterday arrest-PERF-NZR person two-DEM die-PERF  
‘The two persons whom were arrested yesterday have died’.

It signifies that sentence 4(b) is embedded in 4(a) as a modifier of the noun phrase nupa ənidu ‘the two persons’ to get the sentence 4(c) where the main clause mi ənidu sire ‘the two persons have died’ signifies the focal prediction of the subordinate clause. In sentence 4(c) above, the entire main clause mi ənidu sire ‘the two persons have died’ is modified by the embedded clause ḷəraŋ pʰa-kʰi-bə ‘who were arrested yesterday’ as a modifier, i.e. ‘who are the two persons died’ is modified by the clause ‘they were the ones arrested yesterday’.

Functional classification

Subordinate clauses are embedded as a constituent of the matrix sentence and they function like a noun, adjective and adverb.

Subordinate noun clauses

Subordinate noun clauses, on the basis of grammatical function in syntactic structures, perform the function of a noun being used in subject and object positions of the verb in the matrix sentences. In the following sentences, embedded clauses occur in the subject position of the verb.
Subordinate noun clauses in subject position

5(a). \[m\text{hakn}\text{haib}\text{du}] \text{cumde}
\begin{align*} m\text{hak-n} & \quad \text{hai-b-}\text{du} \quad \text{cum-de-i} \\
he-\text{ERG} & \quad \text{say-NZR-DEM} \quad \text{be true-NEG-ASP} \
\end{align*}
‘What he said is not true’.

(b). \[n\text{ndu} \quad p^h\text{aj-i}
\begin{align*} n\text{n} & \quad \text{ndu} \quad p^h\text{aj-i} \\
you-\text{ERG} & \quad \text{speak-PROG-DEM} \quad \text{be nice-ASP} \
\end{align*}
‘What you are speaking is nice’.

Evidence is that the clause \(m\text{hakn}\text{haib}\text{du}\) ‘what he said’ in sentence 5(a) performs the function of a noun being used as the subject of the verb \(\text{cumde}\) ‘be true+NEG+ASP’. The clause \(m\text{hakn}\text{haib}\text{du}\) ‘what he said’ is an embedded nominalized noun clause which directly precedes the main verb \(\text{cumde}\) ‘be true+NEG+ASP’ and functions as a noun that is, the sentence can be as \(\text{wap}^h\text{mdu} \quad \text{cumde}\) ‘The word is not true’. In this sentence \(\text{wap}^h\text{mdu}\) ‘word+DEM’ acts as subject of the verb \(\text{cumde}\) ‘be true+NEG+ASP’ and the subject can be replaced by the clause \(m\text{hakn}\text{haib}\text{du}\) ‘what he said’ and hence the clause acts as embedded noun clause. The underlying sentence structure might be as \(m\text{hakn}\text{haib} \quad \text{wadu} \quad \text{cumde}\) ‘what he said is not true’. The sentence is possible to shorten by dropping the word \(\text{wap}^h\text{m}\) however, the very demonstrative \(-\text{du}\) remains attached to the derived noun \text{haib} ‘say+NZR’.

Subordinate noun clauses in object position

Subordinate noun clauses in object position of the verb are illustrated by the examples given below.

6(a). \(m\text{hakn}\text{dak}\text{t}\text{oib}\text{m}\text{man}\text{pammi}
\begin{align*} m\text{hak-n} & \quad \text{dak-t} \quad \text{oib} \quad \text{m-a-n} \quad \text{pam-i} \\
he-\text{ERG} & \quad \text{doctor} \quad \text{be-NZR} \quad \text{3PP-mother-ERG} \quad \text{like-ASP} \
\end{align*}
‘His mother likes that he becomes a doctor’.
Subordinate adjective clauses

Subordinate adjective clause performs the function of an adjective modifying the NP that lies as a head. The following illustrations can be considered.

7(a). əina pambo nupidi ənəni
I-ERG like-NZR woman-DEM you-COP
‘You are the woman whom I like’.

7(b). məhakno əskə isədu mijamnə pammi
he-ERG sing-NZR song-DEM people-ERG like-ASP
‘The song that he sang is liked by all’.

In the illustration of 7(a), the clause can be identified as əina pambo ‘whom I like’ is the embedded clause preceding the NP nupidu ‘woman+DEM’. Since this embedded clause modifies the head NP, the clause becomes an embedded adjective clause.

Again considering 7(b), the clause məhakno əskə ‘that he sang’ precedes the head noun isə ‘song’ and which is modified by the clause. The clause becomes an embedded adjective clause as it modifies the NP.
Subordinate adverb clauses

Subordinate clause functioning as an adverb modifies a verb, an adjective or another adverb and also modifies the entire matrix clause to which the subordinate clause is embedded.

8(a). məhak sonbənə cətpə ɣəmdə
məhak son-bə-nə cət-pə ɣəmd-de-i
  he be weak-NZR-ADV go-NZR be able-NEG-ASP
  ‘He is too weak to go’.

(b). jotti sariŋəidə jëiu
jot-ti sa-ri-ŋə-i-də jëi-u
  iron-DEM be hot-PROG-during-DAT strike-COMD
  ‘Strike the iron while it is hot’.

In sentences 8(a) and 8(b), the subordinate clauses functioning as adverb məhak sonbənə ‘as he is weak’ in 8(a) and jotti sariŋəidə ‘when the iron is hot’ in 8(b) modify the very main clause cətpə ɣəmdə ‘unable to go’ and jëi ‘strike’ respectively. In fact, the proposition of the subordinate clause is the reason for the proposition of the main clause and therefore modifies.

Again subordinate clause functioning as adverb clause modifies the adjective and the main clause, which is shown in the examples given below.

9(a). təupʰəm kʰəŋəŋəbənə məhak ɲaure
təu-pʰəm kʰəŋə-ŋə-bənə məhak ɲau-re
  do-place know-NEG-NZR-ADV he be mad-PERF
  ‘He is mad as he has nothing to do’.

(b). məsək tʰiməŋəbənə məhak ikaire
mə-sək tʰi-mə-ŋə-bənə məhak ikai-re
  3PP-face be ugly-excess-NZR-ADV she shy-PERF
  ‘She feels shy as she is quite ugly’.
In sentence 9(a), it is observed that the clause $təp^nəm kʰɛʔdəbənə$ ‘as he has nothing to do’ functions as an adverb clause modifying the main verb $ŋaore$ ‘be made+PERF’. It is therefore, the subordinate clause $təp^nəm kʰɛʔdəbənə$ becomes the reason for the occurrence of the main clause $məhak ŋaore$, that is, the proposition of the subordinate clause is the reason for the proposition of the main clause and therefore modifies.

Similarly in 9(b), the clause $məsək tʰimənbənə$ ‘as she is quite ugly’ functions as an adverb which modifies the adjective $ikaire$ ‘be shame+PERF’ and as well as the clause itself becomes the reason for the occurrence of the main clause $məhak ikaire$ ‘she feels shy’. It is therefore, the proposition of subordinate clause $məsək tʰimənbənə$ ‘as she is quite ugly’ is the reason for the occurrence of the main clause $məhak ikaire$ ‘she feels shy’ and is modified.

The subordinate clause which functions as an adverb also modifies another adverb in the larger sentence. Examples:

10(a). $təp^nəlakpənəməhak kʰɛʔɛ tʰɛɲi$

$təp-nə$ $lak-pə-nə$ $məhak$ $kʰɛʔɛ$ $tʰɛɲ-i$

be slow-ADV come-NZR-ADV he some be late-ASP

‘He got something late since he came slowly’.

(b). $sau-nəcət-kʰi-bə-nəməhak jəm-nətʰu-i$

$sau-nə$ $cət-kʰi-bə-nə$ $məhak$ $jəm-nə$ $tʰu-i$

be angry-ADV go-PERF-NZR-ADV he very-ADV be quick-ASP

‘He is very quick since he has gone angrily’.

Considering the example in 10(a) it can be noticed that the subordinate clause functioning as adverb shows close grammatical relationships with the main clause itself. The main clause $məhak kʰɔrə tʰɛɲi$ ‘he got something late’ is modified by the subordinate clause $təp^nəlakpənə$ ‘since he came slowly’. It expresses the reason for getting himself late that is, because of coming slowly and hence becomes a proposition which binds a reason for the occurrence of both the clauses.
Similarly, in 10(b), the subordinate clause functioning as adverb clause *sauna catkʰibənə* ‘since he went angrily’ modifies the main clause *məhak jamnə tʰui* ‘he is very quick’ expressing the reason why he is very quick, that is, because of going angrily and hence a close relation with each clauses.

It is clear that subordinate noun clauses being used in subject and object positions perform the functions of a noun. Subordinate adjective clauses, on the other hand, are prenominal embedded clauses that modify the NP which occurs in the same sentence. In some other case, the order of the position of the adjective clause is also possible to occur after the NP. But the adjective clause precedes the matrix (main) clause. Subordinate clause functioning as adverb in Manipuri is found as causal clause, conditional clause as well as permissive clause under semantic classification.

Case markers such as associative (-kə~gə), genitive (-ki~gi), locative (-tə~də) and ablative (-təgi~dəgi) derive clausal subordinators following a pattern that is common in Tibeto-Burman languages, as noted by Konow (1909).

The associative case marker -kə~gə is used to create an adverbial clause which signals a temporal sequence of events. The genitive marker -ki~gi can be suffixed to a nominalized verb to indicate a clause of purpose. The locative marker -tə~də may be suffixed to a nominalized verb to indicate a time clause with the meaning of ‘when verb+ing’. The ablative marker -təgi~dəgi is used to form a subordinate clause which gives an explanation for a current state that has just come into being. It can be translated as ‘resulting from verb’.

11(a). [məhak lakpəgə] kəpʰ-re

məhak lak-pə-gə kəp-kʰ-re
she come-NZR-ASS cry-DEF-PERF
‘She started crying as she arrived’.

(b). [nəŋə haibəgi] əi lakpənɪ

nəŋ-nə hai-bə-gi əi lak-pə-ni
you-ERG say-NZR-GEN I come-NZR-COP
‘I have come as you said’.

(c). [nəŋ lakpədəgi] imuŋsi nəŋnəire
‘This family became happy after you have come’.

All these clauses marked with bracket are the subordinate clauses denoting the time to express the matrix clauses. The case markers -gə, -gi, -də and -dəgi as subordinators are held by adding to the clauses such as məhək lakpəgə ‘as she has arrived’ in 11(a), nənə haiβəgi ‘as you said’ in 11(b) and nən lakpədəgi ‘after you have come’ in 11(c). These clauses signaling temporal of events are first nominalized with the morpheme -pə–βə and then case markers are suffixed.

Conclusion

In the light of the above discussion, it is noticed that subordination in Manipuri takes nominalizers to construct embedded clauses. Nominalizers such as suffixal and lexical playing a significant role take part in the construction of embedded clauses. In embedded clauses formed by adding nominalizer along with case markers, the verb of that clause gets first nominalized and as a continuing process respective case markers are added. The entity that lies as the head NP can be kept disguised in subject and object positions of an embedded clause. Subordinate adjective clauses are prenominal. The verb in the matrix clause is modified by the embedded clause in subordinate adverb clauses signaling causal clause, conditional clause and permissive clause.

Abbreviations

2PP  second person pronoun
3PP  third person pronoun
ABL  ablative
ADV  adverb
ASP  aspect
ASS  associative
BEN  benefactive
COP  copula
DAT  dative
DEF  defective
DEM  demonstrative
ERG  ergative
References