International Journal of English and Education
ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:3, Issue:1, January 2014

Copular Clauses in Manipuri

S. Indrakumar Singh, Ph.D. Scholar

Abstract: *The present paper attempts to describe the syntax and semantics of copular clauses in Manipuri. The primary goal of this paper is to identify different types of copular constructions which are very frequently used in Manipuri. It examines for a single underlying semantics of the copula in equative, predicational and specificational sentences in Manipuri. There are notions that the strategies in which two pre-verbal referents are bridged by the different forms of copulative verbs. In Manipuri, the copula -ni functions as a link between the two referents they occurred before the verb. Furthermore, this paper shows that the two NPs in an equative sentence are semantically arguments of the copula and this copula expresses an identity relation between their respective NPs. An equative sentence in Manipuri falls into the categories such as Identification and Class Inclusion. Lastly, predicational and specificational sentences are discussed with the semantic descriptions that specificational sentences are related to predicational sentences and can be syntactically analyzed as predicate inversions.*

1. Introduction

Manipuri, a Tibeto-Burman language is a verb-final language, i.e. the word order is primarily maintained as subject-object-verb and it shares a number of characteristic features of SOV languages. A simple sentence consists of atleast an NP and a VP or a copula that it does not construct complex or compound in it. Very specifically, Manipuri has extensive verb morphology, extensive suffix with more limited prefixation (Yashawanta 2000). No particular order is imposed on arguments instead, word order is syntactically maintained. There are notions such as subject and object can be excluded in description of Manipuri clause structure. Arguments are, in fact freely deleted and as a result, only the verb can consist of a clause since Manipuri allows omission of arguments.

The outline of this paper is as follows: an attempt has been made in §2 of this paper to present a description of the copula in Manipuri. The next section of this paper is devoted to the semantic analysis of equative sentences with the categories of identification and class inclusion. §4 analyses predicational sentences which shows that the property expressed by the predicate NP is predicated of the first referent of the sentence. §5 discusses about the specificational sentences explaining a kind of sentence which specifies the value of the description given by NP1. Finally, §6 summarizes the findings.

As far as the methodology adopted in this paper is concerned, it is a descriptive account of copular clauses in Manipuri. The work explores the different forms of copular clause constructions in Manipuri. Data incorporated in this paper are sourced from the reliable and authoritative books, published or unpublished works, local newspapers, news which is being broadcasted over television and radio, and various conferences held in the university or other academic places. On the basis of these data an attempt has been made to analyze copular clauses in Manipuri.

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:3, Issue:1, January 2014

2. Copula

Copula is not restricted to the verb class. The term "copula" (COP), as a constituent of a copular construction, has been used in typological studies to refer to any morpheme (affix, particle or verb) that links or "couples" a subject with a copula complement in a "family" of constructions, collectively often referred to as "predicate nominal constructions" (Payne 1997). The typological studies across languages have listed four different kinds of copula, such as a verb, a pronoun, an invariant particle or a derivational operation that changes a noun to a verb. World languages have clauses that express functions like equivalence, predication, specification, location, existence and kinship relation.

In copular clause constructions, Manipuri makes use of copula *-ni*. The copula *-ni* has its variant phonological representations, i.e. the allomorphs of *-ni* which are frequently used in copular clauses are *-no, -ne, -ro~-lo* and *-rə~-lə*. The copula *-ni* along with its variant representations are illustrated by the following examples.

1(a). kumar oja̱ni
kumar oja̱-ni
Kumar teacher-COP
'Kumar is a teacher'.

(b). məhak mihatpəne
məhak mihatpə-ne
he murderer-COP
'He is a murderer'.

(c). nəŋ kənano
nəŋ kəna-no
you who-Cop
'Who are you'?

(d). məhak ramlə
məhak ram-lə
he Ram-COP
'Is he Ram'?

(e). mədu ləiro
mədu ləi-ro
that flower-COP
'Is that a flower'?

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:3, Issue:1, January 2014

The copulative variant *-no* is found to use only in wh-questions as an example revealed in the above sentence 1(c) while *-rə~-lə* and *-ro~-lo* are found to use only in yes/no-questions as in the above sentences (d) and (e).

3. Equative sentences

An equative sentence is a term used in grammatical analysis to refer to a type of sentence where the referents of the pre-verbal and post-verbal noun phrases are in a relationship of identity (Crystal 1985). The verb which links referents may be called an equational verb (or a verb with equative function). The equative copular clause has two expressions referring to the same individual and the copular clause establishes this equative relation between the two referents. Usually in English, it is a form of the copula verb 'be'.

Manipuri has equative sentences where the copula verb *-ni* functions as a link between the two referents where the two referents are pre-verbal. Hence, both NPs are semantically arguments of the copulative verb. Equative sentences like (2) below can be considered that the referents of the expression show semantically identical.

2(a). tombidi moiraŋ t^{h}oibini
tombi-di moiraŋ t^{h}oibi-ni
Tombi-DEM Moirang Thoibi-COP
'Tombi is the Moirang Thoibi (in beauty)'.

(b). məndakinidi latamәŋgeskərni
məndakini-di latamәŋgeskər-ni
Mandakini-DEM Latamangeskar-COP
'Mandakini is the Latamangeskar (in singing)'.

Example 2(a) asserts that the referent of the expression '*Tombi*' and the other referent of the expression '*Moirang Thoibi*' are identical. Similarly, the referent of the expression '*Məndakini*' and the other referent of the expression '*Latamangeskar*' in 2(b) are identical. In short, these sentences express an identity relation between their respective NPs; and these identity relations are linked by the copula verb *-ni*. Equatives express an identity relation between the arguments (Geist 1999).

Other different forms of copula verb are recognized in Manipuri depending on the types of sentences. The copula verb *-ni* is employed in affirmative sentence, but in negative sentence *nətte* 'not' is employed while in interrogative *-rə~-lə* and *-no* are employed. Examples cited below illustrate these forms of copula.

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:3, Issue:1, January 2014

3(a). məhak t^{h}oibini
məhak t^{h}oibi-ni
she Thoibi-COP
'She is Thoibi'.

(b). məhak t^{h}oibi nətte
məhak t^{h}oibi nət-te-i
she Thoibi be-NEG-ASP
'She is not Thoibi'.

(c). məhak t^{h}oibirə
məhak t^{h}oibi-rə
she Thoibi-COP
'Is she Thoibi?'

(d). məhak kənano
məhak kəna-no
she who -COP
'Who is she?'

The two arguments are linked by different forms of copula since the structure of sentences is different. These sentences demand for an identification. Having confronted with such semantic notion, an equative sentence in Manipuri falls into the categories such as Identification and Class Inclusion.

3.1 Identification

4(a). məhak t^{h}oibini
məhak t^{h}oibi-ni
she Thoibi-COP
'She is Thoibi'.

(b). əi kumarni
əi kumar-ni
I Kumar-COP
'I am Kumar'.

The second referent is identified by the copulative verb *-ni* 'be' which functions as a link showing an equal relationship with the first referent. The copula verb *-ni* links the NP *məhak* 'she' with

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:3, Issue:1, January 2014

the other NP '*Thoibi*' appearing as the two arguments of the sentence 4(a). In similar fashion, '*-ni*' links the first argument *əi* 'I' with the other argument '*Kumar*' in 4(b). Both the sentences express an identity relation.

3.2 Class Inclusion

5(a). əŋaŋdu nupani
əŋaŋ-du nupa-ni
baby-DEM boy-COP
'The baby is a boy'.

(b). (dramagi) heroindu nupani
drama-gi heroin-du nupa-ni
drama-GEN heroin-DEM man-COP
'The heroin (in drama) is a man (man acts as a woman)'.

Sentences in (5) are equative sentences of class inclusion. The referent of the expression *əŋaŋdu* 'baby+DEM' and *nupa* 'man' in other referent of the expression in 5(a) are identical and expressing the class inclusion of the referent '*man*'. Similarly, it happens in sentence 5(b) too that the referent of the expression *heroindu* 'heroin+DEM' and *nupa* 'man' in other referent of the expression are identical and expressing the class inclusion of the referent *nupa* 'man.

4. Predicational sentences

Predicational copular clauses like other predicational clauses tell something about the referent of the subject. According to Carlson (1977) and Diesing (1992), predicates had been classified into stage-level and individual-level in standard literature of semantics. The predicate which refers to a temporary state of the individual is known as a stage-level predicate and the predicate that refers to some permanent property of the individual is called an individual-level predicate.

In Manipuri, copular sentences, other than equative, sentences such as predicational sentences and specificational sentences are distinguished. In a predicational sentence like 6(a) below, the property expressed by the predicate NP *oja* 'teacher' is predicated of *məni* 'Mani'. Such expression is interpreted as a predicational sentence (Geist 1999).

6(a). məni ojani
məni oja-ni
Mani teacher-COP
'Mani is a teacher'.

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:3, Issue:1, January 2014

(b). Kumar pailotni
Kumar pailot-ni
Kumar pilot -COP
'Kumar is a pilot'.

In a similar fashion with 6(a), in the predicational sentence like 6(b), the property expressed by the predicate NP *pailot* 'pilot' is predeicated of '*Kumar*', the first referent of the sentence and is interpreted as a predicational sentence. In short, the property of being a teacher in 6(a) is assigned to '*Mani*' and the property of being a pilot in 6(b) is assigned to '*Kumar*'.

5. Specificational sentences

Some authors assume a further type of copular sentences which is called 'Specificational sentences'. Such a sentence specifies the value of the description given by NP1 (Heggie, 1988). Focusing on sentences in (7) below specificational sentences can be analyzed.

7(a). prəsidendu ciŋlenni
prəsiden-du ciŋlen-ni
president-DEM Chinglen-COP
'The president is Chinglen'.

(b). oɟadu bobini
oɟa-du bobi-ni
teacher-DEM Bobi-COP
'The teacher is Bobi'.

(c). mihatpədu b^himni
mihat-pə-du b^him-ni
man-kill-NZR-DEM Bhim-COP
'The murderer is Bhim'.

Heggie (1988) considers such copular sentences as specificational sentences because, intuitively, NP2 specifies the 'value' of the description given by NP1. In 7(a), *prəsidentdu* 'president+DEM' (NP1) restricts the variable for which NP2 specifies the referent of '*chinglen*' as a value. Similarly, *oɟadu* 'teacher+DEM' in 7(b) restricts the variable for which NP2 specifies the referent of '*bobi*' as a value. The same is happened also in sentence 7(c).

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:3, Issue:1, January 2014

In specificational sentences given in (7), NP2 is clearly referential. However, the denotational status of NP1 is controversial. In some accounts, NP1 is analyzed as a predicative NP and the sentence is considered an inverse predicational sentence. If NP1 is analyzed as referential, then the sentence can be classed as equative as assumed by Heycock and Kroch (1999).

It is worth to keep observations from the above analysis of copular sentences that specificational sentences are related to predicational sentences and can be syntactically analyzed as predicate inversions. All predicate expressions occurring in the predicative position in predicational sentences can also occur in the initial position of specificational sentences as stated by (Heycock and Kroch, 1999: 379). Hence, in sentences (6) above, the predicative expressions occurring in the predicative position like *oja* 'teacher' in 6(a) and *pailot* 'pilot' in 6(b) can occur in the initial position with a demonstrative -*du* (without which the expression is treated as '*noun in apposition*') so as to become specificational sentences as cited in (8) below.

8(a). ojadu manini
oja-du mani-ni
teacher-DEM Mani-COP
'The teacher is Mani'.

(b). oja manini
oja mani-ni
teacher Mani-COP
'It is teacher, Mani'.

(c). pailottu kumarni
pailot-tu kumar-ni
pilot-DEM Kumar-COP
'The pilot is Kumar'.

(d). pailot kumarni
pailot kumar-ni
pilot Kumar-COP
'It is pilot, Kumar'.

Sentences 8(b) and 8(d) are the expressions which use the nouns in apposition. When these noun phrases are separated with the demonstrative attaching to the first NP as in 8(a) and (c), the expression becomes a specificational one since it specifies the 'value' of the description *ojadu* 'teacher+DEM' in 8(a) and *pailottu* 'pilot+DEM' in 8(c). Mention may be made here about the topic-comment-structure in predicational sentences in comparison to sepecificational sentences. The predicational sentence in 9(a)

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:3, Issue:1, January 2014

below is about the *bhim* 'Bhim', hence this expression is the topic. However, the specificational sentence in 9(b) below is about the *mihatpə* 'murderer' that is, about the murderer or more correctly, about somebody who is the murderer, hence, *mihatpə* 'murderer' serves as topic.

9(a). b^{h}im mihatpəni
b^{h}im mi-hat-pə-ni
Bhim man-kill-NZR-COP
'Bhim is murderer'.

(b). mihatpədu b^{h}imni
mi-hat-pə-du b^{h}im-ni
man-kill-NZR-DEM Bhim-COP
'The murderer is Bhim'.

In the predicational sentence 9(a), the topic *b^{h}im* 'Bhim' is referential and hence, satisfies the topic hood requirement proposed by Reinhart (1982). In the specificational sentence 9(b), *mihatpədu* 'the murderer' is analyzed as an expression which serves as topic. This suggests that the choice of a noun phrase as the topic expression of a given sentence is sensitive to the semantic properties of this noun phrase.

6. Conclusion

On the basis of the above discussion it can be concluded that Manipuri makes use of copula *-ni* with its variant phonological representations such as, *-no, -ne, -ro~lo* and *-rə~-lə*. Of these variants *-no* is used only in wh-questions while *-rə~-lə* and *-ro~lo* are used only in yes/no questions.

Two referents which are pre-verbal are linked by the copulative verb in equative clause constructions. Equative clauses express an identity relation between their constituent NPs. It is found the negative form *nətte* 'not' is employed to negate the copulative verb *-ni*, as in the sentences below-

10(a) məhak oja̱ni
məhak oja̱-ni
he teacher-COP
'He is a teacher'.

(b) məhak oja̱ nətte
məhak oja̱ nət-te-i
he teacher be-NEG-ASP
'He is not a teacher'.

ISSN: 2278-4012, Volume:3, Issue:1, January 2014

The category 'Identification' of equative sentence expresses an identity relation between their referents while 'Class inclusion' expresses that the two referents are identical but there is an inclusion of the firs referent into the last referent.

In predicational sentences, the property expressed by the predicate NP is predicated of the subject. Specificational sentences specify the value of the description given by NP1 i.e. NP1 restricts the variable for which NP2 specifies where NP2 is clearly referential, while the denotational status of NP1 is controversial.

Abbreviations

ASP	aspect
COP	copulative
DEM	demonstrative
NZR	nominalizer

References

Carlson, Gregory N. 1977. *Reference to kinds in English.* Ph.D. Thesis, **University of Massachusetts, Amherst**.

Crystal, D. 1985. *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics.* **Oxford: Basil Blackwell**.

Diesing, M. 1992. *Indefinites.* **Cambridge: MIT Press (Mass.)**.

Geist, L. 1999. Predication And Equation In Copular Sentences: Russian Vs English. ZAS Papers in Linguistics.

Heggie, L. 1988. The Syntax of Copular Structures. Ph.D. Thesis. USC.

Heycock, C. & Kroch, A. 2002. Topic, Focus, and Syntactic Representations. In L. Mikkelsen & C. Potts (Eds.), ***Proceedings of the 21st WCCFL***. Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press.

Singh, Ch. Yashawanta. 2000. *Manipuri Grammar.* **New Delhi: Rajesh Publications**.