Case and Case-ending of the Bengali and Assamese Language: A Contrastive Study

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Abstract: The case and the case markers play a very important role especially in relation to noun and pronoun. Generally, case is marked by an affix or a complete word. Trask said that, "Any one of the forms which a noun or noun phrase may assume in order to represent its grammatical and semantic relation to the rest of the sentence". (p.35). case is considered to be an inflectional category, basically of nouns and pronouns, which specially mark their function in relation to other parts of the sentence. The present paper aims to explore the case marking in Bengali and Assamese which spoken in West Bengal, Bangladesh and Assam. Both the languages case is realized in the form of postpositions, when these postpositions take noun structurally form phrase.

Keywords: Bengali, Assamese, Case, Case-ending, Morphology, Contrastive Study.

Methodology: In this study, contrastive method has been chosen for discussing the use case marking in both Bengali and Assamese language. "Contrastive linguistics could at present be broadly defined as the systematic study of similarities and differences in the structure and use of two or more language varieties, carried out for theoretical and practical purpose." (Rangko, *1991:73-92*). In this research is carried forward to identify the stablishing similarities and dissimilarities of case marking in both the languages.

Introduction: Bengali is an Indo-Aryan language of the eastern Indian subcontinent, evolved from the Magadhi Prakrit, Pali and Sanskrit Language. It is official and national language of Bangladesh. In India Bengali has the status of official language in West Bengal, Tripura and Barak Valley region of the state of Assam. Bengali is the primary language spoken in Bangladesh and is the second most widely spoken language in India. (Chetterji,1970: 62-140). Bengali is the mother tongue of as many as 9,72,37,669 persons. (Census Repot of India, 2011).

Similarly, Assamese is also an Indo-Aryan language (that) originated from the Vedic dialects, and therefore, a sister of all the northern Indian language of the country. But the exact nature of the origin and growth of the language is not very clear yet. It is supposed that like other Aryan languages Assamese was also born from Apabhramsa dialects developed from Magadhi Prakrit of the eastern group of Sanskrit language. (Goswami,1982). Assamese is the principal language of the state of Assam, and often regarded as the *Lingua-Franca* for the North-East of India. (Goswami, 1982). Assamese is the anglicised name of *Asomiya* which is the official language of Assam declared by the Constitution of India. It is spoken in other states like Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh in the form of *creole* and *pidgin*. (Hakacham, 2009). As per the Census report of India 2011, Assamese is the mother tongue of 1,53,11,351 persons. (Census Repot of India, 2011)**.**

As both the Bengali and Assamese are derived from the world's largest language family, that is, Indo-European language family, that is why in the discussion of linguistic studies various similarities and dissimilarities have been seen between both the language.

Case: Case is an inflectional category, typically of noun, pronoun etc, which marks their role in relation to the other parts of the sentence. According to B.J. Blake, "Case is a system of marking dependent nouns for the type of relationship they bear to their heads." (Blake, 1994: 1:1). In most cases, case typically marks the relationship of a noun to a verb at the clausal level, or of a noun to a pre/post position or another noun at the phrasal level. Case functions like a tool which when added to the bare noun in a sentence, determines the grammatical function of that noun in the sentence or a phrase. Case in Bengali and Assamese is known as *Karak.*

In this study, we will discuss the Bengali case ending along with Assamese. In traditional Assamese and Bengali grammars, the description of case is influenced by Sanskrit grammars. In such grammars Assamese and Bengali case system is described as a nominative-accusative system. distinguishes between case (karaka) and case marker (bibhakti) and speaks of six types of "Karaka" (Karta, karma, karan, sampradan, apadan and adhikaran) and seven types of "Bibhakti" in Bengali and Assamese. "Karta" is the doer, and the grammatical subject of the sentence. "Prathama bibhakti" is assigned to "karta" karak. "Karma" is usually the grammatical object of the sentence that is affected by the verb (action). Karta and karma correspond to agentive and objective

case respectively. "Karana" corresponds to the instrumental case whereas "Sampradan" corresponds to dative. "Apadan" refers to the origin, root or source of things. Adhikaran corresponds to locative. Adhikaran can be of two types- "kalbodhak" (at what time) and "sthanbodhak" (on which place). The present paper aims to explore the different case ending in Bengali and Assamese. From my analysis seven no of cases are realized in Bengali and Assamese. There are:

1) Nominative
2) Objective
3) Dative
4) Genitive
5) Ablative
6) Instrumental and
7) Locative

Nominative case: Nominative case generally marks pronouns, noun and adjectives. Nominative noun and pronouns usually appear at the beginning of a sentences and are often used for the subject of sentences (Thompson, 2010). The case maker for nominative case in Bengali and Assamese is marked and unmarked. The subject of finite verb Both Bengali and Assamese have a one nominative case markers: /e/ which is added after consonant ending.

Bengali:
a) Ram Ravank-e Merechilo. (Ram killed Ravana).
b) Chor-e Churi kore. (Thieves steal). etc.
Assamese:
a) Ram-e kitap pore. (Ram is reading a book).
b) Sikshak-e Satrak Porhay. (The teacher teaches students). etc.

Unmarked case-ending examples:
Bengali:
a) Baba badZar theke sobdZi eneche. (Father brought vegetables from the market). etc.
Assamese:
a) manuh mArAnshil. (Man is mortal). etc.

Objective: The accusative or objective case defines the object of a verb. Objective case is used to mark both direct and indirect objects. In Bengali, objective case is marked by /-ke/ whether the word ends in a vowel, consonant or in a classifier. But, In Assamese objective case is marked by a suffix /-k/ or /-ok/. (the vowel drops when the root ends with a vowel). Considering the following examples:
Bengali:
a) Baba-ke Bolte Hobe. (Have to tell father).
b) Chatrader-ke bhalo kore budZalei hoy. (explain properly to the students). etc.
Assamese:
a) Teu Hari-k Kathatu Kabo. (He will tell the word to Hari).
b) Ami ihÁ-ok janu. (we know them). etc.

Dative: In grammar, the dative case is a grammatical case used in some language to indicate the recipient or beneficiary of an action. (https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dative_case). basically, something given, transfer etc. It usually expressed the indirect object relation as well as a range of meaning which is similar to the meaning expressed by English 'to' or 'for'.

Bengali: In Bengali, the dative case markers are /-e/ and /-ke/. /-ke/ is used for both accusative and dative case. Examples:
a) Se tar baba-ke kapor dilo. (He gave a cloth to his father).
b) Krishn-e man samarpan karo. (Surrender your mind to Krishna). etc.

Assamese: The dative case markers in Assamese are '-loi' frequently used, whereas '-ke' can also be used to mark the same. Examples:
a) Bhikhari-loi dan.
   Bikhuk-ke dan.
   (Offering to the Beggar).
b) Teo bapek-əloi sithi likhise
   Teo bapek-ək sithi likhise

He is writing a letter to her father.etc.

Genitive: This case indicates the possessive relationship of noun and pronoun. In indicates the possessor of a thing or a relationship of a particular object with another object.

Bengali: The genitive case marker in Bengali is /-r/ that occurs after a word ending with a vowel. Moreover, noun ending in diphthong or in a monosyllabic noun ending in a single vowel or nouns ending with a full vowel takes genitive case marker /-yer/ or /-er/. (Das,2017). Considered the following examples:

a)   Maa-r sathe dZabo. (Will go with Maa).
b)   TomAr pA-er byAthA komese?
(Is your leg pain reduced?).
c)   Ram-er Boi. (Ram's Book). etc.

Assamese: Like Bengali, the genitive case marker in Assamese is /-r/ that occurs after a word ending with a vowel. It has an alternate /-or/ that occurs if the word ends with a consonant. Considered the following examples:

a)   Xita RamÁ-r patni. (Sita wife of Ram)
b)   Rahul-or School (Rahul's School). etc.

Ablative: Ablative expresses meanings including instrument, time, cause, location and source. It specifies the point in space to where something is transferred at the culmination of the action, identified by the verb.

Bengali: Bengali does not posses an organic affix for ablative. The use of locative form in /-ta/, /-te/ for ablative exists. Some grammarians stated that from locative case marker /-e/, we get ablative sense. Also /-theke/ is uses in Bengali language as an ablative sense. Example as follows:

a)   Dudh-e hoy doi. (curd is made from milk)
b)   Dudh theke doi hoy. (curd is made from milk). Etc.

Assamese: In Assamese, ablative is marked with /-r/ + pəra. Examples:

a)   Tai Guwahati-r pəra ah-ise.
She has come from London.
b)   Tila-r pəra tel hoy. (Oil is from sesame). etc.

Instrumental: When an object helps in doing a work then it takes instrumental case in these two languages. This defines the instrument to carry out the action or cause of the action identified by the verb.

Bengali: The Bengali instrumental case indicates the instrument that is used in carrying out the action identified by the verb. It is mostly marked by the postpositions /-diye/, /-dwara/ etc., which expresses the meaning "by means of". But when the object is animate then accusative marking /-ke/ is used before /-diye/.

Examples:

a)   Hatur diye Maro. (Hit with hammer).
b)   nij hate lekha chithi. (This letter is written by own hand). etc.

Assamese: In Assamese Instrumental case markers, the noun as the means of accomplishment of the action expressed by the clause. 're', 'di', and postpositions like 'dwara', 'dwarai' (used after +human) added after the genitive marker 'r' act as instrumental markers. Examples:

a)   Teo suri-re apel-to kat-ile. (He cut the apple with knife).
b)   Moi tar dwara kamtu koraisu. (I have done the work by him). Etc.

Locative: Generally, Locative case marks the location with both the spatial and temporal reference. A part from this; it also used to serve to locate something. In Bengali, Locative case is marked by /-e/ when the noun ends in a consonant or in diphthong. Again, noun ending in vowel takes locative case suffix /-y/ or /-te/. Moreover, nouns ending in inherent vowels take the locative case /-e/ and the final inherent vowel /Á/ gets dropped. But, the locative case markers in Assamese are /-ot/ and /-t/, /-ot/ occurs if the word end with a consonant and /-t/ if ends with vowel. Considered the following examples:

Bengali:
a)   Ghar-e lok asi. (There are people in the house).
b)   Se basa-te ase. (He is in the house). etc.

Assamese:
a)   Habi-t bagh thake. (There are tigers in the forest).
b)   Sagar-ot Mach thake. (there are fish in the sea). etc.

Finding and discussion:

The main implication of my findings is to show the similarities and differences between both Bengali and Assamese languages. Secondly, it marks the primary case and its grammatical relation. Thirdly, the case marking also shows the semantic/thematic roles. Below we have pointed out the differences and similarities:

Similarities:

case system has developed from Sanskrit language in both Bengali and Assamese language. Also, both the language, case inflection is postpositional.

Nominative and objective case marker works in a similar way in these languages. It is generally used with animate object in both the languages. Both the languages when the object is inanimate then the case marker is dropped.

On the other hand, Dative case inflection is similar with accusative case inflection in Bengali and Assamese language. It is to be noted that in both the language drop its accusative case marking when the object is inanimate.

Dissimilarities:

There are more or less differences between case-marking in Bengali and Assamese. For example, in instrumental case marking the differentiation between animate and inanimate is shown by two different case markers in Assamese. It is marked in Assamese by suffix /-di/ and /-ere/ when the object is inanimate and /-dwara/ when the object is animate. But Bengali when the object is inanimate then the postposition /-diye/ is used. Again, when the object is animate then accusative marking /-ke/ is used before /-diye/.

On the other hand, Assamese uses /-ot/ and Bengali uses /-te/ for locative case marking.

Discussed in this way, it can be seen that there are more similarities and dissimilarities between the case marking of both the languages.

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