

The CALA 2020 Proceedings Paper 8 - 2

Ethnographical Language Work, Paper 2

Case Marking of Rava in Comparison with Bangla

Shuvam Dutta

Jadarpur University, India

Case Marking of Rava in Comparison with Bangla

Shuvam Dutta^a

^a*Jadavpur University, India*

Abstract

Rava, also known as Kochakrew, is a Tibeto-Burmese language mainly spoken at the New Alipurduar and Jalpaiguri districts, West Bengal, India. Bangla/Bengali is an Indo-Aryan Language spoken primarily in India and Bangladesh. Here, language mixing occurs, and within which case becomes a salient phenomenon. Case marking is traditionally referred to as “a system of marking dependent nouns for the type of relationship they bear to their heads” (Blake 1994).

The present paper aims to investigate how case is formed in both Rava and Bangla. It mainly undertakes a study of case as a nominal inflectional category in Rava and Bangla and accounts for the morphological and syntactic features of case and case marking with special emphasis on their semantic significance.

Keywords: Case marking, case, animate, Bangla, Rava

Introduction

Rava is one of the speech communities in the West Bengal state of India. Rava, also known as Kochakrew is a Tibeto-Burmese language primarily spoken at New Alipurduar and Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. Outside West Bengal, the language is spoken in Assam and Meghalaya. But the Rava language, which is spoken in West Bengal, is significantly different from the language spoken in the Assam or Meghalaya. However, for the present study, I have concern on Rava as spoken in the New Alipurduar district, West Bengal.

Bangla is the official language of West Bengal. The Bangla language is an eastern branch of the Indo-Aryan family of languages and a descendent of Magadhi Prakrit. In West Bengal, the Rava community is surrounded by the Bangla language speakers. Along with other similarities, they share same case features, though they are realized differently through affixation and postpositions.

Rava and Bangla both are convenient languages to use in order to illustrate case because they both are agglutinative languages, i.e. one in which there are affixes that are easily separable from the stem. With nouns, the stem, the number marking and the case marking, are all separable (except for some cases of phonological assimilation).

Objective

The present paper aims to investigate how case is formed in both Rava and Bangla. It mainly undertakes a study of case as a nominal inflectional category in Rava and Bangla and accounts for the morphological and syntactic features of case and case marking with special emphasis on their semantic significance.

Methodology

We have pursued interviews for the present study. We collected data through direct communication with speakers through these interviews. The present work is based on the data collected in field trips in Madarihat, in the New Alipurduar district. Primary data of Rava varieties has been collected through sentence lists related to case construction.

Case

Cases are traditionally described as ‘a system of marking dependent nouns for the type of relationship they bear to their heads’ (Blake 1994). Case is an inflectional category. Typically Case marks the relationship of a noun to a verb at the clausal level or of a noun to a preposition, post position or another noun at the phrase level. We need to make a distinction between cases and the case markers or case form through which case are realized. A case marker is an affix where a case form is a complete word. In both Rava and Bangla, case affixes can be separated from the stem, so it is possible to discuss case markers for these languages. From my analysis seven cases are realized in both Rava and Bangla.

- i. Nominative
- ii. Accusative
- iii. Dative
- iv. Genitive
- v. Ablative
- vi. Instrumental
- vii. Locative

Nominative Case

The Nominative encodes the subject and the nouns that stand in a predicative relation to the Subject. The noun ‘that is doing something’ is said to be in the nominative case.

Rava

The subject of the finite verb receives ϕ marker in Rava.

01.	rad ^h a-wa- ϕ	jubu:-eit-a	
	radha-CLF-NOM	sleep-PROG-PRS	
	‘Radha is sleeping.’		
02.	mia-ra- ϕ	bəl- ϕ	gelbi-a
	boy-PL-NOM	football-ACC	play-PRS
	‘Boys play football.’		

Bangla

In Bangla, the nominative case also receives the ϕ marker. However the noun in the Nominative case may be an actor or agent of the verb.

03.	rad ^h a- ϕ	g ^h umo-cc ^h - ϕ -e	
	radha-NOM	sleep-PROG-PRS-3	
	‘Radha is sleeping.’		

04.	c ^h ele-ra-ϕ	futbol-ϕ	k ^h el-ϕ-e
	boy-PL-NOM	football-ACC	play-PRS-3
	'Boys play football.'		

Accusative Case

The Accusative case defines the direct object and the nouns that stand in a predicative relation to the object. Accusative case markers work in a similar way in both languages. Consider the following examples:

Rava

05.	raja-ϕ	bocotei-ϕ	sa
	raja-NOM	mango-ACC	eat.PRS
	'Raja eats mango.'		
06.	rad ^h a-ϕ	umar-wo	m ^w ok-a
	radha-NOM	he-ACC	love-PRS
	'Radha loves him'		

Bangla

07.	raja-ϕ	am-ϕ	k ^h a-ϕ-i
	raja-NOM	mango-ACC	eat-PRS-3
	'Raja eats mangoes'		
08.	rad ^h a-ϕ	ta-ke	b ^h alobas-ϕ-e
	radha-NOM	he-ACC	love-PRS-3
	'Radha loves him.'		

In examples of both the languages it can be seen that when the object is inanimate, then the case marker is dropped. But when the object is animate, the accusative marker is -ke in Bangla and -wo in Rava.

See some other examples:

09.	sa-wo	ama-i	la	Rava
	child-ACC	lap-LOC	carry	
	'Carry the child on your lap.'			
10.	leka-wa -ϕ	tibil-ni	pira-i	taŋ Rava
	book-CLF-ACC	table-GEN	on-LOC	keep
	'Keep the book on the table.'			
11.	*leka-wa-wo	tibil-ni	pira-i	taŋ Rava
	book-CLF-ACC	table-GEN	on-LOC	keep
	'Keep the book on the table.'			
12.	bacca-ʈa-ke	kol-e	nao	Bangla
	child-CLF-ACC	lap-LOC	carry	
	'Carry the child on your lap.'			
13.	boi-ʈa-ϕ	tebil-er	opor-e	Bangla
	book-CLF-ACC	table-GEN	on-LOC	keep
	'Keep the book on the table.'			
14.	boi-ʈa-ke	tebil-er	opor-e	Bangla
	book-CLF-ACC	table-GEN	on-LOC	keep
	'Keep the book on the table.'			

Here, example 11 is ungrammatical in Rava. In Rava, the animate and inanimate object can not take both classifier and accusative marker form at the same time, whereas in Bangla, an animate object can take accusative case marking after taking classifier.

Dative Case

The main function of dative is to mark the indirect object. The basic role for dative case is to distinguish the recipient of something given, transferred etc.

Rava

In Rava, the Dative case marker is -na:

15.	raja- ϕ	uni	j ^w ok-na	go-sa	par- ϕ	laotana
	raja-NOM	his	wife-DAT	one-CLF	flower-ACC	give.PST
	'Raja gave a flower to his wife.'					
16.	bikram- ϕ	lota-na	leka- ϕ	laoa		
	bikram-NOM	lata-DAT	book-ACC	laoa		
	'Bikram gives the book to Lata.'					

Bangla

The Dative case marker in Bangla is -ke, similar to the Accusative case:

17.	raja- ϕ	tar	bou-ke	ek-ta	p ^h ul- ϕ	di-il-o
	raja-NOM	his	wife-DAT	one-CLF	flower-ACC	give-PST-3
	'Raja gave a flower to his wife.'					
18.	bikram- ϕ	lota-ke	boi- ϕ	de- ϕ -y		
	bikram-NOM	lata-DAT	book-ACC	give-PRS-3		
	'Bikram gives the book to Lata.'					

Genitive

The Genitive case is primarily used to denote noun phrases as dependents of a noun, i.e. it is primarily an adnominal case. Among its adnominal function is the encoding of possessor.

Rava

In Rava, the Genive case is marked by -ni:

19.	nakak-ni	talc ^w obi- ϕ	d ^w ob ^w i	saiou		
	door-GEN	latch-NOM	broken	AUX.PFV.PRS		
	'The latch of the door is broken.'					
20.	leka-wo	tibil-ni	pira-i			
	book-ACC	table-GEN	on-LOC			
	'The Book is on the table.'					

Bangla

The Genitive case marker in Bangla is -r and occurs after a word ending with a vowel. It has an alternate - that occurs if the word ends with a consonant. Consider the following examples:

21.	darʒa-r	ɕʰiʔkɪni-ϕ	bʰaŋ-a	ho-ecʰ-ϕ-e
	door-GEN	latch-NOM	break-NMLZ	AUX-PFV-PRS-3
	‘The latch of the door is broken.’			
22.	boi-ʒa-ϕ	ʒebil-er	opor-e	
	book-CLF-ACC	table-GEN	on-LOC	
	‘The Book is on the table.’			

Ablative

The basic role of the Ablative case is to indicate movement away from some location. The Ablative case is the case of separation from the source in performing the action carried by the verb.

Rava

In Rava, the Ablative is marked with the post position ‘pʰriŋ’ :

23.	umar	kolkata	pʰriŋ	feinaya
	he.NOM	kolkata	ABL	come.FUT
	‘He will come from Kolkata.’			
24.	pʰaŋgai	pʰriŋ	ɕʰak	sorokeita
	tree	ABL	leaf	fall.PROG.PRS
	‘Leaves are falling down from the tree.’			

Bangla

In Bangla the Ablative case is realized with the postposition ‘tʰeke’:

25.	se	kolkata	tʰeke	asbe
	he	kolkata	ABL	come.FUT
	‘He will come from Kolkata.’			
26.	gacʰ	tʰeke	pata	porche
	tree	ABL	leaf	fall.PROG.PRS
	‘Leaves are falling down from the tree.’			

Instrumental Case

The Instrumental case denotes the noun as the means of accomplishment of the action expressed by the clause.

Rava

In Rava, the Instrumental case is marked by the only suffix –mʷon.

27.	caku-mʷon	cekʷoŋ	matana	
	knife-INS	hand	cut.PFV.PRS	
	‘Hand got cut by the knife.’			
28.	pisiriŋ-mʷon	halai		
	broom-INS	sweep.PRS		
	‘Get it swept by the broom.’			
29.	brahmanlai-mʷon	puʒo	law	nigina
	brahmin-INS	puja	do.INF	AUX.FUT
	‘Puja is to be done by the Brahmin.’			

Here we can see that there is no differentiation between animate and inanimate.

Bangla

In Bangla *-e /-te* and postpositions such as ‘d^wara,’ ‘diye,’ added after the genitive marker *-r*, act as instrumental markers:

30.	c ^h uri-te	hat	keɽ-ec ^h -ɸ-e		
	knife-INS	hand	cut-PFV-PRS-3		
	‘Hand got cut by the knife.’				
31.	j ^h aru	diye	j ^h aɽ	da-ɸ-o	
	broom	INS	sweep	give-PRS-2	
	‘Get it swept by the broom.’				
32.	brahman-ke	diye	puɽo	kora-te	hɔ-b-e
	brahmin-ACC	INS	puja	do-INF	AUX-FUT-3
	‘Puja is to be done by the Brahmin.’				

When the object is inanimate, the postposition ‘diye’ is used. But when the object is animate then accusative marking *-ke* is used before ‘diye.’

Locative Case

The locative case generally expresses the location with both spatial and temporal references. This case indicates the location of the event or action identified by the verb. Consider the following examples:

Rava

The marker for locative case in Rava is *-i*:

33.	muɽu-ɸ	mata-i	hɔrcak-ɸ	saita
	cow-NOM	field-LOC	grass-ACC	eat.PROG.PRS
	‘The cow is eating grass in the field.’			
34.	ini	anao-wa	iskula-i	
	i.GEN	sister-NOM	school-LOC	
	‘My sister is in school.’			

Bangla

The locative case markers in Bangla are *-e/-te*:

35.	goru-ɽa-ɸ	mat ^h -e	g ^h as-ɸ	k ^h a-cc ^h -ɸ-e
	cow-CLF-NOM	field-LOC	grass-ACC	eat-PROG-PRS-3
	‘The cow is eating grass in the field.’			
36.	amar	bon-ɸ	iskul-e	
	i.GEN	sister-NOM	school-LOC	
	‘My sister is in school.’			

Findings

a. The case markers are summarized below :

CASE	CASE MARKER (Rava)	CASE MARKER (Bangla)
<i>Nominative</i>	ɸ	ɸ
<i>Accusative</i>	ɸ,-wo	ɸ/-ke

<i>Dative</i>	-na	-ke
<i>Genitive</i>	-ni	-r/-er
<i>Ablative</i>	p ^h riŋ	t ^h eke
<i>Instrumental</i>	m ^w on	-e/-te/ d ^w ara / diye/ kore
<i>Locative</i>	-i	-e/-te

- b. Case inflection is postpositional in the two languages.
- c. The Nominative case is unmarked in these two languages.
- d. Both languages drop their accusative case marking when the object is inanimate.
- e. Features of differentiation of the animate and inanimate object through case marking is highly noticeable for the Accusative case.

Case Marking	Bangla		Rava	
	<i>Animate</i>	<i>Inanimate</i>	<i>Animate</i>	<i>Inanimate</i>
Accusative	-ke	ϕ	- wo	ϕ
	Classifier+ke	Classifier+ke	Classifier + ϕ	Classifier + ϕ
Instrumental	-ke + diye	diye	-m ^w on	-m ^w on

- f. The Dative case inflection is similar to accusative case inflection in Bangla. However, it is not similar in Rava.
- g. In Bangla, different cases are denoted by the same case marker, whereas in Rava, different cases are marked by different case markers.

Conclusion

Case or case-marking is a Morphosyntactic device that is used to indicate who is doing what to whom. Rava and Bangla exhibit such an inflecting nature. This paper is an effort to analyze an aspect of Rava and Bangla case system. We have worked on morphological and syntactic aspects, but we need to conduct more analysis, and as such, to determine several other features with which to illustrate the diversity of different cases in these languages.

References

- Blake, B., J. (2004). *Case*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,.
- Butt, M. (2006). *Theories of Case*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
- Chakravarty, B., D. (1963). *Uchchatara Bangla Vyakaran*. Akhsaymalancha.
- Chatterji, S., K. (1939). *Bhasha-Prakash Bangla Vyakaran*. Calcutta: Calcutta University,
- Deb, D. (2012). On Case Marking in Assamese, Bengali and Oriya. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 1(2): 102
- Ghosh, M., K. (1952). *Bangla Banan, Asha Prakashani*. Bengal: Bengal Library.