Aspect Markers in Hmar

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Abstract: This paper attempts to highlight the aspect markers in Hmar. Hmar is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken by the Hmar people. They are mainly concentrated in Churachandpur district, the southern part of Manipur. And other villages outside Manipur are also scattered over a vast area comprising of northern Mizoram, Cachar district of Assam and Chittangong hill tracts of Bangladesh.

Hmar is one of the recognized tribes of Manipur. It is regarded one of the nuclei of the Central Chin sub-group of Kuki-Chin group of Tibeto-Burman family (Grierson, LSI Vol. III, part III, 1904).

There are four aspect markers in Hmar. They are - simple aspect, progressive aspect, perfective aspect and unrealized or non realization aspect. Simple aspect is marked by ‘zero markers’, progressive aspect is denoted by /jim/ or /mek/ and /lai/. The progressive aspect markers /jim/ or /mek/ can be used separately. Again, the progressive aspect marker /lai/ can be used with a progressive aspect marker either /jim/ or /mek/ in progressive sentences, perfective aspect is expressed by /akə/ and unrealized or non realization aspect marker is denoted by /tih/ or /dim/.

Keywords: progressive aspect, perfective aspect, simple aspect, unrealized aspect

I. Introduction

Aspects are different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation (Comrie, 1976). Four types of aspects can be established in Hmar. These aspects have different aspect markers. Aspects in Hmar can be made by suffixing aspect markers to the verb root of the sentence. These aspect markers can stand at the end part of a sentence. In the case of simple aspect, the marker is denoted by zero markers. They are discussed as below:

1.) Simple aspect,
2.) Progressive aspect,
3.) Perfect aspect and
4.) Unrealized or Non realization aspect.

1. SIMPLE ASPECT

Simple aspect expresses simple statement, habitual fact and universal truth. It is formed by suffixing zero ( 0 ) markers to the verb roots. Here, in the examples (1, 2 & 3 both singular and plural) the ‘ marker’ can be suffixed to the verb root pəŋ’ means ‘to eat’. The first person plural pronouns /kai-ni/ expresses ‘exclusive’ whereas /ai-ni/ expresses ‘inclusive’ of the subject/speaker as in examples (1a. & 1b) as follows:

(1.) /kai bu pəŋ/ / 1PP. rice eat S.ASP.
‘I eat rice.’
(1.a) /kai - ni bu pəŋ/ / 1PP. PL. rice eat S.ASP.
‘We (EXCL.) eat rice.’
(1.b) /ai - ni bu pəŋ/ / 1PP. PL. rice eat S.ASP.
‘We (INCL.) eat rice.’

(2.) /naŋ bu pəŋ/ / 2PP. rice eat S.ASP.
‘You (SG.) eat rice.’
(2.a) /naŋ - ni bu pəŋ/ / 2PP. PL. rice eat S.ASP.
‘You (PL.) eat rice.’

(3.) /ama bu pəŋ/ / 3PP. rice eat S.ASP.
‘She/he eats rice.’
(3.a) /ama - ni bu pəŋ/ / 3PP. PL. rice eat S.ASP.
‘They eat rice.’

In Hmar, the subject can be omitted and it is denoted by the pronominal markers like - /ka/, /l/, and /al/ in the singular sentences. The pronominal markers - /kai/ ‘first person (I)’, /naŋ/ ‘second person (you)’ and /ama/ ‘(she/he)’ are used for singular pronouns whereas /kən/ or /l/, /ln/ and /am/ in the plural counterparts. The second person pronominal marker /l/ is different form of second personal pronoun /naŋ/. It is different to compare with first person and third person pronominal markers and its’ plural counterpart is /in/ as in the examples (5. & 5a.). Such pronominal markers are prefixed to the verb roots (except in the case of unrealized aspect marker ‘tih’). Examples are as below:

(4.) /bu ka- pəŋ/ /
(4.a) /bu kən- pəŋ/ /
rice 1PRO. eat S.ASP. 'I eat rice.'
(4.b) / bu ni- p₃ak /
rice 1PP. eat S.ASP. 'We (INCL.) eat rice.'
(5.) / bu i- p₃ak /
rice 2PRO. eat S.ASP. 'You (SG.) eat rice.'
(5.a) / bu in- p₃ak /
rice 2PP. eat S.ASP. 'You (PL.) eat rice.'
(6.) / bu a- p₃ak /
rice 3PRO. eat S.ASP. 'He eats rice.'
(6.a) / bu an- p₃ak /
rice 3PP. eat S.ASP. 'They eat rice.'

2. PROGRESSIVE ASPECT

Progressive aspect expresses the action which is going on but not completed. It is denoted by suffix markers /-mek/ and /-ji/. The suffix markers /-mek/ or /-ji/ is suffixed to the verb root to express the action which is not completed.

Examples of /-mek/:

(7.) /kṣi tui don- mek/
1PP. water drink PROG.
'I am drinking water.'
(7.a) /kṣi-ni tui don- mek/
1PP.PL. water drink PROG.
'We (EXCL.) are drinking water.'
(7.b) /ni- tui don- mek/
1PP.PL. water drink PROG.
'We (INCL.) are drinking water.'

(8.) /nəŋ tui don- mek/
2PP. water drink PROG.
'You (SG.) are drinking water.'
(8.a) /nəŋ - ni tui don- mek/
2PP. PL. water drink PROG.
'You (PL.) are drinking water.'

(9.) /sma tui don- mek/
3PP. water drink PROG.
'She/he is drinking water.'
(9.a) /sma- ni tui don- mek/
3PP. PL. water drink PROG.
'They are drinking water.'

The progressive aspect marker /ji/ carries the same meaning of /mek/. It is also suffixed to the verb roots to express progressive aspect. It is given in the examples:

Examples of /-ji/:

(10.) /kṣi tui don- ji/
1PP. water drink PROG.
'I am drinking water.'
(10.a) /kṣi-ni tui don- ji/
1PP.PL. water drink PROG.
'We (EXCL.) are drinking water.'
(10.b) /ni- tui don- ji/
1PP.PL. water drink PROG.
'We (INCL.) are drinking water.'

(11.) /nəŋ tui don- ji/
2PP. water drink PROG.
'You (SG.) are drinking water.'
(11.a) /nəŋ- ni tui don- ji/
2PP. PL. water drink PROG.
'You (PL.) are drinking water.'

(12.) /sma tui don- ji/
3PP. water drink PROG.
'She/he is drinking water.'
(12.a) /sma- ni tui don- ji/
3PP. PL. water drink PROG.
'They are drinking water.'

Another progressive aspect marker /ma/ can occur with /-mek/ or /-ji/ to form progressive aspect in the examples (13, 14 & 15). In this type of sentence, two progressive aspect markers can be used.

Examples of progressive marker /ma/ with /mek/:

(13.) /kṣi tui don- lai- mek/
1PP. water drink PROG. PROG.
'I am drinking water.'
(13.a) /kṣi-ni tui don- lai- mek/
1PP.PL. water drink PROG. PROG.
'We (EXCL.) are drinking water.'
(13.b) /ni- tui don- lai- mek/
1PP.PL. water drink PROG. PROG.
'We (INCL.) are drinking water.'

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Examples

3. PERFECTIVE ASPECT

Perfective aspect expresses an action which has already completed. It is denoted by the suffix marker /takʰa/. This suffix marker /takʰa/ is suffixed to the verb root. The verb root ‘don’ means ‘drink’ is made perfective aspect by suffixing /takʰa/ as in the following examples (18, 18.a, 18.b, 19..19.a, 20 and 20.a).

4. UNREALIZED OR NON-REALIZATION ASPECT

Unrealized or non-realization aspect expresses that the action is yet to be performed or it is not yet realized which may not performed at all. It is also known as irrealis aspect. There are two types of unrealized aspect markers, they are - /- diŋ/ and /- tih/. The aspect marker /- diŋ/ is suffixed to the verb roots whereas the aspect marker /- tih/ is suffixed to the pronominal markers. Both the aspect markers /- diŋ/ and /- tih/ can stand at the final position of the sentences.

Examples of /diŋ/:
Aspects of /tih/: 

(24.) /jiŋ hmun kə- tih/ 
 tomorrow come 1PRO. UNR. 
‘I will come tomorrow.’

(25.) /nəŋ jiŋ hmun i- tih/ 
 you tomorrow come 2PRO.UNR. 
‘You (SG.) will come tomorrow.’

(26.) /ama jiŋ hmun a- tih/ 
She/he tomorrow come 3PRO.UNR. 
‘She/he will come tomorrow.’

In the above analysis, it can be obtained that Hmar have different forms of sentences. They are - (i) sentences begin with subject (i.e. pronouns), (ii) sentences begin with subject and pronominal markers before the verb root and, (iii) sentences made with pronominal marker before the unrealized aspect marker /tih/.

(i) Sentences begin with subject (i.e. pronoun):

In this type of sentences, the personal pronoun begins first at the sentence. The personal pronouns are - /kəi/, /nəŋ/, and /ama/ are used as first person, second person and third person singular pronouns whereas /kəini/ or /sini/, /nəŋni/ and /amani/ used as first person, second person and third person plural pronouns respectively. Examples are as below:

(ii) Sentences begin with subject and the pronominal markers before the verb root:

(27.) /kəi bu phak/ 
1PP. rice eat 
‘I eat rice.’

(28.) /nəŋ bu phak/ 
2PP. rice eat 
‘You (SG.) eat rice.’

(29.) /ama bu phak/ 
3PP. rice eat 
‘She/he eats rice.’

In this type of sentences, the personal pronouns - /kəi/, /nəŋ/, /ama/, /kəini/ or /sini/, /nəŋni/ and /amani/ begins first at the sentence. The pronominal markers - /kə- ‘I’, /nə/ ‘you (SG.)’, /a-/ ‘she/he’ are used as singular sentences whereas /ka- ‘we (EXCL.)’, /a-/ ‘we (INCL.)’, /s/- ‘you’ and /n/ ‘they’ used as plural sentences respectively. Examples are as below:

(28.a) /kəi- ni bu ka- phak/ 
1PP. PL. rice 1PRO. eat 
‘We (EXCL.) eat rice.’
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(29.) /nəŋ bu i- pəak/
2PP. rice 2PRO. eat
‘You (SG.) eat rice.’

(29.a) /nəŋ ni bu i- pəak/
1PP.PL. rice 2PRO. eat
‘You (PL.) eat rice.’

(30.) /ama bu a- pəak/
3PP. rice 3PRO. eat
‘She/he eats rice.’

(30.a) /ama- ni bu an- pəak/
3PP. PL. rice 3PRO. eat
‘They eat rice.’

(iii) Sentences made with pronominal markers before the unrealized aspect marker /tih/.
In this type of sentence, the pronominal markers can stand just before the unrealized aspect marker /tih/. In this type, the subject is denoted by pronominal markers in the middle part of sentence. Examples as:

(31.) / bu pəak ka- tih/
rice eat 1PRO. UNR.
‘I shall eat rice.’

(31.a) / bu pəak ka- tih/
rice eat 1PRO. UNR.
‘We (EXCL.) shall eat rice.’

(31.b) / bu pəak ai- tih/
rice eat 1PRO. UNR.
‘We (INCL.) shall eat rice.’

(32.) / bu pəak i- tih/
rice eat 2PRO. UNR.
‘You (SG.) will eat rice.’

(32.a) / bu pəak in- tih/
rice eat 2PRO. UNR.
‘You (PL.) will eat rice.’

(33.) / bu pəak a- tih/
rice eat 3PRO. UNR.
‘She/he will eat rice.’

5. CONCLUSION
In the above analysis, it is found that simple aspect is marked by ‘zero markers’, progressive aspect is denoted by /jìn/ or /mek/ and /lai/, perfective aspect is denoted by /takə/ and unrealized or non realization aspect is expressed by /tih/ or /dīj/.

The subject of the sentence is sometimes omitted. It is denoted by pronominal markers. Three distinctive features of pronoun -/kəl/, /n nj/, and /ama/ are used as first person, second person and third person singular pronouns, and /kəni/ or /sini/, /nəŋni/ and /əmani/ used as first person, second person and third person plural pronouns respectively. /kəl/, /n/ and /kan/ or /lai/, /in/, /əlai/ are the pronominal markers of first person singular and plural pronouns respectively. The first person pronoun /kəni/ expresses the exclusive meaning whereas /sini/ expresses the inclusive meaning of subject ‘we’ in a sentence.

The progressive marker markers /jìn/ or /mek/ can stand separately on the other hand, the aspect marker /lai/ can make progressive aspect either /jìn/ or /mek/ aspect markers in sentences.

6. Abbreviation

1PP.
‘first person’
1PRO.
‘first person pronominal marker’
2PP.
‘second person’
2PRO.
‘second person pronominal marker’
3PP.
‘third person’
3PRO.
‘third person pronominal marker’
EXCL.
‘exclusive’
INCL.
‘inclusive’
PERF.
‘perfective aspect’
PL.
‘plural’
PROG.
‘progressive aspect’
S.ASP.
‘simple aspect’
SG.
‘singular’
UNR.
‘unrealized aspect’

Reference

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