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NOMINALIZATION IN KORO¹

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Abstract

Koro is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the East Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. The present paper deals with the nominalization processes in Koro. Two types of nominalizing strategy is seen in Koro: derivational and clausal. Derivational nominalization derives a noun from a non-nominal lexical root (a verb or adjective) as [V-NMZ]N or [ADJ-NMZ]N. In clausal nominalizations, the nominalized clause is subordinate to the matrix clause. Koro employs the morphological marker –gō to derive nouns from action verbs. The clausal nominals do not take any nominalizer marker but display nominal markers like number, definite articles, case on the verb.

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1 Introduction

Koro is a language spoken by the Koro community settled in the Richukhrong circle of East Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh, India. Koro still remains unclassified in the Tibeto-Burman languages of Arunachal Pradesh. Koro tribes came into worldwide attention as a group of linguists led by Gregory Anderson visited Koro villages in 2007 as part of a documentation project sponsored by Living Tongues Institute and National Geography Daily from America. Anderson (2010) published the basic findings of the said trip in his paper ‘Preliminary notes on the Koro tribes of Arunachal Pradesh’. Prior to Anderson, the earliest reference of the Koro tribes can be found in Raghuvar Dutta (1963), D.S. Grewal (1997). Abraham et al (2005) Like most of the languages of Arunachal Pradesh, the Koro language is oral and does not possess a script. The major concern is that the language is fast moving towards endangerment. According to 2011 census, the number of Koro speaking population is 1500 approximately. The Ethnologue enlists the language as ‘threatened’. The Atlas of the World’s Endangered Languages has rated the Koro language as ‘definitely endangered’.



Fig 1: Map of the East Kameng district highlighting the area inhabited by Koro people.

1.1 Typological Features

The basic word order of Koro is SOV. It is an agglutinating and inflectional language. Evidence of inflection comes from case marking and TAM features.

- (1) *dzamu narəŋ to-ba*
 jamu orange eat-PST.3
 ‘Jamu ate the orange.’

- (2) *siŋda baci-məŋ kʰakɔ-de-m fajam-ba*
siŋda baci-DAT book-DEF-ACC sent-PST.3
'Singda sent the book to Bachi.'

Example (1) is a transitive sentence where *dzamu* 'jamu' is the subject, *narəŋ* is the direct object, to 'eat' is the verb and *-ba* is the past tense marker for third person subjects. (2) is a ditransitive clause where the indirect object *baci* 'Bachi' precedes the direct object *kʰakɔ* 'book'. Both the objects are marked with the objective case *-məŋ/-m*. *-de* is the definite article in Koro. The verb *fajam* 'send' is marked with the past tense marker *-ba*. Randy Lapolla (2004) states that the TB languages show a pattern of isomorphy where the same case form is used to mark more than one case type. Koro also exhibits the same property as *-məŋ/-m* is used to mark both accusative, dative case in direct and indirect objects of transitive constructions and experiencer subjects.

2 Nominalization: A brief overview

Nominalization is a process through which a non-nominal lexeme is turned into a nominal. Nominalization operates in two levels: derivational and clausal. Derivational nominalization, generally, creates a noun by adding an affix. Clausal nominalization, on the other hand, turns a clause into a nominal clause. That is, the clause can function as the noun phrase within a larger clausal structure or as a complement of the head noun phrase. In Koro, lexical nominalization takes place with the help of the nominalizer *-gõ*. The derived nominals carry the morphological features of a noun i.e. they take the plural marker, definite marker and the case marker. In Koro, derivation of a noun from a verb is more productive than adjective i.e. $[V-NMZ]_N > [ADJ-NMZ]_N$. The present paper will briefly describe the nominalization processes in Koro.

2.1 The Action nominalizer -gõ

-gõ is the action nominalizer in Koro i.e. it converts an action verb into a noun. The *-gõ* suffixes to the verb stem along with the definite article *-bude* to derive nominals. Table 1 shows the nominals derived from action verbs in Koro.

Table 1: Derived Nominals in Koro

Verb	Derived Nominal
<i>paca</i> ‘to teach’	<i>paca-gõ-bude</i> teach-NMZ-DEF ‘teacher’
<i>fere</i> ‘to write’	<i>fere-gõ-bude</i> write-NMZ-DEF ‘writer’
<i>pu</i> ‘to cultivate/work on the fields’	<i>pu-gõ-bude</i> farm-NMZ-DEF ‘farmer’
<i>suram</i> ‘to hunt’	<i>suram-gõ-bude</i> hunt-NMZ-DEF ‘hunter’

The derived nominals can inflect for case, number, definiteness. In (3), the verbs *gede* ‘see’ have two core arguments: *suram-gõ-bude* ‘hunter’ as the subject NP and *pu-gõ-de-m* ‘farmer’ as the direct object NP. The subject *suram-gõ-bude* ‘hunter’ is the agent and is in the nominative case. The direct object NP takes the accusative case. The peripheral argument case *sempe-pa* ‘forest’ following the verb is in locative case. The derived nominals in singular form carry the definite marker *-bude*. The definite marker has two allomorphic forms *-bude*, *-(bu)de/du*. When a derived nominal takes the plural form, the plural marker *-me* substitutes the definite marker *-bude*.

- (3) *suram-gõ-bude pu-gõ-de-m gede-ba sempe-pa*
 hunt-NMZ-DEF farm-NMZ-DEF-ACC see-PST.3 forest-LOC
 ‘The hunter saw the farmer in the forest.’

3 Clausal Nominalization in Koro

Clause nominalization occurs when the entire embedded clause is nominalized. The complement clauses in Koro generally show nominalization where the verb of the subordinate or embedded clause carries nominal affixes. This is evident from the examples (4-5) where the nominalized clauses are complements of the main clause and the presence of the definite marker *-de* and allative case marker *-sa* in (4), *de* in (5) indicates the complement clause is nominalized.

- (4) *ne naŋ-de-m ji-sa-ləŋ-de lage-go*
 1SG.NOM house-DEF-ACC walk-ALL-INFL-DEF want-PRS
 ‘I want to go home.’

- (5) *li li-gu se-re-ləŋ-de ŋəŋa-go*
 3SG.NOM 3SG-GEN work-do-INF-DEF work-PRS
 ‘He is busy in his work.’

The verb of the nominalized clause in (6) does not take the infinitival *-ləŋ*. Instead the definite marker *-de* followed by the object case marker *-m* is suffixed to the nominalized verb.

- (6) *ne li-m gede-gu sece-de-m uŋ-de-m*
 1SG.NOM 3SG-ACC see-PST.1 3SG-DAT hit-DEF-DAT
 ‘I saw him hitting him’.

One of the main functions of nominalization in Tibeto-Burman languages is relativization, that is, forming relative clause. According to Delancey (2002) ‘relativization is understood as synonymous with nominalization except for a handful of TB languages.’ The genitive morpheme is used to nominalize the relative clause in the majority of TB languages. E.g. Lahu, Classical Tibetan (Matisoff 1972, Delancey 2002). The use of genitive morpheme as relativizer is quite widespread, if not, common to all the TB languages. In Koro, the verb of the relative clause can nominalized by adding the nominal markers such as definite article, case, etc

- (7) *li muru-bu-li-m ne-gu adʒiŋ siŋ-de*
 DEM man-DEF-DEM-ACC 1SG-GEN friend die-DEF
 ‘The man who died was my friend.’

In (7) the verb of the relative clause *siŋ* ‘die’ is carrying the definite marker *-de*. However, it is not obligatory for relative clauses to be nominalized in Koro as shown in (8) where the relative clause precedes the matrix clause, and do not exhibit any nominalizing affixes.

- (8) *ti mimi-bu-ti-m ne gede-gukərcuŋə*
 DEM girl-DEF-DEM-ACC 1SG see-PST.1 market
 ‘This is the girl I saw in the market.’

4 Conclusion

The derived nominals in Koro are formed with the nominalizer *-gō* (Table 1). At the clause level, too, the nominalized verbs take the nominal markers (4-6). The relative clauses in Koro can be post-headed as in (7) or pre headed as in (8). The verbs of relative clause in Koro can sometimes take the nominal markers as in (7). But the relative clauses do not necessarily undergo nominalizing process as can be seen in (8).

List of abbreviations

1	1st person
3	3rd person
ACC	Accusative
ALL	Allative
COMP	complement
DAT	Dative
DEF	Definite
DEM	Demonstrative
GEN	Genitive
INF	Infinitive
LOC	Locative
MOD	Modal
NMZ	Nominalizer
NOM	Nominative
NP	Noun phrase
PRS	Present
PST	Past
SG	Singular
TAM	Tense,Aspect,Mood
TB	Tibeto-Burman

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