

SENTENTIAL COMPLEMENTATION IN MIZO

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Abstract

The primary aim of this paper is to discuss the phenomenon of sentential complementation in Mizo. Complement clauses contain specific linkers that link them to the main clause. This work will attempt to find common syntactic processes that are found in complement clauses in Mizo with a view to see how these processes are similar to or different from the processes used in other South Asian languages in general and Tibeto-Burman in particular. The hypothesis intended to be tested in this study is whether the predictions made by the Government and Binding Theory and the Minimalist framework are valid. In addition, we intend to see to what extent the features of Mizo provide support to Emeneau's notion of 'India as a linguistic Area' and Greenberg's 'word order universals'. Mizo is a Tibeto-Burman language of the Kuki-Chin group spoken in the north-east of India. There are some speakers scattered in the adjoining hill states of Manipur and Tripura as well as along with the border areas of Burma and Bangladesh. Like other Tibeto-Burman languages, Mizo too conforms to almost all the typological features of an SOV language. The very rich pattern of agreement in Mizo allows heavy 'pro drop'. Subject normally precedes all other arguments. Locative precedes instrumental and Instrumental precedes Indirect Object. Direct object follows the Indirect Object. As it is a split-ergative language, all the transitive subjects are marked with the ergative marker *-n* and the object with-

Issues and Primary Observations

The present proposed research intends to study the nature and structure of complementation in Mizo, addressing the current issues in linguistic theory. Mizo, like any other language, has both types of complementations- finite clause complementation and non-finite clauses complementation. Mizo has a Final Complementizer (FC) occurring to the right of the embedded sentence, which is a quotative.

Mizo has a post-sentential complementizer. There are two complementizers in Mizo viz., *ti?* and *in*. We will briefly see the distribution of these two complementizers and problems related to them. Mizo has final complementizers that occur post-sententially. *ti?* in Mizo has been derived from the verb *say* and *do* and functions as a quotative. *in* is a grammaticalized form of a linker that has extended its function as a complementizer. The distribution of the two complementizers in Mizo is not uniform. *ti?* as a complementizer occurs only with finite clauses. The occurrence of *ti?* with non-finite clauses results in ungrammatical sentences. *ti?* is a form of the verb 'say' and functions as a quotative. In addition to *ti?*, *in* occurs in the following two cases as claimed by Subbarao and Lalitha Murthy (ms):

(i) when probability is expressed either in the matrix clause or in the embedded clause or in both.

(ii) when the matrix verb is a nonfactive predicate.

The distribution of both the complementizers needs to be further investigated as we find gaps and irregularities in their occurrence. In the proposed study we intend to find and examine the cases and conditions of their occurrence with a view to study their nature.

Position of the COMP

Mizo has a right peripheral complementizer (FC) as in (3). FC clauses are normally found in verb-final languages and the left peripheral complementizer (IC) is a feature of non-verb final languages. But as far as the languages of this sub-continent are concerned, it is very common to find IC clauses in some of the verb-final languages such as Hindi-Urdu, Punjabi, Kashmiri etc.

and to find both IC as well as FC clauses in the same language, such as in Marathi, Bengali, Assamese, Oriya, Bodo etc.

Agreement and pro-drop:

Like the construction in Japanese which is labeled as ‘Reverse Equi’ (Subbarao,pc) , Mizo too has such a construction. It is an important feature of Mizo where either the subject of the embedded clause or the subject of the matrix clause can be deleted under the identity with each other(Subbarao,pc).The subject of the embedded clause is PRO and hence, the embedded verb does not carry any agreement marker. Since the notional subject of the embedded verb is identical to that of the matrix verb, and the embedded verb is non-finite Mizo allows the embedded subject to be PRO.

When the matrix subject is deleted, it does not carry any agreement marker. When the embedded verb is intransitive the absence of the ergative marker shows that the embedded subject is retained. Since the matrix verb has no agreement marker, Subbarao and Lalitha Murthy hypothesized it to be PRO. As PRO occurs in the matrix clause, it is called Reverse Equi. We shall try to test the claim made by Subbarao and Lalitha Murthy (ms) and attempt to adduce for the evidence in support of or against their claim.

Negative polarity items and the direction of C-command :

The negative element licenses and C-commands the negative polarity item. In English the direction of C-Command between **Neg** and the licensed item is uniformly from **left to right**. In Mizo, the unmarked order of the direction of C-command is from **right to left** just as in all South-Asian languages except in Khasi (cf. A.Lyngdoh, 2000).

As we see, the direction of C-Command is from right to left. However, there are certain adverbs that occur to the right of the **Neg** and thus, the direction of C-Command is from **left to right**. Following example illustrates it. The negative polarity item in Mize cannot be separated from the **Nag** just as in most of the Tibeto-Burman and Austro-Asiatic languages and thus, it cannot move to the matrix clause. The movement of **Nag** to the higher clause results in ungrammatical sentence.

Scope of the Who-expressions:

According to Bayer (1999:12), the wh-expression has narrow as well as wide scope with the quotative as the Comp. As far as the scope of wh-expression in Mizo is concerned, we observe that Bayer’s generalization does hold when **ti?** occurs as COMP. It is to be noted that the embedded clause does not have any overt wh-expression and permits only narrow scope. The overt occurrence of any wh-expression permits only wide scope. It is interesting to note here that when **ti?** occurs as a complementizer, the word for ‘say’ is not **ti?** but **soi** to avoid the ambiguity in the interpretation. The occurrence of an overt wh-expression is crucial for the wide scope reading in Mizo.

Case Resistance Principle

Stowell (1981) claims that an initial complement clause without a head noun cannot occur intrasententially in its canonical position. His Case Resistance Principle states :‘phrases which cannot receive case, are evacuated from the position in which case is assigned.’ But it does not explain why a final complement clause occurs intrasententially in its canonical position in Mizo. The intended thesis proposes to find an answer to it.