NOUN CASES IN NYISHI

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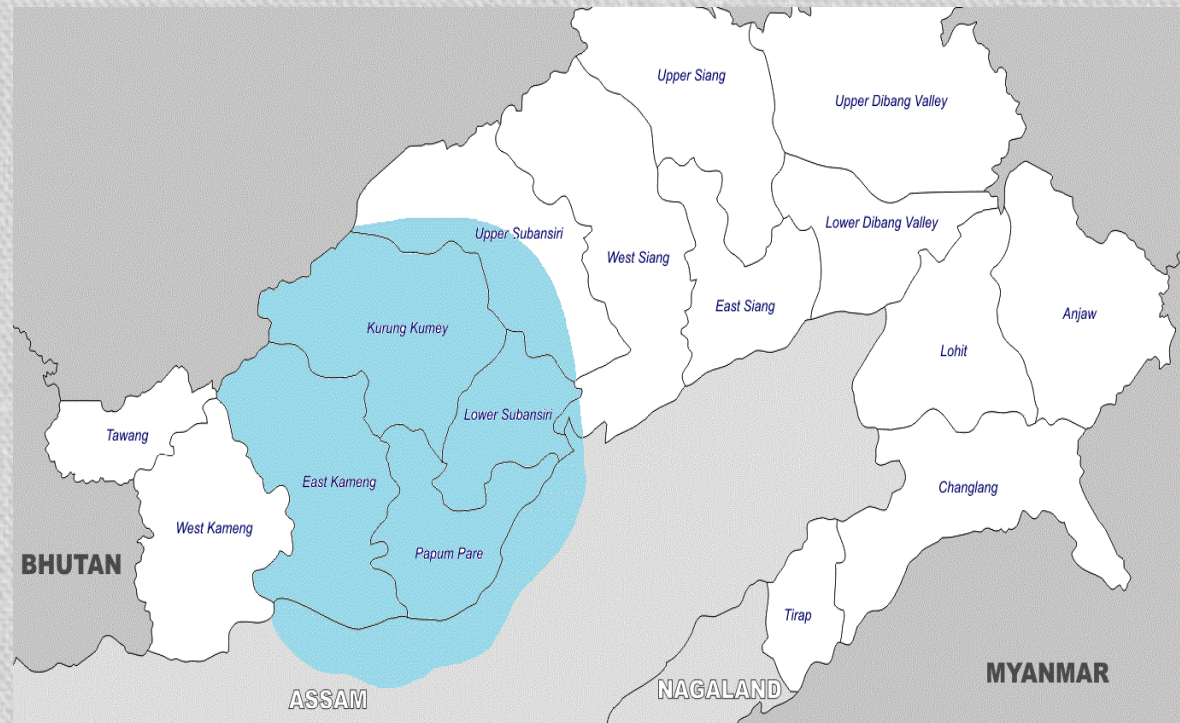
Introduction: Nyishi, the Tribe

- Nyishi is also known as Bangni, Dafla, Daphla, Lel, Nil, Nisi and Nyising (retrieved from http://www.ethnologue.com/ on 25th May 2013).

- It is language of the Nyishi tribe, one of the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh.

- Arunachal Pradesh ('land of rising sun' in Sanskrit) is thinly populated hilly tract in the extreme northeastern part of India.

Map: Nyishi Speaking Region

Introduction: the Tribe

- People dwelling in between *Nyem* (men of hills; Tibetan region) and *Nyepak* (men of plain; Assam) are called Nyishi

- *Nyi* means 'man' and *Shi* means 'high land' so Nyishi means 'upland man'. *Nyishi* also means 'human beings'.

- They believe themselves to be descendent of *Abo Tani* (first man) so they call themselves part of Tani group.

Introduction: Nyshi, the Language

- It is spoken by 118,111 speakers in India, according to the census conducted by the government of India in 2001.

- UNESCO (Atlas of World's Languages in Danger, 2010) marks Nyishi as one of the vulnerable languages.

- Not much linguistics work. A Grammar of Nyishi Language by P T Abraham (2005).

Case System

- Cases are generally multifunctional in languages around the world.

- But the foremost function of case is that of "marking dependent nouns for the type of relationship they bear to their heads" Blake(2001).

- In Nyishi case only performs this function. But one form is used to realize many relations.

Case through Cognitive Grammar

- CG highlights that "all grammatical forms have a meaning that could explain their usage" (Luraghi, 2008), which includes cases.

- Using CG extension from one case to another (plenty in Nyishi)can be easily understood.

- Instrumental and locative (Wackernagel's 1982), Comitative and instrumental (Lakoff & Johnson 1980).

Table: Case Markers

	Cases	Case Markers
1	Possessive	-gə, -ge, -gɑ
2	Objective	-ne, -əm, -həm, -ŋəm
3	Benefactive	-ləgɑ, -gɑlo
4	Causative	-gɑlo
5	Locative	-alo, -si, -be, -ɑ, -bo
6	Instrumental	-gabo
7	Comitative	-t̪olo
8	Ablative	-t̪olo, -gɑ, -alo

Possessive

- Possessive case marker is /gə/ which is used when the possessor is +human. But not when the possessor is –human.

1. ŋo-gə   nɑm
   I-GEN   house
   My house.

2. mulu-gə   se
   our-GEN   cattle
   Our cattle.

Possessive

- Like a typical Tibeto-Berman language, Nyishi too forms compound noun when both the non–human possessor and the possessive come together in a possessive relation.

    3. ik   əmi
       dog   tail
       Dog's tail

    4. sen   ɑhi
       tree   fruit
       Tree's fruit.

Possessive

- But it is interesting to note that if the possessor is –human (typically a place) and the possessed is +human then the possessive marker is used. In such sentences the place is perceived to possess the human.

5. no   hugəlo-gə
   you   where-GEN
   Where are you from?

6. ŋo   biharə-ge
   I   Bihar-Gen
   I am from Bihar.

Object Marking

- One action can be perceived as a chain of action. The action starts or initiates from the source passes through the path and reaches the goal.

- One participant is more active (Agent) than the other one (Object or Beneficiary).

- Objective- The goal where the action meets after coming out from the source. This action may or may not effect or change the goal.

Objective

- Objective (OBJ) is used here to mark the objects which are involved in some action but they do not initiates the action but they may suffer change during the process.

7. iki-əm   ɑpiŋe   bi̪to

    dog-OBJ   food   give

    Give food to the dog.

8. rɑɟu rɑɟɑ-ŋe   ɑpiŋe   be-pɑnɑ

    Raju Raja-OBJ   food   give-TAM

    Raju gave food to Raja.

Benefactive

- Benefactive- "When the indirect object gets benefit of the situation or when the indirect object is the goal to which the direct object reaches" (Kittilä & Zúñiga 2010).

- Benefactive case has often been taken as a part of dative case. "Somewhat more concrete cases related to datives are benefactive" (Haspelmath 2006).

Benefactive

- Abraham while describing the case system marks the Benificiaery as Dative "dative case is used when the NP is the receipient of benefaction".

9.　　ŋo　　so　　puŋə　　　　no-gabo　　　aŋegə-pan

　　　I　　these flowers　　　you-BEN　　bring-TAM

　　　I bought these flowers for you.

10.　　ŋo-gə　ko-ɲəm-gəb　t̪ɯŋk　　　ɟi-t̪ɔ

　　　I-POSS　child-female-BEN money give-TAM

　　　Give me money for my daughter.

Causative

- The cause of an action gets marked in Nyishi by the marker /t̪olo/.

- Genereally one noun and one verb together form a compound word to which the causal marker is attached to mark it as the cause for some other action.

Causative

11. ɲid̪o-ho-t̪olo   ŋo   ɑŋəpo-komə-mo

    rain-fall-CAU   I   reach-TAM-NEG

    Due to rain I couldnot reach.

12. kɑo-kɑp-t̪olo   ɑne   hoci-liŋə-d̪o

    child-cry-CAU   mother   angry-get-TAM

    Due to child's crying mother got angry.

Locative

- Locative cases mark the location of an object in relation to another object.

- Locative case is used in these languages to mark the static position of an object.

- Abraham marks "the locative marker is /–o/. It is fused together with the deictic word to form a single lexical item".

Locative

- There are various suffix markers for location is this language. Mostly the use depends on the shape and size of the location.
    - /alo/ or /a/- in, around.
    - /bo/ - inside
    - /ao/- on, above
    - /be/- under

13.   ŋo   loko-loko   pukuri-alo   ɟa-ḍona

    I   often   pond-LOC   swim-TAM

    I often swim in the pond.

Locative

14.　no　　ugu-alo　　　　　re　　　　　ḓuŋ-pa

you　house-LOC　　　　INTER　be-TAM

Are you in the house?

15.　Himi　kuŋa-bo　　joʔlək-paku

boy　well-LOC　　fell-TAM

The boy felt inside the well.

16.　kiṯabətebil　　　　ao

book　　　table　　　　LOC

The book is on the table

Locative

17. ŋo   milo-si   ɑo
    I   roof-CLA   LOC
    I am on the roof.

18. ŋo   milo-ga   ɑo-t̪olo   d̪oh-pɑ
    I   roof-POSS LOC-CLA   be-TAM
    I am on the roof.

- The location takes GEN which is followed by the LOC. Can be seen in many languages. The location is perceived as being a part (possessed) of the larger location. Like, the roof has many sides (parts) like bottom, top, corner and top is just one of it.

Locative

- There are few postpositions too which are used to mark the location. When these are used then the use of locative marker becomes optional.

    ureu- inside   bɑir- near

    peŋo- in between   ḏeko- under

19.   ɑsɑ   tebil-gɑ   ḏeko-(be)   ḏopɑ

    cat   table-POSS   under-LOC   TAM

    The cat is under the table.

Instrumental

- There are two markers /gɑlo/ & /ləgi/ for the instrumental case which are used both with human and non-human entities.

20. ram raban-ne   opo-ari-ləgi   miŋə-pɑ

    Ram Ravan-OBJ bow-arrow-INST kill-TAM

    Ram killed Ravan with bow and arrow.

21. ŋo siṭa-gɑlo ram-ne   apiŋ ḍo-ge-penɑ

    I   Sita-INST Ram-OBJ   food   make-eat-TAM

    I made Sita feed Ram.

Comitative

- The Marker /gɑlo/ is also used to mark companionship or comitative (COMI) case.

- The relationship shared between the instrument and the companion is perceived as one in many languages as both accompanies the agent.

- COMI- When it accompanies the agent to fulfill the same role.

- INST: One participant serves as the tool with which another participant carries out an action.

(Stolz, Stroh & Urdze, 2006).

Comitative

22.   ram   mira-galo   ḓuŋəba-paku

      Ram   Mira-COMI   sit-TAM

      Ram is sitting with Mira.

- Interestingly the COMI is also used for instances where there is a presence but the speaker talks about the absence of the shared companionship.

23.   ŋo   no-galo   aŋəpiŋ   naŋ-mo

      I   you-COMI   away   TAM-NEG

      I do not want to go away from you.

      (Talking about –COMI)

Ablative

- The relationship between the source and the object is called ablative case. There is a motion from the source which ends at the goal.

- In Nyishi this source is pereceived in two ways.
  - The source is perceived as the cause of the motion: the CAU is used.
  - The source is perecived as another location from where the journey of the object begins: LOC is used.

Ablative

24. səŋəne-t̪olo   oko   julo-d̪o
     tree-(CAU) ABL   leaves   fall-d̪o
     Leaves are falling from the tree.

25. pat̪a   rəsəp-alo   ɟərni-kun
     bird   nest-LOC   flew-TAM
     Birds flew away from the nest.

Ablative

- As marked earlier, a place is generally perceived to possess the human so if the source (place) of a person's journey generally take possessive marking.

26. ŋo   ḏeli ho-ge   hoḏu-ḏen
     I   Delhi place-POSS   come-TAM
     I am coming from Delhi.

Interrogatives

- In interrogative sentences these case markers can come without a host to form a question.

27.   gabo?
       BEN
       For whom?
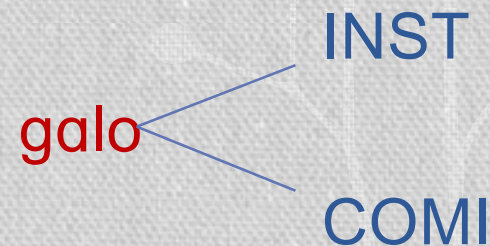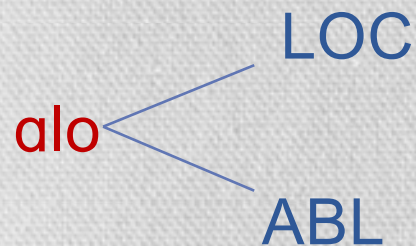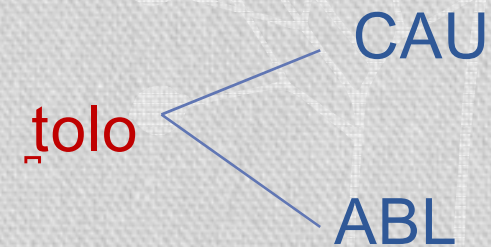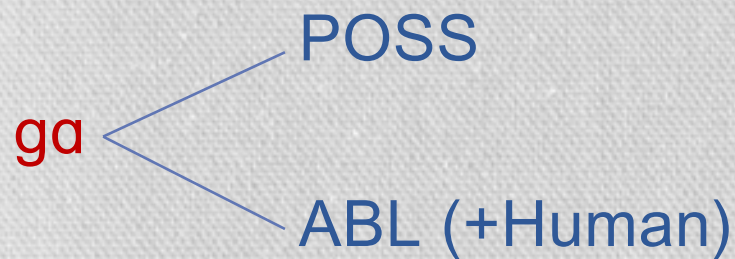
28.   ga   barikə?
       POSS   for
       For Whom?

- There seems to be absence of indefinite pronoun in Nyishi so the case markers come independently in absence of definite pronoun.

Polysemy

- It was seen that generally in Nyishi one marker has more than one case relation attached to it.

ga
- POSS
- ABL (+Human)

t̠olo
- CAU
- ABL

alo
- LOC
- ABL

galo
- INST
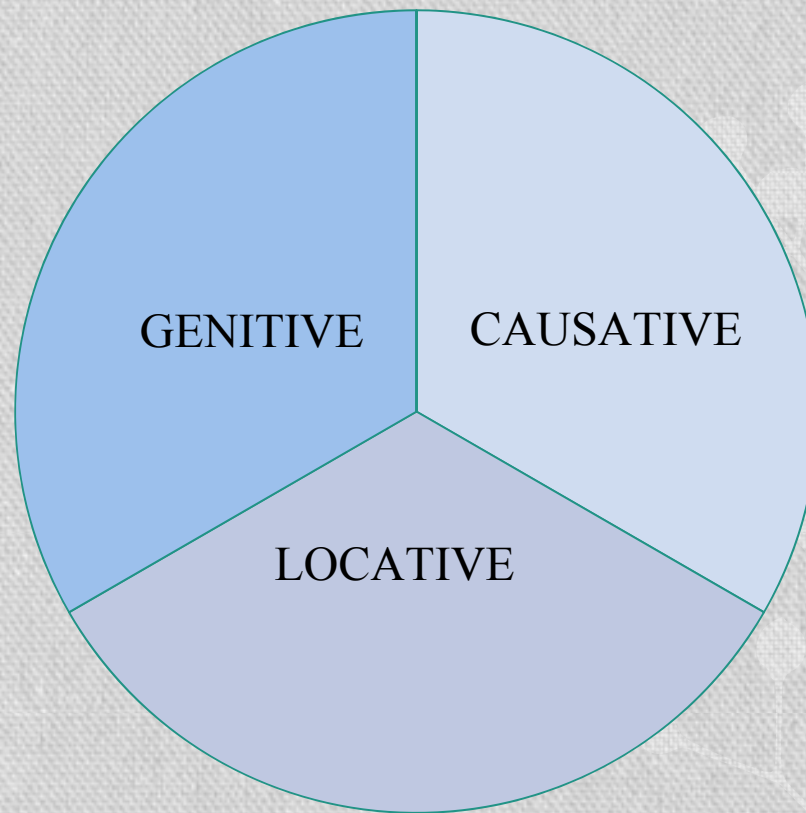- COMI

Ablative: Case without marker

Diagram 1: Showing the case markers of the Ablative case

Conclusion

- CG focuses on the idea that languages show the perception of the speakers which is revealed through the case system as well.

- Some of the following findings can be concluded from the description of the case system of Nyishi.

  - There is no animacy heirarchy as cases do not work as DOM or Index marker. No different case marker for +Animate and –Animate

Conclusion

- "Possession seems to be one of the central concepts of human cognition… In possessive constructions the entity coded as the possessor is always the more salient entity in a given situation and thus the reference point. It serves to ensure identification of the possessed, which is the target entity" (Mitkovska, 2004).

  - But POSS can be used with humans only as humans are perceived to be able to possess only which seems quite logical.

Conclusion

- Land is equated to Human. In some way it is greater to Human as it can possess the human. It is a nature worshipping tribe so this idea can find support in its culture.

- This is a primary work which needs more to be explored.

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Thank you!