



CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF INDIAN LANGUAGES

53rd Foundation Day Lecture Series

Lecture 31

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Relative Clauses in Tibeto-Burman



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Kārumūri V. Subbārāo is formerly Professor and Head of Linguistics, University of Delhi. He also served as Radhakrishnan Chair Professor, University of Hyderabad. He was President of Linguistic Society of India (2003-2005). His areas of specialisation include Syntactic Typology of South Asian languages, Dravidian languages, Munda languages; Syntactic Convergence and Language Change; Writing grammars of Tibeto-Burman languages. His noteworthy publications include *South Asian Languages: A Syntactic Typology* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), *Complementation in Hindi Syntax* (Academic Publications, Delhi); *A Structural Study of Hindi and English Syntax* (Indira Gandhi National Open University, Delhi).

Keeping in view the typology of South Asian languages, we discuss the typology of relative clauses in the Tibeto-Burman languages of the Northeast. They are distinct in having Internally-Headed Non-finite Relative clauses that none of the other language families has in the South Asian subcontinent in addition to having Externally-Headed Non-finite Relative clauses and Relative-Correlative clauses. We demonstrate how intense contact with a language from a different language family results in borrowing a non-indigenous structure in select Tibeto-Burman languages. We shall show that the functions of the relative complementizer that occurs in several Naga languages and Dravidian languages are identical.

We show how the occurrence of the verbal clitic */i/* in Hmar (Kuki-Chin) and the absence of Subject Agreement marker in sentences, when the subject is questioned are the result of A-bar Movement. We shall demonstrate how lexical case marking on the Internal Head in an IHRC functions as a distinct feature that demarcates the Naga languages from the Kuki-Chin languages where such marking is absent. We shall discuss the productive nature of compounds, which are derived from underlying relative clauses.

Based on evidence from Free Relatives in the Kuki-Chin languages, we demonstrate that reduplication of a constituent of the predicate plays the most crucial role in manifesting indefiniteness of the Head in Free Relatives.

We demonstrate how partial reduplication functions as a crucial tool in enabling an NP to head a relative clause. We shall demonstrate how Hierarchical Precedence and the Movement of the Internal Head play a significant role in resolving ambiguity in cases involving potential ambiguity. We show how the movement of a constituent in an EHRC or an IHRC is helpful in resolving ambiguity in structures involving potential ambiguity.

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