

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 /jiŋ/ or /mek/ and /lai/. The progressive aspect markers /jiŋ/ or /mek/ can be used separately. Again, the progressive aspect marker /lai/ can be used with a progressive aspect marker either /jiŋ/ or /mek/ in progressive sentences, perfective aspect is expressed by /tak^ha/ and unrealized or non realization aspect marker is denoted by /tih/ or /diŋ/.

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 () 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 'p^hak' means 'to eat'. The first person plural pronouns /kəi-ni/ expresses 'exclusive' whereas /əi-ni/ expresses 'inclusive' of the subject/speaker as in examples (1a. & 1.b) as follows:

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| (1.) /kəi bu p ^h ak / 1PP. rice eat S.ASP. 'I eat rice.' | (1.a) /kəi - ni bu p ^h ak / 1PP. PL. rice eat S.ASP. 'We (EXCL.) eat rice.' |
| (2.) /nəŋ bu p ^h ak / 2PP. rice eat S.ASP. 'You (SG.) eat rice.' | (1.b) /əi - ni bu p ^h ak / 1PP. PL. rice eat S.ASP. 'We (INCL.) eat rice.' |
| (3.) /əma bu p ^h ak / 3PP. rice eat S.ASP. 'She/he eats rice.' | (2.a) /nəŋ - ni bu p ^h ak / 2PP. PL. rice eat S.ASP. 'You (PL.) eat rice.' |
| | (3.a) /əma- ni bu p ^h ak / 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 - /kə/, /i/, and /ə/ in the singular sentences. The pronominal markers - /kəi/ 'first person (I)', /nəŋ/ 'second person (you)' and /əma/ '(she/he)' are used for singular pronouns whereas /kən/ or /əi/, /in/ and /ən/ in the plural counterparts. The second person pronominal marker /i/ is different form of second personal pronoun /nəŋ/. 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:

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| (4.) / bu kə- p ^h ak / | (4.a) / bu kən- p ^h ak / |
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|------|---|-------|--|
| | rice 1PRO. eat S.ASP. 'I eat rice.' | | rice 1PRO. eat S.ASP. 'We (EXCL.) eat rice.' |
| | | (4.b) | / bu əi- p ^h ak / rice 1PP. eat S.ASP. 'We (INCL.) eat rice.' |
| (5.) | / bu i- p ^h ak / rice 2PRO. eat S.ASP. 'You (SG.) eat rice.' | (5.a) | / bu in- p ^h ak / rice 2PRO. eat S.ASP. 'You (PL.) eat rice.' |
| (6.) | / bu ə- p ^h ak / rice 3PRO. eat S.ASP. 'He eats rice.' | (6.a) | / bu ən- p ^h ak / rice 3PRO. 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 **/-jiŋ/**. The suffix markers **/-mek/** or **/-jiŋ/** is suffixed to the verb root to express the action which is not completed.

Examples of **/-mek/**:

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| (7.) | /kəi tui don- mek/ 1PP. water drink PROG. 'I am drinking water.' | (7.a) | /kəi-ni tui don- mek/ 1PP.PL. water drink PROG. 'We (EXCL.) are drinking water.' |
| | | (7.b) | /əi-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.) | /əma tui don- mek/ 3PP. water drink PROG. 'She/he is drinking water.' | (9.a) | /əma- ni tui don- mek/ 3PP. PL. water drink PROG. 'They are drinking water.' |

The progressive aspect marker **/jiŋ/** 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 **/-jiŋ/**:

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| (10.) | /kəi tui don- jiŋ/ 1PP. water drink PROG. 'I am drinking water.' | (10.a) | /kəi-ni tui don- jiŋ/ 1PP.PL. water drink PROG. 'We (EXCL.) are drinking water.' |
| | | (10.b) | /əi-ni tui don- jiŋ/ 1PP.PL. water drink PROG. 'We (INCL.) are drinking water.' |
| (11.) | /nəŋ tui don- jiŋ/ 2PP. water drink PROG. 'You (SG.) are drinking water.' | (11.a) | /nəŋ-ni tui don- jiŋ/ 2PP.PL. water drink PROG. 'You (PL.) are drinking water.' |
| (12.) | /əma tui don- jiŋ/ 3PP. water drink PROG. 'She/he is drinking water.' | (12.a) | /əma- ni tui don- jiŋ/ 3PP. PL. water drink PROG. 'They are drinking water.' |

Another progressive aspect marker **/lai/** can occur with **/-mek/** or **/-jiŋ/** 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 **/lai/** with **/mek/**:

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

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| <p>(14.) 2PP. water drink PROG. PROG. 'You (SG.) are drinking water.' /əma tui don- lai- mek/ 3PP. water drink PROG. PROG. 'She/he is drinking water.'</p> | <p>(14.a) 2PP. PL. water drink PROG. PROG. 'You (PL.) are drinking water.' /əma- ni tui don- lai- mek/ 3PP. PL. water drink PROG. PROG. 'They are drinking water.'</p> |
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The aspect marker /**jiŋ**/ is added to the verb root just after the aspect marker /**lai**/. In this type, two progressive aspect markers can be used.

Examples of progressive marker /**lai**/ with /-**jiŋ**/:

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| <p>(15.) /kəi tui don- lai- jiŋ/ 1PP. water drink PROG. PROG. 'I am drinking water.'</p> | <p>(15.a) /kəi-ni tui don- lai- jiŋ/ 1PP. PL. water drink PROG. PROG. 'We (EXCL.) are drinking water.'</p> |
| <p>(16.) /nəŋ tui don- lai- jiŋ/ 2PP. water drink PROG. PROG. 'You (SG.) are drinking water.'</p> | <p>(16.a) /nəŋ-ni tui don- lai- jiŋ/ 3PP. PL. water drink PROG. PROG. 'You (PL.) are drinking water.'</p> |
| <p>(17.) /əma tui don- lai- jiŋ/ 3PP. water drink PROG. PROG. 'She/he is drinking water.'</p> | <p>(17.a) /əma- ni tui don- lai- jiŋ/ 3PP. PL. water drink PROG. PROG. 'They are drinking water.'</p> |

3. PERFECTIVE ASPECT

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

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| <p>(18.) /kəi tui don- tak^ha/ 1PP. water drink PERF. 'I am drinking water.'</p> | <p>(18.a) /kəi-ni tui don- tak^ha/ 1PP. PL. water drink PERF. 'We (EXCL.) are drinking water.'</p> |
| <p>(19.) /nəŋ tui don- tak^ha/ 2PP. water drink PERF. 'You (SG.) are drinking water.'</p> | <p>(18.b) /əi-ni tui don- tak^ha/ 1PP. PL. water drink PERF. 'We (INCL.) are drinking water.'</p> |
| <p>(20.) /əma tui don- tak^ha/ 3PP. water drink PERF. 'She/he is drinking water.'</p> | <p>(19.a) /nəŋ-ni tui don- tak^ha/ 3PP. PL. water drink PERF. 'You (PL.) are drinking water.'</p> |
| | <p>(20.a) /əma- ni tui don- tak^ha/ 3PP. PL. water drink PERF. 'They are drinking water.'</p> |

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 be 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**/:

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| <p>(21.) /kəi jiŋ hmuŋ- diŋ/ 1PP. tomorrow come UNR. 'I will come tomorrow.'</p> | <p>(21.a) /kəi-ni jiŋ hmuŋ- diŋ / 1PP. PL. tomorrow come UNR. 'We (EXCL.) will come tomorrow.'</p> |
| | <p>(21.b) /əi-ni jiŋ hmuŋ- diŋ/ 1PP. PL. tomorrow come UNR. 'We (INCL.) will come yesterday.'</p> |

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| (22.) /nəŋ jɪŋ hmuŋ- diŋ / 2PP. tomorrow come UNR. 'You (SG.) will come tomorrow.' | (22.a) /nəŋ-ni jɪŋ hmuŋ- diŋ / 2PP.PL. tomorrow come UNR. 'You (PL.) will come tomorrow.' |
| (23.) /əma jɪŋ hmuŋ- diŋ/ 3PP.tomorrow come UNR. 'She/he will come tomorrow.' | (23.a) /əma-ni jɪŋ hmuŋ- diŋ/ 3PP. PL. tomorrow come UNR. 'They will come tomorrow.' |

Examples of /tih/:

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| (24.) / jɪŋ hmuŋ kə- tih/ tomorrow come 1PRO. UNR. 'I will come tomorrow.' | (24.a) / jɪŋ hmuŋ kən- tih/ tomorrow come 1PRO. UNR. 'We (EXCL.) will come tomorrow.' |
| (25.) /nəŋ jɪŋ hmuŋ i- tih/ you tomorrow come 2PRO.UNR. 'You (SG.) will come tomorrow.' | (24.b) /jɪŋ hmuŋ əi- tih/ tomorrow come 1PRO. UNR. 'We (INCL.) will come tomorrow.' |
| (25.a) /nəŋ-ni jɪŋ hmuŋ in- tih / you PL. tomorrow come 2PRO.UNR. 'You (PL.) will come tomorrow.' | (26.a) / ma-ni jɪŋ hmu ən- tih/ 3PP.PL. tomorrow come 3PRO. UNR. 'They will come tomorrow.' |
| (26.) /əma jɪŋ hmu ə- tih/ She/he tomorrowcome 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 **/əma/** are used as first person, second person and third person singular pronouns whereas **/kəini/** or **/əini/**, **/nəŋni/** and **/əmani/** 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:

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| (27.) /kəi bu p ^h ak/ 1PP. rice eat 'I eat rice.' | (27.a) /kəi- ni bu p ^h ak/ 1PP.PL. rice eat 'We (EXCL.) eat rice.' |
| (28.) /nəŋ bu p ^h ak/ 2PP. rice eat 'You (SG.) eat rice.' | (27.b) /əi- ni bu p ^h ak/ 1PP. PL. rice eat 'We (INCL.) eat rice.' |
| (27.) /əma bu p ^h ak/ 3PP. rice eat 'She/he eats rice.' | (28.a) /nəŋ- ni bu p ^h ak/ 1PP.PL. rice eat 'You (PL.) eat rice.' |
| (27.a) /əma- ni bu p ^h ak/ 3PP. PL. rice eat 'They eat rice.' | |

In this type of sentences, the personal pronouns - **/kəi/**, **/nəŋ/**, **/əma/**, **/kəini/** or **/əini/**, **/nəŋni/** and **/əmani/** begins first at the sentence. The pronominal markers - **/kə-/** 'I', **/i-/** 'you (SG.)', **/ə-/** 'she/he' are used as singular sentences whereas **/kən-/** 'we (EXCL.)', or **/əi/** 'we (INCL.)', **/in/**, 'you' and **/ən/** 'they' used as plural sentences respectively. Examples are as below:

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|--|--|
| (28.) /kəi bu kə- p ^h ak/ 1PP. rice 1PRO. eat 'I eat rice.' | (28.a) /kəi- ni bu kən- p ^h ak/ 1PP.PL. rice 1PRO. eat 'We (EXCL.) eat rice.' |
| | (28.b) /əi- ni bu əi- p ^h ak/ 1PP. PL. rice 1PRO. eat |

- (29.) /nəŋ bu i- p^hak/
2PP. rice 2PRO. eat
'You (SG.) eat rice.'
- (29.a) /nəŋ- ni bu in- p^hak/
1PP.PL. rice 2PRO. eat
'You (PL.) eat rice.'
- (30.) /əma bu ə- p^hak/
3PP. rice 3PRO. eat
'She/he eats rice.'
- (30.a) /əma- ni bu ən- p^hak/
3PP. PL. rice 3PRO. eat
'They eat rice.'

(iii) Sentences made with **pronominal markers** before the unrealized aspect marker /tɪh/:

In this type of sentence, the pronominal markers can stand just before the unrealized aspect marker /tɪh/. In this type, the subject is denoted by pronominal markers in the middle part of sentence. Examples as:

- (31.) / bu p^hak kə- tih/
rice eat 1PRO. UNR.
'I shall eat rice.'
- (31.a) / bu p^hak kən- tih/
rice eat 1PRO. UNR.
'We (EXCL.) shall eat rice.'
- (31.b) / bu p^hak əi- tih/
rice eat 1PRO. UNR.
'We (INCL.) shall eat rice.'
- (32.) / bu p^hak i- tih/
rice eat 2PRO. UNR.
'You (SG.) will eat rice.'
- (32.a) / bu p^hak in- tih/
rice eat 2PRO. UNR.
'You (PL.) will eat rice.'
- (33.) / bu p^hak ə- tih/
rice eat 3PRO. UNR.
'She/he will eat rice.'
- (33.a) / bu p^hak ən- tih/
rice eat 3PRO. UNR.
'They 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 /jɪŋ/ or /mek/ and /lai/, perfective aspect is denoted by /tak^ha/ and unrealized or non realization aspect is expressed by /tɪh/ or /diŋ/.

The subject of the sentence is sometimes omitted. It is denoted by pronominal markers. Three distinctive features of pronoun- /kəi/, /n ŋ/, and /əma/ are used as first person, second person and third person singular pronouns, and /kəini/ or /əini/, /nəŋni/ and /əmani/ used as first person, second person and third person plural pronouns respectively. /kə/, /i/, /ə/ and /kən/ or /əi/, /in/, /ən/ are the pronominal markers of first person singular and plural pronouns respectively. The first person pronoun /kəini/ expresses the exclusive meaning whereas /əini/ expresses the inclusive meaning of subject 'we' in a sentence.

The progressive marker markers /jɪŋ/ or /mek/ can stand separately on the other hand, the aspect marker /lai/ can make progressive aspect either /jɪŋ/ 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' |
| | 'simple aspect' |

Reference

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