RELATIVE CLAUSE IN RONGMEI NAGA

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ABSTRACT

Like many other Tibeto-Burman languages of Northeast India, Rongmei does not have relative pronoun. The relative clause in Rongmei is formed by suffixing nominalizer -mai to the verb of the nominalized clause. Matisoff (1982), has mentioned in describing Lahu language that a single morpheme may functions as a nominalizer, complementizer, relativizer, and genitive marker. A similar complex of functions revolving around a single morpheme occurs in other Tibeto-Burman languages, e.g. Jingphaw, Southern Chin (Houghton 1892), and Chantyal (Noonan 1997). This article is a humble attempt to describe the structure of the relative clause structures in the Rongmei Naga language spoken in Barak Valley, Assam

KEYWORDS: *Noun, Head, Headless, Relative Clause etc*

INTRODUCTION

Rongmei exhibits externally headed relative clause where the relativized noun occurs to the right of the clause i.e., a headed relative clause directly precedes the head nominal it modifies as in many other Tibeto-Burman languages do. Relativization in this language differs from that of the neighboring Indo Aryan languages like Assamese, Bengali (sylethi), Bishnupriya, Bhojpuri, etc. where the relative clause is introduced by a relative pronoun. The type of relative clause construction in this language has been shown in the following sentences:

Head Relative Clause

In headed relative clause, the relative clause is prenominal.

- *daulanaigauŋ-mai   tunə-pui ə-čaimou-e*

  yesterday   come-REL   girl-F   1-sister (elder)-DECL

  '(The) girl who came yesterday is my sister'

- *daulanai   agai-mai   mansai ə-čaibuŋ-e*

  yesterday   fight-REL   man   1-brother-DECL

  '(The) man who fought yesterday is my brother'

- *ziŋbaŋ   lu suan-mai   tunə-pui luŋsi-e*

night song sing-REL girl-F be.poor-DECL

'(The) girl who sings in the night is poor'

- *daulanai paktat-mai mansai ə-čampan-e*

yesterday run-REL man 1-friend-DECL

'(The) man who ran way yesterday is my friend '

- *kʰauhai guaŋ-mai si ə-tuaŋ-e*

yesterday come-REL dog 1-be.own-DECL

'(The) dog which came here is mine'

Headless Relative Clause

In this construction we find no head nominal and it is equivalent to 'those who' in English. Here the relative clause is directly followed by the plural or other suffixes.

- *kriket tali-mai-guai neila bam-tʰə-e*

cricket play-REL-PL be.happy stay-PST- DECL

'Those who played cricket were happy'

- *zou zaŋ-mai-guai tau nau bam-e*

wine drink-REL-PL now sick stay-DECL

'Those who drank wine are sick now'

- *haikʰau guaŋ-mai-guai haugai bam-e*

here come-REL-PL be.beautiful stay-DECL

'Those who came here are beautiful'

Relative Clause as a Lexical Item

Certain common concepts that are so frequently referred have acquired the semantic specificity of a compound lexical item. Consider the following examples:

- *gari tʰau-mai-pu*

vehicle drive-REL-M

'Driver'

- *lu suan-mai-pu*

song sing-REL-M

'Singer'

- *kaček di-mai-pu*

cloth   hit-REL-M

'Goldsmith'

- *sam   tiap-mai-pu*

  hair   cut-REL-M

  'Barber'

- *ram   si-mai-pu*

  Things   carry-REL-M

  'Potter'

Subject Relative Clause

The relativizer relativizes the subjects of agentive transitive or non-agentive intransitive clauses *-mai* where the relative clause precedes the head noun as can be seen in the following examples.

- *seŋ-mai si*

  bark-REL   dog

  '(The) dog which barks' (Lit. barking dog)

- *kap-mai tunə-pui*

  cry-REL girl-F

  '(The) girl who cries' (Lit. crying child)

- *hou-mai mansai*

  steal-REL   man

  '(The) the man who steals' (Lit. stealing man)

- *heŋ-mai si*

  red-REL dog

  (The) dog which is red' (Lit. red dog)

- *keŋ   bai-mai mansai*

  bell   ring-REL man

  '(The) person who rings the bell' (Lit. the bell ringing man)

Object Relative Clause

In Rongmei, the same relativizer *-mai* where the relative clause precedes the head noun relativizes the object. It is one of the typological features of Rongmei that the same relativizer *-mai*, relativizes subject and object.

- *kamai   dun-mai munpuaŋ*

he   pluck-REL   flower

'(The) the flower that he plucked' (lit. The flower he plucked)

- *Abi   lu-mai   gari*

  Abi   buy-REL car

  'The car (that) Abi bought'

- *Debo ri-mai   sian*

  Debo give-REL   money

  'The money (that) Debo gave'

- *ai   zuan-mai   si*

  I   sell-REL dog

  '(The) dog (that) I sold'

- *ə-pui   suaŋ-mai   zan*

  1-mother   cook-REL   curry

  '(The) curry (that) my mother cooked'

CONCLUSIONS

From the above discussion, it is clear that Rongmei does follows the regular Tibeto-Burman relative clause construction in which relative clause is expressed by the suffix *-mai*, The -mai is a nominalizer in the language and used to forms relative clause in the language but not by the relative pronoun. Being a Tibeto-Burman language, Rongmei has no relative pronoun. The lack of relative pronoun is one of the typological features of the Tibeto-Burman languages.

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ABBREVIATION

DECL		Declarative
F		Female
M	-	male gender marker
PL	-	Plural
REL	-	Relativizer
1		First Person pronominal prefix