

Anaphora and Pronominal Agreement in Vaiphei

The Vaiphei is a Northern Kuki language of the Tibeto-Burman Kuki-Chin sub-family of languages. This North-Eastern language is majorly spoken in the Churachandpur district of Manipur, and in pockets of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland, as well as in the Kabaw Valley and Chin State of Myanmar. Vaiphei is one of the 100 non-scheduled languages in India and an endangered North-eastern language (2011 census data) and this language is written with roman script. According to Census-2011, the total population of Vaiphei speakers in India is 42,748, including 21,343 males and 21,405 females. Moreover, Vaiphei is also the name of the tribe who speaks this language. The basic word order of Vaiphei is SOV/SV, with agglutinative morpho-syntactic structure and syllable structure (C)V(V)(V)(C) / T. In this language, there are distinct forms of personal pronouns [i.e. /kei/ (1st), /nan/ (2nd) etc.] as well as there are distinct pronominal agreement markers [i.e. /ka/ (1st), /la/ (2nd), /aʔ/ (3rd) that occurs within the verb phrase. The pronominal agreement markers occur as a prefix to the main verb. There are also reflexive and reciprocal pronominal markers that are signalled by verbal agreement suffix (sometimes with overt pronominal form) in Vaiphei. However, all the personal pronoun forms are optional in the subject position and the person feature is encoded by the pro-markers. This suggests that Vaiphei is a pro-drop language. For example,

1. zapoan pani hi la doi hi
clothes both prox. 2nd like aux.
“You like both of the clothes.”

The third person singular pronoun is a composite DP, containing obligatory deictic marker and determiner, for example: /zepahi/ [3rd.sg.mas]. In contrast, the plural 3rd person pronoun has a distinct form, for example: /amao/ [3rd.plu.mas.]. The personal pronoun paradigm can be observed in the following examples:

2. zanixan kei ka tai hi
yesterday I 1st run aux.
“I ran yesterday.”
3. zanixan ze pa hi aʔ tai hi
yesterday det. mas. prox. 3rd run aux.
“He ran yesterday.”

Moreover, the occurrences of personal pronoun forms are optional, whereas, the pronominal agreement markers are obligatory. Another essential feature is ‘clusivity’ that can be observed in Vaiphei. This distinction is drawn by the 1st person plural pronominal agreement marker. The pronominal agreement marker is /ka/ for exclusive “we” and is /i/ for inclusive “we”. Moreover, the split-ergative- case marking feature can also be observed in Vaiphei. The ergative case marker is /n/. The ergative marking can only be observed in 3rd person pronouns.

Therefore, this paper gives an adequate account of the pronominal paradigm of Vaiphei and provides insight into the pronominal agreement feature, as well. This paper thus demonstrates a descriptive morpho-syntactical account of the pronominal structure in Vaiphei language.

Selected References

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