

Abstract

A Descriptive Grammar of Toto

The present research work entitled “A Descriptive Grammar of Toto” is the synchronic study of Toto, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Alipurduar District of West Bengal. Shafer (1974) stated that Toto belongs to the Jalpaiguri group of the Barish Section within the Baric Subdivision of Sino-Tibetan. The closest linguistics relatives of Toto are: Lepcha (Rong), Newar, Magar and Gurung. Their language is still oral and they have no script of their own. The status of their language is very negligible they received less attention from the government. Their language is not taught in the schools of Jalpaiguri. Toto cultural dance, songs, or any other cultural events are not telecast in the Jalpaiguri Durdarshan Kendra. The present thesis is divided into six chapters: Introduction, Review of literature, Phonology, Morphology, Syntax and conclusion.

Chapter I provides the introduction of Toto language, such as its name, its linguistic affiliation, its population, its status etc. and finally explains the methodology used in the thesis.

Chapter II provides an overview of literature on Toto. There is very scanty linguistic work available in the language. Most of the works in the language are mainly on socio-cultural and historical aspects. Bimalendu Mazumder (1991) *A Sociological Study of the Toto Folk tales* describes the society and folk lore perspectives of the same tribe. However, his work did not give a detailed study of the structure of the language in the systematic way. Amitabha Sarkar (1993) *Toto: Society and Change* describes the area and the people where he depicts the village Totopara is located in Madarihat P.S. under Alipurduar sub-division of Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal. It

lies within altitude 89° 20' and longitude lays 26° 50. The village is situated at the foothills of the Himalayas towards south of the border between Bhutan and West Bengal. Since the village is very close to the Himalayas, they experience a humid and cold climate.

The linguistic work on Toto is limited to few sources: Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India Vol. III part I*, (1903). In the Linguistic Survey of India (LSI), Grierson offers a brief introduction of Toto people and very few grammatical sketch of Toto along with some text data. He pointed out that the tribe Toto lives in the Sub-Himalyas, in the Baxa subdivision of Jalpaiguri. They are considered to have migrated from Bhutan. They are a very wild tribe and no non-Toto knows their language. There is a said to be one Toto in existence who knows a little Bengali besides his own language. The materials forward for the purposes of this survey have been put together with his assistance. They comprise an incomplete list of standard words and phrases, a version of the parable of the Prodigal Son, to which are appeal some numerals and pronouns.

Chapter III deals with the phonology of Toto. There are eighteen consonants in Toto. According to their place of articulation, Toto consonants can be categorized into bilabial, alveolar, palatal, velar and glottal. In terms of manner of articulation, they can be further categorized into seven types: stops, fricatives, affricates, nasals, lateral, trill and semi-vowels. Toto has eight stops i.e., /p, b, t, d, c, j, k, g/, three fricatives /s z and h/, three nasals /m, n, ŋ/, two liquids /l and r/ and two semi-vowel /w/ and /y/ and six vowel phonemes i.e., /i, e, ə, a, u and o/ in its phonemic inventory. No aspirated stops are noticed in the language. The voicing is also one of distinctive features in the case of consonantal phonemes in Toto. Like many other Tibeto-Burman languages, Toto has three nasal

sounds /m, n, and ŋ/, all of them occur in all three positions viz., initially, medially and finally. Other consonant sounds in the language which include fricative /s/, lateral /l/ and trill /r/. Like the majority of Sino-Tibetan languages, Toto is a tonal language in which a change in the pitch of the syllable corresponds to a change in its meaning.

Toto has nine diphthongs viz., /iu/, /ei/, /eu/, /əi/, /ai/, /au/, /oi/, /ou/. and /ui/. Phonetically they are realized as [iʊ] [eɪ], [eʊ], [əɪ], [oɪ], [aɪ], [aʊ], [oʊ]. and [ʊɪ]. Like many other Tibeto-Burman languages of North Eastern India, diphthongs in the language occur only in the open syllable rather than closed one. Diphthong /ui/ occurs in all positions, /iu/ and /eu/ occur initial and medial positions, /ai/, /oi/, /əi/, and /ei/ occur medial and final positions while /ou/ and /au/ occur only in the medial positions of word.

The vowel sequences in the Toto language: /oa/ and /ua/ The vowel sequences in the language occur both medial and final positions of word. The first members in the sequences are high and mid back vowels whereas the second members of the sequences are always central low unrounded /a/ vowel. It should be mentioned here the sequences /oa/ is most common ones i.e., they occur frequently in the language. Toto has two contrastive lexical tones: high and low. Unlike consonant clusters, the consonant sequences in Toto are very rich; however, they occur only in the medial position of words. So the first members of the sequences are always stops nasals and trill while stops, fricatives, affricates, nasals, lateral, trill and semi-vowels occupy the second members of the same. Hence the second members are more in the CC sequences in Toto than the first one in terms of its numerical strength.

.In Toto, syllables structure can be classified into four major types: (i) mono-syllabic (ii) disyllabic and (iii) trisyllabic and (iv) tetrasyllabic word.

Chapter IV deals with the morphology of Toto. It discusses roots and affixes, noun, number, gender, pronouns, numerals, case and postpositions, adjectives, verbs, tense/aspect, mood and adverbs. Roots in Toto can be either nominal or verbal. As many other agglutinating language in the world, affixation in Toto plays a significant role to form new words. Affixation in Toto can be classified into two types namely: (i) prefixation and (ii) suffixation. However, infixation is totally absent in the language. However, coining of new words with of prefixation is not noticed so far in the language.

A noun in Toto may be defined as a class of words that can be postposed for the categories of gender, number and case while the pronouns can be postposed only for case. Pronouns in Toto can take number and case markers but do not show gender distinction. Pronouns can be classified into personal, demonstrative, interrogative, reflexive and indefinite pronouns. Personal pronouns differentiate three persons and two numbers i.e., first, second and third person with singular and plural number. Toto has no grammatical gender, it has only natural gender, i.e., all the male comes under the masculine and all the female comes under the feminine. From the semanto-morphological point of view, the noun may be divided into human and non-human classes. The human nouns in Toto are morphologically marked for male and female. There are different markers for indicating male in case of non-human nouns. However, the female marker remains same irrespective of the distinct categories of animals. All the inanimate nouns are considered as neuter. Toto contrast two-way distinctions in number viz. singular and plural. The singular forms of nouns are not marked by any marker i.e., singular nouns remain unmarked. Plural in Toto is usually formed at the morphological level by suffixation of plural marker *-bi~ -biya* to the generic form of nouns.

Numerals in Toto are of decimal type. Vigesimal system is also found in the numeral system of the language. Majority of the numeral roots in the language are mono-morphemic. Bi-morphemic numerals in the language are numeral root plus prefixes for instance, *nico* 'two' *tu-co* 'six' etc. Compounding is the productive morphological process to form the higher numerals. They are classified into cardinals, ordinals, multiplicative, fractional, and distributive numerals. Toto has seven cases in viz., (i) nominative, (ii) accusative, (iii) dative, (iv) genitive, (v) ablative, (vi) instrumental, and (vii) locative.. The case in Toto is expressed by means of suffixation. Toto does not have distinct category of adjective. In other words, the class of word what we call adjectives in Toto are not morphosyntactically an independent grammatical element as we find in most of the Indo-European languages of the world. Instead, they are derived from the verbs particularly the stative verbs as many Tibeto-Burman languages of Southeast Asia do. Furthermore, adjectives in Toto are indistinguishable from nouns or verbs, i.e., adjectives frequently share the morphosyntactic features of either nouns or verbs. It is interesting to note that the derivation of adjectives from verbs through suffixation is one of the characteristic features of Toto language. Comparative and superlative are morphologically formed by adding suffixes *-koi* and *-koina* to the positive form respectively. Verbs in Toto are inflected for tense, aspect, mood, and other verbal affixes as well. Like many other Tibeto-Burman languages, auxiliaries in Toto follow the main verb. Morphosyntactically, Toto tense can be categorized into: (i) present (ii) past and (iii) future tense. The present tense is marked by a suffix *-mi*, the past is marked by a suffix *-na* and future tense in Toto is expressed by the suffix *-ro*, which is attached to the verb root. There are three aspectual distinctions in Toto language, viz., (i) perfective (ii) progressive and (iii) habitual. In Toto, the all the aspectual markers are

post-verbal suffixes. Structurally, adverbs in Toto can be categorized into two different types: simple and derived adverbs. Semantically, adverbs are classified into (i) adverb of time, (ii) adverb of place, (iii) adverb of manner and (iv) adverb degree. The adverbs always precede the verbs they modify. Derived adverbs in Toto are derived from nouns or verbs by adding adverbial marker *-pa* to the same. Therefore, the derivation of adverbs from noun or verbs is one of the typological features of Tibeto-Burman languages shared by Toto. The mood in Toto can be analyzed in terms of the imperative, permissive, capability, obligatory, probability, conditional, necessity, intensive and optative. The common morphological processes, which are used to form new words in Toto. They are mainly affixation, derivation, compounding reduplication and borrowing of which compounding is the most productive one in the language like many other Southeast Asian languages. It is worth mentioning here that the nominal compounds in Toto are a large proportion of the compound words.

Chapter V deals with the syntax. It provides an overview of basic noun and verb phrase structure in the language. A phrase that functions as the subject or object of a verb can be termed as noun phrase in which nouns most commonly act as a headword. A noun phrase in Toto may consist minimally of the noun (or noun substitute, such as a pronoun) and the other words or affixes can be added. A noun phrase may consist of a head noun and one or more modifiers. Modifiers may be a nominal, an adjectival, a demonstrative, or a numeral. The coordinators express the coordination in Toto, which may be either conjunctive or disjunctive. Verb phrase in Toto must consist of a verb and some other optional elements (NPs or Adverbs) which generally precede the verb. Like many other languages in the world, Toto verb phrase must have a verb, whereas NPs or adverbs are optionally present in the phrase. In other words, the core of

a verb phrase is a verbal nucleus consisting of one or more verbs i.e., either lexical or be verbs. The clause and sentence structures of Toto provides an overview of different types of clauses, nominalization, reflexivization, causativization, relativization, interrogatives, negation and finally types of sentences in Toto. The clause types of Toto are: declarative clause, purposive clause, desiderative clause, relative clauses, infinitival clause etc. Declarative clause in Toto is unmarked. Semantically, it express statement, assertion etc. Declarative clause can be divided into verbal and non-verbal clause.

Toto has no relative pronoun. However, the nominalizer *-wa* is used to forms relative clause in the language. In Toto, the negator *-ma* is employed to negate both the declarative and interrogative clauses; and the non-declarative clayse is negated by the prefix *moko-* in the language, nevertheless negative particle *uhu* is used only in the formation of negative interjections

Toto makes use of nominalizing suffix *-wa* for the derivation of nouns from action/process/stative verbs. Relativization in Toto is made by suffixing the nominalizer *-wa* to the verb of the nominalized clause.

Causative or casual verb in Toto is morphologically marked. The suffix *-pa* is the causative morpheme in Toto, which is postposed to the verb.

Sentences in Toto may be classified into three types, viz., (i) simple (ii) complex and (iii) compound

Chapter VI deals with the findings and summary.

There are three appendices in the thesis. The first appendix contains one texts of Toto language, second appendix deals with the some common riddles of Toto and the third appendix contains Toto vocabulary.