Yakkha complex predicates and the grammar/lexicon distinction

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Overview

1. The grammar/lexicon distinction
2. Yakkha
3. Yakkha complex predicates
4. A closer look at some function verbs
5. Conclusions
1 Introduction

- The problem:
  - the necessity of predefined CONCEPTS, in order to represent knowledge in a comparable and accessible way
  - NATURAL LANGUAGE: ambiguities, overlaps, prototypical, rather than categorical distinctions
## 1 Introduction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRAMMAR</th>
<th>LEXICON</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>productive, regular</td>
<td>idiosyncratic, non-predictable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grammatical categories</td>
<td>word classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inflection</td>
<td>derivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>constructions, clauses</td>
<td>words, idiomatic expressions, collocations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1 Introduction

- **grammars:**
  - ... capture useful generalizations (Enfield 2006: 297)
  - ... reduce the burden on the lexicon

- **dictionaries:**
  - ... represent all the unpredictable material; anything that cannot be derived by rules
1 Introduction

“The gradient nature of the distinction between lexical and grammatical elements has long been recognized [...].” (Schultze-Berndt 2006:359)

“Any borderline drawn between lexicon and grammar is [...] a linguistic construct, so that it may be difficult to decide where to accommodate a particular linguistic phenomenon.” (Mosel 2006: 46)
1 Introduction

- Complex predicates (CPs):
  - Verbs consisting of at least 2 verbal stems, yielding more specific verbal meanings than simple verbs.
  - **Function verb (V2):** same lexeme occurs in distinct gramm. contexts, both ‘content word’ and ‘function word’.
  - Productive morphemes AND lexically restricted; a typical example for the blurry boundary between grammar and lexicon (Schultze-Berndt 2006, Lehmann 2002)
1 Introduction

- Complex predicates and the traditional outline of reference grammars (Schultze-Berndt 2006):
  - **Grammar** or **dictionary**?
  - **morphology** (word formation) or **syntax** (phrase structure)?
  - **form-to-function** or **function-to-form**: one chapter dedicated to CPs, or distributed over several chapters, according to their respective functions?
2 The Yakkha language

- Tibeto-Burman > Eastern Kiranti > Greater Yakkha
- Spoken in Eastern Nepal
2 The Yakkha language

- core area: Sankhuwasawa and Dhankuta districts
- migrated communities in the cities of the Tarai, in Ilam and Darjeeling.
- 14,000 speakers, mostly South of Chainpur, 17,000 ethnic Yakkha (2001 census)

map: thegreathimalayatrail.org
2 The Yakkha language

- Only few fluent speakers in the young generation
- Daily life, media and education dominated by Nepali
- Tamaphok dialect of Yakkha documented since 2009 (own PhD research)
2 The Yakkha language

- Complex morphophonology
- Mainly SOV, head-final phrase structure
- Arguments easily dropped (low referential density)
- Highly synthetic

(1) 
\[ n-dund\text{-wa}-m-ci-m-\eta a-n=ha \]

NEG-understand-NPST-1pl.A-3nsg.P-1pl.A-EXCL-NEG=NMLZ.nsg

‘We (pl, excl) do not understand them.’
3 Yakkha complex predicates

- First verbal stem (\textbf{V.\text{lex}}): lexical information
- Second verbal stem (\textbf{V2, function verb)}:
  - (a) argument structure
  - (b) temporal structure
  - (c) spatial orientation, direction marking
  - (d) misc. ‘semantic fine-tuning’
- V2 are a closed class, 26 verbs
3 Yakkha complex predicates

- Functional structure of a **single predicate** (one set of arguments, one TAM and polarity value)
- **Monoclausal**; no clause linkage marker (cf. Dixon & Aikhenvald 2006 on serial verbs)
- CPs refer to **one event**; a time-positional adverbal locates all subevents of one CP in time (cf. Bohnemeyer et al. 2007)
3 Yakkha complex predicates

- Roughly 44% of the verbal lexicon are CPs
- Text frequency (across genres): 15%
- Productive and transparent CPs found along with idiomatic CPs
- Interaction between V2 and the semantics of the V.lex (transitivity, aktionsart)
3 Yakkha complex predicates

- Morphological structure:

  Pref.-**V.lem**-Suff.[1]-**V2**-Suff.[all]

- (a) Prefixes attach to **V.lem**
- (b) Suffixes and clause-final particles attach to **V2**
- (c) **V.lem** hosts max. one suffix, but only if it consists of a **vowel**
- (d) Only suffixes that occur in the underlying suffix string following **V2** may attach to **V.lem**
  (→ morphologically informed process, not just phonological copying)
3 Yakkha complex predicates

(2a)
*asan*   *lukt-i-khe-i-ŋ=ha*
yesterday *run-1pl.S-V2.go-1pl.S[PST]-excl=NMLZ.nsg*
‘Yesterday we ran away.’

(2b)
*ka*   *yog-u-nes-wa-ŋ=ha*  (*/-wa-u-ŋ=ha*/)
*1sg*   *search-3P-V2.lay-NPST[3P]-1sg.A=NMLZ.nsg*
‘I will keep searching for it.’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>V2</th>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Lexical meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-pi?</td>
<td>Benefactive, affected arguments, intr. completive</td>
<td>‘give’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-met</td>
<td>causative</td>
<td>‘apply, put’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ca</td>
<td>Reflexive, self-benefactive, middle (intentional actions)</td>
<td>‘eat’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-si?</td>
<td>Middle (unintentional actions, intr.)</td>
<td>(only V2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-so?</td>
<td>Experiential</td>
<td>‘look’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-bhoks</td>
<td>Punctual, sudden events</td>
<td>‘split’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-nes</td>
<td>Continuative</td>
<td>‘lay’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-heks</td>
<td>Immediate prospective</td>
<td>‘cut’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-si?</td>
<td>Block, prevent (trans.)</td>
<td>‘kill’ (sis)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ghond</td>
<td>Walk around and do X</td>
<td>‘dig, roam’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-i ~ -ni</td>
<td>Trans. completive</td>
<td>(only V2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V2</td>
<td>Function</td>
<td>Lexical meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-khe?</td>
<td>Telic, irreversible change of state; intr. motion away</td>
<td>‘go’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ght ~ -het</td>
<td>Telic, tr. motion away</td>
<td>‘carry off’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ris</td>
<td>Tr. motion towards distant goal</td>
<td>‘invest, put and go away’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-bhes</td>
<td>Tr. motion hither</td>
<td>‘bring and go away’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-end</td>
<td>Tr. motion down + away</td>
<td>‘insert’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-haks</td>
<td>Tr. motion up + away; irreversible caus. accomplishments</td>
<td>‘send’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-uks</td>
<td>Intr. motion down + towards</td>
<td>‘come down’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ukt</td>
<td>Tr. motion down + towards</td>
<td>‘bring down’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ge?</td>
<td>Intr. motion up + towards</td>
<td>‘come up’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-get</td>
<td>Tr. motion up + towards</td>
<td>‘bring up’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ap</td>
<td>Intr. motion across + towards</td>
<td>‘come from same level’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-apt</td>
<td>Tr. motion across + towards</td>
<td>‘bring from same level’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ra</td>
<td>Intr. motion towards</td>
<td>‘come from further away’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ra?</td>
<td>Tr. motion towards</td>
<td>‘bring from further away’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-a ~ -na</td>
<td>Do X and leave object there</td>
<td>‘leave’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 A closer look: V2 kheʔma ‘go’

- spatial orientation:

  * lukma ‘run’ → * lunŋkheʔma ‘run away’
  * pukma ‘jump’ → * punŋkheʔma ‘jump away’
  * pema ‘fly’ → * peŋkheʔma ‘fly away’
  * lama ‘return’ → * lanŋkheʔma ‘go back’
  * hiŋma ‘turn’ → * hiŋkheʔma ‘turn away’
  * upma ‘cave in, collapse’ → * umkheʔma ‘collapse and slide off’
4 A closer look: *kheʔma* ‘go’

- **telicity** (emphasizing terminal point of inherently telic verbs)

  - *sim* → *siŋkheʔ*ma ‘die’
  - *pem* → *peŋkheʔ*ma ‘faint’
  - *kaŋ*ma → *kaŋkheʔ*ma ‘fall’
  - *poʔ*ma → *poŋkheʔ*ma ‘tilt over’
4  A closer look: *kheʔma* ‘go’

- irreversability, ‘too late’ (context-dependent), sth. undesirable already happened

- **kama** ‘shout, crow’ $\rightarrow$ **kan\textit{kheʔma}** ‘shout, crow already’
  (the cocks crow in the morning and the hero loses his bet)

- **uma** ‘enter’ $\rightarrow$ **unj\textit{kheʔma}** ‘enter already’
  (a mouse escapes into its hole and the cat cannot catch it)
4 A closer look: V2 kheʔma ‘go’

- **detransitivizer** in labile verb pairs (+ telicity)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labile (trans./intrans.)</th>
<th>Intransitive, inchoative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>khieʔma ‘stretch’</td>
<td>kheʔma ‘stretch’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lomma ‘emerge/take out’</td>
<td>loŋkheʔma ‘come/go out’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ekma ‘break, snap’</td>
<td>eŋkheʔma ‘break, snap’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yupma ‘cut, slice’</td>
<td>yumkheʔma ‘tear, go to pieces’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>supma ‘strip off, peel off’</td>
<td>sumkheʔma ‘peel off’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 A closer look: V2 kheʔma ‘go’

- **lexicalized compounds** (both V-V and N-V)
- non-compositional meaning:
  
  \( \text{khuma} \) ‘steal’ → \( \text{khunjkheʔma} \) ‘escape’ (steal-go)

- V.\text{lex} does not occur independently

  \( \text{kinjkheʔma} \) ‘rot, go bad, decay’
  
  \( \text{honjkheʔma} \) ‘crumble down’
  
  \( \text{thanjkheʔma} \) ‘go away in marriage, remarry’
4  A closer look: V2 piʔma ‘give’

- Benefactive marker, animate/sentient objects

  luʔma ‘tell’ → *lumbiʔma* ‘tell/sing for someone’
  hamma ‘distribute/spread’ → *hambiʔma* ‘distribute (among people)’
  chuʔma ‘tie’ → *chumbiʔma* ‘tie for someone’
4 A closer look: V2 piʔma ‘give’

- **Affected participants** in general
  (not just beneficial actions)

  - *uhma* ‘drink’ → *uhbiʔma* ‘drink out someone else’s drink’
  - *khuma* ‘steal’ → *khumbiʔma* ‘take away from someone’
  - *khokma* ‘chop off’ → *khoŋbiʔma* ‘chop off (body part)’
  - *thokma* ‘spit’ → *thoŋbiʔma* ‘spit at someone’
4  A closer look: V2 piʔma ‘give’

- Affected participants, **intransitive verbs**;
  **lexicalizations**: V.\textsc{lex} does not occur independently

  - **sundiʔma**  ‘get sour’
  - **wanʔdiʔma**  ‘become bent/crooked’
  - **chuŋdiʔma**  ‘become wrinkled’
  - **thaŋdiʔma**  ‘get spoiled (of children)’

  (suppletive form -diʔ only occurs in infinitive; inflected forms display -piʔ)
4 A closer look: V2 *piʔma* ‘give’

- Affected participants, *transitivity operations*, marker *–i ~ -ni*

- \( \text{maŋdiʔma} \) ‘be surprised’ ↔ \( \text{maknima} \) ‘surprise’
- \( \text{mundiʔma} \) ‘be forgetful’ ↔ \( \text{muʔnima} \) ‘forget’
- \( \text{mandiʔma} \) ‘get lost’ ↔ \( \text{maʔnima} \) ‘lose’
- \( \text{thaŋdiʔma} \) ‘get spoiled’ ↔ \( \text{thaʔnima} \) ‘spoil’
- \( \text{pendiʔma} \) ‘get wet’ ↔ \( \text{peʔnima} \) ‘soak, wet’
4 A closer look: V2 piʔma ‘give’

- Experiential verbs (lexicalizations)
  - yon yiʔma ‘be scared’ (shake-give)
  - niŋwa khoŋ diʔma ‘become mentally ill’ (mind-break-give)
  - sokma him diʔma ‘be annoyed, be bored’ (breath-flog-give)
4 A closer look: V2 piʔma ‘give’

- Immediacy, certainty, inevitability of an event

  - amdiʔma  ‘come (immediately)’
  - phohor lenṭdiʔma  ‘become dirty (eventually)’
  - kuyum lenṭdiʔma  ‘get dark (eventually)’
4 A closer look: V2 *cama* ‘eat’

- **Sequences** of V.lex + eating
  - *sincama* ‘kill and eat’
  - *huncama* ‘roast and eat’
  - *nincama* ‘fry and eat’
4  A closer look: V2 cama ‘eat’

- **Manners** of eating

- *komcama*  ‘pick up and eat’ (with hands/beak)
- *lenca*  ‘lick up’ (lick-eat)
4 A closer look: V2 *cama* ‘eat’

- **More abstract: consume, live on sth.**
  - *khuncama* ‘live on stealing’ (steal-eat)
  - *naŋcama* ‘live on begging’ (ask-eat)
  - *hiŋcama* ‘live on, feed on’ (survive-eat)
  - *lincama* ‘live on farming’ (plant-eat)
4  A closer look: V2 cama ‘eat’

- Enjoy, do to oneself, self-benefactive

  - **khemcama**  
    ‘enjoy listening’ (hear-eat)
  
  - **mincama**  
    ‘think to oneself’ (think-eat)
  
  - **koncama**  
    ‘take a walk’ (walk-eat)
  
  - **senjcama**  
    ‘clean (own house)’ (clean-eat)
  
  - **phancama**  
    ‘knit for oneself, enjoy knitting’ (knit-eat)
4  A closer look: V2 *cama* ‘eat’

- **Reflexive marker**
  - *moŋcama*  ‘beat oneself’ (beat-eat)
  - *soncama*  ‘look at oneself’ (look-eat)
  - *chik eŋcama*  ‘hate oneself’ (hate-eat)

- **Ambiguities**
  - *moŋcama*  ‘beat others for fun’ (beat-eat)
  - *soncama*  ‘enjoy the view’ (look-eat)
4  A closer look: V2 cama ‘eat’

- Lexicalizations

  * lemma ‘flatter, persuade’
  * luʔma ‘tell’
  * omma ‘block’
  * ima ‘revolve’
  * lemcama ‘cheat’
  * luncama ‘backbite’
  * oncama ‘overtake’
  * incama ‘play’

- common semantics: the intention to be affected by an action carried out by oneself (identity of A and P)

- Næss (2009): ‘EAT’ is not a prototypically transitive concept; A is affected by the event (also: Hopper & Thompson 1980)
4 A closer look: V2 *hanjma* ‘send’

- Trans. movement away from deictic center

  - *ikma* ‘chase’ → *injhanjma* ‘chase off’
  - *sekma* ‘select’ → *sennhanjma* ‘sort out’

- But also lexicalizations:

  - *pi?ma* ‘give’ → *pinnhanjma* ‘marry off’
  - *khuma* ‘steal, take away’ → *khunhanjma* ‘rescue’
4 A closer look: V2 həŋma ‘send’

- Irreversability, telicity of transitive actions

  phopma ‘spill’  →  phomnhaŋma ‘spill completely’
  pekma ‘shatter’  →  peŋnhaŋma ‘destroy completely’
4 A closer look: V2s and reference

- The higher the patient on the **referential hierarchy** the greater the odds for using a complex predicate
- **Higher specification of events in certain participant configurations**

- *ikma* ‘chase’ → *inbhema* ‘chase people towards deictic center in a horizontal direction’
- *khuma* ‘steal’ → *khunjkheʔma* ‘kidnap’
- *lomma* ‘take out’ → *lonnhaŋma* ‘expel’
5 Conclusions

- High functional load, polysemy of the V2s:
  - intentions, abilities, affectedness, referential properties of the participants
  - temporal structure
  - transitivity
  - spatial orientation
  - context (‘too late’, ‘inevitably’, ‘completely’)
- Both: productive and unpredictable combinations
- Interaction of V.lex and V2
5 Conclusion

- Grammar or lexicon?
- BOTH!

- A purely lexical account (list of lexemes, crossreferences) would fail to capture possible generalizations.

- Form-to-function (rather than function-to-form): otherwise, one would not do justice to the semantic and functional wealth of complex predicates and their role as a typical character trait of Yakkha.

- Not including complex predicates in a dictionary would mean to neglect almost half of the verbal lexicon.
5 Conclusion

“[…] failure to achieve ‘economy’ does not detract from the utility of discussing general patterns observed in the lexicon of a language. Such perceived sets of relationships, particularly given their common diachronic significance, are of intrinsic interest in a grammatical description.” (Enfield 2006: 315)
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References


References

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