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

- idealized view:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GRAMMAR</th>
<th>LEXICON</th>
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</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 gram. 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: thegreatimalayasrail.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)
\[ n\text{-}d\text{und}-wa\text{-}m\text{-}ci\text{-}m\text{-}\eta a\text{-}n=ha \]

\text{NEG-}\text{understand-}\text{NPST-}1\text{pl.A-}3\text{ngs.P-}1\text{pl.A-}\text{EXCL-}\text{NEG=} N\text{MLZ.nsg}

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

- First verbal stem (*V.\text{lex}*): lexical information

- Second verbal stem (*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 adverbiallocates 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.lex**-Suff.[1]-**V2**-Suff.[all]

- (a) Prefixes attach to **V.lex**
- (b) Suffixes and clause-final particles attach to **V2**
- (c) **V.lex** 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.lex**
  (→ morphologically informed process, not just phonological copying)
3 Yakkha complex predicates

(2a) 
*asen*  *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>-bhok</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>-kheʔ</td>
<td>Telic, irreversible change of state; intr. motion away</td>
<td>‘go’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-ghet ~ -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 here</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>-geʔ</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>-raʔ</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’ \[\rightarrow\] *lunŋkheʔma* ‘run away’
  - *pukma* ‘jump’ \[\rightarrow\] *punŋkheʔma* ‘jump away’
  - *pema* ‘fly’ \[\rightarrow\] *penŋkheʔma* ‘fly away’
  - *lama* ‘return’ \[\rightarrow\] *laŋkheʔma* ‘go back’
  - *hiŋma* ‘turn’ \[\rightarrow\] *hiŋkheʔma* ‘turn away’
  - *upma* ‘cave in, collapse’ \[\rightarrow\] *umkheʔma* ‘collapse and slide off’
4 A closer look: kheʔma ‘go’

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

  - sima → siŋkheʔma ‘die’
  - pemma → peŋkheʔma ‘faint’
  - kæŋma → kaŋkheʔma ‘fall’
  - poʔma → poŋkheʔma ‘tilt over’
4 A closer look: *kheʔma* ‘go’

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

  *kama* ‘shout, crow’ $\rightarrow$ *kanjkeʔma* ‘shout, crow already’
  (the cocks crow in the morning and the hero loses his bet)

  *uma* ‘enter’ $\rightarrow$ *unjkeʔma* ‘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)

labile (trans./intrans.) → intransitive, inchoactive

khiŋma ‘stretch’ → khiŋkheʔma ‘stretch’
lomma ‘emerge/take out’ → loŋkheʔma ‘come/go out’
ekma ‘break, snap’ → eŋkheʔma ‘break, snap’
yupma ‘cut, slice’ → yumkheʔma ‘tear, go to pieces’
supma ‘strip off, peel off’ → sumkheʔma ‘peel off’
4  A closer look: V2 *kheʔma* ‘go’

- **lexicalized compounds** (both V-V and N-V)
- **non-compositional meaning:**
  \[khuma\] ‘steal’  \[\rightarrow\]  \[khuŋkheʔma\] ‘escape’ (steal-go)

- V.**lex** does not occur independently

  \[kinŋkheʔma\] ‘rot, go bad, decay’
  \[hoŋkheʔma\] ‘crumble down’
  \[thangkheʔma\] ‘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)

  - *unjma* ‘drink’  →  *unjbiʔma* ‘drink out someone else’s drink’
  - *khuma* ‘steal’  →  *khumbiʔma* ‘take away from someone’
  - *khoŋkma* ‘chop off’  →  *khonjiʔma* ‘chop off (body part)’
  - *thokma* ‘spit’  →  *thonjiʔma* ‘spit at someone’
4 A closer look: V2 piʔma ‘give’

- Affected participants, intransitive verbs; lexicalizations: V.lex does not occur independently

- sundeʔma ‘get sour’
- wanjdiʔma ‘become bent/crooked’
- chunjiʔma ‘become wrinkled’
- thanjiʔma ‘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*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Transitivity Operation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>maŋdiʔma</em></td>
<td>‘be surprised’</td>
<td>↔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mundiʔma</em></td>
<td>‘be forgetful’</td>
<td>↔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mandiʔma</em></td>
<td>‘get lost’</td>
<td>↔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>thaŋdiʔma</em></td>
<td>‘get spoiled’</td>
<td>↔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>pendiʔma</em></td>
<td>‘get wet’</td>
<td>↔</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>maknima</em></td>
<td>‘surprise’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>muʔnima</em></td>
<td>‘forget’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>maʔnima</em></td>
<td>‘lose’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>thaʔnima</em></td>
<td>‘spoil’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>peʔnima</em></td>
<td>‘soak, wet’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4 A closer look: V2 *piʔma* ‘give’

- **Experiential verbs (lexicalizations)**

  - *yoŋdiʔma* ‘be scared’ (shake-give)
  - *ninwa khoŋdiʔma* ‘become mentally ill’ (mind-break-give)
  - *sokma himdiʔma* ‘be annoyed, be bored’ (breath-flog-give)
4 A closer look: V2 *piʔma* ‘give’

- **Immediacy, certainty, inevitability** of an event

  - *amdiʔma* ‘come (immediately)’
  - *phohor lenʔdiʔma* ‘become dirty (eventually)’
  - *kuyum lenʔdiʔma* ‘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)
  - *lenącama*  ‘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)
- *hinčama*  ‘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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Meaning and Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>khemcama</em></td>
<td>‘enjoy listening’ (hear-eat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>mincama</em></td>
<td>‘think to oneself’ (think-eat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>koncama</em></td>
<td>‘take a walk’ (walk-eat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>senjcama</em></td>
<td>‘clean (own house)’ (clean-eat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>phancama</em></td>
<td>‘knit for oneself, enjoy knitting’ (knit-eat)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4  A closer look: V2 *cama* ‘eat’

- Reflexive marker
  
  - *moŋcama*  ‘beat oneself’ (beat-eat)
  - *soncama*  ‘look at oneself’ (look-eat)
  - *chik enŋcama*  ‘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 *haŋma* ‘send’

- Trans. movement away from deictic center

  - *ikma* ‘chase’ → *inŋhaŋma* ‘chase off’
  - *sekma* ‘select’ → *seŋnaŋma* ‘sort out’

- But also lexicalizations:

  - *piʔma* ‘give’ → *pinnaŋma* ‘marry off’
  - *khuma* ‘steal, take away’ → *khunnaŋma* ‘rescue’
4  A closer look: V2 *hanja* ‘send’

- Irreversability, telicity of transitive actions

  *phopma* ‘spill’  →  *phomnhanja* ‘spill completely’
  *pekma* ‘shatter’  →  *pejnhanja* ‘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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{ikma} \, \text{‘chase’} & \rightarrow \text{iŋbHEMA} \, \text{‘chase people towards deictic center in a horizontal direction’} \\
\text{khUMA} \, \text{‘steal’} & \rightarrow \text{kHUNgKEʔMA} \, \text{‘kidnap’} \\
\text{lOMMA} \, \text{‘take out’} & \rightarrow \text{lonNHANgMA} \, \text{‘expel’}
\end{align*}
\]
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

References


