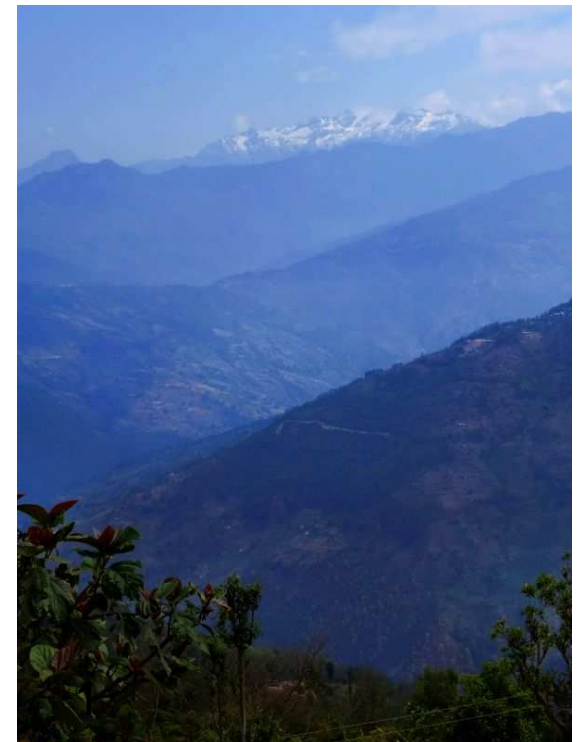


Yakkha complex predicates and the grammar/lexicon distinction

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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

GRAMMAR	LEXICON
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- productive, regular- grammatical categories- inflection- constructions, clauses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- idiosyncratic, non-predictable- word classes- derivation- words, idiomatic expressions, collocations

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):**

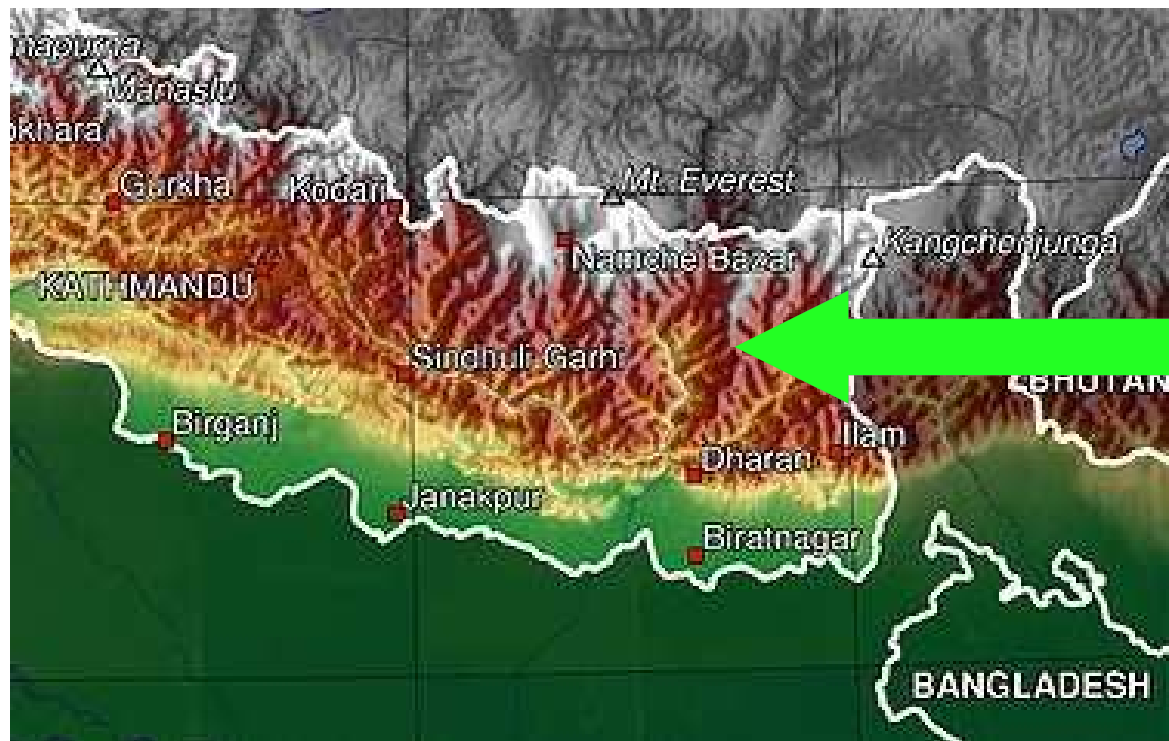
- Verbs consisting of at least 2 verbal stems, yielding more specific verbal meanings than simple verbs.
- **Function verb (V2):** same lexeme occurs in distinct gram. contexts, both ‘content word’ and ‘function word’.
- Productive morphemes **AND** lexically restricted; a typical example for the blurry 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?

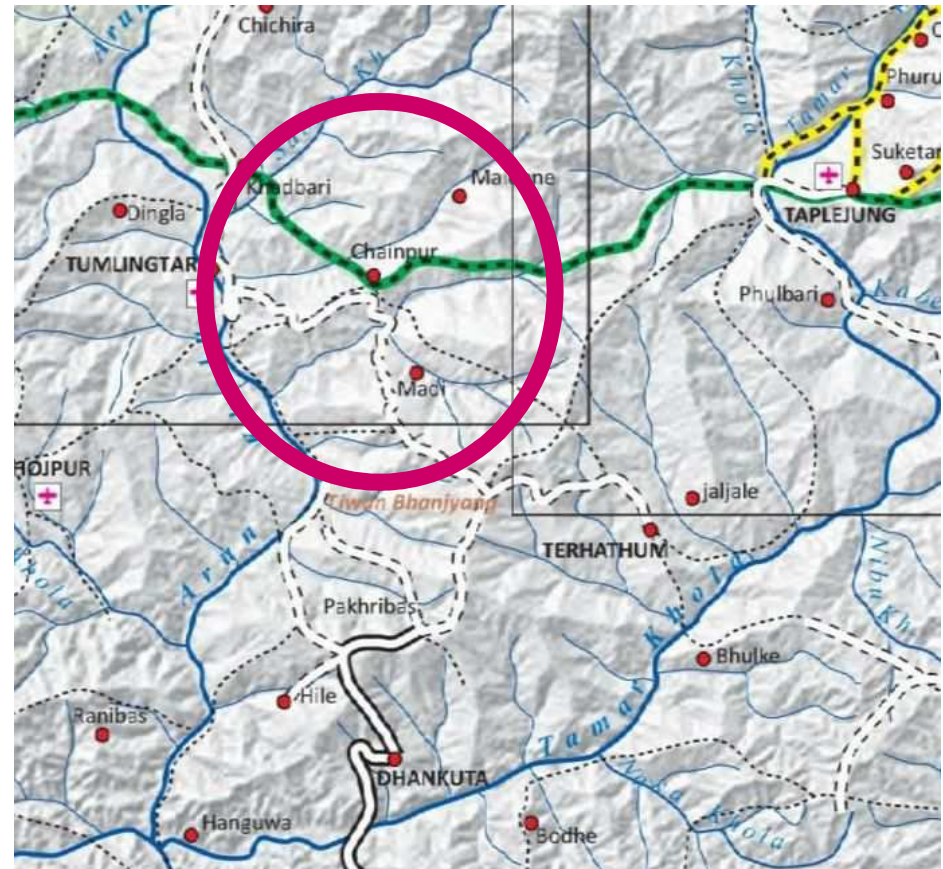
2 The Yakkha language

- 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: 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-**du**nd-wa-m-ci-m-**ŋa**-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 (**V.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 adverbial 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.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-η=ha*

yesterday run-1pl.S-V2.go-1pl.S[PST]-excl=NMLZ.nsg

‘Yesterday we ran away.’

(2b)

ka *yog-u-nes-wa-η=ha* (/ -wa-*u*-η=ha/)

1sg search-3P-V2.lay-NPST[3P]-1sg.A=NMLZ.nsg

‘I will keep searching for it.’

V2	Function	Lexical meaning
<i>-pi?</i>	Benefactive, affected arguments, intr. completive	'give'
<i>-met</i>	causative	'apply, put'
<i>-ca</i>	Reflexive, self-benefactive, middle (intentional actions)	'eat'
<i>-si?</i>	Middle (unintentional actions, intr.)	(only V2)
<i>-so?</i>	Experiential	'look'
<i>-bhoks</i>	Punctual, sudden events	'split'
<i>-nes</i>	Continuative	'lay'
<i>-heks</i>	Immediate prospective	'cut'
<i>-si?</i>	Block, prevent (trans.)	'kill' (<i>sis</i>)
<i>-ghond</i>	Walk around and do X	'dig, roam'
<i>-i ~ -ni</i>	Trans. completive	(only V2)

V2	Function	Lexical meaning
<i>-khe?</i>	Telic, irreversable change of state; intr. motion away	'go'
<i>-ghet ~ -het</i>	Telic, tr. motion away	'carry off'
<i>-ris</i>	Tr. motion towards distant goal	'invest, put and go away'
<i>-bhes</i>	Tr. motion hither	'bring and go away'
<i>-end</i>	Tr. motion down + away	'insert'
<i>-haks</i>	Tr. motion up + away; irreversable caus. accomplishments	'send'
<i>-uks</i>	Intr. motion down + towards	'come down'
<i>-ukt</i>	Tr. motion down + towards	'bring down'
<i>-ge?</i>	Intr. motion up + towards	'come up'
<i>-get</i>	Tr. motion up + towards	'bring up'
<i>-ap</i>	Intr. motion across + towards	'come from same level'
<i>-apt</i>	Tr. motion across + towards	'bring from same level'
<i>-ra</i>	Intr. motion towards	'come from further away'
<i>-ra?</i>	Tr. motion towards	'bring from further away'
<i>-a ~ -na</i>	Do X and leave object there	'leave'

4 A closer look: V2 *khe?ma* ‘go’

□ spatial orientation:

<i>lukma</i> ‘run’	→	<i>luŋkhe?ma</i> ‘run away’
<i>pukma</i> ‘jump’	→	<i>puŋkhe?ma</i> ‘jump away’
<i>pema</i> ‘fly’	→	<i>peŋkhe?ma</i> ‘fly away’
<i>lama</i> ‘return’	→	<i>laŋkhe?ma</i> ‘go back’
<i>hiŋma</i> ‘turn’	→	<i>hiŋkhe?ma</i> ‘turn away’
<i>upma</i> ‘cave in, collapse’	→	<i>umkhe?ma</i> ‘collapse and slide off’

4 A closer look: *khe?ma* ‘go’

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

sima → *siŋkhe?ma* ‘die’
pemma → *peŋkhe?ma* ‘faint’
kaŋma → *kaŋkhe?ma* ‘fall’
po?ma → *poŋkhe?ma* ‘tilt over’

4 A closer look: *khe?ma* ‘go’

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

kama ‘shout, crow’ → *kaŋkhe?ma* ‘shout, crow already’
(the cocks crow in the morning and the hero loses his bet)

uma ‘enter’ → *uŋkhe?ma* ‘enter already’
(a mouse escapes into its hole and the cat cannot catch it)

4 A closer look: V2 *khe?ma* ‘go’

□ detransitivizer in labile verb pairs (+ telicity)

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

khiŋma ‘stretch’ → *khiŋkhe?ma* ‘stretch’
lomma ‘emerge/take out’ → *loŋkhe?ma* ‘come/go out’
ekma ‘break, snap’ → *eŋkhe?ma* ‘break, snap’
yupma ‘cut, slice’ → *yumkhe?ma* ‘tear, go to pieces’
supma ‘strip off, peel off’ → *sumkhe?ma* ‘peel off’

4 A closer look: V2 *khe?ma* ‘go’

- **lexicalized compounds** (both V-V and N-V)
- non-compositional meaning:
khuma ‘steal’ → *khun*khe?*ma* ‘escape’ (steal-go)
- V.lex does not occur independently

*kin*khe?*ma* ‘rot, go bad, decay’

*hon*khe?*ma* ‘crumble down’

*than*khe?*ma* ‘go away in marriage, remarry’

4 A closer look: V2 *piʔma* ‘give’

□ **Benefactive** marker, animate/sentient objects

<i>luʔma</i> ‘tell’	→ <i>lumbiʔma</i> ‘tell/sing for someone’
<i>hamma</i> ‘distribute/ spread’	→ <i>hambiʔma</i> ‘distribute (among people)’
<i>chuʔma</i> ‘tie’	→ <i>chumbiʔma</i> ‘tie for someone’

4 A closer look: V2 *pi?ma* ‘give’

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

uŋma ‘drink’

→ *uŋbi?ma* ‘drink out someone else’s
drink’

khuma ‘steal’

→ *khumbi?ma* ‘take away from
someone’

khokma ‘chop off’

→ *khonbi?ma* ‘chop off (body part)’

thokma ‘spit’

→ *thonbi?ma* ‘spit at someone’

4 A closer look: V2 *piʔma* ‘give’

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

<i>sundiʔma</i>	‘get sour’
<i>wanʔdiʔma</i>	‘become bent/crooked’
<i>chunʔdiʔma</i>	‘become wrinkled’
<i>thanʔdiʔma</i>	‘get spoiled (of children)’

(suppletive form *-diʔ* only occurs in infinitive;
inflected forms display *-piʔ*)

4 A closer look: V2 *pi?ma* ‘give’

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

<i>maŋdi?ma</i>	‘be surprised’	↔	<i>maⁿima</i>	‘surprise’
<i>mundi?ma</i>	‘be forgetful’	↔	<i>mu?niⁿima</i>	‘forget’
<i>mandi?ma</i>	‘get lost’	↔	<i>ma?niⁿima</i>	‘lose’
<i>thaŋdi?ma</i>	‘get spoiled’	↔	<i>tha?niⁿima</i>	‘spoil’
<i>pendi?ma</i>	‘get wet’	↔	<i>pe?niⁿima</i>	‘soak, wet’

4 A closer look: V2 *piʔma* ‘give’

□ **Experiential** verbs (lexicalizations)

<i>yoŋdiʔma</i>	‘be scared’ (shake-give)
<i>niŋwa khoŋdiʔma</i>	‘become mentally ill’ (mind-break-give)
<i>sokma himdiʔma</i>	‘be annoyed, be bored’ (breath-flog-give)

4 A closer look: V2 *piʔma* ‘give’

□ Immediacy, certainty, inevitability of an event

<i>amdiʔma</i>	‘come (immediately)’
<i>phohor lenʔdiʔma</i>	‘become dirty (eventually)’
<i>kuyum lenʔdiʔma</i>	‘get dark (eventually)’

4 A closer look: V2 *cama* ‘eat’

□ Sequences of V.lex + eating

*sin***cama**

‘kill and eat’

*hun***cama**

‘roast and eat’

*nin***cama**

‘fry and eat’

4 A closer look: V2 *cama* ‘eat’

□ Manners of eating

<i>komcama</i>	‘pick up and eat’ (with hands/beak)
<i>lenjcama</i>	‘lick up’ (lick-eat)

4 A closer look: V2 *cama* ‘eat’

□ More abstract: consume, live on sth.

<i>khuncama</i>	‘live on stealing’ (steal-eat)
<i>nanɔcama</i>	‘live on begging’ (ask-eat)
<i>hiɲcama</i>	‘live on, feed on’ (survive-eat)
<i>lincama</i>	‘live on farming’ (plant-eat)

4 A closer look: V2 *cama* ‘eat’

□ Enjoy, do to oneself, self-benefactive

<i>khemcama</i>	‘enjoy listening’ (hear-eat)
<i>mincama</i>	‘think to oneself’ (think-eat)
<i>koncama</i>	‘take a walk’ (walk-eat)
<i>seŋcama</i>	‘clean (own house)’ (clean-eat)
<i>phancama</i>	‘knit for oneself, enjoy knitting’ (knit-eat)

4 A closer look: V2 *cama* ‘eat’

□ Reflexive marker

<i>moŋcama</i>	‘beat oneself’ (beat-eat)
<i>soncama</i>	‘look at oneself’ (look-eat)
<i>chik eŋcama</i>	‘hate oneself’ (hate-eat)

□ Ambiguities

<i>moŋcama</i>	‘beat others for fun’ (beat-eat)
<i>soncama</i>	‘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’ → *iŋhaŋma* ‘chase off’

sekma ‘select’ → *seŋhaŋma* ‘sort out’

□ But also lexicalizations:

piʔma ‘give’ → *pinnaŋma* ‘marry off’

khuma ‘steal, take away’ → *khunnaŋma* ‘rescue’

4 A closer look: V2 *haŋma* ‘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’ → *ij**b**hema* ‘chase people towards deictic center in a horizontal direction’

khuma ‘steal’ → *khun**k**he?ma* ‘kidnap’

lomma ‘take out’ → *lon**n**haŋma* ‘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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