CHAPTER-I

Introduction to Nepali and Complex Predicates

1.0 Introduction

In this chapter, we give a brief introduction of the Nepali language as spoken in Assam. This variety of Nepali has some differences with the standard variety of Nepali. The first half of this chapter looks into the Nepali language and the Gorkha community and their migration history to Assam. Followed by a comparative analysis of the differences between the Assam variety of Nepali (AN) and the Standard Nepali (SN). The second half discusses complex predicates in general; followed by review of literature, methodology, aims and objectives and other aspects of the research work.

1.1 The Nepali Language

Nepali is an Indo Aryan language that is mainly spoken in Nepal and also widely spoken in India, Bhutan, Myanmar. It is the national language of Nepal. The script used for writing Nepali is Devanagari. The term Nepali is used to identify the language as well as the nationality of the citizens of Nepal. Nepali is one of the scheduled languages of India, as it got included in the VIII (8th) Schedule of the Constitution of India in the year 1992. The Nepali speaking people of India identifies themselves as the Gorkha community. The term Indian Gorkha is used to differentiate them from the Nepali speaking people of other nations including Nepal. According to the 2011 Census of India Report [i], there are 2926168 Nepali speakers residing in several states of India. The states like Sikkim, West Bengal and Assam are the major states where the Gorkha people reside. Since this research is conducted on the Nepali language spoken in the state of Assam, in §1.2 we have discussed the Nepali language and community in details.

1.2 The Assam Variety of Nepali and Gorkha Community

In present scenario Nepali language has produced several literary works like poetry, fiction, non-fiction, literary criticism, biographies etc. In the field of linguistics, many foreign scholars and linguists are working on this language.

In § 1.2.1 and §1.2.2, we have discussed the Gorkha community of Assam and their migration history to Assam. In § 1.2.3 we have shown the influence of Assamese on Nepali leading to a new variety of the language called *Asameli Nepali* (AN). Due to constant contact with the Assamese people has led to the convergence of Assamese linguistic features in the AN variety. The SN and the AN varieties are mutually intelligible. Therefore, we have used the term Nepali for discussion in the chapters. The standard Nepali (SN) is the written variety of Nepali, which is commonly used by all the native speakers in any formal setup. The SN variety used by the AN speaker in formal situation includes addressing public meetings, literary events, educational institutions etc. The Nepali speakers of Assam tend to use AN variety in their day to day life conversations or in any informal situations like market place, community gatherings. In the subsequent chapters, whenever we see any kind of variation from the standard variety, we will use term AN to show the differences. Some differences between SN and AN are shown in § 1.2.3.

1.2.1 The Gorkha community of Assam

According to the Census of India Report 2011[ii], there are 5,96,210 Nepali speakers residing in Assam. The Nepali community in Assam are referred to as **Asameli Gorkha** (AG); they are very well assimilated with the Assamese culture and tradition and this is reflected in major literary works produce by them. They actively contribute for the overall development of the state and have brought laurels to the state since a long period of time. The Gorkhas of Assam have also preserved their traditional culture and customs but at the same time adapted with the Assamese identity. The Gorkhas of Assam celebrates their traditional festivals *Dasain*, *Tihar*, *Teej* and with the same enthusiasm they celebrate *Bihu*. Most Nepali speakers of Assam are well versed in Assamese and therefore the influence of Assamese on Nepali has differentiated it from the standard variety of Nepali (SN).

1.2.2 History and Migration of Nepali people in Assam

The Nepali people migrated to the North East India for food, shelter and land. It was easy to migrate them to India because the British were in search of active workers. Chetry (2016:23) argues that the British administration allowed the Nepali migrants to North-East India because they didn't want to decrease their revenue collection as Assam

was a potentially fertile zone for income for the British. In North East India the migration in a large amount began because of the colonial interest [iii]. So they allowed the Nepali people to come to Assam (Erstwhile Assam comprised the following states: Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland). The colonizers realized that Nepali people were hardworking and active workers in agriculture, cattle farming and other domestic jobs. During the Anglo Nepali war (1814-1816) British officials saw the fighting ability of the Nepali soldiers as they were known for their bravery and fighting skills. Later the British thought for their stable settlements in defense services. In 1835 when the Assam Rifle was formed, it has also included the Gorkha soldiers in it. Most of these Nepali people permanently settled in North East India after the Treaty of Sougulee in 1815. The role of Gorkhas in India's freedom struggle is also remembered by Asameli Gorkha freedom fighters like Chabilal Upadhyaya, Dalbir Sing Lohar and others. In Assam several organizations like All Assam Gorkha Students' Union, Assam Nepali Sahitya Sabha, Assam Gorkha Sammelan, Gorkha Development Council are continuously working for the rights and development of the community. Down the years the assimilation with Assamese culture in every possible domain has given the Nepali people of Assam a new identity as Assameli Gorkha.

1.2.3 The Assam Variety of Nepali (AN) and its influence from Assamese

The Assam variety of Nepali has adapted many linguistic features of the Assamese language. The Nepali speakers of Assam, have adapted a number of lexical items from Assamese. In this section we have listed some Assamese words which are also widely used by the Nepali speakers of Assam. It may be noted that use of the SN variety is limited to formal domains. The influence of Assamese and less exposure to the standard variety is one of the main reason for the incorporation of Assamese words into the AN variety. Assamese loan words and other linguistic features are used colloquially by the Nepali people of Assam. I have listed below a few lexical items as an instance for the reference.

Table 1

Assamese	AN	SN	Gloss
sidha	sidha	sozo	straight forward
ustadi	ustadi	batho	cleverly
ɦap	sap	sarpa	snake
dami	dami	mahango	expensive
besi	besi	dher	excess
kintu	kintu	tara	but
zeniba	zeneba	zastoki	for example
suti	chutti	bida	close
nirdisto	nirdisto	chuttei	specific
dharona	dharana	zankari	notion
sobzi	sobzi	tiun/tarkari	vegetable curry
abeg	abeg	awesh	emotion
zharu	zhadu	kuchho	broom
notun	noutun	naja	new
zomoni	zomoni	thatta	comedy
asolote	asolote	asolma	actually
zodi	zodi	jadi	if
dukan	dokan	pasal	shop
gilas	gilas	glass	glass
nimokh	nimok/nimek	nun	salt
nimokhija	nimokhija	nunilo	salty
raiz	raiz	zanasadharan	folks
zikunu	zikunu	kuneipani	anything
kazia	kazia	ladai	fight
manɦo	mangso	masu	meat
nam	nam	zhar	get down
otipat	atipat	atti	extreme
todonto	tadanta	karwai	investigation
alusona	alusona	boithak	discussion
potol	potol	porwol	pointed gourd
bilahi	belai	tamatar	tomato
kuhijar	kuijar	ukhu	sugarcane

bhol	bhol	ghiroula	luffa
kal	kol	kera	banana
biɦoi	bisoj	mudda	matter
tamul	tamul	supari	betel nut
tusok	tusok	dhosona	mattress
khirki	khidki	zhyal	window
darja	darja/doilo	dhoka	door
pasi	pasi	dalo	bamboo basket
gos	gas	rukh	tree
ɦomporko	samparka	sambandha	relation
ɦak	sak	sag	spinach
bohi	bohi	kapi	copybook
mazot	maza	bich	between
poriskar	poriskar	spasta	clear
dhemali	dhamali	hasso	joke
tan	tan	garo	hard
zugar	zogar	taijarri	arrangement
darmaha	darma	talab	salary
obosta	obosta	halat	condition
porijal	parijal	pariwar	family
matra	matra	para	temper
matha	matha	dimag	head
aɦuvidha	asubidha	aftjaro	problem
ghur	ghur	farki	return
aam	aam	aap	mango
anaroɦ	anarash	bhui kator	pineapple
bhab	bhab	soch	thought
deka	deka	zawan	young
khed	khed	dhapa	chase
dim	dimma	anda	egg
ukil	ukil	wakil	lawyer

Table 1: Lexical items in Assamese, AN and SN

Based on the above listed lexical items we have seen the following changes in Assam variety of Nepali from Assamese while borrowing:

(a) The phoneme ɦ changes to s, in certain AN words. For example, *ɦap* 'snake' becomes *sap*, *mɑngɦo* 'meat' becomes *mɑngso*, *biɦoi* 'topic' becomes *bisoi*, *ɦomporko* 'relation' becomes *samparka*.

(b) Trisyllabic word changes to disyllabic in some AN words. For example, *kuhijar* 'sugarcane' becomes *kuijar*, *bilahi* 'tomato' becomes *belai*.

(c) Vowel changes in certain AN words. For example, o changes to ɑ in *dharana* 'notion', u changes to o in *dokan* 'shop'.

(d) Vowel change in some AN words. For example, in Assamese we have *notun* 'new' and in AN we see *noutun* where the monophthong o changes to diphthong ou.

Apart from these lexical items, the AN also differs from the standard variety of Nepali in terms of first and second person plural agreement marker, ablative and genitive case marker. I have shown some examples below:

(1) hami   sɑbei-lai   maja   gɑr-ch-ɑu   (SN)

    we   everyone-ACC   love   do-PRES-1P.PL

    "We love everyone."

(2) hami   sɑbei-lai   maja   gɑr-ch-um   (AN)

    we   everyone-ACC   love   do-PRES-1P.PL

    "We love everyone."

In example (1) *-au* is the first person plural marker but in Assam variety of Nepali as seen in example (2) *-um* is the first person plural marker. In formal setup the Nepali speakers of Assam tend to take the agreement marker of standard variety but in daily conversation the *-um* marker is used mostly.

The plural marker in SN is *-haru* and in AN it is *-heru*. In (3) the second person pronoun *timi* 'you' takes the plural *–haru* to indicate the plurality of the subject pronoun. In (4)

the second person *timi* 'you' drops the vowel *–i* when the plural marker *–heru* suffixes to the subject pronoun. Here we observe a morpho-phonemic change in AN.

(3) timi-hɑru   ka   zan-ch-ɑu   (SN)

you-PL   where   go-PRES-2P

"Where are you going?"

(4) tim-heru   ka   zan-ch-eu   (AN)

you-PL   where   go-PRES-2P

"Where are you going?"

In the same examples we find that SN takes the second person plural agreement marker -*au* where as AN takes -*eu*.

The Ablative case marker in SN is -*bɑtɑ*; AN speakers predominantly uses -*bada* as shown in (5) and (6).

(5) pahad-bɑtɑ   bholi   au-ch-ɑu   (SN)

mountain-ABL   tomorrow   come-PRES-1P.PL

"Tomorrow we will come from hills."

(6) pahad-bɑdɑ   bholi   au-ch-um   (AN)

mountain-ABL   tomorrow come-PRES-1P.PL

"Tomorrow we will come from hills."

In SN the genitive case marker is -*ko*. The genitive marker changes into -*kɑ* if it is a plural construction or a mid-honorific construction.

(7) ram-ko   kitap

ram-GEN   book

"Ram's book."

8) ram-ka   kitap

    ram-GEN   book

    "Books of Ram."

In AN variety the genitive markers *–ko* and *–ka* can occur interchangeably unlike in SN, indicating *–ko* and *–ka* are in free variation in AN. See (9-10) below.

(9) mɑ   ram-ko   ghɑr   zan-ch-u

    I   ram-GEN   home   go-PRES-1P.SG

    "I go to Ram's home."

(10) mɑ ram-ka   ghɑr zan-ch-u

    I   ram-GEN   home go-PRES-1P.SG

    "I go to Ram's house."

Both the constructions are acceptable in Assam variety of Nepali whereas example (10) may not be a good example in the SN variety.

While analyzing the typological features of AN in Chapter 2, compound verbs in Chapter 3 and the serial verb constructions in chapter 4, we shall witness a few more differences between AN and SN varieties. These variations will be discussed accordingly, in the subsequent chapters.

1.3 Complex Predicate

Complex predicate (CP) refers to a combination of two or more lexical items together to constitute a single expression. In such constructions both the items form the predicate of a single clause. Kubota (2014:1146) defines CP as "a complex predicate is typically a predicate consisting of multiple parts that stand in some semantic relation to one another (most typically that of semantic embedding), which despite the complex semantic relation expressed, behaves as one word in surface realization." According to Bhattacharyya, Chakrabarti and Sarma (2006:332) complex predicate widely exists in South Asian languages in the form of nominal + verb and verb + verb combination.

Miriam Butt (1993:2) defines complex predicates as given below;

- 'The argument structure is complex (two or more semantic heads contribute arguments).'
- 'The grammatical functional structure is that of a simple predicate. It is *flat:* There is only one single predicate (a nuclear predicate) and a single subject.'
- 'The phrase structure may be either single or complex. It does not necessarily determine the status of a complex predicate.'

Verma (1993:197) defines complex predicate as "an appellation which has, for all practical purposes, been applied to Noun + Verb constructions in which the verb is what is called a 'light verb'." Verma discusses Hindi complex predicates to provide "larger structural unity of the various categories of V1 V2 type predicates."

Davies (1993:47) describes "many South Asian languages contain complex predicate constructions, in which the verbal element of a sentence is made up of two verbal elements or a nominal expression and a finite verb."

Complex predicate is an umbrella term which includes various type of complex constructions; like compound verbs, verb serializations, verbal extensions etc. This research focuses on the compound verb and serial verb construction in the Nepali language.

Complex Predicate

Compound Verb   Serial Verb Construction
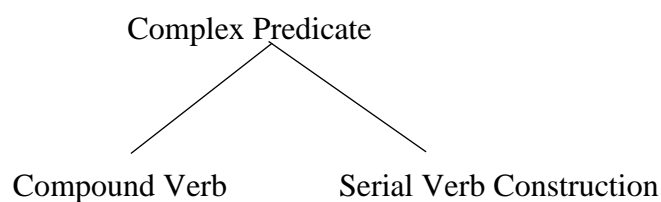
This work is a descriptive study of Nepali complex predicates. In chapter 3 and chapter 4, we have discussed the compound verb and serial verb construction in details.

1.4 Objectives

This research mainly focuses to study the syntax of complex predicates along with very basic semantic explanation in certain cases. The role of light or vector verbs in a complex predicate construction is discussed in details. It also enquires the **-i** marker

which is considered as a conjunctive particle as well as non-finite marker depending on the construction. The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To examine the construction and characteristics of compound verbs in Nepali and serial verb construction in Nepali.
2. To examine the **-i** marker in Nepali compound verb and serial verb construction.
3. To gain familiarity with the phenomenon of Nepali light verbs and its properties.
4. To achieve new insights related to the syntax of Nepali complex predicates.

1.5 Review of Literature

There are a few research works conducted on Nepali complex predicates but no detailed descriptive accounting of compound and serial verbs are done in Nepali. Pokhrel (1991) also worked on compound verbs by doing a descriptive accounting and Lohani (1999) by using Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG) framework. There is no substantial work that has been carried out in Nepali serial verb construction.

Diana Schackow and John Peterson (2011) in their paper titled *Complex Predicates in Nepali* discusses the semantics of complex predicates but lacks detailed syntactic analysis. They have also discussed the Nepali Aktionsart and its interaction with tense and aspect. They have talked about Nepali vector verbs with reference to the temporal structure of an event. This paper is very important because it has discussed some specific type of verb constructions from semantic point of view.

Madhav P Pokharel's (1991) *Compound Verbs in Nepali* is one of the seminal work in this area. This paper is very helpful for understanding the basic properties of compound verbs in Nepali language. This work looks into the construction of compounding and the major thrust of this paper is V+V compound. Pokhrel's work is undoubtedly a significant one and it has left a wide scope for further study in this area.

Miriam Jessica Butt (1993) in her doctoral thesis *The Structure of Complex Predicates in Urdu* discusses the permissive, aspectual complex predicates and the formation of complex predicates in Urdu. Butt has also talked about linking in terms of Urdu complex predicates. Butt urges that complex predicates in South Asian languages are used to form

new verbal predications given a few basic building blocks. This work on complex predicate helps to understand the intricacies of complex predicates in details.

Manindra K. Verma (1993) in *Complex Predicates in South Asian Languages* compiled thirteen articles on different languages' complex predicate structure. This book consists of the analysis of languages like Urdu, Telugu, Tamil, Hindi and Marathi. There are many interesting articles edited by Verma, for example; *Complex Verb Phrase: A Diachronic and Synchronic View* by Vijay Gambhir (1993:77-96), *Verb Serialization in Syntax, Typology and Historical Change* by Yamuna Kachru (1993:115-134), Sub-areal variations in Conjunct Verb by Colin P. Messica (1993:157-160), and *Aspectogenesis and the Compound Verb in Indo Aryan* by Peter Edwin Hook (1993:97-114). This book helps to understand and explore the diverse issues related to complex predicate and to generalize many features of complex predicate in South Asian languages.

Alex Alsina, Joan Bresnan and Peter Sells' (1997) *Complex Predicates* is a collection of 13 articles on complex predicates which deals with related diverse phenomenon as serialization, causatives, auxiliarization, noun incorporation etc. In this book Mark Baker's article *Complex Predicates and agreement in Polysynthetic Languages* is also included, where Baker focuses on the structure of complex predicates in polysynthetic languages.

Debarchana Basu and Rony Wilbur (2010) Purdue University wrote a paper titled *Complex Predicates in Bangla: An event-based analysis*. In this paper they have discussed Bangla complex predicates in an event structure based framework. Their paper is based on semantic syntactic mapping of the lexical verb and its argument structure. They have mainly dealt with CV and SVC in Bangla for discussing the data and syntax-semantic interface is used for data analysis. This paper helps to understand the accounting of both syntactic and semantic data analysis of complex predicates.

P T Noufal (2016) in his doctoral thesis *On The Syntax of Verb-Verb Constructions in Malayalam* discusses Malayalam multi verb constructions and its properties. Noufal shows some specific tests to distinguish SVCs from other verb constructions. This work has helps to understand SVC in details.

Benjamin Slade (2013) in his paper titled *The Diachrony of Light and Auxiliary Verbs in Indo-Aryan* where he has discussed the morpho-syntax of CVs. He has also talked about diachronic evolution of CV constructions. The semantics of CV construction is also portrayed by Slade in his paper. The importance of this paper is that it has discussed the development of Indo Aryan CVs and enquired its probable influence from other nearby language families.

Shakthi Poornima (2012) in her Ph.D. thesis *Hindi Complex Predicates At The Syntax-Semantics Interface* discusses aspects like Hindi light verbs and its formal syntactic analysis using the lexicalist framework of Head Driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG). In this dissertation, Poornima tries to draw the relationship between syntax and semantics of complex predicate construction. This is definitely helpful as the data analyzed here belongs to the Indo-Aryan language family.

Jayaraj Acharya's (1991) *A Descriptive Grammar of Nepali and an Analyzed Corpus* is also one of the notable book on Nepali grammar. Acharya's book has shown many aspects of the language along with building a framework to analyze corpus. This book is very important for a linguistic researcher to work on Nepali. It has given many typological accounting of Nepali language along with a descriptive data accounting.

David Matthews' (1998) *A Course in Nepali* is also a significant book for Nepali language learners. It has simplified many linguistic issues so that it becomes easier to learn the internal ambiguities of the language. This book helps to examine the Nepali data from the standard variety because the linguistics data discussed here is from Nepal.

Mark Post's (2004) *Assamese Verb Serialization in Functional, Areal-Typological and Diachronic Perspective* is the most important paper for this research work. Post's analysis of Assamese serial verb is applied in Nepali in this work. Post shows that in Assamese serial verb construction a non-finite marker **-i** occurs and this marker is also present in the serial verbs of Nepali spoken in Assam.

K.A Jayaseelan (2004) in *The Serial Verb Construction in Malayalam* shows different types of serial verb constructions. In this paper Jayaseelan shows that the string of verbs in a serial verb construction can be lengthened till the ingenuity and patience of the speaker. In Nepali similar serial verb construction is observed.

1.6 Research Methodology

This work is an analytical one; where qualitative research has been undertaken. Since I am a native speaker of the target language therefore native speakers' intuition is also used here but only after verifying with the other native speakers. I have also visited Kathmandu in Nepal and observed as well as interacted with the Nepali speakers of different backgrounds including linguists. I have used both primary and secondary sources for conducting this research work. Some of the methods to conduct this research are given below:

   (a) Field study as and when required.
   (b) Telephonic conversations.
   (c) Data observation.
   (d) Data elicitation.
   (e) Data discussion.

Secondary sources: Research papers, journals, thesis, dissertations, books etc. related to the research area.

1.7 Area of Study

I have mainly collected my data from the speakers of Nagaon and West Karbi Anglong District of Assam. Majority of the data for this research is collected from Nepali speakers from Baithalangso, which is situated in the border area of Nagaon and West Karbi Anglong districts of Assam. I have also observed the Nepali speakers of Sonitpur district mainly from Tezpur area where a handsome number of Nepali speakers reside. We have shown the map in Fig 1 for better geographical understanding of the places that we have mentioned in this section.
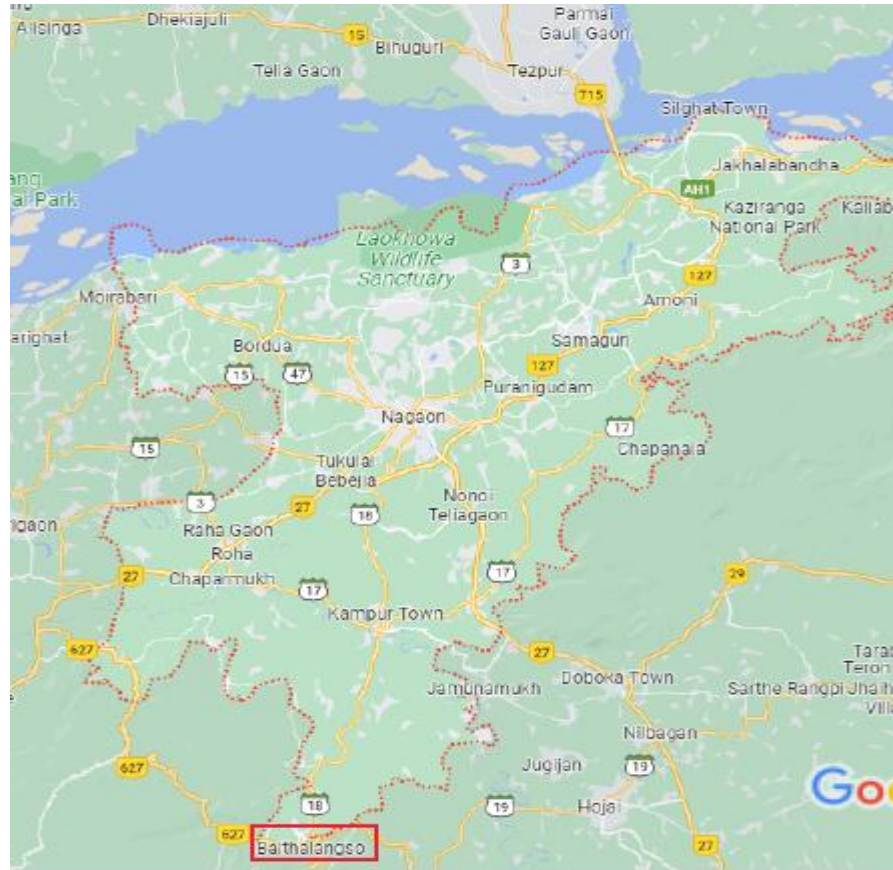
Fig 1: Map highlighting Baithalangso

Source: Google Maps

1.8 Chapter Division

This thesis is divided into five chapters: they are as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction to Nepali and Complex Predicates

Chapter 2: Finite and Non-Finite Clause Structure in Nepali

Chapter 3: Compound Verb Construction in Nepali

Chapter 4: Serial Verb Construction in Nepali

Chapter 5: Conclusion

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[i] Census of India website https://censusindia.gov.in/census.website/data/census-tables (The decennial Census Report of 2021 is not published at yet.)

[ii] Census of India website https://censusindia.gov.in/census.website/data/census-tables

[iii] For details see Sanjib Kumar Chetry's (2016) "Nepalis in Assam: A historical Perspective (1816-1985)" **www.isca.me**