1. INTRODUCTION

Explicator compound verbs (henceforth ECVs), also known as 'modified verbal expressions' (cf. Porizka 1967-69), 'serial verbs' (cf. Kachru 1978.) and simply 'compound verbs' (cf. Hook 1974) have long since been identified as a major areal feature of South Asian languages. The phenomenon has attracted most attention in languages of the Indo-Aryan and Dravidian families while extant work in the Austroasiatic languages is, in proportion, negligible. As for the situation in Tibeto-Burman languages, there has been no serious attempt made to study the construction to the best of our knowledge. Pioneering work on the ECV as an areal phenomenon of South Asian languages is found in Masica (1976) and this is followed by others like Kachru, Pandharipande (1980) and Hook (1988). Currently in progress is a more detailed study of the ECV as an areal phenomenon prevalent among languages of the four language families in India.¹

By explicator compound verb we mean a sequence of at least two verbs V1 and V2 where the first member is the main or predicating verb and the second member, although homophonous with an independent verb in the language, does not appear with its primary lexical meaning; V2 only occurs in the sequence to mark the main verb V1 for certain 'grammatical' features. Two illustrations, from Hindi and Malayalam, are given below.

Hindi

1. vo aa gayaa
   he come GO-pst.
   'He came'

Malayalam

2. kuppi poṭṭI pooyi
   bottle break-cp GO-pst
   '(The) bottle broke'

In sentences 1. and 2. aa 'come' and poṭṭI 'break' are the main verbs in stem and participial forms respec-
tively, while gayaa 'go and pooyi also 'go', both marked for tense, are explicators that function as grammaticalized markers for features such as 'perfection' and 'undesirability'.

In functional terms, both the verbs in the ECV construction do not have independent lexical status. Instead, it is the lexical meaning of just one of the verbs (usually the first) that forms the semantic core or nucleus of the ECV, while the other verbal member loses it primary lexical meaning. In other words, the morphologically non-finite verb is the functionally finite verb form. The first verbal member of the ECV has variously been called 'main verb', 'polar verb' and 'principal verb'. The second, delexicalized verb form is known as 'operator', 'vector', 'explicator', 'auxiliary', 'intensive auxiliary', and also 'light verb', in more recent GB theory based writings on the subject. It is indeed the above noted "non-lexical occurrence" (Hook) or "lexical emptying" (Masica) of the second verb form that is specifically seen as a distinguishing trait of ECVs. Further, it is also important to note that, although delexicalized, the explicator is not without function for it systematically contributes specific shades of meaning to the main verb that it would not indicate outside these constructions. These characteristics when taken together with other related facts such as those of explicators belonging to a closed set of limited members on the one hand and on the other, their combining in most cases with more than one lexical verb in languages where they occur, has led to their being identified as 'grammatical' elements.

It is a special characteristic of the explicator compound verb that it alternates with the corresponding simple verb with no apparent change in the cognitive meaning of the predicate. We do not mean by this statement that there is no meaning loss or gain in the use of the simple word in place of the ECV or vice versa, rather we simply assert that the use of one or the other does not alter the truth value of the predication made in either case. In other words, the explicator in an ECV specifies or explicates the predicate without changing it in any basic sense. This, therefore, is the reason why it is said that the semantics of explicators has a significant role to play at the level of discourse. Compare sentence 1. and 2. with sentences 1a, and 2a, given below for clarification of this point.

Hindi

1a. vo aayaa
    he come - pst.
    'He came'
Malayalam

2a. kuppi poṭṭi

bottle break - pst.

'(The) bottle broke'.

Significantly, this second definitional constraint automatically excludes all tensual, aspectual and modal auxiliaries from the class of explicators.

What we propose to do in this paper is to make a comparative areal study of explicator compound verbs not in terms of the lexical items used or their actual semantic usages in the various Indian languages, but in terms of what most writers agree, either explicitly or otherwise, are similar types of meanings indicated by explicators in these languages. Analysis, however, demands cross linguistic comparison of the actual lexical items used in the construction under consideration. This is supplied in Tables 1-3 later in the paper. For purposes of the present study we have taken representative data from languages belonging to all the four language families in India: Dravidian, Indo-Aryan, Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman.

EXPLICATORS-SEMANTIC TYPES

First, a brief note on the 'types' of meanings indicated by explicators in South Asian languages. At the highest level, these meanings may be grouped into ASPECTUAL, ADVERBIAL and ATTITUDINAL types. Each of these types can further be seen in terms of several discrete or, sometimes, partially overlapping sub-types. Let us take a quick look at these sub-types that represent (and this can be said with near certainty) all the meanings indicated by explicators in the South Asian languages where they have been studied so far.

The ASPECTUAL sub-type is the least differentiated one. Under it come the overlapping meanings of perfection or action being seen as a whole, completion etc.

For instance:
Meitei 3. ay cat-thok-luy
I go - EXIT - pst
'I went away' (Perfective)

Kannada 4. naanu ella ha:lla nnu kuqIdu biqutteene
I all milk drink LEAVE-fut-per.
'I'll drink up all the milk'
(completion)
The ADVERBIAL sub-type is of three kinds:

(i) **manner**, indicating an action/event to be abrupt, non-volitional, deliberate, done with difficulty, done easily, done casually, decisively/drastrically done, intensively or exhaustively done.

For instance:
Punjabi 5. toshii ne kamm kar suṭṭiaa 
Toshi erg work do THROW-pst., mas. sg. 
'Toshi did the work (violently)

(ii) **benefactive** indicating whether an action is for oneself or for another.

For instance:
Kurukkh 6. nin enage onte svaṭar ṭas?oi ci?oi you for me one sweater knit-interro. GIVE-interro. 
'Will you knit a sweater for me? (other-benefactive)

'Basu built a house (self-benefactive)

and (iii) **others** such as irreversible action, an action done in anticipation or in advance, done to get over with, marking emphasis, definiteness etc.

For instance:
Kashmiri 8. von kyaa karI, bi goos yI kE:m kErith now-what-do I-WENT-this-work-having done 
'Now what shall I do, I have done this work' (irreversible, without remedy)

The ATTITUDINAL sub-type marks attitudes of the speaker or narrator towards the action or actor such as those of humility, respect, contempt, surprise, censurability or undesirability and anger, disgust or exasperation. See examples 9 and 10 given below.

Tamil 9. lakshmi paaṭṭa - paaṭI kiliccaa Lakshmi song sing - pst. prt. TEAR-pst. fem.sg 
'\text{Lakshmi sang a song}' (contempt)