Grammaticalization of verbs in Classical and Modern Newari

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper will examine the various grammaticalized uses of certain verb forms in both Classical and Modern Newari, a Tibeto-Burman language of Nepal. Grammaticalization as a historical process will be discussed in terms of verb serialization, auxiliarization and morphologization, with lexical and syntactic data drawn from Classical Newari texts dating back as far as the early 12th century, as well as from modern uses of the language.

2. MAJOR SYNTACTIC DEVICES IN NEWARI

Historically, Newari seems to have diverged considerably from the other cognate languages in the Bodic subdivision, especially the complex pronominalized group of Kiranti languages in Eastern Nepal. The language has undergone significant changes in its phonology, morphology, lexicon and syntax ever since it came in contact with the Indo-Aryan spoken languages. The influx of Indian immigrants and the assimilation of Prakrit and Sanskrit speakers into the matrix of Newari society in the early centuries A.D. brought steady if not rapid changes in the structure of the language. Newari however has retained some of the basic characteristics of a T-B language, where such primary grammatical categories as case markings in nouns or pronouns, comparative forms of adjectives, and verb inflections for tense, number, mood, voice and aspect are very limited. The verbs simply indicate past and non-past, and apart from the nominal ergative other case-markers like the gerundive have not developed; gender and sex have no direct relationship, and both animate and inanimate nouns do not always have plural suffixes. As the T-B languages are basically isolating in structure, syntactic constructions are normally expressed by specific word-orders. The basic syntactic word order consists of the agent, patient and the verb which is always placed at the end of the sentence, while modifiers precede the noun phrase or the verb phrase.

I would like to express my gratitude to Scott DeLancey for his valuable advice and comments on the first draft of this paper. The errors and inconsistencies that remain are my own.
2.1. Finite and non-finite verb morphology

A final verb or auxiliary inflected for tense is a finite verb in Newari, and any other verb in such a string is considered non-finite. The finite verbs normally indicate past and non-past, which actually is a contrast between perfective and future. A verb can be both past and perfective, while the non-past category is limited to the future use, as can be seen in the following examples:¹

(1) huhū simdhavo lApm lA-om/-am
    over there lion meet happen-PST
    'I happened to meet a lion over there.'

(2) avani chi-ji mvA-ya ma-dat-o thva kisi-na from now you-I live-INF NEG-be-FUT this elephant-AGT

    nho-yA  si-yu
    trample-PST die-FUT
    'From now we will not live, (we) will die by being trampled by this elephant.'

The conjunct-disjunct person marking system as it operates in Classical and Modern Newari has the following forms which can be summarized as a four-vowel contrast with morphophonemic alternatives:

\[
\begin{array}{c|c|c}
\text{Conjunct} & \text{Disjunct} \\
\text{Past} & -A & -a/-am/-om \\
\text{Non-past} & -e & -i/-u \\
\end{array}
\]

Even this inflection system is marginal, since only event verbs, i.e., transitive and intransitive verbs, follow this inflection. Impersonal verbs inflect for tense, but not for the category of person. In Classical Newari stative and attributive verbs are marked with the future morpheme -i or -u, while in modern usage these verbs do not inflect at all. The conjunct forms normally occur with first person, and disjunct forms with non-first persons in statements. In questions and other pragmatic situations, however, the conjunct forms (-A, -e) can occur with second person, and disjunct forms (-a, -i) with first and third persons (Hale 1980):

¹ The low, front tense vowel [a] is represented by the upper case symbol "A."
(3) a. ji-ī khApA tin-A
   I-ERG door close-PC
   'I closed the door.'

   b. cha-ā khApA tin-A lA
      you-ERG door close-PC Q-marker
      'Did you close the door?'

(4) a. ji-ī khApA khan-e
   I-ERG door open-NPC
   'I will open the door.'

   b. cha-ā khApA khan-e dhAl-a
      you-ERG door open-NPC say-PD
      'You said you would open the door.'

(5) a. wa-ā khApA til-a/tit-a
     he-ERG door close-PD
     'He closed the door.'

   b. ji-ī khApA til-a/tit-a lA
      I-ERG door close-PD/close-PD Q-marker
      'I closed the door (accidentally).'/"Did I close the door?"

(6) a. wa-ā thva jyA yA-i
    he-ERG this work do-NPD
    'He will do this work.'

   b. ji-ī thva jyA yA-i lA
      I-ERG this work do-NPD Q-marker
      'Would I do this work?'

Apart from this simple inflectional pattern, Classical Newari verbs have three morphologically derived forms:

a. Imperative: khan-o/- wo 'tell!'; yA-wo 'do!'; bi-wo 'give!'

b. Stative (future): khan-i, yAy-i, biy-i/-u

c. Causative: gAyak-al < gAl- 'to fan'
   cAyak-al < cAl- 'to open'

Newari verbs also have some non-finite forms which are crucial for an analysis of verb sequences. They are the infinitive, gerundive/concatenative, and the participle/non-final. The infinitive occurs in three different forms:
a. Citation form: kham-ja ‘to tell’, lhA-ca ‘to speak’
bila-ya ‘to give’
b. Infinitive of purpose: khana-ŋAna, yAta-ŋAna, bila-ŋAna
c. Verb complement form (only found in later MSS):
yayayA-gu/-guli ‘which was done’
bilayA-gu/-guli ‘which was given’

The gerundive form is the same as its past conjunct form (i.e., the -A form), e.g., khan-A-wo ‘seeing’, bhAlap-A-wo ‘thinking’. The participial, too, is the same as the past conjunct form except that the -A is long -A:, e.g., khva-yA: ‘on weeping’, syAn-A:(-wo) ‘on killing’. In Classical texts, participial forms such as -syam/-sem or -ana are also well attested.

(7) thva svAna todaphe-syam...
   this flower drop-PTP
   ‘Having dropped this flower…’

(8) ajhodit-om snAna bijyAŋ-ana...
   river-LOC bathe come (HON)-PTP
   ‘After bathing in the river…’

2.2 Nominal and verbal affixes

The nominal and verbal prefixes are widely used but do not affect the inflectional morphology of the root words, at least in the earlier texts. These affixes seem to be related more to semantic distinctions and less to grammatical functions, as can be seen in the following examples:

(9) a. dú-cho ‘drop into’
    in-send
    pi-kAl ‘take out’
    out-take
    li-jo ‘leak backward’
    back-leak
    li-phyA ‘take in return’
    back-take

b. co-gva ‘used to live’
   stay-NOM
   tAth-a-sA ‘if left behind’
   leave-PST-COND
   mel-a-ko ‘as much as needed’
   need-PST-ADV
   bil-a-sem ‘when given’
   give-PST-ADV

c. tokha-dhul- ‘to be broken’
   piece-break
   monda-lhu-ya ‘to bathe’
   head-wash-INF