THE ROLE OF THE SPEAKER IN THE VERBAL SYSTEM OF THE TIBETAN DIALECT OF TABO/SPITI

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INTRODUCTION

The dialect of Tabo in the Lahul and Spiti district of Himachal Pradesh, India, belongs to the group of "Western Innovative Tibetan" (Bielmeier 1998) and is therefore related to the dialects of Upper Ladakh, Zanskar and Lahul on the one hand, and to some dialects of Upper Kinnaur and Ngari (Tsanda) on the other.

This first attempt at a description of the verbal system of the Tabo dialect tries to integrate phenomena found in Ladakhi by Koshal (1979) as well as categories used for Central Tibetan (Haller 1995, Tournadre 1996), in order to work out the peculiarities of this dialect.

As the role of the speaker has been found to be important in different distinctions applied to the description of Tibetan dialects, e.g. evidentiality (Haller), personal knowledge vs. acquired knowledge (van Driem 1998), orientation (Koshal), this paper describes the auxiliary system of the Tabo dialect in terms of categories related to the speaker. To be more precise, it is the speaker's knowledge of the verbal action that is seen as the guiding principle. Unlike many other descriptions, this system is not broken up into binary oppositions, but tries to distinguish a range of different categories of the speaker's knowledge.

For this description, the lexical category "control"[1] is another important parameter. Furthermore it has to be kept in mind that there is no distinction of grammatical person except through the opposition "speaker" versus "non-speaker".

THE SPEAKER'S KNOWLEDGE

The speaker's knowledge of the verbal action is taken as the guiding principle.[2] In a given utterance the focus can be on different aspects of this speaker's knowledge. The following aspects can be distinguished:

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1   Cf. Felix Haller's article in this volume.
2   "Verbal action" is used as a general term here and includes both states and events.

| focus on speaker's involvement | focus on speaker's perception | focus on speaker's unspecified . knowledge | speaker's inferred knowledge |

Table 1. Aspects of speaker's knowledge

The distinctions suggested here range from intimate knowledge at the extreme left to incomplete knowledge on the right. Although it is difficult to establish a strict hierarchy or order among them, these distinctions constitute the different ways by which the speaker perceives or knows of the verbal action, and thus serve as useful categories for the description of the verbal system.

This paper focuses mainly on the first three categories, since they form a fairly coherent system, whereas the category called "inferred knowledge" is limited to some, present perfect forms. A full description of inference would have to include a number of modal particles expressing probability or uncertainty.

Under each category of speaker's knowledge the auxiliary morphemes can now be listed, grouped according to the stems to which they are added, or tenses that can be identified in this dialect.[3] As for the category "speaker's perception", the following table shows that it can be either visual or non-visual (i.e. auditory or any other sensory perception).

	Focus on speaker's involvement	Focus on speaker's perception		Focus on speaker's unspecified knowledge
		Non-visual Perception	visual perception	
present	-et	-arak	-(t)uk	-(k)ak
future	-in -(k)en			-(k)ak
present perfect	-peret -deret	-derak	-peruk -deruk	-pekak -dekak
past	-(w)en	-tçuŋ	-soŋ	-(w)ak

Table 2. Auxiliary morphemes[4]

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[3]   In this paper the English terms are used for the tenses. In the case of the present tense, the term "imperfective" would be more adequate, since some such forms denote either present or past. But "imperfective" here refers to the first verbal stem.

[4]   Some of these morphemes are complex and cannot be analysed completely in this paper.

CATEGORIES ESTABLISHED FOR TABO TIBETAN

A) Focus on the speaker's involvement

In the first category the speaker is directly involved in the verbal action, normally either in the semantic role of agent or patient. It is therefore related to what Tournadre (1996) calls "egophoric". The morpheme *-et* is added to the imperfective stem if the focus of a **present-tense** utterance is on the speaker's involvement. Usually in such a sentence the speaker is in the role of the agent and the verb is controllable (1):

(1) ŋō   tɕa̱   tʰūŋ-et
     I.ABS   tea.ABS   drink-PRES

    'I drink tea.' or 'I am drinking tea.'[5]

It is also possible to use *-et* with verbs which are non-controllable. In such a sentence, the speaker is in the role of patient and the auxiliary expresses a habitual state only. Because of this use of *-et* Haller's term "volitional" does not cover this category completely.

(2) ŋō   ŋa̱l-et
     I.ABS   be.tired-PRES

    'I am (always) tired.'

If *-et* is used with a controllable verb in an utterance where the agent is not the speaker, there is the implication that the action expressed happens according to the speaker's intention or wish. In this case, the verb could be called "volitional":

(3) ŋūi   ʈū: tɕōklēt   sa̱-et
     I.GEN   boy.ABS   chocolate.ABS   eat-PRES

    'My child eats chocolate (and I agree).'

(4) ŋūi   ʈū: tɕōklēt   sa̱: me̱t
     I.GEN   boy.ABS   chocolate.ABS   eat-NEG.PRES

    'My child doesn't eat chocolate.'

The morpheme *-in* is added to the imperfective stem of the verb to express the speaker's **promise** to perform an action. It is therefore similar to English "(Don't worry) I will do it". This type of future can only be formed with controllable verbs:

(5)   ŋō   cʰə̄ʔ-la   kūɕū   tēr-in
       I.ABS   you-DAT   apple.ABS   give-FUT

       'I will give you an apple.'

There is a second type of future ending in *-(k)en.* It also consists of the auxiliary *jin* but is preceded by the particle *-ka-* which appears in the spoken form only after unvoiced consonants. With this form of the future the speaker expresses his strong **intention** to perform the verbal action, which again makes it possible only with controllable verbs:

(6)   ŋō   kʰō-la   kūɕū   ɲī: tēʔ-ken
       I.ABS   he-DAT   apple   two.ABS   give-FUT

       'I intend to give him two apples.'

For the **present perfect tense** the auxiliaries are *-peret* or *-deret.* They are added to the perfective stem of the verb[6]. I consider the morphemes *-per-* and *-der-* to be grammaticalized verbs functioning as perfective markers. *-per-* (Written Tibetan: *byed* 'to do') is used with controllable verbs (7) and *-der-* (WT *bsdad* 'to stay') with a number of verbs of motion (8).

(7)   ŋō   tɕālāk-ja   dọlē   dọ-peret
       I.ABS   thing-PL   all   put.away-PERF

       'I have put all the things in a safe place.'

(8)   ŋō   ɲimā   de̱:-deret
       I.ABS   sun   warm.up-PERF

       'I am basking in the sun.'

The focus can also be on the speaker's involvement in an utterance with a verbal action in the **past tense**. It is formed by adding *-[w]en* to the perfective stem of the verb. This is only possible with controllable verbs (and a small group of verbs which are considered to be either controllable or non-controllable):

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[6]   Apart from a handful of irregular verbs there are a number of controllable verbs which have slightly different imperfective and perfective stems.

(9) ŋō   tɕa̰   tʰūŋ-wen
     I.ABS   tea   drink-PAST

    'I drank tea.'

(10) ŋō   daŋ   cūā   cū:-wen
      I.ABS   yesterday   vomit.ABS   vomit-PAST

    'I vomited (intentionally) yesterday.'

Let us now have a look at all the auxiliary morphemes found in the first category. If the focus of an utterance is on the speaker's involvement, the auxiliary always consists of some form related to the Written Tibetan verbs *yod* and *yin*, namely *-et* on the one hand and *-in /-[k]en* and *-[w]en* on the other hand. It must be noted that only the forms with *-et* allow the use with a non-speaker agent, as in examples (3) and (4) above. With *-in /-[w]en /-[k]en* this usage is not accepted by my informant.

B) Focus on the speaker's perception

The second category focuses on the way in which the speaker "perceives" the verbal action. The speaker's perception can be either visual or non-visual. The speaker's non-visual way of perceiving an action also includes feelings he has. They are mostly expressed by non-controllable verbs (11). In such utterances the speaker is in the role of patient. This is similar to category (A), where the speaker is in most cases "involved" as the agent, as opposed to category (C), where the speaker has no semantic role at all. But the auxiliary for non-visual perception is also found in utterances where the speaker merely states that he hears or feels that somebody else is doing something. The verbs are then usually controllable (13).

If an utterance expresses an experience or non-visual perception in the present, the form *-arak* is added to the imperfective stem of the verb.

(11) ŋō   ŋa̰l-arak
      I.ABS   be.tired-PRES

    'I am feeling tired.'

(12) na̰ŋ   ţønmō   tsʰōr-arak
      inside   warm   feel-PRES

    'It feels warm inside.'

(13) *kʰō*   *jǫŋ-arak*
      he.ABS   come-PRES

      'I can hear him coming.'

The **present perfect tense** is usually formed by adding *-derak* to the stems of non-controllable verbs:

(14) *ŋūi*   *zu̧:*   *tø̧:-derak*
      I.GEN   body.ABS   be.warm-PERF

      'My body has got warm.'

If the utterance refers to a sensory perception in the **past,** *-tɕuŋ* or *-joŋ* is used. With non-controllable verbs and the speaker in the role of patient, this corresponds to the present tense usage, as in (11):

(15) *daŋ*   *ŋō*   *ŋa̧l-tɕuŋ*
      yesterday   I.ABS   be.tired-PAST

      'Yesterday I felt tired.'

But with non-speaker agents and controllable verbs, the manner of perception is no longer specified. *-tɕuŋ* simply indicates that the action happened in a direction towards the speaker.

(16) *kʰō*   *ba̧zār-la*   *lēp-tɕuŋ*
       he.ABS   market-DAT   come-PAST

       'He came to the market.' (towards to speaker)

The **speaker's visual perception** is normally expressed in utterances with non-speaker agents or patients. By adding the auxiliary *-(t)uk* to the imperfective stem a progressive meaning is often conveyed. It can refer to the **present** or the **past**[7].

(17) *kʰō*   *ɕīŋ*   *tɕāk-tuk*
      he.ABS   wood.ABS   break-PRES

      'He is/was breaking wood.'

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[7]   There are also two narrative past forms ending in *-tuk* which are not included in this description.

(18)   *mẹ*   *bạr-uk*
         fire.ABS   burn-PRES

         'The fire is burning.'

Example (18) shows that the auxiliary *-(t)uk* is also used with non-controllable verbs.

The **present perfect** tense is formed by adding *-deruk* or *-peruk* to the perfective stem of the verb. *-deruk* goes with non-controllable verbs and some verbs of motion, whereas *-peruk* is used with controllable verbs.

(19)   *kʰō*   *kōrē*   *tʰīlī-ɟa*   *sā:-peruk*
         he.ABS   cup ABS   plate-PL   stack.up-PERF

         'He has stacked up the cups and plates.'

(20)   *kʰō-i*   *tɕyndā*   *lạ:-deruk*
         he-GEN   plan.ABS   succeed-PERF

         'His plan has become successful.'

In the **past tense**, the speaker's visual perception is expressed by the auxiliary *-soŋ* added to the perfective stem of the verb. This usage works with both categories of verbs, controllable and non-controllable:

(21)   *kʰō*   *bạzār-la*   *pyʔ-soŋ*
         he.ABS   market-DAT   go-PAST

         'He went to the market.'

(22)   *kʰōāɲȳ*   *lạp*   *tɕʰǭʔ-soŋ*
         they.two.GEN   argument   be.resolved-PAST

         'Their argument was settled.'

In such utterances the speaker is only present through the marker for visual perception. It is possible, though, to use *-soŋ* with the speaker in the role of patient; the verb then is non-controllable (23). But the more common case is to express such a situation with *-tɕuŋ* as an instance of non-visual perception by the speaker (24):

(23)   *ŋō*   *nǭlɟāk*   *ɟal-soŋ*
         I.ABS   wrestling.match.ABS   win-PAST

         'I won the wrestling match.'

(24)   ŋō   nə̄lɹāk   ɹal-tɕuŋ
        I.ABS   wrestling.match.ABS   win-PAST

        'I won the wrestling match.'

-soŋ in (23) does not strictly speaking express visual perception, but rather a kind of knowledge which is less of a personal experience or feeling than is conveyed through *-tɕuŋ*. It is often used with speaker plural patients, if the *speaker wants to indicate that even though he is a member of a group he can* only express his own sensory perception or feeling. This is how my informant explains his preference of *-soŋ* in the following situations:

(25)   ŋōaɹa   lam-tu   ʈal-soŋ
        we.EXCL.ABS   way-LOC   be.separated-PAST

        'We got separated on the way.'

(26)   tɹɾīŋ   ŋōaɹa   krīkēt   ɹal-soŋ
        today   we.EXCL.ABS   cricket.ABS   win-PAST

        'Today we won the cricket match.'

Another difference between *-tɕuŋ* and *-soŋ* is one of deixis. As shown in example (16), *-tɕuŋ* marks verbal actions as directed towards the speaker, whereas with *-soŋ* in example (21) the direction is away from the speaker. This phenomenon has been described for Central Tibetan[8]. What is special for the dialect of Tabo is that another aspect to be considered is the distinction among different manners of perception. For the sake of simplicity the latter distinction has been given priority in this system, since it accounts for the vast majority of cases. But it must be acknowledged that there is a small number of verbs with which deixis takes priority over perception for semantic reasons. Normally most feelings (expressed by non-controllable verbs) can be understood as appearing to(wards) the speaker/patient:

(15)   daŋ   ŋō   ŋal-tɕuŋ
        yesterday   I.ABS   be.tired-PAST

        'Yesterday I felt tired.'

(27)   ŋȳ   āmtɕōk-la   tāknā   cāl-soŋ
        I.GEN   ear-DAT   ring.ABS   get.lost-PAST

        'I lost my earring.' or 'My earring got lost.'

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8   Cf. Tournadre (1996). For *byung* (Tabo *tɕuŋ*) see p. 233 ("L'emploi ego-centripète").
Here the process is also seen as directed towards the speaker.

Since *cāl* in (27) is a non-controllable verb, the form *cāltçuŋ* could be expected, as it expresses an experience felt by the speaker. But my informant refuses this on the grounds that the act of losing is seen as happening away from the speaker.

C) Focus on the speaker's unspecified knowledge

In this category the speaker is neither associated with the verbal action nor has he experienced or perceived it directly. The morphemes of this category are mainly used with non-speaker agents and patients. The auxiliary *-(k)ak* is added to the imperfective stem to express the speaker's knowledge of the verbal action without specifying how this knowledge is/was gained. This **present-tense** form usually denotes a general state or even **future**. Contrasting with *-(t)uk* marking visual perception and therefore usually expressing new knowledge, verbs ending in *-(k)ak* denote assimilated knowledge. Formally, the auxiliary *-(k)ak* is most likely a contraction of some particle *-ka-* to which the morpheme *-ak* is added, as the negative form in (30) implies.[9]

28)   *kʰō*   *çīŋ*   *tçāk-ak*
        he.ABS   wood.ABS   break-PRES

        'He breaks wood.' (habit) or 'He will break wood.'

(29)   *kʰō*   *pʰīru*   *tōptçā*   *sa-ak*
        he.ABS   there   food.ABS   eat-PRES

        'He eats food there.' or 'He will eat food there.'

(30)   *ʔī*   *kʰō*   *cʰōʔ-la*   *tēʔ-ka-mak*
        this   he.ABS   you-DAT   give-PART-NEG.PRES

        'He will not give you this.'

It is possible to use *-(k)ak* with the speaker in the role of agent. It expresses that it is the speaker's duty to perform the action, i.e. in Haller's terms the verb is not volitional:

(31)   *ŋō*   *djlī-la*   *do-ak*
        I.ABS   Delhi-DAT   go-PRES

        'I am to go to Delhi.'

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9   The negative particle *mi* and the auxiliary morpheme *-ak* are again contracted.

Corresponding to the other categories the **present perfect tense** is formed by adding *-dekak or -pekak* to the perfective stem of the verb.

(32) pʰī̄   tɕāŋmā-la   lā   nē:-dekak
      that   willow-LOC   naga.ABS   dwell-PERF

      'In that willow tree there is a naga.'

(33) ʔī̄   līā   ŋō-la   mī:i   tɕe̲:-pekak
      this   work.ABS   I-DAT   consider   do-PERF

      'This work has been done for me.'

To express this kind of general knowledge which is not based on the speaker's direct perception, there is also a **past tense** formed by adding *-(w)ak* to the perfective stem. Let's contrast such an utterance (34) with visual perception, past tense (21):

(21) kʰō̄   ba̲zār-la   pyʔ-soŋ
      he.ABS   market-DAT   go-PAST

      Where is he? 'He went to the market. (I saw him leave.)'

(34) kʰō̄   di̲lī-la   pyt-ak
      he.ABS   Delhi-DAT   go-PAST

      Has he ever been to Delhi? 'He has been to Delhi. (I know.)'

To summarize the categories of "speaker's knowledge" presented so far, let us use the same controllable verb 'jump' in the present tense, with the speaker in the role of the agent:

(35) ŋō̄   ʔī̄   caŋ   tāŋnasu   tɕʰōŋ-et
      I.ABS this   wall   top.from   jump-PRES

      'I am jumping from this wall.'

      ŋō̄   tɕʰōŋ-arak
      I.ABS   jump-PRES

      'I am jumping (I can feel it).'

      ŋō̄   tɕʰōŋ-uk
      I.ABS   jump-PRES

      'I am/was jumping.' (in a dream)

ŋō   tçʰōŋ-ak
I.ABS   jump-PRES

'I am supposed to jump'

In the first sentence the focus is on the speaker's involvement: the speaker is the agent, who is performing the verbal action. If the verbal action is presented as felt by the speaker, the second category (*-arak*) is applied. This category expresses a sensory perception, here the sensation or feeling of jumping. The verbal action can be even further removed from the speaker, i.e. it can be presented as if seen from outside. In such an unusual situation as in a dream, in which no conscious control can be exercised, the auxiliary expressing visual perception can be used. In the last example the morpheme for unspecified knowledge indicates that although the speaker is the agent, the decision to perform the action lies outside him.

As has just been shown, all the categories distinguished here allow a speaker agent with controllable verbs. But only the first one (category A) is unmarked usage. In category (B), the unmarked usage for non-visual perception is expressed with speaker patients and non-controllable verbs, although non-speaker agents and patients are possible. But with visual perception, non-speaker agents or patients predominate. In category (C), non-speaker agents or patients constitute the unmarked usage.

D) Inferred knowledge

Inferential forms are actually described more adequately in a system of their own. Only its basic structure can be outlined here. Leaving aside verbal forms with any kind of modal particle, there are three forms to be considered as expressing inferential knowledge.

Firstly, two of the categories introduced above illustrate a fundamental distinction: Either the speaker states that he perceives a certain fact and infers some action from that, or his inference is based on his unspecified knowledge. This can be summarized as:

speaker's (sensory) perception   vs.   *speaker's unspecified knowledge*

Secondly, the speaker's perception is specified according to the way it is perceived, i.e. visual versus auditory or other manners of sensory perception. This creates the tripartite distinction that has been found for inferential utterances:

I   speaker's visual perception of some fact
     from which a verbal action is inferred: *-(w)anuk*

II   speaker's auditory or other sensory perception of some fact
     from which a verbal action is inferred: *-(w)anak*

III speaker's unspecified knowledge of some fact
     from which a verbal action is inferred: *-(w)a jinkak*

Examples:

(36)   *kʰō*   *ārāk*   *tʰūŋ-wanuk*
        he.ABS   liquor.ABS   drink-PERF

        'He must have had liquor. (I can see it.)'

(37)   *kʰō*   *pētɕā*   *sīl-anak*
        he.ABS   book.ABS   read-PERF

        'He must have read the book. (I can hear it.)'

(38)   *kʰō*   *tōptɕā*   *sø:-wa jinkak*
        he.ABS   food.ABS   eat-PERF

        'He must have eaten. (Otherwise he would be hungry.)'[10]

The complex structure of these forms cannot be clarified completely at this point. They basically consist of morphemes related to the WT particle *pa* marking verbal nouns, and the WT auxiliary *yin* to which the markers for sensory perception are added in I and II. Form III is irregular inasmuch as *-kak* normally follows unvoiced sounds. Although the evidence in my material is not very strong, this irregularity is understood as marking an opposition to form II, which in full must be *-(w)ajinarak*.

CONCLUSION

This paper does not provide a complete analysis of all the verbal forms of the Tabo dialect, but attempts to give a survey of some of its guiding principles on the basis of which the verbal system can be described.

The main difference from Central Tibetan Dialects is that Tabo Tibetan shows a more differentiated system of evidentiality, in other words, the binary opposition "evidential" versus "non-evidential" are not sufficient to describe this system, because the sort of perception also has to be specified. This leads to

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[10]   So far there is only one example of this type in my material.

a definition of the remaining categories according to the different ways they are opposed to "getting knowledge through perception". For example, the category of the speaker's direct involvement in the verbal action is clearly a different aspect of having or gaining knowledge of an action. This first category is very close to Haller's term "volitionality." In this paper I have attempted to show why it is not used in this description, although the phenomenon can be found in the Tabo dialect. The last two categories seem to be less controversial.

The categories I have proposed to describe the verbal system of Tabo have proved useful. I suggest that they be called "epistemic categories".

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