



Negation In Nepali Complex Predicates

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Abstract: This paper aims to discuss some properties and characteristics of complex predicates with reference to negation in Nepali. The paper will analyze how negation works with compound verb and serial verb constructions in Nepali. It will also discuss compound verbs like N+V along with V+V structure and analyze the conjunctive participle marker in certain construction. We will also look into the agreement system of negative compound verbs where certain agreement feature gets attached to the negation marker. In this paper we will enquire the condition of negation marker occurring as both prefix and suffix in Nepali serial verbs. We will also try to show how negative polarity items occur in Nepali complex predicate configuration. This paper is a descriptive account of the negative constructions in Nepali complex predicates. Theoretical account is outside the scope of this paper.

Keywords: Compound Verb, Serial Verb, Negation, Agreement, NPI

1. Introduction

Complex predicate (CP) refers to a combination of two or more morphological items together to constitute a single expression. In such constructions both the items form the predicate of a single clause. Kubota (2014) 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 & Sarma 2006) complex predicate widely exists in South Asian languages in the form of nominal+verb and verb+verb combination. Butt (1993) argues that in a complex predicate the argument structure is complex. The items that together form a single complex argument structure has a number of interesting features and linguists are keen to understand these features.

The term complex predicate is an umbrella term which connotes different types of constructions. This paper will aim to discuss two types of complex predicate construction; i.e. compound verb construction and serial verb construction in Nepali with negation. The first part of this paper will aim to study and analyze negation with reference to Nepali compound construction (CV) and the second part of this paper will try to discuss and analyze negation with reference to Nepali serial verb construction (SVC).

2. The Nepali Language

Nepali belongs to the Indo Aryan language family. It is the national language of Nepal and it is also spoken widely in several parts of India. Earlier the Nepali language was also known as Khas-kura, Gorkhali etc. In 1992, the Nepali language was included in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution of India. The data for this paper is mainly collected from Nepali speakers in Nagaon and West Karbi Anglong districts of Assam, India. The Nepali speaking people of Assam are mostly multilingual and they are well assimilated with the Assamese society and culture for decades.

3. Typological Features of Nepali

(a) Nepali is an inflecting and agglutinating language.



- (b) The Nepali language follows the canonical word order SOV but it exhibits flexibility in the word order.
- (c) Nepali has numeral classifiers and both ordinal and cardinal number system is used in the language.
- (d) It is a postpositional language.
- (e) The language has Tense-Aspect-Mood (TAM) features.

4. Verbal Morphology in Nepali

Verbs are generally the most complex kind of structures as they show different features which make the language more interesting to study and analyze. Therefore, to understand such intricate mechanism of any verbal feature the study of verbal morphology is very crucial. In this section we will look into tense and agreement system in Nepali.

4.1 Tense

Nepali has three tense forms: present, past and future. The present tense marker is -ch, past tense marker is -j and -na is the future tense marker.

1)	ma I 'I read books.'	kitab-haru rice-PL	par-ch-u read-PRES-1P.SG	Present
2)	hami-le we-ERG 'We read books.'	kitab-haru book-PL	par-j-im read-PST-2P.PL	Past
3)	pinaki-le pinaki-ERG 'Pinaki will read books.'	kitab-haru book-PL	par-ne-ch-in read-FUT-PRES-3P.SG.F	Future

The Nepali speakers of Assam normally don't use the future tense marker -ne. The speakers use adverb of time to indicate future time and the verb takes the present tense form.

4)	pinaki-le pinaki-ERG 'I read books.'	b ^h oli tomorrow	kitab-haru book-PL	par-ch-in read-PRES-3P.SG.F
	'Tomorrow Pinaki will read books.'			

4.2 Agreement

In Nepali, there is agreement in Person, Number and Gender. Let us see the subject-verb-agreement system in Nepali from the below given table.

Table 1 shows Agreement in Person, Number and Gender in Nepali

Person	Singular	Plural	Agreement Marker					
			Singular			Plural		
			Present	Past	future	present	past	future
1 st	ma	Hami	-u	-e	-u	-um	-im	-um
2 nd	ta (LH)	timheru	-es	-es	-es	-eu	-eu	-eu
	timi (MH)	timheru	-eu	-eu	-eu	-eu	-eu	-eu
	tapai (HH)	tapaiheru	-a	-o	-a	-a	-o	-a
3 rd	u (M/F) LH	udheru	-a /-e	-o/-i	-a/-e	-an	-e	-an
	uni (M/F) MH	uniheru	-an/-in	-e/-in	-an/-in	-an	-e	-an



5. Complex Predicates in Nepali

The term complex predicate (CP) in this paper will denote to compound verb and serial verb constructions only as mentioned earlier. Let us see examples of Nepali compound verb construction first;

- | | | | | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|----------|-------|----------------|-------------|-------|
| 5) | timi-le | mero | phon | bana-i | di-j-eu | (V+V) |
| | you-ERG | my | phone | make-CP | give-PST-2P | |
| | 'You made (or repaired) my phone.' | | | | | |
| 6) | nabin-le | timi-lai | ramro | pau-ch-a | | (N+V) |
| | nabin-ERG | you-DAT | like | get-PRES-2P.SG | | |
| | 'Nabin likes you.' | | | | | |

In example (5), we have a compound verb which is verb plus verb compound and in the next example (6), a non-verbal element plus verb forms a compound verb. [Montaut \(2016\)](#) stated that the existence of a CP formed by a nonverbal element with a light verb is one of the pan Indian features which make India a linguistic area. [Lohani \(1999\)](#) has also discussed different type of compound constructions in Nepali, i.e. verb+verb, noun+verb, adjective+verb, adverb+verb and analyzed the data in LFG framework.

In (5), the main verb banai takes a conjunctive participle marker –i and the light verb di takes all the verbal inflections. In (6), the non-verbal element ramro does not take any inflectional marker but the light verb pa takes all the verbal features namely tense and agreement markers.

Now let us move to another type of complex predicate. This is a serial verb construction as shown in (7)

- | | | | | | |
|----|---|----------|---------|---------|------------------|
| 7) | timi | nach-i | ga-i | khel-i | par-ch-eu |
| | you | dance-CP | sing-CP | play-CP | study-PRES-3P.MH |
| | 'You dance (and then) sing (and then) play (and then) study.' | | | | |

From the example (7), we have seen that the –i marker which is a conjunctive particle suffixes to multiple verbs. In Nepali, serial verbs are formed with the help of the conjunctive particle, and it can join with many predicates to indicate a sequence of events. In serial verb constructions, the multiple verbs conjoined by the conjunctive particle –i, has the same subject. In other words, construction as in (7) indicate a sequence of action of the same subject. In the next section we will look at the negative construction in general and the complex predicates in particular.

6. Negation in Nepali

[Miestamo \(2007\)](#) defines negation in terms of simple propositional logic as an operator that reverses the truth value of a proposition. Negation is a process by which the speaker of a language negates the statement which may be in an affirmative sentence. Every world language has its own set of system by which it negates a construction. The word not in English is considered as standard negation tactic. [Pokharel \(1991\)](#) while discussing about compound verbs, has also shown double negation test to identify a compound construction from other such constructions.

In Nepali, the –na marker is used as a suffix in order to negate a construction. Let us look at an example from Nepali;

- | | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|-------|------------------|----------------------|
| 8) | saban-le | khana | kha-j-o | Affirmative Sentence |
| | saban-ERG | food | eat-PST-3P.M | |
| | 'Saban ate the food.' | | | |
| 9) | saban-le | khana | kha-je-na | Negative Sentence |
| | saban-ERG | food | eat-PST.3P.M-NEG | |
| | 'Saban did not eat the food.' | | | |



The example (9) is a negative construction of the affirmative sentence (8) in Nepali, where the negative marker –na is suffixed with the verb. In (9), the statement falsifies the statement of (8). From the above example we can say that, Nepali has morphological negative marker which gets affixed with the verb in order to negate a construction. The order of suffixation on a finite verb in Nepali is shown in (10) below:

10) Verb – Tense – Agreement – Negation.

All of these constituents that attach to the main verb are bound morphemes.

7. Negation in Nepali Compound Verb Construction

In Nepali, we can negate any construction by using the negative marker –na. In a CV construction, negation can be done by using the negative marker either to the main verb or the light verb. But at the same time if we negate both the main and light verb, it will result a bad construction. Let us take some examples from Nepali:

11)	gopal-le	dokan	bond ^h	gar-je-na
	gopal-ERG	shop	close	do-PST.3P.M-NEG
	'Gopal did not close the shop.'			

12)	mai-le	timi-lai	ramro	pa-ji-na
	I-ERG	you-DAT	like	get-PST.1P-NEG
	'I did not like you.'			

In a N+V construction we observe that the conjunctive particle –i is not suffixed to the nonverbal constituent as seen in (11) and (12) unlike in (13) and (14) where the conjunctive particle –i suffixes to the first constituent which is a verbal element. In (11) the light verb gar 'do' takes the negative marker –na and in (12) the light verb pa 'get' takes the negative marker –na.

In (13) and (14) we have V+ V compound verb sentences. Sentence (13) is a positive construction and sentence and (14) its negative counterpart, where the light verb di 'give' takes the negative marker -na.

13)	u-le	k ^h ana	k ^h a-i	di-j-o
	he-ERG	food	eat-CP	give-PST-3P.SG
	'He ate the food.'			
14)	u-le	khana	kha-i	di-je-na
	he-ERG	food	eat-CP	give-PST.3P-NEG
	'He did not eat the food.'			

In §6, we have shown the order of the constituents in a negative verb in Nepali in (10). In (11), (12) and (14) the same order is maintained.

The order of the verbal constituent in a compound verb negative construction is as shown in (15).

15) Main Verb-CP-Light Verb - Tense- Agreement -Negative

7.1 Tense and Agreement in Negation

Let us see some more examples of negation in all the tense forms in Nepali;

The sentence in (16) has the same order of constituent as observed in (15). However, the examples (17 and 18) show an interesting feature of negation in Nepali compound construction when the gender and number agreement occurs in a construction. The light verb gar in (17) takes all the inflections but the gender agreement -n follows the negative marker –na, unlike other constructions (11, 12, 14) where the agreement marker gets suffixed to the tense marker and the negative marker –na gets attached to it. However, in (17) the order of the agreement



markers feminine –n and in (18) the number marker –u follows the negative marker -na. Going by the examples in (17 and (18) we have the following order of the verbal constituents as shown in (19).

16)	timro	jas	kam-lai	mai-le	ninda	gar-ji-na	Past
	your	this	work-DAT	I-ERG	criticize	do-PST.1P-NEG	

'I did not criticize this work of yours.'

17)	rima-le	mero	chora-lai	hercha	gar-di-na-n	Present
	rima-ERG	my	boy-DAT	hospitality	do-completive.3P.SG-NEG-F	

'Rima doesn't look after my son.'

18)	timher-le	jo	berenchi	safa	gar-ne-chai-na-u	Future
	you.PL-ERG	this	bench	clean	do-FUT-PRES-NEG-3P.PL	

'You will not clean this bench.'

19) Verb – Tense – Negative - Agreement

8. Negation in Nepali Serial Verb Construction

Noufal (2016) defines SVC as a construction having more than one verb which may appear independent or compound and together, they express single event notion of sequential sub events.

In Nepali serial verb construction as shown in examples (20) and (21) the conjunctive particle –i suffixes with multiple verbs in the SVC construction. With help of the conjunctive particle -i, predicates join together in a sequential event order to form an SVC.

Affirmative

20)	ma	a-i	paka-i	bana-i	k ^h a-i	ghar	ga-j-e
	I	come-CP	cook-CP	make-CP	eat-CP	home	go-PST-1P.SG

'I came (and then) cooked (and then) made (and then) ate (and then) went home.'

Negative

21)	ma	a-i	paka-i	bana-i	k ^h a-i	ghar	ga-j-i-na
	I	come-CP	cook-CP	make-CP	eat-CP	home	go-PST-1P.SG-NEG

'I came (and then) cooked (and then) made (and then) ate (and then) did not go home.'

In (21) the matrix verb of the SVC takes the negative marker -na. giving a wide scope reading. Serial Verb is a strategy that shows the subtle sub-eventualities like come, cook, make, eat which would not get noticed because of the entire broader event.

22)	ma	[a-i	paka-i	bana-i	kha-i]	ghar	ga-j-e
	I	come-CP	cook-CP	make-CP	eat-CP		home	go-PST-1P.SG

'I [came (and then) cooked (and then) made (and then) ate (and then)] went home.'

Here in (22), if we skip the sub events from the SVC then the broader event is 'I went home'. Therefore, whenever we negate a Nepali SVC the final verb or the matrix verb of the broader event inflects for the negative marker -na as suffix.



In (23) we observe that one of the serial verbs take the negative marker *na-*, but here the negative marker prefixes to the verb unlike in (21) where it suffixes.

23) ma a-i paka-i bana-i na-k^ha-i ghar ga-j-e
 I come-CP cook- CP make- CP neg-eat- CP home go-PST-1P.SG
 'I came, cooked, made , but did not eat and went home.'

In (23) if we negate the constituent verb *kha* 'eat' then the negative marker gets prefixed to the verb. Here we have an instance of a narrow scope and this is indicated by the disjunct 'but' in the English sentence.

24) ma a-i paka-i bana-i na-kha-i ghar ga-j-i-na
 I come-CP cook- CP make- CP neg-eat- CP home go-PST-1P.SG-NEG
 'I came cooked , made , but did not eat, and did not go home.'

In (24), both the constituent verb and the final verb take the negation marker *na* indicating that the prefixed *na-* and the suffixed *-na* are mutually compatible in a SVC construction. This exception has led to another interesting construction as discussed below;

25) ma na-a-i na-paka-i na-bana-i na-k^ha-i ghar ga-j-i-na
 I NEG-come-CP NEG-cook-CP NEG-make-CP NEG-eat- CP home go-PST- 1P.SG-NEG
 I did not come, did not cook, did not make, did not eat, did not go home.'

In (25) we see that negation is prefixed with each of the constituent verbs and gets suffixed to the main verb of the SVC. Every constituent verb is an independent verb which can occur also a main verb in the sentence final position. If we break the entire construction of (25) then we will see every constituent verb is competent enough to occur as a matrix verb and they are fully lexical verbs which are combined in a string to indicate one larger predicational meaning through small sub events. Therefore, every constituent verb of a SVC can take negation along with the main verb in Nepali. So, from the above discussion we can conclude that:

- (a) The negative marker *na-* precedes the constituent verbs of the SVC. (Examples 23 and 25)
- (b) The negative marker follows the matrix verb of a SVC in Nepali. (Example 21 and 24)
- (c) The negative marker can co-occur as prefix with constituent verbs and as suffix with the main verb. (Example: 25)

Although the negation marker can occur with each and every verb of a SVC, but in order to negate the entire SVC as a unit, the negation marker should be attached to the final verb as it is done in the Nepali CV construction

9. Negative Polarity Item and the Complex Predicate

Negative polarity items (NPI) are words that come only when there is a negative element in a construction. Let us see some examples from Nepali;

26) mai-le kadapi doilo band^h gar-ji-na
 I-ERG never door close do-PST.1P-NEG
 'I never closed the door.'

In example (26-27), words like *kadapi*, *kaileni* are the examples of Negative Polarity Items in Nepali. These words can never occur in a declarative or affirmative sentence. Let us see another example where we will see how the NPI can occur in between a compound construction.

27) sid^hu-le kaileni bathroom safā par-je-na
 sidhu-ERG never bathroom clean make-PST.3P.SG-NEG
 'Sidhu never cleaned the bathroom.'



- 28) Sid^hule bathroom safa kaileni parjena. V-NPI-V
 29) Sid^hule bathroom safa parjena kaileni V-V-NPI
 30) kaileni Sid^hule bathroom safa parjena NPI-V-V

From the example (28), we can see that the NPI can occur in between the compound verb construction. In (29) we see that NPI can also occur at the final position or right after the compound verb construction. The example (30) shows the NPI can also occur in the sentence initial position

10. Conclusion

- This paper attempted to discuss how negative constructions are formed in complex predicates.
- The negative marker precedes agreement marker in present and future tense negative compound verb constructions and follows past tense negative construction.
- The negative marker can be prefixed with any of the constituent verb in an SVC construction. While the matrix verb takes the tense and agreement features as suffixes.
- In SVC the negative marker suffixes to the main verb and the agreement marker follows it.
- The flexibility in Nepali word order allows the Negative Polarity Items (NPI) to occur in sentence initial, medial and final position with reference to Nepali compound verb construction.

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List of Abbreviation

CP: Conjunctive Particle	NEG: Negation
CV: Compound Verb	NPI: Negative Polarity Item
DAT: Dative	PRES: Present
ERG: Ergative	PL: Plural
F: Feminine	PST: Past
FUT: Future	SG: Singular
HH: High Honorific	SVC: Serial Verb Construction
LH: Low Honorific	V: Verb
M: Masculine	1P: First Person
MH: Medium Honorific	



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