

EAT expressions in Kathmandu Newar

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美作大学・美作大学短期大学部紀要（通巻第53号抜刷）

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キーワード：ネワール語、意味の拡張、意味の記述

1 Introduction

Polysemy of a word is more often than not a result of linguistic innovation, motivated by our cognition and imagination. Basic verbs often have multiple usages in a given language. EAT is such a verb. Recently Pardeshi et al. (2006) take up the verb EAT and discuss its several semantic extensions in various meanings, including a semantic network diagram that tries to capture the correlations and developmental pathways.

The paper by Pardeshi et al. focuses on a typological overview of the distribution of the extended usages and the semantic range of EAT. The languages dealt with in the discussion are chosen from the Euro-asia: Persian, Tajik, Turkish, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Kashmiri, Hindi-Urdu, Bengali, Marathi, Gujarati, Telugu, Sinhala, Mongolian, Korean, Japanese, Thai, Vietnamese, Khmer and Mandarin. Unfortunately, their work does not, however, contain any languages from another no less important linguistic group in Asia, the Tibeto-Burman family.

Tibeto-Burman languages are spoken in Asia, and may be the single linguistic group that stretches from the far east in China to the near Middle-East in Pakistan, and boasts a wide variety of language sub-groups that are worth studying from a typological point of view. Therefore, some samples taken from one of the Tibeto-Burman languages will surely

enrich Pardeshi et al.'s work from a typological perspective.

The aim of this paper is to achieve the fore-mentioned goal by examining some examples from Newar, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Kathmandu Valley. In Section 2, I'll summarize the analysis in Pardeshi et al. (2006). Then, Newar examples will be discussed in Section 3. Section 4 is a conclusion.

2 A Geotypology of EAT-expressions in Languages of Euro-asia

Pardeshi et al. (2006) recognize seven categories to classify both the basic and extended uses of EAT in terms of the grammatical roles and their features under three parameters related to animacy, agency and concreteness, as in Table 1.

The parameters for subject distinguish two types of subject in terms of macro roles, actor and undergoer. The subject in Categories A through D bears the role of actor, while that in the rest bears the role of undergoer, which is theme, patient or experiencer. Some typical subjects and objects for each category except Category I are listed in Table 2, based on the schematic illustrations in Pardeshi et al. (2006: 93).

Pardeshi et al. argue that the variety of extended meanings of EAT results from a semantic complexity of the verb. They present the main aspects of EAT as the

Table 1: EAT Categories

- Category A : [+animate, +agentive] Subject, [+edible] Object
- Category B : [+animate, +agentive] Subject, [-edible] Object
- Category C : [-animate, -patientive] Subject, [-abstract] Object
- Category D : [-animate, -patientive] Subject, [+abstract] Object
- Category E : [+animate, -agentive] Subject, [-abstract] Object
- Category F : [+animate, -agentive] Subject, [+abstract] Object
- Category G : [-animate, +patientive] Subject, [-abstract] Object
- Category H : [-animate, +patientive] Subject, [+abstract] Object
- Category I : isolated, one-of-a-kind idioms

(Pardeshi et al. 2006: 93)

Table 2: Typical arguments for each category

	SUBJECT	OBJECT	SENSE
Category A	men, women, etc.	bread, water, cigarettes, betel leaf, etc.	basic sense of 'to eat'
Category B	men, women, etc.	money, bribe, profit, rent, etc.	'to bribe'
Category C	cars, computers, jobs, etc.	fuel, time, electricity, etc.	'to consume'
Category D	balls, kites, boats, rope, etc.	a bounce, swing, kink, etc.	inanimate agent's per-forming an action
Category E	humans	whip, bullets, sword, cudgel, curses, etc.	Subjects affected by an instrument
Category F	humans	deception, defeat, eviction; anger, fear, sorrow, etc.	Subjects undergo action or emotion
Category G	books, grain, knives, etc.	rust, ants, dust, etc.	Inanimate subjects affected by entities.
Category H	crops, clothes, etc.	heat, cold, dampness, etc.	Inanimate subjects affected by forces.

following nine properties.

- (i) making an item decrease as it is consumed.
- (ii) making it disappear.
- (iii) incorporating one thing in another.
- (iv) absorbing the properties of the item eaten.
- (v) reacting to the properties of the eaten item.
- (vi) outward display or reflection of the properties of the item eaten.
- (vii) coming in intimate bodily contact with something.
- (viii) use of the mouth.
- (ix) living or depending on the items that are eaten.

These basic aspects of the action of eating serve as

sources for semantic extension.

3 EAT-expressions in Kathmandu Newar

In this section, I discuss the Newar EAT, *naye* and its extended meaning in the context of the categories presented by Pardeshi et al. The data were collected by an interview with two Newar consultants, based on the list of EAT expression categories provided by Pardeshi et al. (2006). In addition, some of the data are taken from dictionaries and my database, and from some examples provided by Tej Ratna Kansakar, who filled out a questionnaire compiled by Pardeshi. *¹ For the sake of convenience, most of the

examples elicited will be of a third person subject in past context because person, number, tense, aspect, etc do not affect the meaning of EAT expressions.

3.1 Category A

Category A is the basic meaning of the verb. In some languages, the verb can take as object not only a solid substance but a liquid. In Newar, however, the food that can be 'eaten' is limited to a solid substance, hence liquid food such as water and soup or tobacco cannot appear as the object of *naye*. Instead, *twane* 'to drink' should be used for both liquid and tobacco. Since betel leaf and nuts are solid food, they can be in the object position of the verb *naye*. As for medicine, if it is liquid, the verb *twane* must be used, whereas if it is in the form of tablet, capsule, or powder, the verb *naye* can be used.

(1) a. *wā: jā na-la.*

3SG.ERG rice eat-PD

'He ate rice.'

b. *wā: la:/kē twan-a.*

3SG.ERG water/dal soup drink-PD

'He drank some water.'

c. *wā: curot twan-a.*

3SG.ERG tobacco drink-PD

'He smoked a tobacco.'

3.2 Category B

Category B takes an actor subject, which is animate and agentive, and takes non-edible item as the object. The extended meanings associated with the properties of Category B is not homogeneous and vary: (i) to take illegal benefit, (ii) to make a living by eating, (iii) to pester someone, and (iv) to enjoy life. In Newar, the four senses are all possible.

(2) (i) To take illegal benefit

a. *dhyebā naye*

money eat

'embezzle, misappropriate'

b. *lābha naye*

profit eat

'embezzle, make a profit'

c. *ghu:s naye*

bribe eat

'take bribes'

It is also possible to replace the verb with *kāye* 'to take' to mean the same way, in which case it is more literal than the case of the use of *naye*.

(3) (ii) To make a living by eating

a. *kamāi naye*

income eat

'to live on one's husband's income'

b. *sampati naye*

inheritance eat

'to live on/use up inheritance'^{*2}

c. *dā: naye*

inheritance eat

'to live on inheritance'

d. *bālā naye*

rent.ERG eat

'to live on rent'

e. *jāgīr naye*

service eat

'to be employed'

One interesting example is (3d). *Bālā: 'rent'* appears in the ergative/instrumental case, not in the absolutive case. In this case pattern, it is possible to consider the verb *naye* is an intransitive verb and the literal translation would be

^{*1} I express my gratitude to T.R. Kansakar for a permission to refer to his questionnaire.

^{*2} As pointed out by the reviewer, *Sampati* is originally a Sanskrit word and means 'property, wealth', hence it is better to glossed as such. However, the consultant who provided this example explained it was a form of property inherited from his/her uncle, so I simply follow his intuition.

‘to eat by rent’. However, it could be considered that it is still the object even though it is in the ergative. In Newar, case does not always reflect the grammatical roles such as subject and object. Especially, the case marker that an object takes varies depending on the semantic role that it bears. Consider the following examples.

- (4) a. *wā: tebul-e hu-la.*
 3SG.ERG table-LOC wipe.off-PD
 ‘He wiped off (the surface of) the table.’
- b. *wā: sima-e khipatā: ci-ta.*
 3SG.ERG tree-LOC rope.INST tie-PD
 ‘He tied a rope around the tree./He tied the tree with a rope.’

In English, the direct object is more grammaticalized in that it is assigned an unmarked case, accusative. On the other hand, the objects in these examples cannot be marked with a default case for direct object, absolutive, but must be marked with a case that reflects their semantic role. Since the table and tree are less affected in terms of transitivity, they are encoded as locations that a theme, whether implicit (a cloth in the case of wiping off) or explicit (a rope for tying), reaches. Furthermore, even if an object is a theme, when it is less affected, and if there is a possibility of being understood as an instrument, it is marked in the ergative, as in (4b). Taking this into consideration, the rent in (3d) may be regarded as an object that is not simply marked with the absolutive but with the instrumental because of its instrumental characteristic.

- (5) (iii) To pester/eat someone’s head/brain
- a. *thwa macā: ji-gu chyā: na-la.*
 this child 1SG-GEN head eat-PD
 ‘This child pestered me.’
- b. *wa jyā: ji-gu chyā:he na-la.*
 that work.ERG 1SG-GEN head EMPH eat-PD
 ‘This work pestered me a lot.’
- c. *thwa macā: ji-gu lā he*
 this child.ERG 1SG-GEN fresh EMPH

- na-la.*
 eat-PD
 ‘Lit: The child ate even my fresh. (The child gave me a lot of trouble.)’

Newar has an ‘eating someone’s head’ idiom, as in (5a), and means that the subject annoys someone. Although Category B assumes an animate subject, this idiom can take an inanimate subject, as in (5b), which will be the case of Category C. See Section 3.3.

A sense of enjoying life is expressed by the verb *naye*.

- (6) To enjoy life
- wā: hāwā na-yā wa-la.*
 3SG.ERG wind eat-CP come-PD
 ‘He went to change air and back.’

Pardeshi et al. note that this type of expression is attested only in Central Asia and South Asia and otherwise in languages with an intense contact with Persian, like Hindi-Urdu. Newar example will support their view in that the word *hāwā* is not a native Newar word, and the native Newar counterpart is *phae*: but it cannot appear in this idiom at all. This means that (6) is borrowed from Nepali, which in turn may have borrowed the expression through contact with Hindi or Persian.

Newar has some more idiomatic usages of EAT when the subject is animate and agentive and the object is not edible.

- (7) a. *cuppā naye*
 kiss eat
 ‘to kiss someone on the cheek’
- b. *kis naye*
 kiss eat
 ‘to kiss’

Here is another example.

- (8) *wā: syā: na-la.*
 3SG.ERG pain eat-PD
 ‘He bore a pain.’

This example could be placed in Category E since the subject is an experiencer, but it is more like an actor in the active role of bearing a pain.

3.3 Category C

In expressions pertaining to Category C, the subject is -animate/-patientive and the object is -abstract. The major sense in this category listed in Pardeshi et al. (2006) is consumption, such as ‘to consume fuel’, ‘to take time’, ‘to use electricity’, ‘to cost money’.

- (9) a. *thwa gārī: yakwa pyetarol na-i.*
 this car.ERG much gasoline eat-FD
 ‘This car eats a lot of gas.’
- b. *tyempū: yakwa i: na:*
 tempo much time eat.st
 ‘A three-wheeler van eats a lot of time. (Going by tempo takes a lot of time).’
- c. *thwa phrijā: yakwa mata na:*
 this freezer.ERG much electricity eat.ST
 ‘This freezer eats (consumes) a lot of electricity.’
- d. *wa jyā: yakwa dhyaba na:*
 that job.ERG much money eat.ST
 ‘That job eats a lot of money. (It costs a lot to do the job).’

Another type of expressions in this category are such that the subject physically affects the object.

- (10) a. *cupi khatā: na-la.*
 knife rust.ERG eat-PD
 ‘The rust ate the knife.(The knife got rust.)’
- b. *ji-gu chē mī: na-la.*
 1SG-GEN house fire.ERG eat-PD
 ‘The fire ate my house.(My house was caught in the fire.)’
- c. *ji-gu chē lakhā: na-la.*
 1SG-GEN house water.ERG eat-PD
 ‘The water ate my house. (My house was washed away by the water.)’
- d. *macā:khusī: na-la.*
 child river.ERG eat-PD
 ‘The river ate the child. (The child was washed away by the river.)’

- e. *syāu kilā: na-la.*
 apple insect.ERG eat-PD

Insects ate the apple. (The apple was eaten by insects.)

In these examples, the affected entities are placed before the affecting entities, and interestingly, the word order is fixed to this and the two arguments may not be reversed. In this sense, the agent and the verb constitute an idiom chunk by itself. The question is whether the ergative NPs are still regarded as subject and the absolutive NPs as object. One clue to this question is from the following example, where the meaning is not idiomatic but literal.

- (11) *ki:-nā: syāu na-la.*
 insect-ERG apple eat-PD
 ‘The insect ate the apple.’

The difference between (10e) and (11) are the case forms that ‘insect’ takes. The absolutive form of ‘insect’ in Newar is *ki:*, whose lengthy vowel indicates that its alternative stem formative for ergative and locative is *kila*. Therefore, the original ergative case is *kilā:*, but as a recent innovation formed with a general ergative marker *-nā:*, *ki:-nā:* is also possible. This ergative marker is often used when the speaker does not know the alternative stem formative. My consultants say that the form *ki:-nā:* sound more natural for the literal meaning and that the agent precedes the patient in word order. This fact suggests that the ergative NP *kilā:* forms an idiomatic chunk with the verb *naye*, and the entire clause may be regarded as an intransitive clause.

Another type of EAT expression that falls in this category are as follows, which express a sense of annoyance.

- (12) a. *thwa lwāpū: ji-gu chyā: na-la.*
 this quarrel.ERG 1.SG-GEN head eat-PD
 ‘This quarrel ate my head. (This quarrel annoyed me.)’
- b. *myē: ji-gu nhye:pā he na-la.*
 song.ERG 1.SG-GEN ear EMPH eat-PD
 ‘The song ate my ear. (The song was very noisy.)’

3.4 Category D

Category D takes -animate/-patientive subject and +abstract object. The major meaning of this category expresses motion and process of inanimate entity. The subject plays the role of actor. In Newar, I found only one instance from Shresthacharya (1995). When the verb takes *lāpā* ‘clapping of hands, flapping’, it depicts a situation in which a paper kite topples over.

(13) *bhutumarī: lāpā na-la.*

kite.ERG flapping eat-PD
‘The kite toppled over.’

The meaning may have been obtained by a metaphorical extension of the flapping sound of a kite when it is nose-diving.

Newar has a set of expressions whose objects are color terms, and they mean a sense of color change. *³

(14) *hyāū: na-ye*

red eat
‘to become read’

3.5 Category E

Category E consists of expressions with an animate subject and a concrete object, and they express a kind of pseudo-passive sense. The subject is patientive and is affected by eating the object. In most cases, the objects are instruments, but Newar seems not to allow instrument to appear in the object position. I found one instance in Kansakar’s questionnaire, as follows.

(15) *wā: goli na:-gu kha:*

3.SG.ERG bullet eat.ST-NL COP.ST

*³ This idiom seems to become obsolete. The younger generation do not know it, while one consultant in his 50’s knew it but the meaning he gave was a little different from what Shresthacharya writes in his dictionary. Shresthacharya writes that ‘COLOR naye’ means ‘to be extremely COLOR’, while my consultant said that it meant ‘to become a little (not completely) COLOR’. In both cases, the subjects turn into the color.

‘He ate a bullet (He was shot).’

Compared to Newar, Nepali seems to have more expressions of this kind. Here is an example from Kansakar.

(16) Nepali

usle lāḥi khāe-ko ho?

3.ERG stick eat-GEN COP.3.PRES

‘Did he eat a stick? (Was he beaten with a stick?)’

Still Newar has some idioms that take a body part to express a pseudo-passive sense.

(17) a. *lhā: naye*

hand eat-CAUS

‘to be hit, struck’

b. *ghussā naye*

fist eat

‘to be hit by a fist’

c. *khwatā naye*

blow eat

‘to be punched’

d. *lwāppā naye*

stroke eat

‘to be stroked on the face with a palm’

Although they are indicated in the bare form, they tend to be used in the causative construction in which the verb takes the causative suffix *-k*. According to my consultants, the non-causativized version sounds odd in these instances. *⁴

In (17a), the body part is in absolutive and it constitutes an idiomatic sense. Interestingly it does not necessarily mean that the hitting or striking is done by hand: it can be done by foot. To have a literal meaning, the ‘hand’ must be in the ergative.

(18) a. *chanta lhā: na-ke māl-a lā?*

2.SG.DAT hand eat-CAUS.INF need-PD Q

*⁴ A consultant provided me with a non-causativized example of (17d) while another insists it sounds odd. The latter consultant claims that the other examples in (17) sound more natural in the causativized pattern.

‘Do you want me to hit you?’

- b. *chanta lhāṭī: na-ke māl-a lā?*
2.SG.DAT hand.ERG eat-CAUS.INF need-PD -Q

‘Do you want me to hit you by hand?’

Actually, the sense of hitting can also be conveyed by the causativized verb itself, so the object ‘hand’ can be omitted. In this sense, the causativized verb *nake* has developed a sense of hitting on its own.

Another type of expression that falls in this category is verbal effect on the subject, such as rebuking, scolding, etc. One of the consultants gave the following example.

- (19) *jī: sār-yā mhutu na-yā*
1.ERG teacher-GEN mouth eat-PC

‘I was scolded by the teacher’

Shresthacharya (1995) carries the following entries.

- (20) a. *pec naye*
screw eat
‘to be tricked’
b. *ku: naye*
spade eat
‘to be in a sad mood’
c. *kapā: naye*
forehead eat
‘to be perplexed’

The last two express the subjects’ undergoing emotion.

3.6 Category F

Category F is similar to Category E in that the subject is affected, but different from it in that the object is an abstract entity. The expressions in this category also function as pseudo-passive. In Category F, the subject is affected by the action or emotion related to the object. The expressions in this category can be divided into two types: (i) the subject is affected by an action, and (ii) the subject experiences an emotion.

- (21) (i) Affected by an action

- a. *bwa: naye*
scold eat

‘to be scolded’

- b. *ye: naye*
irony eat
‘to be taunted’
c. *dhwakhā: naye*
deception eat
‘to be deceived’
d. *kasā naye*
torture eat
‘to be tortured, to be taught a lesson’
e. *gwatā naye*
trouble eat
‘to get into trouble’
f. *dhakkā naye*
collision eat
‘to be pushed’

- (22) (ii) Experiencing emotion

- a. *hares naye*
despair eat
‘to feel despair’

For the sense of experiencing emotion, Newar has different idioms discussed in the previous section for Category E.

3.7 Category G

Category G contains expressions with inanimate/patientive subject affected by the object such as rust, mold, dent, etc. In Newar, there is no expression that expresses this kind of meaning with the verb *naye* in the assumed clause pattern. Expressions that are similar to those in this category are expressed in Category C.

3.8 Category H

Expressions in Category H take -animate/ +patientive subject affected by forces. Like Category G, Newar does not have expressions with the assumed clause pattern to express the meaning presented in Pardeshi et al. The similar sense is expressed in such a way that the affecting force appears in the ergative following the absolutive affected

entity, which falls in the pattern pertaining to Category C.

(23) *wāmā khwāū: na-la.*
rice.plant chill.ERG eat-PD

‘The rice crops were eaten by the chill. (Kansakar)

3.9 Category I

Category I contains expressions that do not fall in the other categories and most of them are idiomatic.

(24) a. *jhā:ga: naye*

bird eat

‘to have a sexual intercourse’ (SUBJ+[animate])

b. *tha:-gu khi naye*

self-GEN excrement eat

‘to filch, swipe, snaffle someone’s property or food’

In Newar, there is a further extended use found. In this idiom, the verb functions as a vector verb.

(25) a. *jī: saikal cha-gu: he gā-yā na-ye*

1.ERG bicycle one-CL EMPH ride-CP eat-INF

ma-phu.

NEG-can

‘(i) I cannot ride even a bicycle.

(ii) I cannot afford to buy even a bicycle.’

b. *chē cha-khā he dan-ā na-ye*

house one-CL EMPH build eat-INF

ma-phu-mha

NEG-can-NL.ANIM

‘Someone who cannot afford to build a house.’

4 Conclusion

I have illustrated Newar examples in accordance to the categories proposed by Pardeshi et al. (2006). Newar has expressions pertaining to Category A, B, C, D, E, F and I, while lacking expression pertaining to Category G and H. Categories E to H take an undergoer subjects and express a pseudo-passive sense. In Newar, such a pseudo-passive sense is allowed only with animate subjects, i.e., in Categories E and F, and is not allowed with inanimate

subjects, i.e., in Categories G and H. This would be explained in terms of animacy and empathy. Since animate subjects are interpreted as empathetic, they are easier to encode as a patient. In Newar, subjects tend to be animate, unless it is the case of cause-effect with natural force that is interpreted as the source of energy. The expressions in G and H, which take affecting entities and forces in the object position, contradict this tendency, and in Newar it is more natural to have the affecting entities in the subject position, since they are the source of affect on the semantic patient. Therefore, the similar meanings are found in Category C in Newar.

Abbreviations: ANIM - animate, CAUS- causative, CL- classifier, COP - copular, CP- connective participle, DAT- dative, EMPH - emphatic particle, ERG- ergative, GEN- genitive, INF- infinitive, INST-instrument, LOC- locative, PC- past conjunct, PD- past disjunct, PRES - present, ST- stative, 1 - first person, 2 -second person, 3 - third person

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