

# PERSON MARKERS IN SHERPA

BURKHARD SCHÖTTELNDREYER

(The work which led to the writing of this paper was stimulated by Austin Hale's 1971 paper, 'Person Markers: Conjunctive and Disjunctive Verb Forms'. Although his paper dealt exclusively with Newari, the analysis presented seems to fit Sherpa equally well. In order to highlight the parallels between Newari and Sherpa, we will follow the organisation and terminology of Hale's paper in presenting the Sherpa materials. A revised version of Hale's paper is included in this volume, pp. 95-106.)

## I. THE PROBLEM<sup>1</sup>

Before our attention had been called to the problems involved, we had viewed the person markers in Sherpa in much the same way as Hale had viewed person markers in Newari. In the declarative we had basically two markers, one marking first person subject, the other marking non-first person subject.

- |              |           |                     |
|--------------|-----------|---------------------|
| 1. nga       | lepiq.    | <i>I arrived.</i>   |
| 2. 'khyorang | lepsungq. | <i>You arrived.</i> |
| 3. 'ti       | lepsungq. | <i>He arrived.</i>  |

In the interrogative we also find two markers, one marking verbs with second person subjects, and another marking verbs with first or third person subjects. The shift of pattern is similar to that found in Newari except that the second person marker is phonologically different from the first person marker of the declarative.

- |              |           |                        |
|--------------|-----------|------------------------|
| 4. nga       | lepsungq? | <i>Did I arrive?</i>   |
| 5. 'khyorang | lepupq?   | <i>Did you arrive?</i> |
| 6. 'tl       | lepsungq? | <i>Did he arrive?</i>  |

With Sherpa also the data may be looked at and explained as a discourse oriented set of person markers.

## II. MATRIX FOCUS AND THE PERFORMATIVE

(For detailed discussion of this section see Hale, p. 96ff. in this volume.)

The following two examples make it clear that our previously chosen labels, first person and non-first person are rather misleading.

7. 'tiki, 'ti lepiq,                    *He said that he (himself) arrived.*  
     'sikyaasung.
8. 'tiki, 'ti lepsungq,                *He said that he (someone else)*  
     'sikyaasung.                        *arrived.*

If we unite the declarative 'first person' marker with the interrogative 'second person' marker, calling both of these conjunct forms, then the examples above show that conjunct forms occur with subjects of all three persons. We may view the declarative 'non-first person' marker and its identical interrogative 'non-second person' counterpart as disjunct forms. If we do, the examples above show that subjects of all three persons also occur with disjunct forms.

The meaning of the terms 'conjunct' and 'disjunct' are thus not given in terms of first, second, and third person subjects. The conjunct form signals referential conjunction of its subject with the matrix focus.<sup>2</sup> Thus the verb form lepiq in example (7) is conjunct thereby signalling that 'ti and 'tiki both refer to the same individual. The disjunct form signals referential disjunction of its subject and the matrix focus. Thus the verb form lepsungq in example (8) is disjunct thereby signalling that 'ti and 'tiki refer to different individuals.

In declarative sentences the matrix focus will be on the speaker. In interrogative sentences the matrix focus is on the hearer.

## III. DIRECT QUOTATION

The following table is a modified version of the rule proposed by Hale for Newari. The interrogative portion of the rule for Newari identifies matrix focus with the object since the hearer of a direct quotation is marked as the object. In Sherpa the hearer is marked as the indirect object. Hence matrix focus for interrogative questions in Sherpa is upon the indirect object.

	Disjunct	Conjunct
Declarative	Subject of the verb has a different referent from the subject of its matrix.	Subject of the verb has the same referent as the subject of its matrix.
Interrogative	Subject of the verb has a different referent from the indirect object of its matrix.	Subject of the verb has the same referent as the indirect object of its matrix.

9. nye "nga lepiq" 'sikyaayi. *I said "I arrived".*
10. 'khyoro "nga lepiq" 'sikyaasung. *You said "I arrived".*
11. 'tiki "nga lepiq" 'sikyaasung. *He said "I arrived".*
12. nye "'khyorang lepsungq" 'sikyaayi. *I said "You arrived".*
13. 'khyoro "'khyorang lepsungq" 'sikyaasung. *You said "You arrived".*
14. 'tiki "'khyorang lepsungq" 'sikyaasung. *He said "You arrived".*
15. nye "'ti lepsungq" 'sikyaayi. *I said "He arrived".*
16. 'khyoro "'ti lepsungq" 'sikyaasung. *You said "He arrived".*
17. 'tiki "'ti lepsungq" 'sikyaasung. *He said "He arrived".*

We have said that in declarative sentences the matrix focus will be on the speaker. The above declarative examples, according to the theory, call for conjunct forms of the verb when the subject of the sentence refers to the subject of the matrix.

In sentences (9), (12), and (15) the form 'sikyaayi is conjunct. It signals that its subject nye is identical with the speaker, who may be called Jangbu.

Also lepiq in sentence (9) is a conjunct form. It signals that its subject nga refers to the same person as the matrix subject nye, who is Jangbu.

In sentence (10) 'sikyaasung is a disjunct form signalling that its subject 'khyoro is not identical with the performative subject, the speaker.

The conjunct form lepiq indicates that its subject nga is identical with the matrix subject, 'khyoro.

The disjunct form of lepsungq in sentences (12) to (17) indicates that its subject is different from its matrix subject.

The disjunct form of 'sikyaasung in sentences (13), (14), (16), and (17) signals that its subject is not the speaker.

In applying the proposed theory to interrogative quotations we will expect a conjunct form when the subject of the quoted verb is identical with the indirect object of the matrix verb.

18. 'tiki ngalaa "nga  
lepsungq?" Tisung. *He asked me "Did I arrive?"*
19. 'tiki 'khyoranglaa "nga  
lepsungq?" Tisung. *He asked you "Did I arrive?"*
20. 'tiki 'tilaa "nga  
lepsungq?" Tisung. *He asked him "Did I arrive?"*
21. 'tiki ngalaa "'khyorang  
lepupq?" Tisung. *He asked me "Did you arrive?"*
22. 'tiki 'khyoranglaa  
"'khyorang lepupq?" Tisung. *He asked you "Did you arrive?"*
23. 'tiki 'tilaa "'khyorang  
lepupq?" Tisung. *He asked him "Did you arrive?"*
24. 'tiki ngalaa "'ti lepsungq?"  
Tisung. *He asked me "Did he arrive?"*
25. 'tiki 'khyoranglaa "'ti  
lepsungq?" Tisung. *He asked you "Did he arrive?"*
26. 'tiki 'tilaa "'ti lepsungq?"  
Tisung. *He asked him "Did he arrive?"*

In sentences (21), (22), and (23) only we find the interrogative conjunct form *lepupq*, indicating that 'khyorang and the addressee in these sentences are the same person.

#### IV. INDIRECT QUOTATION

"In direct quotation the directly quoted first person refers to the person who *originally* uttered the quoted material, and a directly quoted second person refers to the person who was originally addressed as hearer. In indirect quotation the indirectly quoted first person refers to the *actual* or quoting speaker and the second person to the *actual* hearer."<sup>3</sup>

27. nye, nga lepiq, 'sikyayyi. *I said that I arrived.*
28. nye, 'khyorang lepsungq,  
'sikyayyi. *I said that you arrived.*
29. nye, 'ti lepsungq, 'sikyayyi. *I said that he arrived.*
30. 'khyoro, nga lepsungq,  
'sikyaaung. *You said that I arrived.*
31. 'khyoro, 'khyorang lepiq,  
'sikyaaung. *You said that you arrived.*
32. 'khyoro, 'khyorang lepsungq,  
'sikyaaung. *You said that you arrived.*
33. 'khyoro, 'ti lepsungq,  
'sikyaaung. *You said that he arrived.*

34. 'tiki, nga lepsungq,                    *He said that I arrived.*  
      'sikyaasung.
35. 'tiki, 'khyorang lepsungq,            *He said that you arrived.*  
      'sikyaasung.
7. 'tiki, 'ti lepiq,                         *He said that he arrived.*  
      'sikyaasung.
8. 'tiki, 'ti lepsungq,                    *He said that he arrived.*  
      'sikyaasung.

The conjunct form in (27) indicates that nga and nye refer to the same person.

A more explicit translation for sentence (31) may be: '*You, Jangbu, said that you (Jangbu) arrived.*' We have a conjunct form lepiq, referring to the same person. For sentence (32) assume two hearers, '*You, Jangbu, said that you, Lhakpaaq, arrived.*' The disjunct form lepsungq indicates different persons.

Indirect quotation of questions is not natural in Sherpa. Hale has also discovered that in Newari indirect quotation of questions is highly unnatural, and that examples (42)-(46) of his 1971 paper are rejected in favour of their more natural direct quotations by most of his informants. Informants agree that they are grammatical, but not natural, not used.<sup>4</sup>

## V. RHETORICAL QUESTION

Unlike the ordinary question the rhetorical question does not call for an answer. Thus a change of speaker is not expected, the matrix focus does not seem to be on the hearer, but on the speaker. It will be expected then that the rhetorical question will be differently marked from the ordinary one. Consider the following example:

36. 'tiki 'tilaa "'khyorang                *He asked him "Did you go?"*  
      'gaalnok in?" Tisung.

The intonation of sentence (36) is that of a question, however, the verb 'gaalnok represents a disjunctive form, which will make the sentence a declarative one.

NOTES

1. I wish to express my sincere thanks to Mr Ang Nyima Lama, Mr Kunga Jangbu Sherpa and Mr Ang Gelbu Sherpa for their help in approaching this problem.
2. Hale gives the following definition:  
"The element which is compared with the subject of the verb in determining whether the verb is to be a conjunct form or a disjunct form will be referred to as the *matrix focus*. Stated differently, when the verb occurs in the conjunct form it signals that both its subject and the matrix focus designate the same individual. When the verb occurs in the disjunct form, it signals that its subject and the matrix focus designate different individuals."
3. Hale, Austin, 1971 *Person Markers: Conjunctive and Disjunctive Verb Forms*. MS. S.I.L.
4. Hale, personal communication.