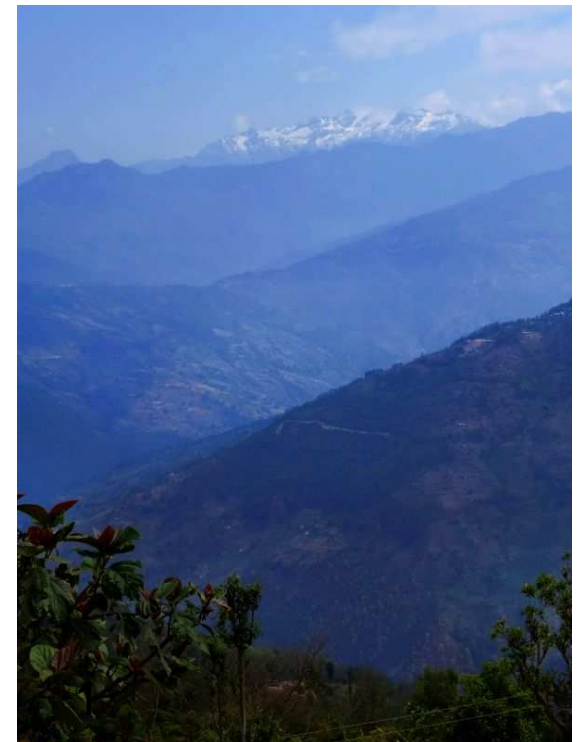


# Yakkha complex predicates and the grammar/lexicon distinction

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# Overview

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- 1 The grammar/lexicon distinction
- 2 Yakkha
- 3 Yakkha complex predicates
- 4 A closer look at some function verbs
- 5 Conclusions

# 1 Introduction

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- **The problem:**

- the necessity of predefined CONCEPTS, in order to represent knowledge in a comparable and accessible way

- NATURAL LANGUAGE:  
ambiguities, overlaps,  
prototypical, rather than categorical distinctions

# 1 Introduction

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□ idealized view:

<b>GRAMMAR</b>	<b>LEXICON</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- productive, regular</li><li>- grammatical categories</li><li>- inflection</li><li>- constructions, clauses</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- idiosyncratic, non-predictable</li><li>- word classes</li><li>- derivation</li><li>- words, idiomatic expressions, collocations</li></ul>

# 1 Introduction

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## □ **grammars:**

- ... capture useful generalizations (Enfield 2006: 297)
- ... reduce the burden on the lexicon

## □ **dictionaries:**

- ... represent all the unpredictable material; anything that cannot be derived by rules

# 1 Introduction

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“The gradient nature of the distinction between lexical and grammatical elements has long been recognized [...].”  
(Schultze-Berndt 2006:359)

“Any borderline drawn between lexicon and grammar is [...] a linguistic construct, so that it may be difficult to decide where to accommodate a particular linguistic phenomenon.” (Mosel 2006: 46)

# 1 Introduction

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## □ **Complex predicates (CPs):**

- Verbs consisting of at least 2 verbal stems, yielding more specific verbal meanings than simple verbs.
- **Function verb (V2):** same lexeme occurs in distinct gram. contexts, both ‘content word’ and ‘function word’.
- Productive morphemes **AND** lexically restricted; a typical example for the blurry boundary between grammar and lexicon (Schultze-Berndt 2006, Lehmann 2002)

# 1 Introduction

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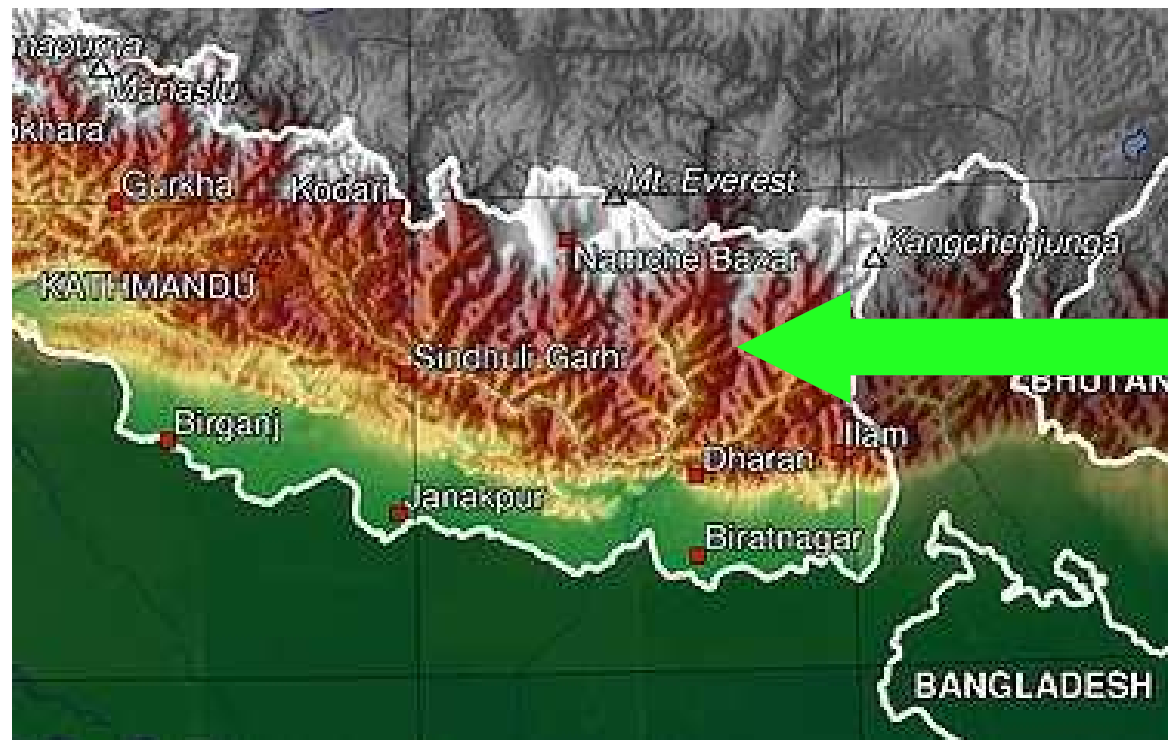
- Complex predicates and the traditional outline of reference grammars (Schultze-Berndt 2006):
  - **Grammar** or **dictionary**?
  - **morphology** (word formation) or **syntax** (phrase structure)?
  - **form-to-function** or **function-to-form**:  
one chapter dedicated to CPs, or distributed over several chapters, according to their respective functions?



## 2 The Yakkha language

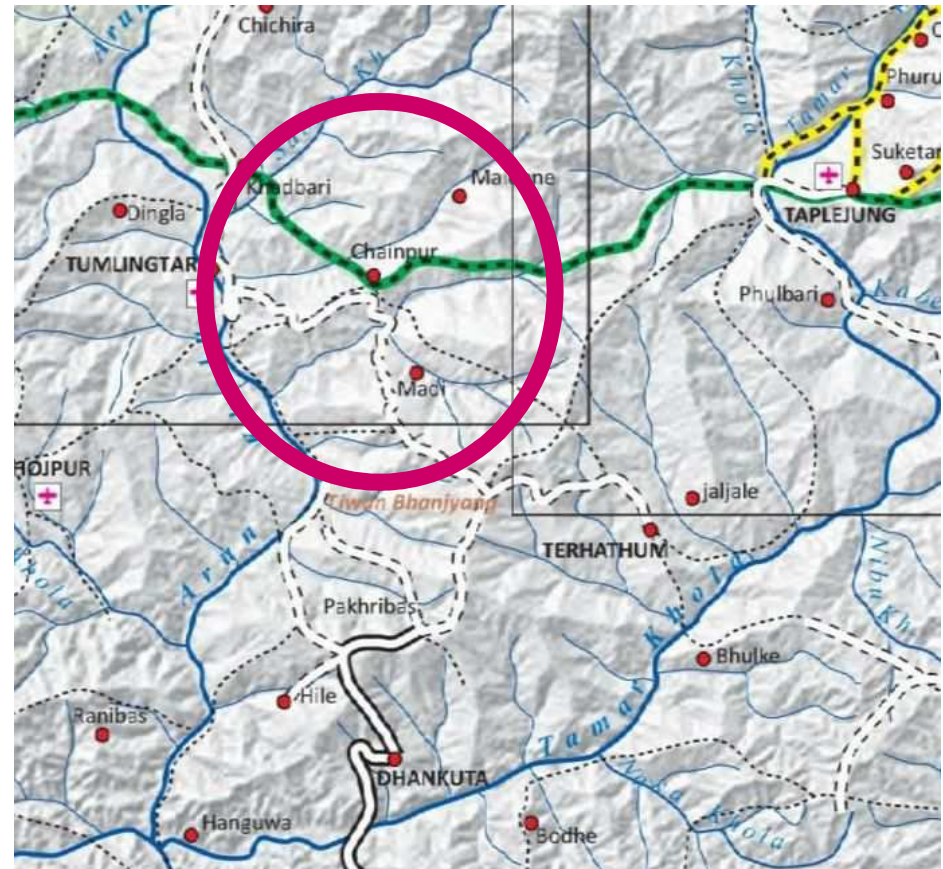
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- Tibeto-Burman > Eastern Kiranti > Greater Yakkha
- Spoken in Eastern Nepal



## 2 The Yakkha language

- core area: Sankhuwasawa and Dhankuta districts
- migrated communities in the cities of the Tarai, in Ilam and Darjeeling.
- 14.000 speakers, mostly South of Chainpur, 17.000 ethnic Yakkha (2001 census)



map: [thegreathimalayatrail.org](http://thegreathimalayatrail.org)

## 2 The Yakkha language

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- ❑ Only few fluent speakers in the young generation
- ❑ Daily life, media and education dominated by Nepali
- ❑ Tamaphok dialect of Yakkha documented since 2009 (own PhD research)



## 2 The Yakkha language

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- Complex morphophonology
- Mainly SOV, head-final phrase structure
- Arguments easily dropped (low referential density)
- Highly synthetic

(1)

*n-**du**nd-wa-m-ci-m-**ŋa**-n=ha*

NEG-understand-NPST-1pl.A-3nsg.P-1pl.A-EXCL-NEG=NMLZ.nsg

‘We (pl, excl) do not understand them.’

# 3 Yakkha complex predicates

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- First verbal stem (**V.lex**):  
**lexical information**
- Second verbal stem (**V2, function verb**):
  - (a) argument structure
  - (b) temporal structure
  - (c) spatial orientation, direction marking
  - (d) misc. ‘semantic fine-tuning’
- V2 are a closed class, 26 verbs

# 3 Yakkha complex predicates

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- Functional structure of a **single predicate**  
(one set of arguments, one TAM and polarity value)
- **Monoclausal**; no clause linkage marker  
(cf. Dixon & Aikhenvald 2006 on serial verbs)
- CPs refer to **one event**; a time-positional adverbial locates all subevents of one CP in time  
(cf. Bohnemeyer et al. 2007)

# 3 Yakkha complex predicates

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- Roughly 44% of the verbal lexicon are CPs
- Text frequency (across genres): 15%
- Productive and transparent CPs found along with idiomatic CPs
- Interaction between V2 and the semantics of the V.lex (transitivity, aktionsart)



# 3 Yakkha complex predicates

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## □ Morphological structure:

Pref.-**V.lex**-Suff.[1]-**V2**-Suff.[all]

- (a) Prefixes attach to **V.lex**
- (b) Suffixes and clause-final particles attach to **V2**
- (c) **V.lex** hosts max. one suffix, but only if it consists of a **vowel**
- (d) Only suffixes that occur in the underlying suffix string following **V2** may attach to **V.lex**  
(→ morphologically informed process, not just phonological copying)



### 3 Yakkha complex predicates

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(2a)

*asen*                    *lukt-i-khe-i-η=ha*

yesterday                run-1pl.S-V2.go-1pl.S[PST]-excl=NMLZ.nsg

‘Yesterday we ran away.’

(2b)

*ka*                    *yog-u-nes-wa-η=ha*    (/ -wa-*u*-η=ha/)

1sg                    search-3P-V2.lay-NPST[3P]-1sg.A=NMLZ.nsg

‘I will keep searching for it.’

V2	Function	Lexical meaning
<i>-pi?</i>	Benefactive, affected arguments, intr. completive	'give'
<i>-met</i>	causative	'apply, put'
<i>-ca</i>	Reflexive, self-benefactive, middle (intentional actions)	'eat'
<i>-si?</i>	Middle (unintentional actions, intr.)	(only V2)
<i>-so?</i>	Experiential	'look'
<i>-bhoks</i>	Punctual, sudden events	'split'
<i>-nes</i>	Continuative	'lay'
<i>-heks</i>	Immediate prospective	'cut'
<i>-si?</i>	Block, prevent (trans.)	'kill' ( <i>sis</i> )
<i>-ghond</i>	Walk around and do X	'dig, roam'
<i>-i ~ -ni</i>	Trans. completive	(only V2)

V2	Function	Lexical meaning
<i>-khe?</i>	Telic, irreversable change of state; intr. motion away	'go'
<i>-ghet ~ -het</i>	Telic, tr. motion away	'carry off'
<i>-ris</i>	Tr. motion towards distant goal	'invest, put and go away'
<i>-bhes</i>	Tr. motion hither	'bring and go away'
<i>-end</i>	Tr. motion down + away	'insert'
<i>-haks</i>	Tr. motion up + away; irreversable caus. accomplishments	'send'
<i>-uks</i>	Intr. motion down + towards	'come down'
<i>-ukt</i>	Tr. motion down + towards	'bring down'
<i>-ge?</i>	Intr. motion up + towards	'come up'
<i>-get</i>	Tr. motion up + towards	'bring up'
<i>-ap</i>	Intr. motion across + towards	'come from same level'
<i>-apt</i>	Tr. motion across + towards	'bring from same level'
<i>-ra</i>	Intr. motion towards	'come from further away'
<i>-ra?</i>	Tr. motion towards	'bring from further away'
<i>-a ~ -na</i>	Do X and leave object there	'leave'

## 4 A closer look: V2 *khe?ma* ‘go’

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### □ spatial orientation:

<i>lukma</i> ‘run’	→	<i>luŋkhe?ma</i> ‘run away’
<i>pukma</i> ‘jump’	→	<i>puŋkhe?ma</i> ‘jump away’
<i>pema</i> ‘fly’	→	<i>peŋkhe?ma</i> ‘fly away’
<i>lama</i> ‘return’	→	<i>laŋkhe?ma</i> ‘go back’
<i>hiŋma</i> ‘turn’	→	<i>hiŋkhe?ma</i> ‘turn away’
<i>upma</i> ‘cave in, collapse’	→	<i>umkhe?ma</i> ‘collapse and slide off’

## 4 A closer look: *khe?ma* ‘go’

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- **telicity** (emphasizing terminal point of inherently telic verbs)

*sima* → *siŋkhe?ma* ‘die’  
*pemma* → *peŋkhe?ma* ‘faint’  
*kaŋma* → *kaŋkhe?ma* ‘fall’  
*po?ma* → *poŋkhe?ma* ‘tilt over’

## 4 A closer look: *khe?ma* ‘go’

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- **irreversability, ‘too late’** (context-dependent), sth. undesirable **already** happened

*kama* ‘shout, crow’ → *kaŋkhe?ma* ‘shout, crow already’  
(the cocks crow in the morning and the hero loses his bet)

*uma* ‘enter’ → *uŋkhe?ma* ‘enter already’  
(a mouse escapes into its hole and the cat cannot catch it)

## 4 A closer look: V2 *khe?ma* ‘go’

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### □ detransitivizer in labile verb pairs (+ telicity)

labile (trans./intrans.) → intransitive, inchoative

*khiŋma* ‘stretch’ → *khiŋkhe?ma* ‘stretch’  
*lomma* ‘emerge/take out’ → *loŋkhe?ma* ‘come/go out’  
*ekma* ‘break, snap’ → *eŋkhe?ma* ‘break, snap’  
*yupma* ‘cut, slice’ → *yumkhe?ma* ‘tear, go to pieces’  
*supma* ‘strip off, peel off’ → *sumkhe?ma* ‘peel off’

## 4 A closer look: V2 *khe?ma* ‘go’

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- **lexicalized compounds** (both V-V and N-V)
- non-compositional meaning:  
*khuma* ‘steal’ → *khun*khe?*ma* ‘escape’ (steal-go)
- V.lex does not occur independently

*kin*khe?*ma* ‘rot, go bad, decay’

*hon*khe?*ma* ‘crumble down’

*than*khe?*ma* ‘go away in marriage, remarry’



## 4 A closer look: V2 *piʔma* ‘give’

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### □ **Benefactive** marker, animate/sentient objects

*luʔma* ‘tell’

→ *lumbiʔma* ‘tell/sing for someone’

*hamma* ‘distribute/  
spread’

→ *hambʔma* ‘distribute (among  
people)’

*chuʔma* ‘tie’

→ *chumbʔma* ‘tie for someone’

## 4 A closer look: V2 *pi?ma* ‘give’

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### □ Affected participants in general (not just beneficial actions)

*uŋma* ‘drink’

→ *uŋbi?ma* ‘drink out someone else’s  
drink’

*khuma* ‘steal’

→ *khumbi?ma* ‘take away from  
someone’

*khokma* ‘chop off’

→ *khonbi?ma* ‘chop off (body part)’

*thokma* ‘spit’

→ *thonbi?ma* ‘spit at someone’

## 4 A closer look: V2 *piʔma* ‘give’

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- Affected participants, **intransitive** verbs;  
**lexicalizations**: V.lex does not occur independently

<i>sundiʔma</i>	‘get sour’
<i>wanʔdiʔma</i>	‘become bent/crooked’
<i>chunʔdiʔma</i>	‘become wrinkled’
<i>thanʔdiʔma</i>	‘get spoiled (of children)’

(suppletive form *-diʔ* only occurs in infinitive;  
inflected forms display *-piʔ*)

## 4 A closer look: V2 *pi?ma* ‘give’

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- Affected participants, **transitivity operations**, marker *-i ~ -ni*

<i>maŋdi?ma</i>	‘be surprised’	↔	<i>ma<sup>n</sup>ima</i>	‘surprise’
<i>mundi?ma</i>	‘be forgetful’	↔	<i>mu?ni<sup>n</sup>ima</i>	‘forget’
<i>mandi?ma</i>	‘get lost’	↔	<i>ma?ni<sup>n</sup>ima</i>	‘lose’
<i>thaŋdi?ma</i>	‘get spoiled’	↔	<i>tha?ni<sup>n</sup>ima</i>	‘spoil’
<i>pendi?ma</i>	‘get wet’	↔	<i>pe?ni<sup>n</sup>ima</i>	‘soak, wet’

## 4 A closer look: V2 *piʔma* ‘give’

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### □ **Experiential** verbs (lexicalizations)

<i>yoŋdiʔma</i>	‘be scared’ (shake-give)
<i>niŋwa khoŋdiʔma</i>	‘become mentally ill’ (mind-break-give)
<i>sokma himdiʔma</i>	‘be annoyed, be bored’ (breath-flog-give)

## 4 A closer look: V2 *piʔma* ‘give’

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### □ Immediacy, certainty, inevitability of an event

<i>amdiʔma</i>	‘come (immediately)’
<i>phohor lenʔdiʔma</i>	‘become dirty (eventually)’
<i>kuyum lenʔdiʔma</i>	‘get dark (eventually)’

## 4 A closer look: V2 *cama* ‘eat’

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### □ Sequences of V.lex + eating

*sin***cama**

‘kill and eat’

*hun***cama**

‘roast and eat’

*nin***cama**

‘fry and eat’

## 4 A closer look: V2 *cama* ‘eat’

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### □ Manners of eating

<i>komcama</i>	‘pick up and eat’ (with hands/beak)
<i>lenjcama</i>	‘lick up’ (lick-eat)



## 4 A closer look: V2 *cama* ‘eat’

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### □ More abstract: consume, live on sth.

<i>khuncama</i>	‘live on stealing’ (steal-eat)
<i>nanɔcama</i>	‘live on begging’ (ask-eat)
<i>hiɲcama</i>	‘live on, feed on’ (survive-eat)
<i>lincama</i>	‘live on farming’ (plant-eat)

## 4 A closer look: V2 *cama* ‘eat’

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### □ Enjoy, do to oneself, self-benefactive

<i>khemcama</i>	‘enjoy listening’ (hear-eat)
<i>mincama</i>	‘think to oneself’ (think-eat)
<i>koncama</i>	‘take a walk’ (walk-eat)
<i>seŋcama</i>	‘clean (own house)’ (clean-eat)
<i>phancama</i>	‘knit for oneself, enjoy knitting’ (knit-eat)

## 4 A closer look: V2 *cama* ‘eat’

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### □ Reflexive marker

<i>moŋcama</i>	‘beat oneself’ (beat-eat)
<i>soncama</i>	‘look at oneself’ (look-eat)
<i>chik eŋcama</i>	‘hate oneself’ (hate-eat)

### □ Ambiguities

<i>moŋcama</i>	‘beat others for fun’ (beat-eat)
<i>soncama</i>	‘enjoy the view’ (look-eat)

## 4 A closer look: V2 *cama* ‘eat’

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### □ Lexicalizations

*lemma* ‘flatter, persuade’

*luʔma* ‘tell’

*omma* ‘block’

*ima* ‘revolve’

*lemcama* ‘cheat’

*luncama* ‘backbite’

*oncama* ‘overtake’

*incama* ‘play’

- common semantics: the **intention to be affected by an action carried out by oneself** (identity of A and P)
- Næss (2009): ‘EAT’ is not a prototypically transitive concept; A is affected by the event (also: Hopper & Thompson 1980)

## 4 A closer look: V2 *haŋma* ‘send’

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### □ Trans. movement away from deictic center

*ikma* ‘chase’ → *iŋhaŋma* ‘chase off’

*sekma* ‘select’ → *seŋhaŋma* ‘sort out’

### □ But also lexicalizations:

*piʔma* ‘give’ → *pinnaŋma* ‘marry off’

*khuma* ‘steal, take away’ → *khunnaŋma* ‘rescue’

## 4 A closer look: V2 *haŋma* ‘send’

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### □ Irreversability, telicity of transitive actions

*phopma* ‘spill’ → *phomnhaŋma* ‘spill completely’  
*pekma* ‘shatter’ → *peŋnhaŋma* ‘destroy completely’

## 4 A closer look: V2s and reference

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- The higher the patient on the **referential hierarchy** the greater the odds for using a complex predicate
- **Higher specification of events in certain participant configurations**

*ikma* ‘chase’ → *ij**b**hema* ‘chase people towards deictic center in a horizontal direction’

*khuma* ‘steal’ → *khun**khe?**ma* ‘kidnap’

*lomma* ‘take out’ → *lon**nha**ma* ‘expel’

# 5 Conclusions

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- High functional load, polysemy of the V2s:
  - intentions, abilities, affectedness, referential properties of the participants
  - temporal structure
  - transitivity
  - spatial orientation
  - context ('too late', 'inevitably', 'completely')
- Both: productive and unpredictable combinations
- Interaction of V.lex and V2



# 5 Conclusion

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- Grammar or lexicon?
- **BOTH!**
- A purely lexical account (list of lexemes, crossreferences) would fail to capture possible generalizations.
- Form-to-function (rather than function-to-form): otherwise, one would not do justice to the semantic and functional wealth of complex predicates and their role as a typical character trait of Yakkha.
- Not including complex predicates in a dictionary would mean to neglect almost half of the verbal lexicon.

# 5 Conclusion

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- “[...] failure to achieve ‘economy’ does not detract from the utility of discussing general patterns observed in the lexicon of a language. Such perceived sets of relationships, particularly given their common diachronic significance, are of intrinsic interest in a grammatical description.”  
(Enfield 2006: 315)

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