1997

Review: Aspects of Nepali Grammar

Clive W. McClelland
Liberty University, cmcclelland@liberty.edu

NP-complete.[6] Again, this does not mean that morphological generation in natural languages really is that hard. In all likelihood, natural languages avoid the complexity either by hitherto unrecognized constraints, or by historical changes (i.e. lexicalization) that result in simplifications.

The papers were printed directly from copy provided by the authors, which results in a variety of typefaces. Given the quality of typesetting now available, this is less of a problem than it was several years ago. (A few authors do succumb to the mathematician's temptation of using unusual symbols where more pedestrian ones would suffice.) Typographic errors appear to be few; three references to example (12) on page 104 should refer to example (14). Occasional non-native English creeps in but not objectionably so.

REFERENCES

Anderson, Stephen R. 1992. A-morphous morphology. Cambridge Studies in Linguistics 62. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Aronoff, Mark. 1976. Word formation in generative grammar. Linguistic Inquiry Monograph Series, No. 1. Cambridge: MIT Press.

Charette, Monik. 1991. Conditions on phonological government. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kaplan, Ronald M., and Martin Kay. 1994. Regular models of phonological rule systems. Computational Linguistics 20:331-378.

Kaye, Jonathan; Jean Lowenstamm, and Jean Roger Vergnaud. 1990. Constituent structure and government in phonology. Phonology 7:193-231.

[Mike Maxwell, 7809 Radin Rd., Waxhaw, NC 28173. E-mail: mike_maxwell@sil.org]

---

[6]'NP-complete' refers to a class of problems in computation which are believed to be very difficult in the sense that computing a solution may require exponential time. (NP stands for 'Non-deterministic Polynomial time'.)

Aspects of Nepali grammar. Santa Barbara papers in linguistics, Vol. 6. By CAROL GENETTI, ed. Santa Barbara: University of California. 1994. 248 pp. $15.00.

Reviewed by CLIVE MCCLELLAND
SIL—Asia Area

This book has nearly all the characteristics of good research: a good overview of the work, minimal use of elicited data for illustrative examples (and a recognition of the problems inherent in elicited material), reliance on natural data, and a perspective that is relatively theory neutral. It is a good introduction to some current issues in the study and interpretation of the grammatical facts of the major Indo-Aryan language of Nepal. It is noteworthy because of its data-driven and data-oriented discussion.

One feature that I particularly like is that the nine interlinearized texts in the final 81 pages are available on cassette tape (for $3.00), so the interested researcher may peruse the material to confirm conclusions reached by the article writers, as well as proceed in other directions of research. If the texts are truly oral (not read from a written text) and well recorded, they will be a valuable resource for Indo-Aryan and Nepali scholars.

The book begins with a good introduction by the editor (Genetti) and an easy-to-follow grammar sketch. In the introduction, 24 of 58 illustrative examples are from conversations or stories, and the transcriptions are easy to understand. Genetti explains that the book is composed of four papers and a collection of narratives written by graduate students during the Field Methods course at UCSB in the 1992-1993 academic year. Data is mostly from one native speaker.

Genetti ends her introduction with Nepali's typological characteristics and an appendix of references for Nepali linguistics. The theoretical orientation of the editor and graduate students is functional/typological because ' ... the ultimate goal of linguistics is to understand the relationship between linguistic constructions and their communicative functions in natural language' (p. 2). Consequently the writers depend, for the most part, upon 'natural' data from conversation and stories. As Genetti says, such an approach lends itself to more exact insight into language universals.

The first article concerns the Dative Subject Construction (DSC), and tries to clarify its function relative to previous research. Out of 82 examples, 22 are from unelicited material—the author mentions how word order changes

according to whether or not the sentences are elicited. The study is an interesting investigation of subjecthood and topic as they relate to DSCs.

The second article is a study of passive formation which the author considers to have been misconstrued by earlier researchers. The author shows that the construction is really a marker for Agent, and aptly points out and illustrates that there is a difference between Subject and Agent in Nepali. Although the importance of 'natural' data is mentioned, the author does not say whether her 33 examples are elicited or not.

The third article pertains to a controversial compound word that has been interpreted as a verb derived from a noun (i.e., N + garu-nu 'to do/make'). The author explains and illustrates well that the construction is not an example of noun plus verb compounding but is syntactic where the noun shows characteristics of objecthood. There are 38 examples-all of which are not specified according to their 'naturalness'.

The fourth article shows that verbal suffixes *daa* and *day* are not free variants of a participial morpheme as some researchers have claimed, but each exhibit characteristics different from the other, as well as some that overlap. The author discusses, as do others, the consequences of relying on elicited data to the exclusion of data from conversation and texts, which can lead to skewed conclusions. Of the 40 examples, 25 are elicited.

In the last section of the book, one of the stories (p. 208) is divided into intonation units (IU) following DuBois (in 'Discourse Transcription' in vol. 4 of the Santa Barbara Papers in Linguistics 1992), thereby better representing the natural sectioning of the text.

In my opinion, this book illustrates what field linguists ought to be about: sticking to data that is as naturally occurring as possible, thereby laying a basis for more realistic theory building and faithful translation that reflects actual language facts. Such works as these promote a deeper understanding of the world's languages and cannot but help us be better linguists if by nothing else than just following their example.

It is a good introduction to Nepali and provides an avenue for verification of results presented and for further research. I've not often seen such scholarly vulnerability. Its awareness of the dangers of elicited material is one that all field linguists should possess. This, I believe, is its chief contribution.

[Clive McClelland,   Ortigas Center, P. O. Box 12962, 1600 Pasig, Metro Manila, Philippines.
E-mail: clive_mcclelland@sil.org]

East Asian linguistics. Santa Barbara Papers in Linguistics, Volume 5. Shoichi Iwasaki, Tsuyoshi Ono, Hongyin Tao, Hyo Sang Lee, editors. 1994. Santa Barbara, CA: University of California. 263 pp. $15.00.

Reviewed by BRIAN MIGLIAZZA
SIL—Mainland South East Asia Group

My interest was originally aroused in this volume because I thought there might be something on Southeast Asian languages, but unfortunately for me this was not the case. The title 'East Asian' means what it says, and the papers mostly discuss the three main languages of the East Asia region—Chinese, Japanese, and Korean. But anyone working in Asian linguistics will find it helpful to know something about Chinese, since its influence has been so pervasive. What makes these papers of further interest is, as the editors say in their preface, that they contain 'analyses heavily based on data'. Each paper has a great deal of data, allowing the reader to independently verify the papers' conclusions and make cross-language comparisons. Quite a bit of the data comes from text sources (including conversations) rather than just elicited material. Most of the papers are about syntax, a few are on phonology, and several more are focused on discourse and pragmatics.

These papers should be useful to anyone working in Asian languages. Out of 14 papers (the result of the May 1993 '2nd East Asian Linguistics Workshop' held at University of California, Santa Barbara), four deal with Chinese (Cantonese, Mandarin, Hui), seven with Japanese, and three with Korean. The Chinese papers discuss syllable structures and inventories, pause in discourse, grammaticalization, and the present perfect. The Japanese papers discuss self repair, constituent prototypicality, core-oblique distinction in discourse, use and meaning of an auxiliary verb, grammaticalization, and feature geometry segmental phonology. The Korean papers discuss grammaticalization and interaction in conversation.

Personally, I found relevant the first paper by Kawai Chui 'Grammaticization of the saying verb *wa* in Cantonese', in that Thai seems to also have a very similar saying verb, *waa* (falling tone), which can act as a verb, an auxiliary verb (with verbs of saying, knowing, asking) and also as a complementizer (frequently translated 'thus' or 'that').

The article on prototypicality prompted me to consider similarities with 'So', a Katuic (Mon-Khmer) that I am investigating. The article on segmental phonology utilizes aspects of autosegmental theory, and gave me