This paper is a preliminary report on the finite verb forms in Nubri. Nubri reveals the verb agreement pattern known as 'conjunct-disjunct (C-D) like some Tibetan varieties, such as Kyirong Tibetan, Gyalsumdo among others. Nubri shows fairly consistent pattern of the verbs in the past tense marked with -hin, and –son for conjunct and disjunct respectively. However, this is not consistent in the non-past tense.

Keywords: Nubri, conjunct, disjunct, evidentiality

1. Introduction and typological features

Nubri (Glottolog code number 1243) is spoken in Tsum-Nubri Village council in the northern Gorkha. The Nurbipas (Nubri people) are recorded as one of the nationalities of Nepal under the term 'Larke' in official government records (NFDIN record). There are a few studies about the Nubri language. Among different varieties of Nubri, a few materials exist in the Lho variety, such as (Dhakal 2018a, c; 2019). The genetic classification proposed in Bradley (1997) is given in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Genetic classification of Nubri (Bradley 1997:5)

Similarly, Tournadre (2016) reports that Nubri is spoken along the Sino-Nepalese border, and he classifies this in 'South Western Section' based on the 'geolinguistic continuum.'

Nubri is a tonal language and bears the characteristics of 'Sinospheric' languages. Nubri makes use of suffixes compared to prefixes. The comparative and superlative forms of adjectives are morphologically derived. The clauses can be combined with the sequence of verbs known as 'serial verbs' (see examples 61, 62, 63). The copulas are used to express evidentiality and other tense and aspect system (Dhakal, 2018b).

The data for this study were obtained from direct elicitation from Lakpa Lama from Lho village of Gorkha. Moreover, the sentences from a text have been examined to further confirm the agreement patterns in the language. The data for this study come from the speakers from Prok village in the northern Gorkha.

The paper is organized as follows. The finite verb forms traditionally known as 'conjunct', 'disjunct' are described in section 2. This section describes the finite verb forms in the past, and present tense, and also discusses the use of copulas in Nubri. Some uses of copulas, such as in the progressive aspect and desiderative mood are discussed in section 3. Mirativity in Nubri is discussed in section 4. Finally, the paper is summarized in section 5.

2. Conjunct/disjunct

A number of scholars have discussed the agreement pattern known as ‘conjunct/disjunct’ particularly in Tibeto-Burman languages since Hale (1980)\(^2\). Hargreaves (2005) has discussed the pattern in some details. He notes that one type of marking is reserved for main clause in the first person subject and questions with second person subjects (the "conjunct"), while another type of

---

\(^2\)Some scholars don't prefer to use the terms 'Conjunct/Disjunct' for the marking of agreement in verbs (cf. Tournadre 2008). However, this paper discussed the verb agreement pattern rather than the literal meaning of the verbs. Some examples are obtained from the corpus and they are indicated in [...].

Nepalese Linguistics, vol. 35, 2022, pp. 41-49. DOI: https://doi.org/10.3126/nl.v35i01.46558
marking is used in all other cases ("disjunct"). Hargreaves (2005:6) mentions that a clause will have a conjunct form in the Kathmandu Newar if:

(a) the clause is finite, and
(b) the event being described is interpreted as involving an intentional action by the actor, and
(c) the speech act is either
   (i) declarative/first person, or
   (ii) interrogative/second person, or
   (iii) reported speech when the matrix clause subject and complement clause subject are co-referential.

Nubri also follows the pattern described by Hargreaves (2005), and some scholars discussed in relation with the same pattern overall.3

2.1 Conjunct/disjunct in Nubri

While the first person statement and the second person question take the conjunct form, the rest of the verb forms take the disjunct form in finite verb morphology. The conjunct past form terminates in -hin, the conjunct question forms mainly end in -sjã, and the disjunct form ends in –soŋ in Nubri.

(1) ŋà momo fe-hin
    1SG dumpling eat-PST.CJ
    ‘I ate momo.’

(2) khø momo fe-soŋ
    2SG dumpling eat-PST.DJ
    ‘You ate momo.’

(3) kho momo fe-soŋ
    3SG dumpling eat-PST.DJ
    ‘He ate momo.’

As shown in (1-3), the distinction is maintained between the first person and non-first person pronouns.

2.1.1 Past

The verb inflections of the verb phin 'go' in perfective (past tense) verb forms are given in Table 1 in statements, and questions. An example follows.

(4) ŋà phin-hin
    1SG go-PST.CJ
    ‘I went.’

Table 1: Inflection of verb phin 'go' in past tense

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State.</th>
<th>Ques.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>ŋà 'I'</td>
<td>phin-hin/phin-hi bu-sjã</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL</td>
<td>horan 'we' (excl.)</td>
<td>phin-hin/phin-hi bu-sjã</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL</td>
<td>ji 'we'</td>
<td>phin-hin/phin-hi bu-sjã</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>khø 'you'</td>
<td>bu-soŋ phin-hina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PL</td>
<td>khjangja 'you PL'</td>
<td>bu-soŋ phin-hina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG.M</td>
<td>kho 'he'</td>
<td>bu-soŋ bu-sjã</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG.F</td>
<td>mo 'she'</td>
<td>bu-soŋ bu-sjã</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PL</td>
<td>khuŋ 'they'</td>
<td>bu-soŋ bu-sjã</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The distinction is seen in the finite verb forms between the first and non-first persons in statements in this table. On the other hand, the verbs are marked with -hina in both the second person singular and plural, contrasting this with the finite verb form of the first and the third person pronouns, viz. –sjã in question. The finite verb forms given in Table 1 show that the first and the third persons are identical. The verb forms in statement (state.) and question (ques.) in the past tense are given in Table 1.

The verb agreement pattern is identical both in transitive, and ditransitive verbs. The verb agrees only with one noun phrase (NP) in Nubri in both intransitive and transitive clauses. Examples from the transitive verbs (5-7) corroborate this claim.

(5) ŋà khim dzõ-hin
    1SG house clean-PST.CJ
    ‘I cleaned the house.’
(6) *kho khim dʒo-soŋ*  
2SG house clean-PST.DJ  
‘You cleaned the house.’

(7) *kho khim dʒo-soŋ*  
3SG house clean-PST.DJ  
‘He cleaned the house.’

The inflection of the verb *dʒo* 'clean' in the past tense in question is given in (8-10).

(8) *ŋà khim dʒo-sjã*  
1SG house clean-PST.QUE  
‘Did I clean the house?’

(9) *kho khim dʒo-sjã*  
2SG house clean-PST.QUE  
‘Did you clean the house?’

(10) *kho khim dʒo-soŋ*  
3SG house clean-PST.DJ  
‘Did he clean the house?’

The inflections of the transitive verbs in the past tense in statements and questions are given in Table 2.

Table 2: The finite verb *dʒo* 'clean' in the past tense

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>State.</th>
<th>Ques.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td><em>ŋà 'I'</em></td>
<td>dʒo-hin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL</td>
<td><em>horay 'we'</em> (exclusive)</td>
<td>dʒo-hin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td><em>kho 'you'</em></td>
<td>dʒo-soŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PL</td>
<td><em>khjangja 'you PL'</em></td>
<td>dʒo-soŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG.M</td>
<td><em>kho 'he'</em></td>
<td>dʒo-soŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG.F</td>
<td><em>mo 'she'</em></td>
<td>dʒo-soŋ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3PL</td>
<td><em>khun 'they'</em></td>
<td>dʒo-soŋ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The verbal inflections in intransitive and transitive clauses in Tsum (cf. Dhakal, Donohue, Gautam and Liu, 2016), the closest neighbour of Nubri, is different in terms of verb agreement. The inflections of intransitive and transitive verbs inflect differently in Tsum although these two are the closest neighbours.

2.1.2 C/D in the non-past tense

The distinction between C/D discussed with regard to the past tense in section 2.1.1 is not maintained in the non-past tense. The finite verbs in Nubri in the non-past tense end consistently with the copula *jø* irrespective of pronouns, numbers, and kinds of sentences (statements, questions). The suffix –*tja* is attached to the verbs with all verb forms in questions.

(13) *ŋà do jò*  
1SG walk COP  
‘I walk.’

(14) *kho do-tja*  
3SG walk-NPST.Q  
‘Does he walk?’

All the pronouns (as subjects) follow the pattern as in (13), and in question as in (14). They are not therefore repeated. The finite forms do not follow the C/D pattern as described in the past tense.

2.1.3 C/D in subordination

The distinction between C/D in different tense is presented in sections 2.1.1-2.1.3. In addition to different tenses marked with C/D, the subordinated clause is marked with conjunct when the subject of the subordinated clause is coreferential with the subject of the main clause. By contrast, if the agent of the subordinated clause is different than the subject of the subordinated clause, it is marked with the disjunct form.

(15) *kho-gi ŋà khim-la de-hin lap du*  
he-ERG I house-LOC sit-PST.CJ say COP  
‘Hei said that he sat at home.’

(16) *kho-gi ŋà khim-la*  
he-ERG I house-LOC  
*de-soŋ lap du*  
sit-PST.DJ say COP  
‘Hei said that he sat at home.’
The verb forms are identical in (19) and (20). The suffix -ken is used in (21-22) irrespective of the subject of the main clause.

2.1.4 C/D and volitionality

The distinction between C/D we showed in previous sections is relevant only with the intentional verbs. While the distinction is maintained with the volitional verbs, viz. the actions carried out intentionally by the subject agents in these clauses, there is no distinction in verb agreement in the non-volitional verbs. The agent (subject) cuts his finger by mistake, and thus there is no volitionality in this action (24).

Example (22) is from a discourse, and we know that the action is not intentional in this case, and the verb form terminates in the disjunct form. Otherwise, the speaker would use the finite verb that terminates in -hin. The discourse context tells us that the speaker was trying to go up to make a phone call to his family members but in vain.

(23) ē hjala bu-soŋ
I above go-PST.DJ
‘I went up.’ [Nubri1.101]

The actions in (23-26) are not done intentionally by the speakers. Therefore, all the finite forms of the verbs in these sentences have the finite verb forms that end in -soŋ/dzoŋ.

(24) ē-i ē lakpa tup-soŋ
1SG-ERG 1SG hand cut-PST.DJ
‘I cut my hand (accidentally).’

(25) ē kho-la thoŋ-dzoŋ
1SG he-ACC see-PST.DJ
‘I saw him.’

(26) ē dy tor-soŋ dē dzhor-soŋ
1SG knife lose-PST.DJ and find-PST.DJ
‘I lost the knife and found it.’

(27) ē sa-la bhap ghel-soŋ
I earth-LOC fall fall-PST.DJ
‘I fell onto the ground (accidentally).’

This can further be illustrated by the pairs of examples presented in (28-33). Although both of the kinds of constructions are possible, the meaning they express is different in the following pairs of sentences (28-29, 30-31, 32-33).

(28) ē-i hé tup-hin
1SG-ERG potato cut-PST.CJ
‘I cut the potato.’

(29) ē-i ē lakpa tup-soŋ
1SG-ERG I hand cut-PST.DJ
‘I (accidentally) cut my hand.’

(30) ē tshu naŋ tshu-soŋ
I water inside enter-PST.DJ
‘I submerged into water.’

(31) ē tshu naŋ tshu-hin
1SG water inside enter-PST.CJ
‘I submerged into water.’

(32) ē sa top-soŋ
1SG hair cut-PST.DJ
‘I cut my hair.’
The pairs of examples in these sentences show that there is a distinction between volitional and non-volitional actions. While the volitional actions make a distinction between conjunct and disjunct, the distinction is not maintained in the non-volitional actions.

Examples (34-35) also show a contrast between the volitionality versus non-volitionality.

(34) ñà ɲal-hin
1SG sleep-PST.CJ
'I slept.' [Volitional]

(35) ñà ɲal-soŋ
1SG sleep-PST.DJ
'I slept.' [Non-volitional]

It was shown earlier that the verb in the past tense makes distinction between 'conjunct' and 'disjunct'. It is also to be noted that the past time is not always marked with the past tense suffixes in the natural discourses. The speakers also make use of the bare verb stems to refer to the past tense in the discourse contexts. For example, all of the examples taken from various discourses do not have any TAM markers in them. Instead, they merely have the bare verb stems.

(36) bhô tfik iskul dzanŋ
date one school send
bu ɲi qhawa dzanŋ
son two lama send
'(I) sent a daughter to school, and two sons to school.' [Nubri1.008]

(37) atsu ghjatso-la lokaldi hoŋ
brother Ghyacho-DAT support come
'(We) came in support of Ghyacho brother.' [Nubri1.059]

(38) fara thamdze hjala gjukphin
male whole above run go
'All the male person went running.' [TashiChoeden.128]

There is the absence of tense and agreement markers in example (39), which is obtained from a discourse. The speaker is asked where she was born, and in turn she replies. Interestingly, we see that there is no tense marker in the verb. However, the context tells us that the verb from refers to the past tense.

(39) ña namlala ke
I Namla-LOC born
'I was born in Namla.' [Nubri3.6]

The bare verb form is used not only in statement, but also in questions. As we see in (40), there is no use of the TAM marker in the verb. Similarly, when the addressee answers the question, he again makes use of the verb form without any inflectional marker. This is true in both examples (40-42).

(40) namlala lo ghatso de
Namla-LOC year how much sit
'How long did you live in Namla?' [Nubri3.7]

(41) lo ɲifu namlala de
year twenty Namla-LOC sit
'(I) lived in Namla for twenty years.' [Nubri3.9]

(42) fuku ḫapliŋ-di ho-di khur
plastic tent-DEF that-DEF carry
'(We) carried the plastic tents.'

The discussion reveals that the bare verb stem may be used to refer to the past tense, in addition to the conjunct form -hin, or -soŋ. In the surface, it is not clear yet whether the speaker is using the past tense or the non-past tense.

Let's consider the following examples where the speaker uses the bare verb stem. As we see in (43), the speaker uses the bare verb stem to refer to the present tense (aspect) while asking the questions, but also giving the answer as in (44). It makes the case complex to find clear nuances to find out the differences between the past and present use of the bare verb stem.

(43) dhana ghanə ɲal
now where sleep
'Where do you sleep now?' [Nubri1.118]
Finite verb forms…

(44) dhana khim nay j̱al
now house inside sleep
‘Now (we) sleep in the house.’ [Nubri1.124]

(45) lo-la lep
Lho-LOC reach
‘(We) reached Lho.’ [Nubri1.92]

It is not necessary that the conjunct, and disjunct are always marked to show tense in Nubri. As shown in the examples, the past tense is zero marked.

2.1.5 C/D and copulas

It seems that Nubri shows a contrast between conjunct and disjunct in the use of copulas. The forms of copulas in Nubri are j̱o, duk, and re. They are discussed in brief in this section.

The copulas j̱o and du/duk are used in locative clauses. Nubri makes a distinction between the first and non-first person copulas in locative clauses in statements. The copula j̱o appears with the first person statements, and with the second person questions. It is also to be mentioned that when the copula appears with the second person question, an additional suffix -kja appears with the copula j̱o. The form that appears with the copula is copula j̱oda.

Table 3: Locative copulas in Nubri

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State.</th>
<th>Ques.</th>
<th>Neg.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ŋà 'I'</td>
<td>j̱o</td>
<td>dukja mé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>horan 'we'</td>
<td>j̱o</td>
<td>dukja mé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ŋi 'we'</td>
<td>j̱o</td>
<td>dukja mé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kho 'you'</td>
<td>duk</td>
<td>j̱oda mé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khjangja 'you (PL)'</td>
<td>duk</td>
<td>j̱oda mé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kho 'he'</td>
<td>duk</td>
<td>dukja mé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mo 'she'</td>
<td>duk</td>
<td>dukja mé</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>khungja 'They'</td>
<td>duk</td>
<td>dukja mé</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By contrast, there are mixed uses of the copulas in the questions. The copula dukja is used with the first person pronouns whereas j̱oda with the second person pronouns. The negative form is identical with all verb forms as shown in Table 3.

(46) ŋà pheta j̱o
I outside COP.CJ
‘I was outside.’

Table 4: Summary of copula

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conjunct</th>
<th>Disjunct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Locative</td>
<td>j̱o</td>
<td>du</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identificational</td>
<td>hin</td>
<td>re</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The copular forms for conjunct and disjunct are distinct in Nubri. A detailed analysis is required.

3 Other uses of copular verbs

The copulas are used for some other functions in Nubri. The main uses of the copulas are used in this section.

3.1 Progressive aspect

Nubri does not make use of any morphemes to for the progressive aspect. Instead, it makes use of serial verb construction to show that the actions are in progress. The progressive construction is formed with the verb followed by the lexical verb de 'sit'. This is followed by the copula that makes C/D distinction.

(50) ŋà nubri ḏhe de j̱o
I Nubri go sit COP
‘I am going to Nubri.’

(51) ḵi hoŋ de duk
dog come sit cop
‘The dog is coming.’

(52) kho ts̱a tup de duk
he grass cut sit COP
‘He is cutting the grass.’
The distinction is maintained to contrast the conjunct and disjunct in the use of copulas in the progressive aspect.

3.2 Desiderative

The suffix -ŋi is added to the verb root to indicate the desiderative mood. The desiderative mood expresses the speakers' desire. The verb marked by the desiderative suffix is followed by the verb de 'sit', and this is again followed by the verb duk.

(53) ŋa hjopa fe-ŋi de duk
    I rice eat-DESID sit COP.DJ
    'I want to eat rice.'

(54) ŋa hjopa fe-ŋi me-de duk
    I rice eat-DESID NEG-sit COP
    'I don't want to eat rice.'

(55) ɐ ara thug-ŋi do duk
    I liquor drink-DESID want COP
    'I want to drink liquor.'

(56) ɐ tsum-la do-ŋi duk
    I Tsum-LOC go-DESID
    ma-do duk
    NEG-want COP
    'I did not want to go to Tsum.'

It is to be noted that the finite verb form is obtained by making use of the disjunct copula duk. It is natural to use this form because one's desires are not volitional.

4 Evidentiality

Like Tibetan languages, Nubri also make use of evidentiality. Evidentiality is served by the use of the copulas. The use of the copula duk refers to evidentiality. The mirative indicates the 'unexpected information' (DeLancey 2000:12). DeLancey (2000:1) mentions, "Evidentiality refers to the grammatical marking of the source of evidence for a proposition; mirativity refers to the marking of a proposition as representing information which is new to the speaker." The information coded in the proposition is surprising to the speaker."

(57) bhitsa lep-son
    boy come-PST
    'The boy came (arrived).'

(58) bhitsa lep duk
    boy come COP
    'The boy came arrived (it was found so).'

(59) khoʃi-son
    he die-PST
    'He died.'

(60) khoʃi duk
    he die COP
    'He died (it was found so).'

The construction in (57) and (58), and also (59) and (60) differ in how the information is obtained by the speaker. When a speaker utters the sentence (57), for example, he is sure about the information. The information is expected by the speaker. By contrast, if the information is surprising to the speaker, he makes use of the construction as in (58). Similar is the case in (59) and (60) respectively.

The following examples, all obtained from the narratives related to the earthquake, have similar constructions. It is natural that we do not expect that the earthquake occurs, or the houses fall. The information like this is surprising to the speaker as can be read in the following sentences.

(61) sandul lep duk
    earthquake come COP
    'The earthquake occurred.'

(62) oda khim fik hoŋ duk
    there house fall come COP
    'The house fell (completely) there.'

(63) iskul fik hoŋ duk
    school fall come COP
    'The school fell (completely) there.'

Thus, the constructions given in (61-63) show that the information coded in these sentences is unexpected to the speakers. They thus differ from the finite verb forms that terminate in -hin, and -son.

5 Conclusion

The finite verbs in Nubri feature the agreement system that is known as 'conjunct' and 'disjunct'. However, the kind of agreement in Nubri does not align neatly with 'conjunct' and 'disjunct' featured in Tibetan varieties mentioned in various sources.
mentioned earlier, such as DeLancey (2003a, b). The choice of the use of copulas in the verb agreement is further complicated by a number of factors. Like the Tibetan varieties discussed in this chapter, the distinction between conjunct and disjunct is determined by volitionality. There is a grammatical category known as mirativity in Nubri. It is also interesting to note that there is slight divergence in the verb agreement pattern in Nubri compared to the 'conservative' conjunct/disjunct pattern.

Acknowledgements

The work in Nubri began with the research followed by the devastating earthquake in Nepal. The project entitled "RAPID: Narrating Disaster: Calibrating Causality and Responses to the 2015 Earthquakes in Nepal". This was funded by National Science Foundation. I am thankful to Dr. Kristine A. Hildebrandt, and other members of the team, namely Dr. Geoff Childs, Dr. Sienna Craig, Dr. Mark Donohue, and Mr. Bhojraj Gautam. I am equally thankful to the speakers of the Nubri community who provided the data for me. They include Ms. Jyangchuk Sangmo, Lakpa Lama (Lho), Lakpa Lama (Sama).

Abbreviations

ABL: ablative; ACC: accusative; C: conjunct; CAUS: causative; CLF: classifier; D: disjunct; ERG: ergative; INF: infinitive; LOC: locative; LVM: loan verb marker; NMLZ: nominalizer; NPST: non-past; NEG: negative; PRF: perfect; PST: past; PROG: progressive, progressive converb; Q: question; SIM: simultaneous converb; STAT: statement; 1: first person pronoun; 2: second person pronoun; 3: third person pronoun.

References


Huber, Brigitte. 2002. The Tibetan dialect of Lende (Kyirong): a grammatical description with historical annotations. VGH Wissenschazsverlag/ International Institute for Tibetan and Buddhist Studies GmbH.


