

**TENSE, ASPECT AND MODALITY
IN
NEPALI AND MANIPURI**

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
in
LINGUISTICS.

By
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Recommendation

This is to certify that Tikaram Poudel has prepared this dissertation, entitled *Tense, aspect and modality in Nepali and Manipuri* under my supervision and guidance. This work was not submitted, in part or full, for any other degree of this or any other university. As this dissertation conforms to the standards of Tribhuvan University, I strongly recommend it for final acceptance.

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LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

We hereby recommend that this dissertation, entitled *Tense, aspect and modality in Nepali and Manipuri* has been prepared by Tikaram Poudel under our supervision and guidance to be accepted by the research committee for the final examination in fulfillment of the degree of doctor of philosophy in linguistics.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the morpho-syntax and semantics of tense, aspect and modality in Nepali and Manipuri. We adopt the definition of tense as the grammatical coding of an event or state in relation to the time of speech. Aspect refers to whether a particular action is completed or not and that action terminates or not at the reference time. Modality refers to the speakers' attitudes towards the proposition. The meaning of each of the three categories is described based on data collected by the researcher and from published sources.

The approach that we adopt here presupposes that every sentence in a natural language consists of a proposition, the element of modality and temporal reference. Realis and irrealis are the two semantic sub-domains of modality. This modal contrast is expressed by means of moods, modal verbs and the inherent modality meanings of lexical verbs. Nepali has mood distinction between declarative and non-declarative. The declarative sentences have tense contrast of past or non-past and aspectual contrast of perfectivity and imperfectivity. The non-declarative sentences may be potential, imperative and optative. In Manipuri the mood distinction is between realis and irrealis. Realis sentences can be aspectually perfective or imperfective. Both languages have modal verbs to express different modal meanings such as ability, epistemic notion, possibility, necessity, etc. Different lexical verbs have different modal scopes over their complements expressing certainty, presupposition, doubt, etc.

The approach that we adopt for aspect covers the notions such as lexical aspect, perfectivity, terminativity and sequentiality. The discussion on lexical aspect explores the effect of inherent meanings of verbal group on the aspectual distinction. The term perfectivity is limited within the morphological level and includes the notions such as completives, anteriors, resultatives and past time markers. The term terminativity operates in the clausal level and has both verbal group and nominal arguments in its scope. The term sequentiality is a discourse level property and we illustrate it from the textual analysis from modern Manipuri fiction.

Nepali has tense contrast between past and non-past in declarative sentences. We argued that Manipuri is a tenseless language. Hence, tense is not a universal category.

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List of abbreviations

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
abl	ablative
acc	accusative
ADD TO	a feature of verb required to make it terminative
ant	anterior
AOM	Agent-oriented modality
ARG	argument
asp	aspect
ass	associative marker
assreal	assertive realis
attr	attributive
ben	benefactive marker
cl	classifier
compl	completive
cont	Continuative
contr	controller
cop	copula
count	counter
dat	dative
def	definite
deic	deictic marker
deM	deontic modality
des	destructive suffix
dir	directional marker
dyM	dynamic modality
emp	emphatic marker
erg	ergative
E-time	event time
evd	evidential marker
f	feminine
fut	future
gen	genitive
hh	high-honorific
imp	imperative
inf	infinitive
ins	instrumental
irr	irrealis
loc	locative
m	masculine

MOD	modality
man	manner
mh	mid-honorific
neg	negative
nf	non-feminine
nh	non-honorific
nom	nominalizer
npt	non-past time reference marker
PROP	proposition
pl	plural
poss	possessive
POSS	possibility
PRED	predicate
prog	progressive
pt	past time reference marker
real	realis
R-time	reference time
S	sentence
s	singular
seqC	sequential converb
simC	simultaneous converb
SOM	speaker-oriented modality
SQA	specified quantity of A
S-time	speech time
TEMP	temporal reference
t	tense
TAM	tense, aspect and modality