

## Problems of Interpreting Maithili Complex Predicates in English

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### Abstract

*Every language has its own uniqueness and lets its users develop any other language in the way their first/mother one has been structured and conceptualized. The present paper attempts to make the English teachers teaching English in Maithili ecology be aware of expressing multi word concepts (complex predicates) of Maithili in English, which has been a common problem for school and campus level students as well. Both types of data sources (primary and secondary) were used, viz. the secondary for identifying the complex predicates and the primary for finding out the difficulties faced by the learners for expressing the Maithili CP concepts in English. The result shows that Maithili is very rich by its complex predicates with different types and all levels (school and campus) students having Maithili as their mother language are found to be expressing the CPs in the same way even in English which happens to be pragmatically unacceptable. The concept of Maithili CPs cannot be expressed in the multi word way but in a single word way. Finally some pedagogical implications are also suggested for handling such problems and carrying out the further researches in the respective field.*

**Keywords:** *Multi-word, complex predicate, teaching ecology, bleached concept*

### 1. Introduction

Teaching English in Nepalese ecology also needs to be shifted towards localised views. Learners, practitioners, and other English sharers have started perceiving English through their mother languages, as also fully supported by the current cultural

approaches for empowering EFL. Every language has its own uniqueness and the users have framed it in a fixed architect at constituent structure. Researchers have claimed that whatever language(s) a person is acquiring after his/her first language, s/he is found to apply similar conceptualizing ways for expressing the

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ideas in the performance. It means the first language idea to word association pattern happens to be followed that causes difficulty for non-English learners to learn English in English pragmatic styles. So, the concerned practitioners involved in sharing English in Maithili ecology should be aware of expressing multi word concepts (complex predicates) of Maithili in English, which has been a common problem for school and campus level students as well.

Semantics is expressed in different ways in different languages of the world. However, this could be covered within the three sense making paradigms: one lexical unit one semantic concept, two lexical units one semantic unit and one lexical unit two semantic units. The second paradigm is also known as the inflation of semantic unit, i.e., one semantic conceptual unit into more than one lexical unit which is the domain of complex word formation in different languages. The South Indian languages are massively characterized with the fact that two (more than two) lexical units together form a single semantic unit, hence has been an interest of research for many linguists.

Maithili is a New Indo-Aryan (NIA) language spoken by about 30 million people mainly residing in the south-eastern part of Nepal, Terai region and in the northern part of Indian State of Bihar.

This language has also been alternatively called *Mithilaa Bhaakhaa*, *Tirhutiyaa*, *Dehaati*, *Thethi*, *Avahata* or *Apabhramsa* (Yadava, 2001). Maithili is the mother tongue of 11.67% of the total population of Nepal and has been the second widely spoken language used by 3,092,530 (CBS, 2011: the Government of Nepal). Today Maithili is a highly sophisticated language with an impressive literature (Yadav, 2011, p. 3).

The predicate in the complex predicates consists of more than one semantic heads but one being bleached in its meaning. The combination of two semantic heads which constitute of a verbal or non-verbal element (noun, adjective and adverb) as a host and the other as a verbal element which is delexicalized/grammaticalized being semantically bleached and so called a light verb is complex predicate. So, complex predicates are in the forms of N/ADJ/ADV/V + V where the second V acts as a light verb which determines the semantic and some syntactic features of the sentences. In the construction of complex verbs, two or more semantic features or co-occurrence of two or more lexical items combine together in which one of the lexical items acts as 'polar' (Hook, 1975) and other items are combined as a single unit. The second item, then, acts as '*explicator*' (Masica, 1976) or '*vector*' (Hook, 1975) or '*light verb*' (Jespersen, 1965; Mohanan, 1994 & Butt, 1995 in Butt, 2010) in case of

compound verb, on the other hand, one of the lexical items acts as ‘nominal host’ or ‘adjectival host’ and other items are combined as one then act as ‘*light verb*’ (Mohan, 1994 & Butt, 1994), in the case of conjunct verb. A compound verb is a complex verbal unit which consists of a sequence of two verb stems (i.e.,  $V_1 + V_2$ ) but functions as a single simple verb (Yadav, 1996, p. 191).

In the course of learning and teaching English, it has been realized that the learners are developing their concepts in the target language through their mother tongue or the language acquired earlier well. This requires English teachers to be multilingual, who can better understand sense expression system of students’ native language as well. Regarding this fact, Kirkpatrick suggested that All English language teachers should be multilingual and multicultural and ideally know the language of their students and understand the educational, social and cultural contexts in which they are working (2007, p. 32). At present, different theories are advocating that first language should not be over looked since the learners see or comprehend a second language through the concept of their first language. So, while teaching a foreign language, a good teacher should be aware of the fact about the way in which the semantic units are structured in both languages. Many research works have focused on teaching English

realizing the semantic paradigm of the first language. However, the semantic concept construction of English is different from the first language, as in the case of complex predicates of Maithili. In Maithili CPs, two lexical units are combined together to form a single sense and this type of concept is found to be expressed in the same way even in English which happens to be pragmatically erroneous cases. Vernacular practices and local knowledge are under-represented in both ELT theories and language teacher education (Tan, 2014, p. 397). So the present paper aims to find out how the Maithili background learners learning English in secondary level while expressing their complex predicate concepts in English and also provide some pedagogical implications for the related teachers who are supposed to make their students be aware of the way of sense making by the CPs of Maithili in English.

There are some valuable studies in the field of Maithili verb complexity giving more focus on compound verbs, converbs, sequential verbs and verbs with other non-verbal elements; Jha (1979), Singh (1979), Yadav (1996), Yadav (2004), Yadava (2006), Yadav (2011), and Yadav (2019). But they are not talking about the problems such constructions are causing while interpreting them in English.

## 2. Methodology

The researcher collected the data from the twenty students of class eleven and twelve from Major English group (randomly selected) of J S Murarka Secondary School Lahan. They were asked (in the written form) to convert/interpret the multi words (also called complex predicates) used in sentences of Maithili into English. He made a list of twenty sentences in Maithili which consisted of the complex predicates collected from the written texts and from his own as well. Thus, he applied the both types of data sources (primary and secondary).

## 3. Results

The researcher asked the following sentences of Maithili to the 20 selected students individually using the Debnagri script and managed 30 minutes. All the sentences were orally read for them twice in the group without explaining their semantic/pragmatic values. They were asked for their interpretation on their own way and to note what they meant in English in the Roman script. These Maithili sentences are here partially interlinearized using the IPA symbols based on Yadav (1996) and Yadava (1999).

**Table no. 1: Data showing the Maithili CP sentences**

1.	<i>john sima-kə cithi likh de-l-əith</i>
	John wrote a letter for Sima.
2.	<i>o hām-ra kitab pāirh de-l-əith</i>
	He read a book for me.
3.	<i>didi kəpɔ̃ a dhoi le-l-khinh</i>
	The sister washed the cloth.’
4.	<i>hām bā suri bāja lai-it ch-əi</i>
	I play flute (probably not so well).
5.	<i>khet-mə bairh ge-l</i>
	It flooded in the field.
6.	<i>əha-kə mən-me sāñka uḥəl ho-et</i>
	You might have doubt in your mind.
7.	<i>ram-kə banta a-el</i>
	Ram vomited.
8.	<i>ram-kə katha yad a-el</i>
	Ram remembered the story.
9.	<i>bidyarthi iskul-sə ɽap kəs-l-ək</i>
	The student ran away from school.
10.	<i>bāca mai-kə bat kaḥ-l-ək</i>
	The child disobeyed his mother.
11.	<i>hunka ris uḥ-l-ah</i>
	He got angry.
12.	<i>binod master-sə piṭai khe-l-ək</i>
	Binod got beating from a teacher.
13.	<i>o səmpəti-ke pol khol-l-əith</i>
	He disclosed the property.
14.	<i>neta-səb bhau khoj-l-ah</i>
	The leaders gave more priority on themselves.
15.	<i>hām cup ləg-l-əūh</i>
	I became silent.
16.	<i>kəpra-me dag pər-əl</i>
	There was spot on cloth.
17.	<i>ləḍaki nəkal par-t-ai</i>
	This girl will behave artificially.
18.	<i>ram sathi-kə sakchi bāis-l-əith</i>
	Ram fasted.
19.	<i>o gəp mar-l-əith</i>
	S/he embraced me.
20.	<i>hām binod-kə dhyan rakh-l-əun</i>
	‘I took care of Biod.

The collected data show that there are only twelve different types of verbs or predicates (light verbs) which are combined with other twenty verbs (polar verbs) in the twenty sentences. Now each verb is being treated separately showing how the learners interpreted such verb forms. The first verb found with the complex construction is 'de' which

means 'give' in English, and others are presented in the table below in the similar way: meaning in English, what they have interpreted and how many of the total students' interpretation is unaccepted for every complex predicate while they were being asked to express such constructions of Maithili in English.

**Table no. 2: Details of interpreted Maithili CPs by students**

SN	Maithili CPs	Meaning in English	Interpreted by students	Total students
1.	<i>likh de</i>	write (for sb)	write and give	16
2.	<i>pəirh de</i>	read (for sb)	read and give	18
3.	<i>dhoi le</i>	wash (for ownself)	wash took	16
4.	<i>bəja lai</i>	play (for ownself)	play took	15
5.	<i>bairh ge-l</i>	Flooded	flood went	19
6.	<i>sənka uthəl</i>	Doubted	doubt sarose/stood	15
7.	<i>banta a-el</i>	Vomited	vomit came	19
8.	<i>yad a-el</i>	Remembered	memory came	16
9.	<i>ṭap kəs</i>	run away	walk tied	20
10.	<i>bat kaṭ</i>	Interrupted	talk cross	15
11.	<i>ris uṭh</i>	got angry	angry arose	10
12.	<i>pitai khe</i>	got bitten	beating ate	19
13.	<i>pol khol</i>	disclosed secrecy	secrecy opened	16
14.	<i>bhau khoj</i>	Boasted	value searched	20
15.	<i>cup ləg</i>	become silent	silent stand	16
16.	<i>dag pər</i>	Spotted	spot fall	15
17.	<i>nəkəl par</i>	Imitated	copy make	19
18.	<i>sakchi bəis</i>	Witnessed	witness sit	20
19.	<i>gəp mar</i>	talked unnecessary	talk kill	16
20.	<i>dhyān rakh</i>	paid attention	attention keep	19

From the table tabled above, it is clear that the complex predicates listed in no. 1, 3, 8, 13, 15 and 19 respectively were interpreted by the sixteen students

which are unacceptable pragmatically in English. Similarly, 5 different CPs numbering with 5, 6, 12, 17, and 20 were converted into English in unaccepted

way by the nineteen students, the CPs of no. 4, 6, 10 and 16 were expressed in the wrong pragmatic value by the fifteen students, twenty in twenty students got wrong English interpretation of the 9th, 14th & 18th CPs, only the second CP by the eighteen students and the 11th CP

by the ten students respectively. Thus, the data about the total CPs, viz. twenty can be analysed from the six groups based on the number of the students committed wrong interpretation of such CPs respectively.

### **Discussion and interpretation**

The study simply outlines a teaching-learning model that builds on a dynamic, situated, multimodal and semiotic understanding of language, which shows the possible roles that LL can play in TL education. While learning and teaching a new language, i.e., English, two of the different aspects of language are very core ones to be considered well. They are lexical and semantic. The result analysed above about the interpretation made by the twenty students of +2 level for the multi word constructions, especially Maithili complex predicates, obviously indicates that the pragmatic values are intertwined with the individual word of the mother language in learning L2. That is, they happened to be unable to interpret their concept in English and came to express such multi word constructions

in the similar way even in English which becomes unacceptable pragmatically. As in the case of the twenty students who made their wrong interpretation of Maithili CPs in English, it is found that the maximum of them have applied the multi word system of English as well to convert their interpretation of such Maithili CPs. In the case of CPs listed in no. 9, 14 and 18 respectively, even all students misinterpreted. There is only one case, i.e., the case of no. 11, the ten students did not interpret wrongly. The situation shows that the system of the L1 plays pivotal place in handling a new language and the pragmatic/semantic correlation with the word string has been already shaped through their L1 system which happens to be applied even for other language dealing. This is what the Maithili speakers learning English are facing the problem in their daily life.

### **Conclusion**

Complex predicates are defined as the combination of two semantic heads consisting of a verbal or non-verbal element (noun, adjective and adverb) as a host (first part) and the other as a verbal element (second part) which is delexicalized/grammaticalized being semantically bleached and so called a light verb. Regarding the problem being faced by the Maithili speakers expressing/interpreting complex predicate constructions of their L1 (Maithili) in

English, the researcher came to conclude from the 20 selected students of +2 level that they happened to be unable to interpret their concept in English pragmatically and came to express such multi word constructions in the similar way even in English which becomes unacceptable. It indicates that the system of the L1 plays pivotal place for conceptualizing a multi word having a single semantic unit as they come to apply even in English which is one to one word conceptualizing language in this regard, not like Maithili which is many to single conceptualizing language regarding CP constructions. Such constructions of Maithili are treated carefully for expressing in English.

### **Pedagogical implication**

Since the speakers of every language are already schematized with the fixed way of expressing their ideas through their language word system, the English teachers involved in teaching English in Maithili setting are often facing problems, especially when (learners) need to express their thoughts which they have framed through the multi word system (such as complex predicate constructions) in English. So, the concerned teachers are supposed to be careful about the word system of Maithili and English. Such teachers must be aware of the ways of expressing single ideas through multi word system in Maithili which is not generally similar in English. Finally,

this study also contributes to the book writers for the pedagogical purpose and encourages further research that extends our understanding of Maithili language (and language learning/teaching) in ways that enable and empower researchers and teachers to make a difference in their communities and in their students' lives

### **Abbreviations**

ADJ	Adjective
ADV	Adverb
CP	Complex predicate
EFL	English as foreign language
L1	First language
IPA	International phonetic alphabets
ML	Maithili learner
MW	Multi word
N	Noun
NIL	New Indo-Languages

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