A Holistic Approach to the Fine Art of Grammar Writing
The Dallas Manifesto

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Each language is a conceptual universe unto itself and should be described in its own terms. This means that you have to get to know the language well. The often heard claim that one has to be a native speaker with native intuitions about the language in order to describe a language well is demonstrably false. The best and most thorough grammars of English were not written by native speakers of English, but by foreigners, most notably by the great Danish scholar Otto Jespersen (1909, 1914, 1927, 1931, 1940, 1942, 1949; 1933) and a number of Dutch scholars, i.e. Kruisinga (1911a, 1991b, 1911c), Zandvoort (1948 [1945]), Visser (1963, 1966, 1969, 1973). The grammars of Jespersen, Kruisinga and Zandvoort have seen many editions and reprints.[1]

These linguists were in a position to acquire a perfect mastery of English and gain unique insights into the workings of the language which elude most speakers of English. Why this should be so is that the most fascinating phenomena in English are foibles of the language so deeply ingrained in the minds of native speakers that they tend to escape their notice. Even when a native speaker of English is confronted with these grammatical peculiarities, he often tends to take them for granted because it is only from the vantage point of the closely related but quite different languages Danish and Dutch that it becomes obvious what is so remarkable about English. How can we ever hope to really understand what is special about a lan-

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guage if we cannot adopt such a perspective and if we have no other languages with which to make insightful comparisons?

In this manifesto, I am going to try to tell you what I think a descriptive analytical grammar should be like. This also involves telling you how *not* to do a linguistic description in order to point out pitfalls that should be avoided and to show you how and where things can go wrong. Descriptive inadequacy can stem from different causes. I shall also give more than one example of how I think a description can be made to be most insightful and do the greatest justice to the language under investigation.

Linguistic belief systems and distorting preconceptions

The first lesson to learn is not to be misled by labels. Linguistic labels are beliefs, and their workings in the mind of a linguist are insidious. Many linguists are unaware of the fact that they are silent believers.

What do we mean when we ask a question like: 'Does this language have a perfect?' We are essentially asking whether there is some verbal form, particle or pattern of word ordering in that language to which we can apply the label 'perfect'. So, what would our criteria be for sticking this label onto a category in the given language? What precisely do we mean by 'perfect'? In much recent typological literature, we see the term either implicitly or explicitly being compared or equated with the English present perfect and characterised as denoting the present result of a past event or as denoting an event in the past, especially the recent past, with enduring relevance at the moment of utterance. Well, is this an accurate and adequate characterisation of the meaning of the English present perfect? If so, is there any reason to assume that precisely the same category should exist in other languages? Is the present perfect even constant in meaning across all varieties of modern English?

A question asked by typologists like 'Does this language have a perfect?' is misbegotten. The question is disqualified by its own presuppositions. However, can we change these presuppositions into a hypothesis? If so, the hypothesis would be something like: There is such a thing as a perfect, and this category of meaning gets expressed in different ways in different languages. Whether we like it or not, this is the working hypothesis on the basis of which we are operating when we go from language to language wielding labels like 'perfect' to stick onto grammatical categories. We do not have to stray far from the British Isles to test this hypothesis. We only have to look at genetically closely related languages which are spoken in geographically and culturally close language communities. Here we already see that the formally analogous tenses in Dutch and German do not have the same meanings as their English counterpart. In Dutch it is possible to say both:

> Ik zag hem gisteren.
> Ik heb hem gisteren gezien.

In English only one of the formally analogous sentences yields an acceptable reading:

> I saw him yesterday.
> *I have seen him yesterday.

The reason for this difference lies in the grammatical meaning of the English present perfect tense which depicts a situation in the present that has resulted from an event which has taken place in the past. The grammatical meaning of a present situation clashes with the meaning of the adverb 'yesterday' which places the situation at a definite point in the past. On the other hand, the English perfect goes

fine with a temporally vague adverb, as in 'I have seen him recently'.

The implication of this type of difference is that comparable utterances such as:

> Ich war in Berlin.
> I have been to Berlin.
> Ik ben in Berlijn geweest.

are semantically non-equivalent. Each of these three utterances in three contiguous and closely related Germanic languages has different temporal and aspectual implications because the meanings of the tenses in German, English and Dutch are not the same. Even formally analogous tenses do not correspond in meaning between geographically and genetically closely related languages. This non-equivalence has been observed for centuries by linguists and lay people alike as they crossed the North Sea, and this non-equivalence extends beyond the present perfect. Almost all analogous grammatical categories mean something different, including even the definite and indefinite articles. On the lexical level too, a Dutch word like *water* does not precisely mean what its English translation 'water' means, and vice versa. A text and its translation are not semantically equivalent. We sometimes ignore what stares us in the face. The myriads of meanings in these three contiguous Teutonic language communities are different and skewed with respect to each other in ways that can be described and documented. These three languages embody quite different grammatically encoded conceptual universes.

So when we ask 'Does this language have a perfect?', we presume too much by our logically flawed question. In fact, there is no such thing as a perfect. There are no language-independent categories of meaning. There is no such thing as tense or aspect. These are just labels which in most cases do not even represent defensible

working hypotheses, yet lead a life of their own as ill-defined notions in the minds of linguists. The term *tense,* ultimately from Latin *tempus* 'time', a translation of Greek χϱόνος 'time', is an originally less technical, more open-ended term which has its roots in Græco-Roman antiquity. The term *aspect* was only introduced in the second half of the 19th century,[2] over half a century after the terms 'imperfective' and 'perfective' had been coined in order to contrast the Slavic opposition with the Romance imperfect vs. perfect distinction. The term *evidential* was first coined by Jakobson in the year I was born as 'a tentative label for the verbal category which takes into account three events — the narrated event, the speech event and the narrated speech event, namely the alleged source of information about the narrated event' (1957: 4). The term *evidential* already has to compete with the newer coinage *epistemic*.

   Typologists might argue that there are similarities between, say, perfect categories in different languages, and we would have to counter by saying that it would be queer indeed if we were not to find such similarities. How did such categories get labelled 'perfect' in the first place, and who did the labelling? Typology is a superficial science. Through its juggling with labels, each of which is an ill-defined working hypothesis, some of the findings of language typological studies are no more than the tautologous outcomes of circular reasoning. Moreover, since such hypotheses are often implicit rather than explicit, the linguist is unlikely to test or challenge the hypothesis. The practice of applying linguistic labels onto categories in languages is a bit like naming newly discovered territories New Amsterdam,[3] the New Netherlands or Nova Belgia,[4] New Holland,[5]

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[2] Elsewhere I have discussed the origin of the term 'aspect' and the evolution of its usage (van Driem 2001: 643-663)
[3] now New York City.
[4] now the states of New York and New Jersey.
[5] now Australia.

Batavia[6] or New Zealand, except that we would never confuse these
newly found territories with the areas in the Low Countries after
which they were named. We would not be misled into thinking that
there was anything but historical accident which united the old and
the new. In linguistics and language typology, however, we can easi-
ly be seduced into thinking that we have a genuine working hypo-
thesis and that there truly exist transcendent, metalinguistic categor-
ies like 'perfect', 'aspect' or 'tense' built into the mind of man. In
fact, this is not so.

There is no such thing as 'perfect', but in our brains there does
exist an empirically demonstrable category of meaning which is the
English present perfect. In the brains of speakers of standard Dutch
there exists an empirically demonstrable category of meaning called
the *voltooid tegenwoordige tijd,* formally analogous to but quite
different in meaning from the English present perfect. In the brains
of speakers of Latin there existed an empirically demonstrable cate-
gory of meaning which Marcus Terentius Varro in the first century
AD labelled *perfectum*. This and other of his labels were adopted in
the Middle Ages for tense categories in vernacular languages of
Europe, which is how the English 'perfect' got its name. However,
the English perfect does not have the same meaning that the Latin
perfectum had. In fact, the *perfectum* in the formal Latin of Quintus
Ennius (239-169 BC) or in the decidedly more colloquial register of
his contemporary Titus Maccius Plautus (254-184 BC) appears to
have meant something somewhat different from the *perfectum* in the
writings of Gregory of Tours, alias Georgius Florentius (538-593
AD), despite the emulation by later writers of earlier, particularly
Ciceronian literary models (cf. Löfstedt 1928, 1933). Although Bul-
garian too has a tense labelled 'perfect', the language arguably has

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6 Latin for 'Holland', now Jakarta.

no grammatical category of meaning equivalent to the Latin *perfectum* or the English perfect (cf. Guentchéva 1990).

This is not to say that we must not use traditional terms. I very much advocate respect for tradition and the conservative use of linguistic terminology, but we must be knowledgeable of the historical development of a terminological tradition. It is fine to call a verbal tense in Kobon 'perfect', but we must keep in mind that, whilst the Kobon perfect is a real category of meaning which exists in the brains of Kobon speakers, a metalinguistic perfect category does not exist. What exists is merely a tradition of sticking labels onto newly investigated language phenomena which remind us of grammatical categories in languages with which we were already familiar. The ultimate challenge of the linguist then is to describe not just the formal manifestations, i.e. the morphology and morphosyntax and concomitant morphophonological regularities, of the category labelled 'perfect' in a language like Kobon. The greater challenge is to characterise its meaning. This is done by means of discovery procedures involving the use of minimal pairs and contrastive examples. Minimal pairs do not just have to be limited to the phonological, like English *gnat* [næt] vs. *net* [nɛt], illustrating the phonemic distinction between the English vowels /æ/ and /ɛ/. Minimal pairs can also be syntactic or morphological. Isolating precisely what the difference in meaning is in such pairs allows us to tap into the native speakers' introspections and intuitions.

An example is the two verbs 'to be' in Nepali हुनु *hunu* and छनु *chanu*. The verb हुनु *hunu* identifies the subject as, or in terms, of the predicate. The verb छनु *chanu* is used with a locational or an adjectival predicate. The verb छनु *chanu* can also be used in an existential sense, just to express the existence, presence or availability of the subject. Whereas the verb हुन *hunu* identifies, the verb छनु *chanu* characterises. No comparable distinction in meaning exists in Hindi or Urdu. It is instructive for our purposes to look at a shortcoming in

the Nepali textbook written by David Matthews, formerly senior lecturer of Urdu at the School of Oriental and African Studies. After providing a confusing, partially incorrect explanation of the difference in meaning between the two Nepali copulas, Matthews observes that there are cases where either copula can be used and then goes on to claim that in such cases the choice is an ambivalent one and does not really seem to make any difference in meaning.

To the contrary, these are the very cases for which you as grammar writers should be looking because they furnish us with the greatest insight. The difference in meaning between them, however subtle, is the most indicative and instructive. We need merely appreciate the difference in meaning in one such minimal pair to understand the distinction between the meanings of the two Nepali copulas. Whereas the Nepali utterance रातो छ *rāto cha* translates satisfactorily into English as 'it is red', the less usual but entirely acceptable phrase रातो हो *rāto ho* can be translated into English in a number of various ways, viz. 'It is the case that it is red', 'It is a red one', 'It is the red one', 'It is red [that I have in mind]', 'It is red [that I am talking about]'. Whereas the use of छ *cha* in the first sentence is with a straightforward adjectival attribute, the use of हो *ho* in the second establishes the identity of the subject. This is why it only makes sense to use the form हो *ho* with a possessive pronoun, as in मेरो हो *mero ho* 'it's mine'. So, it turns out that the difference in meaning is easy to understand, once you hit the nail on the head, but it easy to see how this difference could elude an observer who has not gained an adequate mastery of the language.

Contrastive examples serve as indispensable tools in pinpointing a difference in meaning. There is no substitute for learning a language well enough to be able to feel out the meanings and the differences between the meanings of the grammatical and lexical categories. Contrastive studies between related languages are insightful for the same reason and likewise illustrate the potential dan-

gers of labels. The Russian grammatical category bearing the label 'perfective' is not equivalent in meaning to the formally analogous grammatical category in Czech which likewise bears the name 'perfective'. The two categories of verbal aspect are essentially different in meaning, despite their similarity in meaning. The differences in meaning between what is called 'aspect' in Czech and Russian have been fruitfully studied, e.g. Mathesius (1947), Stunová (1986, 1988, 1991, 1993). In fact, the 'aspect' distinction is not quite the same in any two distinct Slavic languages. This underscores the fact that there is no such thing as aspect as such. On the other hand, there does exist such a thing as Czech aspect, and there exists such a thing as the Russian aspect distinction. Both Czech aspect and Russian aspect are empirically demonstrable categories of meaning in the brains of the members of two distinct speech communities. The issue here is not a terminological one. There is nothing wrong with labelling the perfective verbal category in Czech 'perfective' though it differs in meaning from the Russian perfective. In fact, there is much to be said for conservatism in the use of linguistic terminology.

Peril lurks where notional categories such as 'perfect' or 'perfective' begin to lead a life of their own in the mind of the linguist. This leads to a certain brand of linguistics where it becomes acceptable to pose preposterous questions in uncannily pretentious formulations such as 'How is perfectivity expressed in languages of the world?'. An abstracted notion of 'perfectivity' based on what a linguist thinks he has seen in two or more languages get generalised in such a way as to be either trivial, inaccurate or descriptively inadequate for most languages. Linguists must be on guard against believing in the metalinguistic reality of putative categories of grammatical meaning, for many language typologists are closet Platonic idealists. One alternative would be to coin a novel term for each grammatical category in each and every language, enlisting the aid

of new neutral labels such as 'mauve' or 'burnt sepia' rather than re-cycling old terms like 'progressive' or 'continuous', but this would be another extreme.

I would urge people to resist the temptation of going overboard and becoming anti-traditionalist coiners of linguistic neologisms. There is no gain in adopting a new vague blanket term which lumps together disparate, superficially similar phenomena or in just chang-ing terminology for its own sake. Often the new labels are no better than the conventional ones they were designed to replace. It is illu-minating and worthwhile to pinpoint and describe the meaning of the Limbu passive or the meaning of the Japanese passive. It is a meaningless, however, to plead that the Limbu passive is really an 'antipassive' or that it is actually a 'true passive' without providing a substantive account of the meaning of the grammatical category and of the morphological and syntactic means used to express it. Both the Japanese passive and the Limbu passive represent categories of meaning which differ fundamentally both from each other as well as from the invariant meaning of the English passive. Yet the advan-tage of any conventional label is that it has a tradition of application to a more or less well-defined set of analogous, albeit non-equi-valent grammatical categories. The field linguist and grammar writer will anticipate that each grammatical category has its own language-specific meaning as long as he or she is well-versed enough to know that labels such as 'present' or 'perfect' have traditionally been ap-plied to semantically non-equivalent and sometimes even dissimilar grammatical categories of meaning.

Just like conventional terminology, most new-fangled terms are attempts to be descriptive. To capture the sense of grammatical phe-nomena found in the verbal systems of modern Bodish languages, Tournadre propagates new terms such as 'inferential', 'allocentric', 'ego-volitional', 'ego-centripetal', 'ego-receptive', 'sensorial', as well as advocating coinages of Claude Hagège such as 'egophoric'

and 'logophoric' (Tournadre and Konchok Jiatso 2001). Some of these neologisms may stand the test of time, but all these descriptive labels by themselves are feeble, inadequate attempts at describing the meaning of a grammatical category in a language. Moreover, grammatical categories bearing like labels in each distinct Bodish language demonstrably differ in meaning. Each dialect merits its own description. Linguistic labels and terms merely represent notions which have been constructed in the brains of just a few linguists and so exist merely as labels. Even conventional general terms like 'tense', 'perfect', 'aspect' or 'perfective' do not denote grammatical categories in any human language, let alone describe or explain their meanings. The use of a label, whether traditional or innovative, does not absolve the linguist of the duty of describing the meanings of the grammatical categories to which he has chosen to affix such a label. The challenge remains to characterise the invariant meaning, the language-specific *Gesamtbedeutung* of a grammatical category, whatever label you choose to apply to it. The field linguist and grammar writer must get to know a language very well in order to meet this serious challenge, but it is not an impossible task. The success of the assignment requires patience, sensitivity and freeing one's mind of implicit beliefs in the guise of labels and theories.

An instructive case is the inflated discussion currently raging about serial verb constructions and event conceptualisation in Austronesian linguistics. Two French linguists pointed out at the 9th International Conference on Austronesian Linguistics at Canberra in January 2002 that the entire discussion is mystifying, since the very notion *event* does not translate into French. How can one decide what does and what does not constitute an event in various Austronesian languages when the English notion does not even translate satisfactorily into French, let alone that the concept *event* be a meaningful notion to speakers of an Austronesian language in the sense

that anglophone linguists have been using the term in their discourses? Whether or not the speakers of an Austronesian language conceptualise an 'event', which ostensibly plays a role in the way serial verb constructions operate, appears in many cases to be something that the linguist decides. So who or what is doing the interpreting and conceptualising, the grammar of Austronesian languages or the linguists who study them?

The conservative use of traditional terms, wherever appropriate, makes sense because it tells us that we are dealing with a similar or formally analogous category. Freedom of the tyranny of a label is gained by becoming knowledgeable of the history of the linguistic tradition in question, not by blind rebellion. The use of linguistic labels is only devoid of danger if we are constantly aware that they are nothing more than labels. Freedom from trendy linguistic theories is attained by not allowing yourself to become a fashion victim. Never succumb to linguistic fashion. You can entertain a theory, but do not 'convert' to a theory or give up the right to change your mind. Again, this is accomplished by becoming knowledgeable about the history of thinking about language. Most generative linguists would never have become disciples of Noam Chomsky if they had been more knowledgeable about linguistics in general and about the sophisticated and profound thinking of earlier linguists. The failure of the now increasingly defunct 'generative revolution' in linguistics was to a great extent due to its denial of the past.

Each language deserves a comprehensive grammar and extensive documentation of its lexicon. A language should not be used serendipitously as an intellectual playground to 'test' the linguist's obsession of the moment or merely to serve as a source of examples for some already dated or quickly fading fashionable formalism such as 'optimality theory' or 'parametrics', e.g. Holmer (1996). Such works have a limited shelf life and are of little lasting value. Nine out of the ten primary branches of the Austronesian language family

are represented exclusively by the native languages of Formosa. Fifteen Formosan languages survive, some of which are represented by several different dialects. All of these languages are threatened with imminent extinction, and none of these has been documented in the shape of a comprehensive grammar with extensive documentation of its lexicon. Many a scholar in Taiwan has dabbled in phonetic features or superficial syntactic phenomena of a particular Formosan language. Yet anything less than providing in-depth grammatical analyses and comprehensive lexical documentation of each of these fifteen Austronesian languages at this point in history will constitute a heinous form of linguistic negligence for which both future generations and the present generation of scholars will not forgive today's linguists and research institutions.

It would be risible if an archaeologist were to excavate a site and decide, for example, just to look for potsherds because the archaeologist in question happened to indulge an interest in the prehistory of ceramic cultures. This archaeologist would discard bones, stone implements, artefacts of early metallurgy and would neglect to use flotation techniques to recover grains of early cultivars from the site. Of course, this would strike us as ludicrous, and fortunately archaeologists do not in fact work that way. Sites are excavated thoroughly. Careful stratigraphies are done. Flotation techniques are used. All recoverable items are meticulously cleaned, preserved, catalogued and described. Dendrochronologically calibrated radiocarbon datings are ascertained. A comprehensive study and analysis of the site is conventional practice. Yet most linguists indulge in frivolous exercises very much like the wanton obsession of our imaginary archaeologist. Examples are picked out serendipitously from poorly documented languages to argue some abstruse point and buttress some formalist framework. In fact, it is fair to say that at this point in the history of the field much work conducted by professional linguists is either bogus, utterly useless or both. The principal task of

linguists is to provide comprehensive grammatical descriptions of languages and extensive documentation of their lexicons.

Some linguists delight in operating with preconceived 'pragmatic' and 'syntactic' roles. These linguists fall prey to *hineininterpretieren* because they are inclined to find manifestations in any given language of the constructs which they have devised. Many linguistic treatises festooned with abstruse verbiage suffer from this approach, as if Ferdinand de Sausssure had never pointed out that a difference in form corresponds to a difference in meaning, whether this be on the phonological, morphological or syntactic level or the level of information structure. Worst of all from a descriptive point of view, such an approach will not capture the precise language-specific grammatical meanings in unknown or poorly documented languages that have yet to be described. Likewise, when a linguist says that a certain 'tense' or 'aspect' in a given language has a certain 'semantic value', this linguist is implicitly professing a belief in the existence of metaphysical or instinctive semantic values which can be turned on or off in a human brain, depending on the way a certain language happens to parse reality into conceptual chunks. It is not that I am averse to the expression 'semantic value', but what we mean to say when we use this term is simply that a certain grammatical category in a given language means something, that is, has a certain meaning. Well, how do we ascertain what it means, and, having done so, how do we encapsulate and represent this meaning in an intelligible format that can be communicated to others?

There are bilinguals and polyglots who forever make mistakes in, say, tense, number, or aspect in their new language because of interference from the meanings of the grammatical categories of their native language. Yet there are also bilinguals and polyglots who acquire a perfect mastery of their new language and make no more errors than do native speakers, and more importantly, even

make the same type of 'errors' as native speakers. A good example is Anna Wierzbicka, a Polish linguist who works at Australian National University in Canberra. She is not a native speaker of English, but she analyses the meanings of words and grammatical categories in English and other languages. If one has the privilege of seeing her in action, it may come to pass that a native speaker of English in the audience raises an objection to a certain analysis given for a certain English meaning. At this point, Wierzbicka will provide a battery of examples of things one can say in English and of things that one does not say in English. The reason that a usage is either felt to be appropriate or to jar native anglophone sensibilities is a direct function of the appropriateness of the resultant combination of meanings. It is wonderful to see the native speaker concede, subsequently agree and finally express delight at having gained a novel insight into a category of meaning which he has in his brain and has always used without thinking twice about it. Well, it is the duty of the linguist to make the native speaker think twice. A good linguist is a good observer with keen analytical skills. Just as aspirant linguists must be trained to become good linguists, field linguists end up training their informants to be linguistically insightful and observant. Some informants are already linguistically highly insightful, and in terms of native intuitions the informant remains ever more insightful than the linguist.

How does a linguist make the native speaker think twice? It cannot be emphasised enough that a linguist must gain profound knowledge and a command of the language under investigation. This would seem to be obvious, but evidently it is not obvious to everyone, and many Chomskyite linguists, for example, make a living by writing up their cogitations and claims about languages about which they know little to nothing, using examples which are often incorrect and usually have been inadequately understood. Therefore, my exhortation to get to know a language really well is not necessarily an

obvious or a superfluous message in the face of the widespread pretence prevalent in the formalist branch of linguistics which its practitioners are fond of styling 'theoretical', albeit without due cause. The sham of generativism has exerted deleterious effects on the science of linguistics, but an altogether different form of make-believe can be highly useful to the field linguist.

Some informants will, if asked for an opinion, reject many grammatical sentences in their own language because they can see no use for the resultant meanings. In such cases, a field linguist should resort to myths, fables, dreams and imagined contexts as tools to ascertain the meanings of grammatical categories when contrastive examples are not readily available. Limbu is a Kiranti language of eastern Nepal with biactantial agreement in transitive verbs for person and number. Once a Limbu informant rejected the idea of conjugating the verb 'to eat' to generate forms other than those showing third person patient agreement. How could you ever use a form which meant 'he ate you', the man reasoned, for how could such a form ever be meaningful? Once the idea of a fable was offered in which children had been devoured by a bear, after which they plotted together on how to escape from inside the bear's stomach, the man at once exclaimed that, well yes, that was perfectly all right, and he provided all the grammatical forms of the verb 'to eat' showing various types of person agreement, such as 'he ate me first', 'he ate you second', etc. The meanings of these conjugated forms suddenly had a plausible context, even if the context was a fable. Yet in this example, we were merely trying to elicit the complete transitive paradigm of a verb. There was no unfamiliar meaning that we were trying to make out. In the second half of this manifesto, the meanings of epistemic categories in Dzongkha are discussed. It will be clear from some of the example sentences that use had to be made of imagined or unusual contexts in order to get to the

bottom of and illustrate the three main epistemic distinctions of Dzongkha grammar.

The way forward to sound and insightful linguistic descriptions is through a descriptive approach akin to Anna Wierzbicka's radical semantic analysis. Grammatical meanings, whatever label they have been given, are not taken for granted until they have been demonstrated. Analytical studies of lexical and grammatical categories of meaning are undertaken on the basis of the way such categories are used and which meanings and senses they can be demonstrated to convey. Even the existence of 'semantic primitives', in which Wierzbicka believes and I do not, is not taken for granted *a priori* in this approach, let alone the universal 'semantic roles' postulated *ex cathedra* by some linguists. If anything, Wierzbicka's comparative studies show that lexically and grammatically expressed meanings differ essentially from language to language, that 'corresponding' words and 'analogous' grammatical categories even in closely related languages are essentially non-equivalent, and that meanings are almost always language-specific, i.e. unique to a given language. Whilst Anna Wierzbicka and Cliff Goddard are optimistic that their investigations approach what Wilhelm von Humboldt called the *Mittelpunkt* of all languages, and that such 'semantic primes' underlie some universal grammar, I interpret their findings as essentially negative (van Driem 2004), and their profound result is of the greatest importance to linguistics and to the study of man.

Labels for grammatical categories often belie the meanings of these categories, but linguists use traditional labels wherever appropriate and adopt a critical attitude to the implied conceptual background rendered explicit by their use of conventional terms. The labels are retained for the sake of argument, whilst the search goes on for the language-specific meanings of formally expressed grammatical categories. In her various studies, Wierzbicka attempts to pinpoint the meaning of grammatical and lexical categories, and to

render these meanings understandable through the use of what she calls a natural semantic metalanguage, which for practical purposes at this juncture in the history of our planet turns out to be simple English (1967, 1988, 1991, 1992). I can urge all of you to read Wierzbicka's work and familiarise yourselves with the approach. Many linguists rarely attempt, let alone succeed at satisfactorily describing the meaning of a particular tense or aspect category in the rigorous fashion developed by Wierzbicka. In her own work, Wierzbicka has tended to study grammatical categories less often and to increasingly devote her efforts to the characterisation of lexical categories of meaning. However in her earlier work she tackled problems as intractable as Polish aspect.

In his grammar of the Yamphu language, Roland Rutgers recently used a Wierzbickian approach to characterise the difference in meaning between the Yamphu indicative mood suffix and the Yamphu factitive mood suffix:

> …speaking of a certain situation x, an indicative expresses the idea *I want you to know this: x happened*. By contrast, a factitive expresses the basic idea *one can know this: x happened*. (1998: 233)

In the second half of this manifesto, I shall show you another way to tackle the same problem. My approach, as you will see, does not employ formulaic wording in a natural semantic metalanguage as developed by Wierzbicka. Rather, my approach follows an old tradition of linguistic description by trying to pinpoint the meanings of grammatical categories by contrasting them with other categories within the same language and relating these grammatical meanings to at least those of the language in which the description or account is being written, e.g. Forsyth (1970). Arguably this approach is also more expedient when writing a grammar. None the less, I continue

to view characterisations of the type developed by Wierzbicka as a highly desirable end result.

This brings me to a related matter, relevant both to the general reception of Anna Wierzbicka in scholarly circles and to the topic of this section, i.e. linguistic belief systems and the distorting effect of the preconceptions which are inherent to them. It will soon become clear why this is relevant to grammar writers. I have heard a few people voicing skepticism about Wierzbicka's analytical approach to semantics where they did not do so before. This new skepticism in some circles stems from the publication of her recent book on Jesus. I can understand why her preoccupation with the gospels has raised a few eyebrows, but it is evident to me that her Christian beliefs do not undermine the rigour and scientific impartiality of her analyses of meaning. Since Wierzbicka's visit to Leiden years ago, I have known that her fascination with the use and meaning of the Aramaic word for 'father', which Jesus must have used in prayer to address God, underlay her attempts to understand the nature of the God that is depicted in Christian tradition. Such autobiographical details are highly interesting because they afford insight into diverse dimensions of the personality of a formidable scholar.

In my view, her devout Roman Catholicism sheds a warm and endearing light on Anna Wierzbicka as does her receptivity to the appeal of the Christian notion of 'a personal God', which differs starkly from the refined, non-theistic framework of Buddhism, for example. In her recent book on Jesus, she has tried her hand at what she calls 'semantic exegesis', applying the rigour of her radical semantic analytical method to the word 'God' in the Bible. The following is the result of Wierzbicka's attempt to capture the meaning of the Biblical concept of 'God' in a formulaic argument structure worded in natural semantic metalanguage.

(a) God is someone (not something)

(b) this someone is someone good
(c) this someone is not someone like people
(d) there isn't anyone else like this someone
(e) this someone exists always
(f) everything exists because this someone wants it to exist
(g) people exist because this someone wants them to exist
(h) this someone exists because this someone exists,
      not because of anything else.
(i) this someone lives (2001: 21)

In her semantic exegesis of the Lord's Prayer, Wierzbicka ascribes significance to the fact that Jesus used the Aramaic word *abba* 'father' without any modifier in addressing God (2001: 226-254). The Christian God, therefore, is someone who is not only biologically male but more specifically someone whose relationship to Jesus Christ, or perhaps even to mankind, is paternal. In today's global supermarket of religions, consumers are free to choose their faith if they require one, but it cannot be denied that Wierzbicka's characterisation of the meaning of the 'God' of Christian tradition is at least a linguistically empirical question, even if the existence of such a supernatural entity is not an empirical issue.

The history of language documentation and grammar writing provides ample evidence that Christians and other traditional religionists arguably make better linguists than linguists who entertain Chomskyite or other formalist linguistic belief systems or metalinguistic typological labels for grammatical categories. From an epistemological point of view, the latter are also essentially religious constructs and do not represent empirical scientific models. The Christian religion need not impede or interfere with impartial and critical observation of linguistic facts, whereas Chomskyite or other formalist linguistic belief systems necessarily impair the partiality of linguistic observations. Yet it is important to observe how belief in a

Christian religious framework could hamper or distort the documentation of meaning in a language description.

I have heard more than one Christian linguist reinterpret the supernatural beings conceived by a non-Christian people in Christian terms. This tendency is perhaps most difficult to repress if the linguist in question is actively engaged in Bible translation and in search of translations for Christian notions such as 'soul', 'forgiveness', 'piety', 'God', 'Beëlzebub', 'the Holy Spirit' and so forth. However, the 'devils' and 'demons' of pagan peoples are not the devils and demons of Judæo-Christian mythology. Failure to resist the temptation of *hineininterpretieren* in this regard not only makes for an anthropologically indefensible caricature of the native eschatology, cosmology and conception of the supernatural of the language community in question, it also falls short of capturing the meanings of words in their language and so fails to document the lexicon of the language accurately. Here again Wierzbicka gives us a good example. You do not have to be an atheist to be able to document the language-specific psychoanatomy and indigenous ethnopsychology of a language community.

Even though Wierzbicka's linguistic investigations form a philosophical part of her quest to understand the Christian God, her analytical acumen saves her from falling into the trap of recognising Judæo-Christian demons and devils in the pantheons of non-Christian cultures. She has even demonstrated that the concept of the 'soul' in the major languages of Western christianised societies is by no means equivalent. How could the concepts vaguely analogous to 'soul', 'astral body' and various manifestations of disincarnate spirits in the tongue of some faraway language community be equivalent to the English concept *soul*, when even English *soul*, German *Seele* and Russian *душа* all demonstrably mean something different? In the same vein, French, Dutch and German all lack a word which precisely translates the English concept *mind*. Instead, these lan-

guages have their own conceptualisation of psychoanatomy. Psychology and spirituality are language-specific, and accurate documentation of the lexicon is part and parcel of writing a grammar.

Not facing up to the challenge

There are many ways of not facing up to the challenge and ending up with an inadequate grammar. The first is simple inadequacy, sometimes compounded either by complacency or by conscious attempts to justify the inadequacy. One example will suffice. Sisaala is one of the Grusi languages of the Gur branch of Niger-Congo. Sisaala is actually a cover term for a language area which covers a large chunk of northwestern Ghana and adjacent portions of Bourkina Fasso, formerly known as Upper Volta. Survey work showed that Sisaala was a chain of dialects, some of which are quite different from each other. It was considered a good idea to treat these dialects as distinct languages, and so the dialect chain was, as it were, chopped up into three distinct languages, an operation which resulted in hybrid names such as Sisaala-Pasaale for the individual languages.

The linguists describing Sisaala-Pasaale chose not to mark tone in their orthography of the language despite the fact that tone fulfils manifestly important functions in all areas of the grammar (McGill, Fembeti and Toupin 1999). In fact, a number of orthographies in Ghana do not mark tone because some linguists maintain in all seriousness that people do not like tone marks, as if this were something to which people could not grow accustomed. Yet in francophone African countries, people regularly mark tone because they are accustomed to using accent marks after the elegant French fashion. This has led to a situation whereby in several parts of Africa there exists for essentially one and the same language a tone-marked orthography on one side of the border and a non-tone-marked ortho-

graphy on the other side. Whether or not attempts are made to justify, mitigate or rationalise ostensibly 'simpler' but phonologically inadequate orthographies, e.g. Cahill (2001), the fact remains that in this day and age non-tone-marked grammars are just not acceptable for a language that has phonological tone.

A romanised orthography must be as simple as possible, *but no simpler than that*. First and foremost, a romanised orthography must be consistent and phonologically adequate. Ideally a new romanised orthography should choose symbols as much as possible in keeping with the traditional phonetic values of letters and letter combinations. The Hànyǔ Pīnyīn system of transcription for Mandarin was in some respects a deliberate, politically motivated attempt to rebel against the latter principle. In South Asia, for example, linguists must take a clear and responsible stand against the inconsistent *ad hoc* scrawlings on the posters that advertise Hindi films. There are literacy proponents today who in all seriousness advocate and propagate clumsy orthographies like *ch* and *chh* for pairs like च *c* and छ *ch*, and उ *c* and ऊ *ch* respectively. In areas traditionally dominated by the British, childish orthographies may appear expedient to literacy advocates in the short run, but such orthographies and the inherently condescending attitude on the part of their proponents which such spellings represent are relicts of an imperialist past and an insult to the intelligence of local peoples. The Malaysian government was right to replace the English digraph *ch* with the streamlined spelling *c* for a single Malay phoneme, and the Indonesian government was right to replace the Dutch orthographies *dj, tj* and *oe* with *j, c* and *u* respectively. I shall resist the temptation to extol the virtues of Roman Dzongkha, a phonological system of transcription of my own design. Instead, I should like to draw attention to the wonderful transliteration system for Hindi developed by Henk Wagenaar, Sangeeta Parikh and Dick Plukker, employed in the excellent Allied Chambers dictionary of Hindi (Wagenaar, Parikh,

Plukker and Veldhuyzen van Zanten 1993). This marvellous work of lexicography is a shining example embodying the remedy against the egregious orthographic vagaries of Hindi film posters.

A second way of ending up with descriptive inadequacy falls well short of producing a grammar marred by a phonologically inadequate orthography or some other structural defect. Instead, some people are satisfied with not producing a grammar at all. I call this form of expediency the syndrome of religious utilitarianism, and it is unmistakably a form of sloth. Let me first state that in principle the aim of translating the Bible need not have any unfavourable effect on linguistic output. In fact, translating the New Testament into some local language, if that happens to be one's prerogative, can go hand in hand with producing a decent grammar of that language. Some wonderful grammars of Tibeto-Burman languages have been produced by people who also happen to be involved in telling others about their own Christian persuasion, e.g. Joseph (1998), Watters (1998), Andvik (1999). Rather, the lack of a decent published grammar of a language which some linguists happen to know well is often the consequence of a utilitarian spirit and an institutional climate that are overdue for revamping.

This issue stems from a working philosophy which, in a nutshell, holds that, once you get the phonology sorted out and agree on the orthography, you do not need to document the grammar because you can then hand over the orthography to a native speaker who ostensibly understands the purport of the Bible, and have him translate the Holy Writ into his native tongue for you. It would carry me too far to explain the many things that are wrong with this approach, even from the strictly utilitarian point of view of producing a decent translation of the New Testament. For the purposes of language documentation, the failure of linguists engaged in Bible translation to produce a sound grammar and make it available in published form to the native language community, the international scholarly com-

munity and posterity represents a missed opportunity, which is often no more than the sad consequence of sloth. Yet this problem is a broader issue. There are other sure-fire ways of not getting the job done which are just as pernicious as religious utilitarianism. Many talented individuals let their efforts get sidetracked and allow other chores to take the place of their actual professional work. Their daily activities are diverted away from the principal task of comprehensively analysing and describing hitherto undescribed languages and extensively documenting their lexicons. They allow themselves to get bogged down in derivative work, institutional support or administrative exercises dictated to them by their local bureaucratic superstructures. These are all manifestations of the same perennial problem.

Easter Island was discovered on Easter Sunday, the 6th of April 1722, by the Dutch navigator Jacob Roggeveen and his crew. Roggeveen found the island inhabited by people speaking a Polynesian language named Rapanui. Their ancestors had discovered the island, obviously much earlier than Roggeveen and his men, between 400 and 500 AD. It took over two centuries after Roggeveen's discovery before a genuinely useful document on the language was published. The description of the Roman Catholic priest Sebastián Englert (1978) is generally hailed as a sound pioneering work. Most of the book is comprised by the dictionary, whereas just 73 pages are devoted to the phonology and grammar. More recently, a description of Rapanui has been published by Veronica Du Feu. This grammar has been criticised for its many elementary mistakes by people knowledgeable of Rapanui, including missionary linguists affiliated, I am told, with the Summer Institute of Linguistics who have lived on Easter Island for over two decades. Yet the question at once arises: Why did these missionary linguists, who have such extensive knowledge of the language, never bother to write a grammar

and share their insights in published form with people who could benefit from their knowledge?[7]

Even in my own Himalayan region, the New Testament was published in Khaling by the Bible Society under the title *Nīnvāmapo Brā*. I happen to know personally that this translation is the product of decades of meticulous linguistic study. There have been significant improvements in each successive version. The translators, deeply pious and good people and conscientious and patient linguists, have striven for a maximally natural translation in terms of grammar, word choice, style and even the use of clitic mood particles. Over the years the translators have discussed and carefully considered numerous alternative Khaling renderings of each and every verse.

Because Khaling happens to be structurally a lot like Dumi, a language on which I published a grammar, I know that it is not an easy matter to describe the complex fixed patterns of verb stem alternation which define the various conjugations, let alone to specify the conjugational type and the diverse stems of each verb in the lexicon. In addition, the morphophonology and verbal agreement morphology of the language are intricate, and have to be disentangled from the complex conjugation-specific patterns of verb stem alternation before you can write up an analysis that presents the grammar of the language in an understandable fashion. In short, a comprehensive grammar of Khaling is a daunting task. Therefore, for various reasons, the people who are really doing the work are not always finishing the job. A change of institutional climate could make a difference, and the Grammar Writing Symposium organised in Dallas in October 2002 is already part of a change.

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[7] After this manifesto was first presented in Dallas in October 2002, two valuable publications on Rapanui were published by Thiesen de Weber (2003) and Weber Christofferson (2003).

So, now I shall address a third pitfall, and for this I must return to the Pacific isolation of Easter Island. In addition to any factual inaccuracies and analytical deficiencies in Du Feu's grammar, a number of shortcomings were built into the work by the predetermined format of the grammar. The analytical categories and lay-out of Du Feu's grammar were dictated to her, not by the native categories and grammatical landscape of the Rapanui language, but by two linguists who had devised the 'Lingua Descriptive Studies Questionnaire' (Comrie and Smith 1977). I cannot urge field linguists strongly enough *not* to use a uniform format like that of the Lingua Descriptive Studies Questionnaire. Such a working outline is not a crutch but an analytical impediment, not a security blanket but a conceptual strait jacket.

Could it ever have been the intent of the two linguists who designed the Lingua Descriptive Studies Questionnaire that a field linguist blindly follow the format outlined in their questionnaire in documenting a hitherto undescribed language? Well, the answer is that evidently even good linguists can sometimes succumb to the temptation of becoming busybodies. The implicating evidence is that in the early 1980s the format of the questionnaire was followed slavishly by an entire series of authors in the Lingua Descriptive Series, which was edited by the same two linguists. It is fair to point out that the two scholars were put up to this by the Dutch linguist Simon Dik, who was the editor of *Lingua* at the time, and that this approach has since proved not to be commercially viable. Yet it is instructive in the Rapanui case to see someone like Du Feu choose to adhere strictly to the outline of this questionnaire as late as 1996. It is therefore timely to warn each and every field linguist to steer clear of such prefab grammar formats.

The most obvious objectionable consequence of such a fixed format jars the aesthetic sensibilities of the reader as soon as he leafs through one of these grammars. The Lingua Descriptive grammars

each contain numerous idiotically numbered sections which in their entirety read like the following:

> *1.14. Other movement processes* Not applicable.
> *1.16.4. Adjective* See 1.16.1.
> *1.16.5. Adposition* Not applicable.
> *3.4.2. Metathesis* Not applicable.
> *3.4.3. Coalescence-split* Not applicable. (Merlan 1981: 50, 53, 53, 211, 211)
> *2.1.2.1.5. Different status of various 3rd person actors?* No.
> *2.1.2.1.6. Different degrees of proximity?* No.
> *2.1.2.1.7. Are there special anaphoric third person pronouns?* No.
> *2.1.2.1.8.1. In contradistinction to the gender of the referent, is the speaker or hearer distinguished?* No. (Olmsted Gary 1982: 78)
> *2.1.1.8.3. General quantifiers* General Quantifiers are described in 1.2.5.2.6.
> *2.1.2.1.1.5.* There are no reduced pronouns.
> *2.1.2.3.1.* There are no special reciprocal pronouns.
> *2.1.3.2.1.3.2.* There are no relative tenses. (Davies 1981: 148, 152, 160, 167)
> *1.6.7. Reflexive relations with noun phrases* Reflexive relations cannot exist within ordinary noun phrases.
> *2.1.2.1.15. Emphatic pronouns* There are no special emphatic pronouns.
> *2.1.2.1.16. Complex pronouns* There are no complex pronouns giving a combination of different kinds of reference. (Asher 1982: 86, 146, 146).

With such flagrant sins against the most elementary sense of beauty, such descriptions hardly qualify as forms of art.

Presumably such aesthetic ailments could be partially alleviated by simply ignoring the irrelevant headings which are 'not applicable' to the language in question and by eliminating altogether the anal retentive numbering. Yet far more dangerous than the sheer ugliness generated by rigidly following a predetermined format are the insidious effects on the thinking of the linguist exerted by the preconceived mould of rubrics and labels. These categories and labels assume a metaphysical existence of their own. As explained in the previous section, there is no such thing as aspect in the sense of an *a priori* category which exists independently of an actual language, let alone anything as specific as 'perfect aspect'. How instructive is it when Peter Cole includes in his Quechua grammar a section which tells us: *'2.1.3.3.2.1.1-2*. There are no perfective or imperfective aspects' (1981: 149)? The inevitable outcome of the preconceived labels and categories is the inadvertent but inexorable distortion of linguistic facts. When Davies, in his grammar of Kobon, obsequiously follows the dictates of the questionnaire by including a section on *'2.1.3.3.1. Perfect aspect',* he presupposes too much, even when he goes on to tell us, 'The perfect forms have both aspectual (present result of past event) and temporal (recent past) semantic values' (1981: 168). Does this mean that Kobon has a category equivalent in meaning to the English present perfect? We have no way of knowing. Evidently Davies found that such Kobon forms could provide satifactory translation equivalents for English present perfect in a number of cases. It really means no more than that.

Instead, my advice to the field linguist and grammar writer is: Let the language itself be your guide. Let its structure determine the structure of your grammar. There is nothing wrong with the traditional approach of being as thorough as possible, beginning with the phonology and phonetics, then consecutively treating the morphophonology, morphology, morphosyntax and syntax, in that order. This format of presentation is conventional and friendly to the read-

er. The topsy-turvy, anti-traditionalist set-up of the Lingua Descriptive Series Questionnaire, beginning with syntax and ending with phonology, serves no purpose other than to satisfy the late Simon Dik's desire to appear innovative. The results of this exercise may be of some utility to language typologists, but the resultant descriptions do no justice to the languages studied.

In a similar vein, the currently fashionable preoccupation with discourse calls to mind an antique and inadequate German method of linguistic description which consists of a collection of texts, a glossary and an outline of features of the grammar that can be gleaned from the texts. Often no interlinear morphemic analysis of the text is provided, and the result is never a comprehensive grammar. It is an illusion to think that a comprehensive grammar can be attained without the active elicitation of speech forms and without intimate intercourse with members of the languages community. Like using a questionnaire, limiting oneself to text analysis is just another way of falling short of the mark by resorting to short cuts. On the other hand, many essential forms are only readily discovered in spontaneous natural discourse and seldom detected by direct elicitation. So, there is no simple recipe for thoroughness other than just being thorough.

This third problem of a grammar questionnaire relates again to the second problem addressed in this section. Organisations such as the Summer Institute of Linguistics are rightly concerned about linguists who have been working on languages for years but who are not, or are no longer, writing up their stuff. This concern is healthy, but the solution is not a corps of flying linguists who wing their way into language communities carrying with them electronically a rigid format like the so-called Pakistan Grammar Outline. Following any standard outline is an inept strategy bound to produce unsatisfactory results in the best case and utterly daft results in the worst. Relying on such a format is tantamount to an admission that one is not up to

the challenge of writing a grammar. There is no substitute for sound training in linguistics and for really getting to know the language very well.

Are grammar questionnaires utterly useless then? A checklist could conceivably be put to good use if it were only consulted by the field linguist after his or her investigations were already in a very advanced stage, merely to check whether there were any loose ends and questions which had been overlooked. If a checklist were to be consulted in a late stage of the game just to ensure thoroughness, there might be some utility to it. Even so, the Lingua Descriptive Series Questionnaire and other suchlike formats would first have to be radically reworked into a checklist, reversing the back-to-front order of the questionnaire, and rewording the labels to warn users of the conceptual traps and snares that they represent. In their present shape, these formats engender deleterious effects through the assumptions built into the questions and the utterly misleading influence of presuming metalinguistic *a priori* grammatical categories which, in fact, have no ineffable language-independent existence. Sticking a label onto a grammatical category is no description of that category and may paradoxically even impede its description.

**Blessed are the meek because they
   are more likely to get it right**

The earliest grammar of Sinhalese that I know is the *Grammatica of Singaleesche Taal-kunst, zynde een korte methode om de voornaamste Fondamenten van de Singaleesche Spraak te leeren* ['Sinhalese Grammar, being a short method to learn the principal basics of the Sinhalese language'], published in Amsterdam in 1708. As an alternative to the Latinate term *grammatica* 'grammar', the title of the book contains the antique Dutch word for grammar, *taalkunst,* which literally means the art or craft of language. This term

has been replaced in modern Dutch by *spraakkunst,* whilst the Latinate term *grammatica* is still also used. The idea of grammar of art is no Dutch invention. The first grammar of Tamil, written in 1549 by the Jesuit Henrique Henriques, was entitled *Arte da língua malabar em português,* a deteriorated manuscript kept at la Biblioteca National Lusa at Lisbon as manuscript No. 3141. The oldest grammar of Japanese is the *Arte da Lingoa de Iapam composta pelo Padre João Rodrigues da Companhia de Jesu*, published in the three volumes at Nagasaki between 1604 and 1608 'con licencia del Ordinario y de los Superiores' (Carvalhão Buescu 1998).

If done properly, writing a grammar is not just a craft, but a fine art. The author of this oldest Sinhalese grammer, Joannes Ruëll, is described on the title page as 'Bedienaar des Goddelyken Woords, en Rector van het Singaleesch Kweekschool tot Colombo, op het Eiland Ceylon' ['Servant of the Divine Word, Rector of the Sinhalese College at Colombo on the Island of Ceylon']. The grammar was completed and first presented to the Lords Seventeen of the *Generaale Vereenigde Nederlandsche Oost-Indische Compagnie* or Dutch East India Company on the 10th of September 1699, nearly a decade before it was finally published. Throughout the book, the Dutch text is printed in *hoogdruk* or relief printing, and the elaborate Ceylonese letters had evidently been meticulously carved in wood especially for this publication and inserted into the plate.[8]

It is a delight to see such a wonderful linguistic description. The author was steeped in the tradition of Greek and Latin grammar. Yet, unlike the Tibetan grammar of Alexander Csoma de K̈ rös (1834), Ruëll did not slavishly follow the Latinate mould, but at-

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[8] In the same year that this book was published, Hadrianus Relandus already mentions this grammar with approval, referring to it as the *'Grammatica Singalea',* published in Amsterdam 'ad usum nostrarum coloniarum in Insula Ceylon' ['for the use of our colonies on the Island of Ceylon'] (1708: 82). In this context, Relandus also mentions the reverend J. Cronenburg, who had also studied Sinhalese in Ceylon and evidently had likewise acquired a command of the language.

tempted to describe Sinhalese in its own terms. There are numerous examples of good grammars. I have already named some, and I shall soon name some more. Unfortunately, there are many grammars which suffer from the servile adoption of some theoretical model, whether this be mediaeval Latin-inspired notional categories, grammatical labels of some standardised format like the Lingua Descriptive Questionnaire or the Pakistan Grammar Outline, tagmemics, parametrics or some other fashionable but quickly dated ways of thinking about language. Instead, a grammar writer should describe what is there. A descriptive linguist should be sensitive and aware of his or her own preconceptions. Get to understand the invariant meaning or *Gesamtbedeutung* of each word, morpheme and grammatical category, and try to hit the nail on the head. Let this grammatical meaning reproduce itself and be constructed in your own neural tissues. Learn the language and internalise its grammatical and lexical meanings. Have them reinforced by continuous appropriate usage within the same speech community. Let the language speak to you and guide your steps.

On the other hand, the grammar writer must not be a *tabula rasa*. He or she must be savvy about the different kinds of grammatical and structural phenomena which occur in many different languages on our planet, a familiarity best gained through meticulous study of many different languages of differing types. The grammar writer must be knowledgeable and have a sound training in linguistics. Therefore, crash courses or short six-month training programmes in grammar writing will not suffice and offer no replacement for a sound training in linguistics. Broad knowledge of linguistic phenomena and linguistic tradition must be complemented by analytical ingenuity and humility. The analytical ingenuity is required to figure out the workings of complex phenomena in a language with which the investigator is unfamiliar. Humility is required for the investigator to be able graciously to relinquish ingenious analysis after in-

genious analysis, for most descriptive solutions to the problems posed by the language will turn out to be contradicted by new facts. Most analyses constructed with much effort and thought after the study of many data are doomed to perish in the course of continued investigation. Only the final analysis will remain, and the road to the final descriptive analytical statement is paved by humble acceptance of having one's analytical descriptive models contradicted time and again by new facts. In another vein, we should also keep in mind that we can be put on a wrong footing by the correct answers of our informants. Our inadequate understanding is never the fault of our informants.

A number of grammars written by young researchers of the Himalayan Languages Project of Leiden University are exemplary works of linguistic description which have taken grammar writing to the level of a fine art. I have already mentioned the 672-page grammar of Yamphu by Roland Rutgers, a language spoken in the northern reaches of the Aruṇ valley in northeastern Nepal. Yamphu is an endangered language of the Himalayas spoken by a small alpine community. The language is rapidly dying out, and the Yamphu community is quickly assimilating to the national language Nepali. The grammar contains a detailed description and analysis of the phonetics and phonology, a detailed account of the morphophonological regularities of the language, and a description and analysis of the morphology, including a detailed account of the formally complex biactantial agreement system of the verb and a detailed characterisation of the meanings and operation of the typologically interesting aspectual, temporal and epistemic categories of Yamphu grammar. The book also contains an account of the syntax and morphology of all types of simple and complex clauses, including all sorts of subordination, indirect speech patterns and constructions with gerunds. The book includes illustrative conjugational tables of all of the various verbal paradigms found in the language and a bilingual Yam-

phu-English glossary, which also provides the necessary grammatical information. The book also contains a morphologically analysed native Yamphu text corpus, complete with interlinear glosses and an integral English translation. Finally, there is also an account of Nepali loans in the language and colour photographs of speakers and the language community.

Jean Robert Opgenort (2004, 2005) published grammars of Wambule and Jero, two languages of the lower Dūdh Kosī basin in eastern Nepal. Anton Lustig published a 734-page analytical grammar of Zaiwa, a language spoken in an enclave of the Chinese province of Yúnnán that is surrounded on three sides by Burmese territory. Opgenort's grammar also contains a dictionary and morphologically analysed native texts with translations. Lustig's hefty book on Zaiwa is just the grammar, and Lustig is currently working on the completion of the second volume, a Zaiwa dictionary. Heleen Plaisier (2005) published a grammar of Lepcha, the native language of Sikkim, Darjeeling and Kalimpong. Mark Turin has completed a grammar of Thangmi (2005). These grammars by Rutgers, Plaisier, Opgenort, Turin and Lustig are typical examples of the output of the Himalayan Languages Project. Comprehensive grammars have also been completed of Limbu, Dumi, Dzongkha, Dhimal and Kulung. Grammatical sketches have been completed of Bumthang, Byangsi, Puma, Rabha and Rongpo. Comprehensive grammars are being completed of Manchad, Lohorung, Sunwar, Lhokpu, Sampang, Gongduk, Black Mountain, Chɨlɨng, rGyal-rong, Chulung and other languages. Grammatical sketches are being completed of Barām, Dura and Toto. The present extent of the project's action radius can be gleaned from the website at <www.iias.nl/himalaya/>.

The Himalayan Languages Project is a research programme in which each member completes a holistic grammar, including lexicon and morphologically analysed texts, of a hitherto undescribed, strategically chosen endangered language. Each investigator tackles a

language on his or her own, unfettered by theoretical dogmas, yet well equipped with the notional, typological and analytical apparatus of sound linguistic training. The approach of one researcher to a language is of maximum professional benefit to the individual investigator. Such efforts make available a large body of detailed and diverse knowledge on vanishing languages and cultures. Holistic documentation provides the most complete and reliable documentation of endangered languages for the scholarly community, the language communities and posterity. The inclusion of a natural text corpus and glossary ensures a more reliable and complete account. Team members are also encouraged to document the native lore, legends and oral traditions of the language community. Language is a complete organism in which regularities and linguistic phenomena at all levels of description are interwoven into one organic whole. As Antoine Meillet once observed, language is *un système où tout se tient,* i.e. a system within which everything has to do with everything else. Detailed and holistic descriptions yield typological data on fascinating linguistic phenomena and directly benefit the local people. Grammars yield findings of lasting scientific interest, benefit language communities and ameliorate the language endangerment situation. This is all part of the research philosophy of the programme.

Epistemic verbal categories in Dzongkha

Having spoken at length about how to write a grammar, in the second half of this manifesto I want to provide an account of epistemic verbal categories in Dzongkha to illustrate how meanings of grammatical categories which have no analogues in English can be documented and explained. This exposition complements the more de-

tailed account in my Dzongkha grammar (1998).[9] Dzongkha is the national language of the kingdom of Bhutan in the eastern Himalayas. The language belongs to the Bodish subgroup of the Tibeto-Burman language family. The epistemic system of the language appears to represent the type of phenomena which have been subsumed under the heading evidentiality in the linguistic literature.

In recent years, interesting studies have appeared on evidentiality in various Tibetan languages, e.g. (Bielmeier 2000, Haller 2000, Hubert 2000, Volkart 2000, Häsler 2001, Hein 2001). These studies focus on the syntactic, pragmatic, semantic and epistemic functions of auxiliaries, conduct contrastive studies of auxiliary usage, or discuss the use of auxiliaries from the point of view of empathy or the pragmatic role of the speaker. However, we must not lose sight of the ultimate goal of documenting the meanings of the grammatical categories of the verbal systems of each language. The grammar of each Bodish language deserves to be documented in its own terms. As Krisadawan Hongladarom has argued, normative statements about the usage of evidentials do not suffice and do not yield descriptive adequacy (1993: 188).

The study of epistemic phenomena inspired Talmy Givón to undertake what he describes as 'a long term project of Revisionist Epistemology', aimed at bringing 'epistemology back to a certain measure of empirical relevance… more in tune with the real facts of human language — which supposedly have constituted the foundation of epistemology to begin with' (1982: 24). It is all very well to relate concepts of truth and knowledge in the philosophies of Plato, Kant and Peirce to the evidential categories found in Kinya Rwanda,

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[9] Since I told this tale once before at a workshop in Heidelberg in 1998, Bettina Zeisler references a forthcoming paper by me entitled 'Epistemic verbal categories in Dzongkha' in her bibliography (2000: 76). The principal content of the Heidelberg talk, which was never published, is contained in the present manifesto.

Sherpa or Ute, but in order to do so meaningfully the invariant meanings or *Gesamtbedeutungen* of the relevant grammatical categories in these languages have to be pinpointed first and characterised in an intelligible way with radical semantic rigour and telling contrastive examples, with or without the use a natural semantic metalanguage. Otherwise, we shall merely be engaged in the gratuitous exercise of comparing terms which have not yet been defined.

Before I embark on my discussion, let me explain that the system of romanisation is called Roman Dzongkha. In this system of orthography, an apostrophe before a continuant initial consonant or a vowel initial indicates a pre-glottalised continuant initial followed by the high register tone. The apostrophe after an initial consonant indicates a devoiced consonant followed by low register and breathy voice in the following vowel. The circumflex indicates a tense 'long' vowel as opposed to a lax 'short' vowel. In the following, I shall discuss the three main oppositions in Dzongkha involving the epistemological status of information grammatically encoded in the verbal system. In addition, there also exist an autolalic future tense and a hearsay evidential, which I shall not discuss here. Before discussing the distinctions in detail, I shall present a synoptic overview of the three main epistemic oppositions in Dzongkha and their formal expression.

1. assimilated, personal vs. acquired knowledge

There are five verbal distinctions in Dzongkha which give expression to the epistemic distinction between the grammatical categories of assimilated personal knowledge vs. acquired knowledge. The first is manifest in the choice of copulas. Very much like the Nepali distinction between the verbs 'to be' हुनु *hunu* and छनु *chanu* discussed above, Dzongkha distinguishes between a copula serving as an identity operator and a copula with existential, locational and attributive functions. (i) The epistemic distinction between assimilated, personal knowledge vs. acquired knowledge is expressed in

the choice between forms of the identity operator 'to be', i.e. ཨིན་ **'ing** vs. ཨིན་པས་ **'immä**, as well as in the choice between forms of the existential, locational and attributive copulas, i.e. ཡོད་ **yö** vs. འདུག་ **dû** ~ **du**. (ii) The steady state present, consisting either of the bare stem of the verb or regular stem plus the suffix པས་ **-bä** ~ བས་ **-wä**. (iii) The two forms of the progressive, one ending in དོ་ **-do**, the other in དོ་བས་ **-dowä**. (iv) The factual present, involving the distinction between the form consisting of the inflected stem of the verb with the auxiliary ཨིན་ **'ing** vs. the inflected stem in combination with the auxiliary ཨིན་པས་ **'immä**. (v) The present continuous formed by the regular stem of the verb plus the endings པའི་སྐྱང་ **-bigang** ~ **-migang** or བའི་སྐྱང་ **-wigang** in combination with the auxiliaries ཨིན་ **'ing** vs. ཨིན་པས་ **'immä**.

2. experienced perceptions

The Dzongkha grammatical category of experienced perceptions is not part of an equipollent opposition, unlike the previous epistemic distinction. This sensorial category is just an epistemic category of its own. The Dzongkha tense of experienced perceptions is formed by inflected stem of the verb plus the ending མས་ **-mä**.

3. witnessed vs. inferred past

The Dzongkha epistemic distinction between the witnessed past and the inferred past tense is expressed in the choice of the past tense formed with the regular stem of the verb plus the suffixes ཡི་ **-yi** or ཅི་ **-ci** vs. the past tense formed with the regular stem plus the suffix ནུག་ **-nu**. This distinction is different in meaning than the opposition which exists in Nepali between the category sometimes called the 'unknown past' or mirative past and the simple aorist past (cf. van Driem 2001: 644-646). The Dzongkha distinction is also different in meaning to the Nepali or Limbu deprehensative categories. The witnessed past tense expresses an event or transition in past time which the speaker or, in the case of a question, the listener consciously experienced. The inferred past expresses a past time event

or past time transition which was not witnessed or consciously ex-
perienced by the speaker or, in the case of a question, by the listener.
Rather, the speaker infers from the resultant situation or currently
observable state of affairs that a certain event or transition must have
taken place in past time.

1. assimilated, personal vs. acquired knowledge

(i) The Dzongkha copular verbs

The epistemic distinction between assimilated, personal know-
ledge vs. acquired knowledge is expressed in the choice between
forms of the identity operator 'to be', i.e. ཨིན་ **'ing** vs. ཨིན་པས་ **'im-
mä**, e.g. (1), (2).

(1)   ཁོ་ཤ་ཉམས་རྒྱགས་རིལ་རི་ཨིན་པས།

     Kho   shanyam   jâ   riri   'immä
     He   physique   fat   completely   be

     He is pretty fat.

(2)   ཁོ་མི་འཁྱུང་དྲང་དྲང་ཏ་ཨིན།

     Kho   'mi   thrangtangta   'ing
     He   man   straight   be

     He is a man of great integrity.

The difference between ཨིན་ **'ing** and ཨིན་པས་ **'immä** is an im-
portant distinction in Dzongkha which has to do with assimilated
versus acquired knowledge. The form ཨིན་ **'ing** expresses old, in-
grained background knowledge which is or has become a firmly in-
tegrated part of one's conception of reality, whereas the form ཨིན་པས་
'immä expresses knowledge which has been newly acquired. It is
therefore usual for a listener in Dzongkha to use the form ཨིན་པས་

'immä in the sense 'that is so, that's right' to politely punctuate someone else's narrative, in a show of friendly attentiveness. In careful or emphatic speech, the form ཨིན་པས་ **'immä** is sometimes pronounced **'imbä**.

The difference therefore between sentence (3) and sentence (4) is that, in sentence (3), the speaker is stating what he knows or believes to be a fact and of which he has certain knowledge, whereas, in sentence (4), the speaker is stating what he has come to know as a fact. This is why the form ཨིན་ **'ing** provides the most plausible reading for sentence (5).

(3)   ཨ་ཕི་མི་དེ་དྲུང་ཡིག་ཨིན།

          'Aphi   'mi   d'i   dr'ungnyi   'ing

          That   man   the   clerk   be

          That man is a clerk.

(4)   ཨ་ཕི་མི་དེ་དྲུང་ཡིག་ཨིན་པས།

          'Aphi   'mi   d'i   dr'ungnyi   'immä

          That   man   the   clerk   be

          That man is a clerk [as I have come to know].

(5)   ངེ་གི་ཆ་བཞག་ས་རང་ཁྱོད་ཨིན།

          Ngê-g'i   chazha-si-ra   chö   'ing

          My-[gen]   to.rely.upon-place-[str]   you   be

          You are someone I can rely on.

Because the form ཨིན་པས་ **'immä** expresses acquired knowledge, it is generally used with respect to third person referents. The use of ཨིན་པས་ **'immä** with second person referents is less common and is

exceedingly rare with first person referents because it not very usual for a speaker to want to express a recently gained insight into the identity of the person to whom he is speaking, and under normal circumstances a speaker has even less occasion to express a recently acquired insight regarding his own identity. Yet there are situations in which ཨིན་པས་ 'immä could be used with a first or second person subject.

Epistemic grammatical categories, by the very nature of the meaning they express, interact unevenly with the person categories. Some descriptive grammars resort to simple and normative rules of thumb, according to which, for example, the first person would always take the form expressing assimilated, personal knowledge. However, such normative rules of thumb are descriptively inadequate because they fail to capture and explain the meaning of the epistemic categories involved. Let us first see how the epistemic distinction between assimilated, personal knowledge vs. acquired knowledge interacts with second person subjects. Whereas sentence (6) is a statement of fact with the form ཨིན་ 'ing, the form ཨིན་པས་ 'immä is used in sentence (7) where the speaker has suddenly just realised that his long-time acquaintance has taken to stealing.

(6)   ཁྱོད་དེ་གི་ཆ་རོགས་ཨིན།

Chö   ngê-g'i   châro   'ing
You   me-[gen]   friend   be

You are my friend.

(7)   ཨེང་   ཁྱོད་ཨར་ཕ་ཨིན་པས་བོ་སྟེ།

'Eng,   Chö   'âu   'immä   bô   te
Oh,   You   thief be   [ctr] [acc]

Oh... So, you are a thief.

By the very nature of its meaning, use of the form ཨིན་པས་ **'im-mä**, which expresses a recently acquired insight, is exceedingly rare with a first person referent. For example, if a person is involved in a traffic accident in which he is catapulted from his vehicle, immediately losing consciousness, and wakes up days later, much to his amazement in a hospital without any memory of what has happened, he might exclaim to himself:

(8) ང་ནད་པ་ཨིན་པས་སྦོ་ སྟེ། ང་ཤེས་རང་མ་ཤེས།

Nga nep   'immä bô   te.   Nga shê-ra
I   patient be   [ctr] [acc] I   know-[str]
      ma-shê
      not-know

So, I'm a patient! I had no idea.

But in speaking about himself to a visitor, the same patient would simply say:

(9) ང་ནད་པ་ཨིན།

Nga   nep   'ing
I   patient   be

I'm a patient.

When a certain Dzongkha speaker is with a large group of friends and family, and this Dzongkha speaker suddenly learns that it has been decided that he has been included in the group that is to go off to the market to do groceries, this person might say:

(10)   ང་ཡང་ཁྲོམ་ཁ་འགྲོ་མི་ཨིན་པས།

Nga   ya   thromkha   jo-mi   ʼimmä
I   too   bazar   go-[sub]   be

I am apparently also [included in the group that is]
going to the bazaar.

Similarly, in example (11), the speaker responds to the question
about himself with the form ཨིན་པས་ **ʼimmä** because the fact that he
placed first in the class, although ultimately the result of the speak-
er's own efforts, represents a recently announced result of the evalu-
ation by the teachers.

(11)   — ཨང་དང་པ་གུ་ཨིན་ན།
         — ང་ཨིན་པས།

         —   ʼAng   d'angba   g'â   ʼin-na?
             Number   first   who   be-[Q]
         —   Nga   ʼimmä.
             I   be
       — Who's first [in the class]?
       — I am [apparently].

One might also say ང་ཨིན་པས། **Nga ʼimmä** 'It's me' if one has just
recognised oneself on a fuzzy photograph. Similarly, if a person
overhears a conversation and suddenly realises that the conversa-
tionalists are talking about him, he might say ངའི་སྐོར་ལས་ཨིན་པས། **ngê-
kôlä ʼimmä**, 'It's me [they're talking about]'. Keep in mind that the
use of ཨིན་པས་ **ʼimmä** is extraordinary with respect to a second
person and especially with respect to a first person referent. These
examples are especially selected to give some idea of when the form
ཨིན་པས་ **ʼimmä** can be used with a first person subject and to
demonstrate that the distinction between ཨིན་ **ʼing** and ཨིན་པས་

'immä has nothing to do with person agreement, but rather is based on an epistemological consideration. Both forms ཨིན་ **'ing** and ཨིན་པས་ **'immä** are used freely with respect to third person referents, depending on whether the knowledge expressed is ingrained or newly acquired.

In questions containing the verb ཨིན་ **'ing**, the special interrogative particle ན་ **na** is suffixed to the verb.

(12)　ཁོ་མི་ཕྱུགཔོ་ཨིན་ན།

　　　Kho　'mi　　pchup　　'in-na
　　　He　　man　　rich　　　be-[Q]

　　　Is he a rich man?

In questions containing the form ཨིན་པས་ **'immä**, the regular interrogative particle ག་ **g'a** may be added. In contrast to the special interrogative particle ན་ **na**, the particle ག་ **g'a** is used only in yes-or-no questions. The difference between question (12) with ཨིན་ན་ **'in-na** and question (13) with ཨིན་པས་ག་ **'immä-g'a** is that the speaker in question (12) assumes that the person he is asking knows the answer to his question, whereas the speaker in question (13) is unsure as to whether the person he is addressing has old, ingrained knowledge or has recently acquired knowledge of the answer.

(13)　ཁྱོད་ཀྱིས་བལྟ་བ་ཅིན་　ཁོ་མི་ཕྱུགཔོ་ཨིན་པས་ག།

　　　Chö-g'i　　ta-wacin　kho　'mi　　pchup　'immä-g'a
　　　You-[erg]　see-if　　he　　man　　rich　　be-[Q]

　　　Do you think he is a rich man?

The form ཨིན་པས་ག་ **'immä-g'a** cannot be used in questions regarding the second person, such as the following question because in

the given example this would yield the absurd meaning[10] that the speaker assumes that the person whom he is asking has at that very moment just discovered whether or not he is a student.

(14)   ཁྱོད་སློབ་གྲྭ་ཨིན་ན།

Chö   'lopdrap   'in-na
You   student   be-[Q]

Are you a student?

The negative form of ཨིན་ **'ing** is མེན་ **mä** or emphatic **men**. The older spelling མེན་ is at present still more common, but the spelling མེན་ is currently advocated by the Dzongkha Development Commission of the Royal Government of Bhutan. The negative form of ཨིན་ པས་ **'immä** is མེན་པས་ **membä**. The difference in meaning between མེན་ **mä** and མེན་པས་ **membä** is equivalent to the difference in meaning between ཨིན་ **'ing** and ཨིན་པས་ **'immä**.

The epistemic distinction between assimilated, personal knowledge vs. acquired knowledge is expressed in the choice between forms of the Dzongkha copulas ཡོད་ **yö** vs. འདུག་ **dû** ~ **du**. The Dzongkha verbs ཡོད་ **yö** and འདུག་ **dû** cover the existential, locational and attributive meanings of English 'to be'. The verbs ཡོད་ **yö** and འདུག་ **dû** are used in a locational sense to indicate the whereabouts of the subject of the sentence, in an existential sense to indicate the availability or presence of a person, commodity or thing, and an attributive sense to ascribe a quality to someone or something. The difference in meaning between ཡོད་ **yö** and འདུག་ **dû** is the same as that which obtains between ཨིན་ **'ing** and ཨིན་པས་ **'immä**. The form ཡོད་ **yö** is used to express assimilated or personal know-

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[10] except perhaps in an offstage exchange between actors in a play.

ledge, whereas འདུག་ **dû** is used to express something about which the speaker has only acquired or objective knowledge.

This difference in meaning between ཡོད་ **yö** and འདུག་ **dû** applies in all the various uses of these verbs. For example, in the attributive sense, the verb འདུག་ **dû** in sentences (15) and (16) expresses objective knowledge on the part of the speaker, acquired through observation, whereas the verb ཡོད་ **yö** in sentence (17) expresses personal knowledge by the speaker regarding his own son. It is true enough that the speaker must have at one point gained this knowledge by observation, but it thereafter came to belong to the realm of the speaker's personal knowledge. Note that example sentence (15) involves a second person subject, whereas examples (16) and (17) involve a third person subject, and sentence (18) a first person subject.

(15) ཁྱོད་འཇའ་རིས་མོ་འདུག།

Chö   j'ârim   dû
You   beautiful be

You are beautiful.

(16) ཁོ་སྦོམ་འདུག།

Kho   bôm   dû
He   big   be

He is big.

(17) ངའི་བུ་སྦོམ་ཡོད།

Ngê   b'u   bôm   yö
My   son   big   be

My son is big.

(18)   ང་ཁེ་ཁོད་ཡོད།

Nga   khêko   yö
I   strong   be

I am strong.

In an attributive statement, either འདུག་ **dû** or ཡོད་ **yö** may be used with respect to a third person referent, depending on the type of knowledge expressed, as illustrated in sentences (16) and (17), but with respect to a second person referent only འདུག་ **dû** can be used because knowledge about a second person referent is by definition objective. Even a mother speaking to her own son whom she has raised and nurtured from birth cannot grammatically replace འདུག་ **dû** with ཡོད་ **yö** in sentence (15). Conversely, in an attributive state-ment with respect to a first person referent only the verb ཡོད་ **yö** can be used because knowledge about a first person referent is inherent-ly personal, as in the boast of sentence (18).

Both verbs ཡོད་ **yö** and འདུག་ **dû** are used in the locational sense to express the whereabouts of the subject. Here again the difference in meaning between ཡོད་ **yö** and འདུག་ **dû** lies in the fact that the speaker's knowledge about his wife's whereabouts is personal, whereas his knowledge about the location of the cat is objective.

(19)   བྱི་ལི་དེ་སྒྲོམ་ནང་འདུག།

Bj'ili   d'i   drôm-na   dû.
Cat   the   box-in   be

The cat is in the box.

(20) རྔེའི་ཨམ་ཚུ་ནཱ་ཁྱིམ་ནང་ཡོད།

Ngê 'amtshu nâ   chim-na yö
My   wife   here house-in be

My wife is here inside the house.

The verbs ཡོད་ **yö** and འདུག **dû** are used in an existential sense to indicate the presence or availability of a person, commodity or thing. In sentence (22) the form འདུག **dû** expresses objective knowledge on the part of the speaker about the presence of mud on the shoes, whereas the form ཡོད་ **yö** in the exchange in (21) has to do with the fact that a shopkeeper has personal knowledge of the ware he has in stock.

(21) — གུ་རམ་ཡོད་གา།
      — གུ་རམ་ཡོད།

      —   G'uram yö-g'a?
          Sugar   be-[Q]?
      —   G'uram yö.
          Sugar   be.
      — Is there sugar? (Do you have sugar?)
      — Yes, there is.

(22) ཁྱོད་ཀྱི་ལྷམ་འགུར་འདམ་འདུག

Chö-g'i   lham-gu dam   dû
You-[gen] shoe-on   mud   be

There's mud on your shoes.

The verbs ཡོད་ **yö** and འདུག **dû** are used with the target case suffix ལུ་ **lu** to indicate possession, e.g. (23), (24).

(23)   ང་ལུ་དཔེ་ཆ་གཅིག་ཡོད།

Ngâ-lu   pecha-ci   yö
Me-[dat]   book-a   be

I have a book.

(24)   ཁོ་ལུ་ར་གཉིས་འདུག།

Khô-lu   ra-'nyî   dû
He-[dat]   goat-two   be

He has two goats.

In a question with respect to a second person referent, such as question (25), the speaker is inquiring about the health of the second person, the state of which the speaker necessarily assumes is a matter of personal knowledge to the second person. The speaker therefore uses the form ཡོད་ **yö** in his question. If a speaker poses a question concerning the first person, i.e. about himself, as in sentence (26), the speaker is inquiring after the second person's opinion, i.e. about the second person's objective knowledge based on the latter's observations.

(25)   ཁྱོད་གཟུགས་ཁམས་བཟང་ཏོག་ཏོ་ཡོད་ག།

Chö   zukham   zangtokto   yö-g'a
You   constitution healthy   be-[Q]

Are you in good health?

(26)   ང་དོད་རིལ་རི་འདུག་གា།

Nga   d'öriri   du-g'a
I   handsome   be-[Q]

Am I handsome [do you think]?

Let us turn to some more examples which illustrate the difference in meaning between the forms ཡོད་ **yö** and འདུག **dû** in their existential and locational meanings. In talking about oneself, it is most natural to use the form ཡོད་ **yö**, as in sentence (27), whereas the choice of འདུག **dû** in sentence (28) would be appropriate if the speaker had just found money in the pocket of a pair of trousers that he has not worn for a long time.

(27)   ང་ལུ་ཏིག་ཊུབ་ལེ་ཤ་ཡོད།

Ngâ-lu   tiru   läsha   yö
I-[dat]   money   much   be

I have lots of money.

(28)   ང་ལུ་ཏིག་ཊུབ་འདུག།

Ngâ-lu   tiru   dû
I-[dat]   money   be

I've got money.

The speaker of sentence (29), in which the form འདུག **dû** is used, had the previous evening out of sheer curiosity walked up the stairs of Norling Restaurant in downtown Thimphu to make a telephone call, peek in and espied the second person there, then went back down the stairs and left. The sentence, in effect, implies 'I saw that you were there'. The use of the form ཡོད་ **yö** in sentence (30) is ap-

propriate if the speaker had been there the evening before together with the accompanied second person to whom he is speaking. Here shared experience constitutes personal knowledge.

(29)   ཁ་ཙ་ཁྱོད་ཡང་ནོར་གླིང་ཟ་ཁང་ནང་འདུག །

Khâtsa   chö-ya   Nô'ling   z'akha-na   dû
Yesterday   you-too   Norling   Restaurant-at   be

You were also there at Norling yesterday.

(30)   ཁ་ཙ་ཁྱོད་ཡང་ཡོད།

Khâtsa   chö-ya   yö
Yesterday   you-too   be

You were also there yesterday.

In sentences (29) and (30), the verbs འདུག་ **dû** and ཡོད་ **yö** are used in a past tense context. The difference between འདུག་ **dû** and ཡོད་ **yö** is quite clear in the following two examples: The form འདུག་ **dû** is used in sentence (31) because the speaker is not privy to the secret, whereas the form ཡོད་ **yö** is used in sentence (32) where the speaker shares the secret.

(31)   ཁོང་གཉིས་ལུ་གསང་ལ�ོའ་གཅིག་འདུག །

Khong-'nyî-lu   sang'lo-ci   dû
They-two-[dat]   secret-a   be

They two have a secret.

(32) ང་བཅས་ལུ་གསང་གཏམ་གཅིག་ཡོད།

Ngace-lu   sangtam-ci   yö
We-[dat]   secret-a   be

We've got a secret.

Questions (33) and (34) are similar but have different implications. In question (33), the use of འདུག་ **dû** indicates that the speaker assumes that the person to whom he is speaking may have come to know whether Sanggä has money or not. The person addressed may, for instance, have been with Sanggä that day and may have come to know something about Sanggä's financial situation. The use of ཡོད་ **yö**, as in question (34), is appropriate if the speaker knows that the person to whom he is speaking is a long-time friend of Sanggä's who has personal knowledge of Sanggä's financial affairs. In other words, the use of the form ཡོད་ **yö** is natural in question (34) because of the presumed intimacy between the person being addressed and the subject of the sentence.

(33) སངས་རྒྱས་ལུ་ཏིག་རུབ་འདུག་གା།

Sanggä-lu   tiru   du-g'a
Sanggä-[dat]   money   be-[Q]

Does Sanggä have money?

(34) སངས་རྒྱས་ལུ་ཏིག་རུབ་ཡོད་ག. །

Sanggä-lu   tiru   yö-g'a
Sanggä-[dat]   money   be-[Q]

Does Sanggä have money?

In sentence (35), the speaker uses the form འདུག་ **dû** to express the presence of people he has established by observation, including both a second person and third person subject. In sentence (36), the speaker has come to Trashichö Dzong with Pänjo, who is now standing at a distance talking to someone else. The speaker in (36) is responding to someone's question as to whether Pänjo is present. The use of the form ཡོད་ **yö** in (36) reflects the speaker's personal knowledge.

(35) ཁྱོད་འདུག   ཁོ་ཡང་འདུག   དཔལ་འབྱོར་�κྱིངམ་གཅིག་མ་འོང་མས།

     Chö dû. Kho ya dû. Pänjo câmci ma-ong-mä
     You be. He also be. Pänjo only not-come-[ep]

     You're here. He's here. Now, Pänjo is the only one
     who hasn't shown up yet.

(36) དཔལ་འབྱོར་ནུ་ཡོད།

     Pänjo nâ yö
     Pänjo here be

     Pänjo is here.

(ii) The steady state present and the suffix of acquired knowledge

The steady state present consists of the bare stem of the verb only. Strictly speaking, the steady state present is not a present tense but a tenseless verb form which also encompasses present time. This tense indicates an enduring, inherent or objective circumstance or an abiding state. Only verbs which denote a state or circumstance, e.g. ཤེས་ **shê** 'to know', སྦོམ་ **bôm** 'to be big', are used in the steady state present, never verbs which denote an activity, e.g. ཟ་ **z'a** 'to eat'.

(37) ཁོ་གིས་མོ་ལུ་དགའ།

Khô-g'i	mô-lu	ga
He-[erg]	she-[dat]	love

He loves her.

(38) གཉིས་ཆ་ར་ཙོག་རང་འཐད།

'Nyî-chara	côra	thê
Two-both	alike	seem

They're both alike / the same

The word ཙོག་རང་ **côra** 'same, alike', used in example sentence (38), regularly collocates with the verb འཐད་ **thê** 'to appear, to seem'. The word ཙོག་རང་ **côra** 'same, alike' can also combine with གཅིག **ci** 'one' to yield the meaning 'identical', as in ཡི་གུ་དེ་གཉིས་ཙོག་རང་གཅིག། **yig'u-d'i-'nyî côra-ci** 'the two documents are identical'. Above we already encountered the suffix པས་ **-bä** ~ བས་ **-wä** as part of the verb ཨིན་པས་ **'immä** ~ **'imbä**. This ending is the suffix of acquired knowledge. The suffix པས་ **-bä** ~ བས་ **-wä** is attached to the regular stem of a verb denoting a state or condition and indicates that the information expressed in the sentence is newly acquired knowledge. Conversely, when the suffix is not used, as in examples (37) and (38) above, this implies that the situation expressed forms part of the ingrained knowledge of the speaker, something the speaker has known all along or which, at least, is not a recently acquired insight or not an only recently observed phenomenon.

The difference therefore between sentence (37) and sentence (39) is that the speaker in (39) has recently learnt of the subject's affections, whereas the speaker in sentence (37) has known all along about the affections of the subject of the sentence. Likewise, the difference between sentences (38) and (40) is that the speaker in (40)

has just recently observed the resemblance, whereas the speaker in (38), referring to twins he has known for many years, is stating a re-semblance as a matter of fact established in his mind long ago.

(39)   ཁོ་གིས་ང་ལུ་དགའ་བས་ལོ།

Khô-g'i   ngâ-lu   ga-wä   lo
He-[erg]   me-[dat]   love-[ak]   [he]

I have been told that he loves me.

(40)   ཁོ་དང་ང་ཚོག་རང་འཐད་པས།

Kho-d'a-nga   côra   the-bä
He-and-I   just.like   seem-[ak]

He and I are just the same.

The suffix of acquired knowledge པས་ **-bä** ~ བས་ **-wä** is written པས་ **-bä** after all verbs ending in a consonant in Roman Dzongkha:

(41)   ཆུམ་དི་གིས་ལང་པས།

Chum-d'i-g'i   lang-bä
Rice-the-[erg]   be.sufficient-[ak]

This rice will be enough.

(42)   ཁོ་གིས་ཨ་པ་གིས་སླབ་སླབ་མི་ཉན་པས།

Khô-g'i   'apa-g'i   'lap'lap   mi-nyen-bä
He-[erg]   father-[erg]   say-say   not-listen-[ak]

He doesn't listen to what father says.

(43) ཁྱོད་ཀྱིས་གནམ་གྲུ་གི་ཤོག་འཛིན་དེ་འཐོབ་པས་ག།

Chö-g'i   'namdr'u-g'i   shokdzin-d'i   thop-bä-g'a
You-[erg]   plane-[gen]   ticket-the   get-[ak]-[Q]

Did you [manage to] get the plane ticket?

The distribution of the regular allomorphs of the ending of acquired knowledge is a function of whether a stem is a so-called hard or soft stem, as explained in the Dzongkha grammar. Verbs with an open stem, i.e. verbs ending in a vowel in Roman Dzongkha, take either the ending བས་ **-wä** or པས་ **-bä**, depending on whether the verb has a soft stem or a hard stem. The form of the suffix is བས་ **-wä** after a soft stem, e.g. དགའ་བས་ **gawä** 'loves', and པས་ **-bä** after a hard stem, e.g. དགོ་པས་ **gôbä** 'needs'. Which open-stem verbs have a hard stem and which have a soft stem is lexically given and must be memorised, like the gender of nouns in French or German. Verbs ending in a vowel should ideally be specified as being either [soft] or [hard] in Dzongkha glossaries and dictionaries.

(44) བགོ་དེ་ཁྱོད་འགྱུར་ཕོག་པས།

G'ô   d'i   chö-gu   pho-bä
Dress this you-on   look.good-[ak]

This dress suits you.

(45) ཁྱོད་ཀྱི་མིག་ཏོག་དེ་བྱ་བས།

Chö-g'i   'mito-d'i   bjâ-wä.
You-[gen]   eye-the   be.beautiful-[ak]

You have beautiful eyes.

(46)   ང་ཁྱོད་མེད་པར་མི་ཆགས་པས།

Nga   chö-meba   mi-châ-bä
I   you-without   not-love/yearn-[ak]

I cannot love without you. (lyrics of poignant,
                    popular song)

(iii) The progressive and the suffix of acquired knowledge

The progressive tense in Dzongkha is formed by adding the end-
ing དོ་ **-do** to the stem of verbs denoting an activity, e.g. ང་ལྟོ་ཟ་དོ།
Nga to z'a-do 'I am eating', ཁོ་ལཱ་འབད་དོ། **Kho lâ be-do** 'He is work-
ing', མོ་ཞབས་ཁྲ་རྐྱབ་དོ། **Mo zh'apthra cap-do** 'She is dancing', གནམ་
གྲུ་འཕུར་དོ། **'Namdru phû-do** 'The plane is flying'. The interaction of
the two grammatical categories in Dzongkha, the progressive and
the epistemic opposition between assimilated, personal vs. acquired
knowledge, yields the following contrast in meaning. The Dzongkha
progressive in དོ་ **-do** expresses an activity which the subject by his
or her own observation knows to be going on in the present.
Example (47) is a sentence spoken by a man called Jam'yang on the
telephone. In examples (47)-(49), the suffix of acquired knowledge
is not used, and the sentences translate into English as present pro-
gressives. In the progressive, the epistemic distinction between as-
similated, personal knowledge vs. acquired knowledge is expressed
in the use of forms consisting of the regular stem of the verb plus
the progressive ending དོ་ **-do** vs. forms consisting of the regular
stem plus the suffixes དོ་བས་ **-dowä**, i.e. the progressive augmented
by the suffix of acquired knowledge. The non-use of the suffix of
acquired knowledge implies that the form expresses immediate per-
sonal knowledge and that the action or situation denoted by the verb
is transpiring before the eyes of the subject of the sentence.

(47) སྐུ་གཟུགས་བཟང་པོ་དྲག་ཤོས། འཇམ་དབྱངས་ཞུ་དོ་ལགས།

Kuzu Zangbo	dr'âsho	Jam'yang	zh'u-do	lâ
greetings	sir	Jam'yang	plead-[pr]	[hon]

Greetings Dr'âsho! It's Jam'yang speaking.

(48) ང་གཞུང་གི་ཆོས་རྒྱགས་བསྒྱུལ་ནིའི་དོན་ལུ་སྦྱང་བ་འབད་དོ།

Nga	zhung-g'i		chônju	
I	government-[gen]		examination	
	kä-nî-d'ön-lu		jangwa	be-do
	take-[inf-gen]-so.that-[dat]		practice	do-[pr]

I am preparing for the Common Exams.

(49) གྲན་སྒྲིགས་རྒྱབ་དོ་ག

Dr'andri	cap-do-g'a
Preparation	perform-[pr]-[Q]

[Are they] getting everything ready?

In the present, verbs denoting activity can be negated in two different ways. The prefix མི་ **mi-** is attached to the stem of the verb, as in the negative of the steady state present. This yields an immediate future reading, e.g. ང་སྦྱང་བ་མི་འབད། **Nga jangwa mi-be** 'I'm not going to prepare'. The negative form of the verb 'to be' མེན **mä** is used as an auxiliary with the inflected stem of the verb. This yields a present progressive reading, e.g. ང་སྦྱང་བ་འབད་ལཱ་མེན། **Nga jangwa beu mä**[11]

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[11] The difference in pronunciation with ང་སྦྱང་བ་འབད་ལཱ་མས། **Nga jangwa beu-mä** 'I am preparing', an experienced perception in མས་ **-mä** uttered by a speaker who suddenly sees himself on videotape engaged in the task of making preparations, is one of intonation, or the use of the alternative, and disambiguating, pronunciation **men** for མེན།

'I'm not preparing [right now]', whereby the form འབད་ལུ་ **beu** is the regular inflected form of the verb stem འབད་ **be ~ bä**.

The progressive ending can be augmented by the suffix of newly acquired information བས་ **-wä**, giving the composite ending དོ་བས་ **-dowä**, which in allegro speech is often pronounced **-deä** or simply **-dä**, and is also sometimes spelt less conservatively as དེ་བས་ **-deä** or དེས་ **-dä** accordingly. Here the more complete spelling དོ་བས་ **-dowä** is maintained. The element དོ་ **-do** expresses the notion of witnessed progressive activity, whereas the ending དོ་བས་ **-dowä**, containing the suffix བས་ **-wä** denoting recently acquired knowledge, expresses either an activity which has already begun and which the speaker has only just recently observed or an activity in progress which the speaker witnessed at some time in the recent past but does not observe at the moment of speaking. The former case takes a present tense translation in English, whereas the latter takes a past tense translation. The progressive in དོ་བས་ **-dowä** can therefore be used in combination with adverbs like ཁ་རྩ་ **khâtsa** 'yesterday' which denote a moment in past time, whereas the progressive in དོ་ **-do** cannot.

First, let us look at examples of verb forms in དོ་བས་ **-dowä** which take present tense translations in English. The choice of དོ་བས་ **-dowä** instead of དོ་ **-do** in sentences (50) and (51) has to do with the fact that the activities expressed had already begun by the time the speaker noticed them. In example (50), the speaker was not party to the activities, which were already underway when he came in. In example (51), the speaker was caught off guard, as it were, by the overflowing bucket.

(50)   ཁོང་གསུམ་ཅ་ལ་བགོ་བཤའ་རྐྱབ་དོ་བས།

Khong   sum   cala   gopsha-cap-do-wä
They   three wares division-perform-[pr]-[ak]

The three of them were dividing up the wares
amongst themselves.

(51)   ཆུ་དུང་དེ་ཁ་གཅད་དགོ་པས།   ཆུ་ལུད་དོ་བས།

Chu-d'ung-d'i   khacê-go-bä   Chu
Water-pipe-the   close-must-[ak] Water
  lü-do-wä
  overflow-[pr]-[ak]

The spigot has to be turned off. The water [in the bucket]
is overflowing.

Recall that the progressive in དོ་ **-do** expresses an activity which the speaker knows is going on through his own observation. In contrast to the use of the composite ending དོ་བས་ **-dowä**, the use of དོ་ **-do** implicitly excludes the observation of the person addressed. For example, one may say ད་ལྟོ་མོ་ཐབ་ཚང་ནང་ལུ་འབད་དོ། **D'ato mo thaptsha-na lâ be-do** 'She is working in the kitchen right now' to someone on the telephone or to someone who is calling from another room in the house, but it is natural to use the form ད་ལྟོ་མོ་ཐབ་ཚང་ནང་ལུ་འབད་དོ་བས། **D'ato mo thaptsha-na lâ be-dowä** 'She is working in the kitchen right now' if the person addressed is present and is in a position to perceive the activity and so make the same observation himself. This accounts for the forms in དོ་བས་ **-dowä** in sentences (52) and (53) where the person addressed is also, as it were, invited by the speaker to observe the activity at hand. However, for natural phenomena which are objective circumstances in nature, the progressive in དོ་ **-do** is used, as in (54) and (55). Examples (52) and (53) can by vir-

tue of their grammatical meaning be appropriately used as an invitation to observe an activity at hand, whereas the grammatical meaning in examples (54) and (55) makes them appropriate to express natural phenomena or objective circumstances.

(52)   བྱ་གོད་གཅིག་གནམ་ཁ་ལས་ཕར་འཕུར་དོ་བས།

Bj'agö-ci   'namkha-lä   phâ   phû-do-wä
Eagle-an   sky-from   thither   fly-[pr]-[ak]

An eagle has swooped down from the sky!

(53)   མོ་གིས་མི་ག་ཡ་ར་ལུ་ཇ་བླུད་དོ་བས།

Mô-g'i   'mi   g'âra-lu   j'a   'lû-do-wä
She-[erg]   man   all-[dat]   tea   pour-[pr]-[ak]

She's pouring everyone tea.

(54)   ད་ཉིམ་ཤར་དོ།

D'a   nyim   shâ-do
Now   sun   shine-[pr]

The sun is shining.

(55)   ད་ཟླ་འཛུལ་དོ།

D'a   dau   dzü-do
Now   moon   enter-[pr]

The moon is setting.

The word གཡར **g'âra** or **gayara** 'all' in sentence (53) is spelt more conservatively as གཡང་རར **gayara** or less conservatively as གར **g'âra** 'all'.

When the ending དོ་བས་ **-dowä** is used in sentences which take past tense translations in English, the sense resembles a classical Greek aorist to some extent in that the activity is unbounded in time: It is not precluded that the activity is still going on at the moment of utterance, albeit unobserved by the speaker. Nor can the speaker have witnessed the cessation of the event or its results because this would necessitate the use of one of the true past tenses which are discussed in the last section below. For example, in sentence (56) the speaker observed the activity but not its cessation. He does not know whether the subject is still at work at the moment of speaking. Similarly, the speaker in (57) does not tell us what he does not know, viz. whether the person in question has now actually died.

(56)　ཁོ་ལཱ་འབད་དོ་བས།

　　　Kho　lâ　　be-do-wä
　　　He　　work　do-[pr]-[ak]

　　　He was working.

(57)　ཁོ་ཤི་ནི་འབད་དོ་བས།

　　　Kho shi-ni　　be-do-wä
　　　He　die-[inf]　do-[pr]-[ak]

　　　He was dying.

The speakers in sentence (58) and (59) express a progressive activity in past time. Although in both utterances the activities expressed have now ceased, the choice of the form in དོ་བས་ **-dowä** is motivated by the speaker's intent to express a progressive activity which was going on at the point of reference in past time, not to express the completion of this activity.

(58)   མོ་གིས་ང་ལུ་དགའད་དོ་བས།

Mô-g'i   ngâ-lu   ga-do-wä
She-[erg]   I-[dat]   laugh-[pr]-[ak]

She was laughing at me.

(59)   ང་ཁ་རྩ་སྤ་རོ་ལས་འོངམ་དང་ཁྱོད་ལུ་འབད་དོ་བས།

Nga   khâtsa   Paro-lä   ôm-d'a
I   yesterday   Paro-from   come-[pg]
        chö lâ   be-do-wä
        you work   do-[pr]-[ak]

You were [still] working when I came back from Paro
                yesterday.

Note that the temporal reading is not a meaning directly expressed
by any of the grammatical categories in the verb, but a function of
the interplay between the meanings of the progressive ending དོ་
-do and the ending of acquired knowledge བས་ **-wä**.

    In sentences (60) and (61), the speaker reports speech acts per-
formed by the subject which were going on in past time. In sentence
(62), the speaker reports on a claim made by the subject at some
point in the past, although the speaker cannot now vouch that the
subject still holds to this claim.

(60)   ཁོང་གཉིས་ཀྱི་བར་ན་སློ་ོ་རྐྱབ་དོ་བས།

Khong-'nyî-g'i   b'âna   'lô-cap-do-wä
They-two-[gen]   between   conversation-perform-[pr]-[ak]

The two of them were conversing between themselves.

(61) ཁོ་གིས་ག་ཅི་སླབ་དོ་བས།

Khô-g'i   g'aci   'lap-do-wä
He-[erg]   what   say-[pr]-[ak]

What was he saying?

(62) ཁོ་གིས་མི་འོང་ཟེར་སླབ་དོ་བས།

Khô-g'i   mi-ong   z'e   'lap-do-wä
He-[erg]   not-come   that   say-[pr]-[ak]

He was saying that he wouldn't come.

Normally it is inappropriate to use a verb in དོ་བས་ **-dowä** with respect to the first person because this would imply that the speaker was not there to see whether and when the activity in question ceased. The use of དོ་བས་ **-dowä** in sentence (63) makes sense, however, because the event takes place in the context of a dream. The speaker was not consciously aware of whether or when the activity in question ceased or continued.

(63) ང་གིས་གཉིད་ལམ་ནང་འཕུར་དོ་བས།

'Ngâ-g'i   'nyilam-na   phû-do-wä
I-[erg]   dream-in   fly-[pr]-[ak]

I was flying in my dream.

Attentive readers will have noticed that Dzongkha exhibits morphological alternations and morphophonological regularities, such as those involving འདུག་ **dû** ~ **du** 'be', the latter allomorph occurring in the interrogative འདུག་ག་ **du-ga** 'is there?', or ང་ **nga** ~ **'ngâ** 'I, me', the latter allomorph occurring in conjunction with the ergative suffix ང་གིས་ **'ngâg'i** 'I [erg]'. Such regularities are discussed in the Dzong-

kha grammar and fall beyond the treatment of Dzongkha epistemic categories here.

(iv) The factual present and the suffix of acquired knowledge

The epistemic distinction between assimilated, personal knowledge vs. acquired knowledge is expressed in the two forms of the factual present, involving the distinction between the form consisting of the inflected stem of the verb with the auxiliary ཨིན་ **'ing** vs. the inflected stem in combination with the auxiliary ཨིན་པས་ **'immä**. The forms using the auxiliary ཨིན་པས་ **'immä** in example sentences (64), (67) and (68) relate observations which are new knowledge to the speaker, whereas examples (65) and (66) relate states of affairs about which the speaker already has personal, assimilated knowledge.

(64)   ཁོ་སློབ་དཔོན་མེན་རུང་ཁོ་གིས་ཆོས་སྟོནམ་ཨིན་པས།

         Kho 'löbö   men-ru   khô-g'i chôtöm 'immä
         He   teacher not.be-although he-[erg] teach   [aux]

         Although he is not a teacher, he appears to be giving
             instruction.

(65)   ང་བཅས་གནམ་གྲུ་གི་ཐོག་ལས་འབད་འགྲོ་ལྔ་ཨིན།

         Ngace   'namdru-g'i   thôläbe   jou 'ing
         We   airplane-[gen] by.means.of   go   [aux]

         We're going by plane.

(66) ངའི་ཕོ་རྒན་མ་གྱིས་རྟག་བུ་རང་ངའི་འགྱུར་ཚོགས་བཏ་བཏང་མ་ཨིན།

Ngê phôgem-g'i tabura ngê-gu
My elder.brother-[erg] always my-upo
      tshôda tâm 'ing
      scolding dispatch [aux]

My elder brother is always upbraiding me.

(67) མཁའ་འགྲོ་གིས་གཱ་རི་འཛོགས་སི་སི་འབད་བཏང་མ་ཨིན་པས།

Khandru-g'i gari drôsisibe tâm 'immä
Khandru-[erg] car recklessly dispatch [aux]

Khandru drives recklessly.

(68) ཁྱོད་ཀྱི་ཆ་རོགས་དེ་ཆ་བཞག་ཚུག་པའི་མི་གཅིག་ཨིན་པས།

Chö-g'i châro-d'i chazhâ-tshu-bi 'mi-ci
You-[gen] friend-the rely-can-[gn] man-one
      'immä
      be

Your friend appears to be a reliable person.

Dzongkha also distinguishes a third and more fundamental factual tense, which is most fittingly called the gnomic present or simply the gnomic tense. The gnomic tense is marked by the suffixes པའི་ **-bi** ~ **-mi** or བའི་ **-wi**. Diachronically, the gnomic tense derives from allegro forms of the assimilated, personal knowledge form of the factual present and depicts a habitual state of affairs. The gnomic tense is formed by adding the ending པའི་ **-bi** ~ **-mi** or བའི་ **-wi** to the regular stem, not the inflected stem, of the verb. The ending བའི་ **-wi** is added to verbs with soft stems. The ending པའི་ **-bi** ~ **-mi** is added to all other verbs, but is pronounced **-mi** after verb stems ending in a

nasal. The gnomic present does not, strictly speaking, partake of an epistemic opposition. Yet it is relevant to discuss this gnomic present because in modern Dzongkha it contrasts in meaning with the factual present form from which it developed. The contrast can be illustrated with a contrastive pair of sentences: Example (69) portrays Tendzi's eating of pork as a habitual state of affairs, whereas the factual present in example (70) depicts Tendzi's eating of pork as a fact which the speaker knows to be the case.

(69) བསྟན་འཛིན་གྱིས་ཕག་ཤ་ཟ་བའི།

Tendzi-g'i   phasha   z'a-wi
Tendzi-[erg]   pork   eat-[gn]

Tendzi eats pork.

(70) བསྟན་འཛིན་གྱིས་ཕག་ཤ་ཟཝ་ཨིན།

Tendzi-g'i   phasha   z'au   'ing
Tendzi-[erg]   pork   eat   [aux]

Tendzi eats pork.

Dzongkha gnomic forms in པའི་ **-bi** ~ **-mi** or བའི་ **-wi** straddle the boundary between verbal and nominal parts of speech and call to mind structural parallels in other languages of the Himalayas, such as the Limbu nominaliser and imperfective suffix <-pa>, the Yamphu factitive in <-æ ~ -e ~ -ye> and the Dumi nominaliser and imperfective ending <-m>, all morphemes which nominalise both verbs and clauses and, if affixed to the main verb of a sentence, mark a type of factitive meaning. The parallel is not precise, however, for the Dzongkha deverbative forms in པའི་ **-bi** ~ **-mi** and བའི་ **-wi** do not generally occur as nominal heads in their own right and cannot, for example, take articles. Such a function is reserved

for the verbal derivatives of the subordinator suffix མེ་ **-mi**. None the less, the meaning of the gnomic tense appears to have some relationship with the nominalising function of the suffix པའི་ **-bi** ~ **-mi** or བའི་ **-wi**.

(v) The present continuous and the suffix of acquired knowledge

The present continuous is formed by adding the ending པའི་སྐྱང་, pronounced **-bigang** ~ **-migang**, or བའི་སྐྱང་ **-wigang** to the stem of the verb. The thus derived continuous stem of the verb is used in combination with the auxiliary verbs ཨིན་ **'ing** and ཨིན་པས་ **'immä**. The ending པའི་སྐྱང་ is written after verbs ending in **-p** or a nasal and after hard stem verbs. This suffix is pronounced **-bigang** after verbs ending in **-p** and after hard stem verbs and pronounced **-migang** after verbs ending in a nasal, e.g. མོ་ཁྱིམ་ནང་ལས་འཐོན་པའི་སྐྱང་ཨིན་པས། **Mo chimnalä thönmigang 'immä** 'She is coming out of the house'; ང་ ཆང་བཏུང་པའི་སྐྱང་ཨིན། **Nga chang thung-migang 'ing** 'I am drinking beer'; ང་སྒོ་བསུམ་པའི་སྐྱང་ཨིན། **Nga go dam-migang 'ing** 'I am closing the door'; ཁོ་ཞབས་ཁྲབ་རྐྱབ་པའི་སྐྱང་ཨིན་པས། **Kho zh'apthra cap-bigang 'immä** 'He is dancing'; ང་བཅས་ཕྱི་ཁ་སྡོད་པའི་སྐྱང་ཨིན། **Ngace pchikha dö-bigang 'ing** 'We are sitting outside'. The ending བའི་སྐྱང་ **-wigang** is written after soft stem verbs, e.g. ཁོ་སྟོ་ཟ་བའི་སྐྱང་ཨིན་པས། **Kho to z'a- wigang 'immä** 'He is eating rice'; ང་ལཱ་འབད་བའི་སྐྱང་ཨིན། **Nga lâ be- wigang 'ing** 'I am working'.

The continuous present is similar to the progressive in དོ་ **-do** in that it expresses an activity in progress in present time. The continuous present differs from the progressive tense in that it stresses the continuous nature of the activity and in that the activity must indeed be going on at the moment of speaking, which is not necessarily the case with the progressive tense. In fact, the use of the progressive in example (71) suggests the temporary nature of the speaker's employment.

(71)   ང་ད་རིས་ནངས་པ་ཡིག་ཆང་འདི་ནང་ལཱ་འབད་དོ།

Nga d'ari-nâba   yitsha-di-na   lâ   be-do
I   nowadays   office-this-in   work   do-[pr]

Nowadays, I work in this office.

(72)   ཨ་ཙི་སྡོད་ཤིག   ང་ད་ལྟོ་ལྟོ་ཟ་བའི་སྐྲང་ཨིན།

'Atsi   dö-sh   Nga   d'ato   to   z'a-wigang   'ing
little.bit   sit-[u]   I   now   rice   eat-[con]   be

Sit [and wait] a bit. I'm eating just now.

(73)   བུ་ཚུ་དེ་ཚུ་ད་ལྟོ་རྡོས་སྒོར་རྐྱབ་པའི་སྐྲང་ཨིན་པས།

B'utshu-d'i-tshu   d'ato   dögo   cap-bigang   'immä
Boy-the-[pl]   now   discus   perform-[con]   be

The lads are out tossing the discus.

        The epistemic distinction in the continuous tense runs parallel to
the distinction in the factual present and likewise involves the choice
between the auxiliaries ཨིན་ 'ing and ཨིན་པས་ 'immä, with the latter
containing the suffix of newly acquired knowledge. Sentence (72)
relates a continuous activity involving the speaker, for which reason
he uses the auxiliary ཨིན་ 'ing, whereas sentence (73) relates a state
of affairs which has come to the knowledge of the speaker by
observation, for which reason he uses the auxiliary ཨིན་པས་ 'immä.
The word རྡོས་སྒོར་ dögo 'discus' in example sentence (73) refers to
the Bhutanese stone discus which is tossed underhand, not for dis-
tance, but for accuracy with the aim of landing the projectile as close
as possible to a stake in the ground. Etymologically the word con-
sists of the elements རྡོས་ do 'discus' and སྒོར་ gô 'disc'. The latter,

for example, occurs in the expression དར་ཚིལ་སྒོར་གཅིག་ **d'âtshi-gô-ci** 'one disc of Bhutanese cheese'.

2. experienced perceptions

The Dzongkha grammatical category of experienced perceptions is not part of an equipollent opposition, unlike the previous epistemic distinction. This sensorial category is just an epistemic category of its own. The tense of just experienced perceptions is formed by adding the ending མས་ **-mä** to the inflected stem of the verb. This tense expresses an activity or phenomenon going on at the moment of reference which the speaker has just observed or a feeling or sensation which the speaker has just experienced. The moment of reference is taken to be in the present, unless the context specifies otherwise, as in sentence (75) below. This suffix appears to be etymologically related to, but is synchronically distinct from, the suffix of newly acquired knowledge པས་ **-bä** ~ བས་ **-wä**. Whereas the suffix པས་ **-bä** ~ བས་ **-wä** is attached to the regular stem of verbs denoting a state or condition, the ending མས་ **-mä** is affixed to the inflected stem of verbs denoting an activity or feeling.

(74)   ཁོ་ངའི་འགུར་བལྟ་ལྟ་མས།

   Kho   ngê-gu   tau-mä
   He   my-upon   look-[ep]

   He's watching me.

(75)   ཁ་ཙ་ཁོང་ཤིང་འཐུ་ལྟ་མས།

   Khâtsa   khong   shing   thû-mä
   Yesterday   they   wood   gather-[ep]

   Yesterday they were gathering wood.

(76)   སེམས་ཅན་དེ་སྦྱུར་ལྷ་མས།

Semce-d'i   pâu-mä
Animal-the   shake-[ep]

That animal is shaking.

In all the above examples, where the tense of perceived pheno-
mena is used to express an activity, the subject is in the third person.
Indeed the use of the tense of experienced perceptions with respect
to a first person is ungrammatical in virtually every naturally occur-
ring context, since a person's information about his own activities is
personal knowledge, which he has not acquired through observing
himself from outside. Therefore a phrase such as ང་ལུ་འབད་ལྷ་མས **Nga
lâ beu-mä** makes no sense except in the unusual situation such as
that depicted in sentence (77) where the speaker discovers himself at
work on a videotape.

(77)   ཁ་ཙ་གི་སློག་བརྙན་ནང་ང་ཡང་འཐོན་ནི་འདུག། དེ་སྐྱང་ང་ལུ་འབད་ལྷ་མས།

Khâtsa-g'i   'lok'nyen-na nga ya   thön-ni
Yesterday-[gen] film-in   I   too appear-[inf]
        dû. D'i   gang nga lâ   beu-mä
        be   That time I   work do-[ep]

I also appear to be in yesterday's video. At that time
    I appear to have been working.

The tense of experienced phenomena is used with respect to a
second person on those rare occasions in which the speaker reports
to a second person on an activity he observes this same second per-
son performing, as in the following diagnostic observation:

(78) ད་རིས་ཁྱོད་ཨ་ཚིག་དེས་རང་རྒྱུབ་མས། ག'་ཅི་འབད་དཔའ་མོ།

D'ari   chö   'atshi   d'ära   cap-mä.
Today   you   sneeze   repeatedly   do-[ep]
        G'aci   bä-dap-'mo
        What   happen-[pf]-be

You are continuously sneezing today.
        What has happened?

   Similarly, sentence (79) was uttered by someone who had been calling his friend but received no answer and went to look for him. Upon finding him eating in the adjacent room, he said:

(79) ཞེ་   ཁྱོད་ལྟོ་ཟཕ་མས་སྦོ་སྟེ།

Eng,   chö   to   z'âu-mä   bô   te
Oh,   you   rice   eat-[ep]   [ctr]   [acc]

Oh, I see you're eating.

   As the suffix མས་ -mä used to express perceptions which the speaker has just experienced, this tense is appropriate to the expression of feelings, sensations and thoughts. This tense cannot be used to express the feelings of a third person subject because the sensations and emotions felt by a third person are not personally experienced by the speaker, which is an essential aspect of the meaning of this tense. To express feelings, emotions and thoughts the tense of experienced perceptions in མས་ -mä can, in the interrogative, take a second person subject.

(80)   ང་ཁྱོད་ལུ་སེམས་ཤོར་སྦ་མས།

Nga   chö-lu   semshou-mä
I   you-[dat]   be.in.love-[ep]

I'm in love with you.

(81)   ཁ་ཚལ་མས།   ཨེ་མ་དེ་ཁ་ཚིག་འདུག།

Kha   tshau-mä   'Êma-d'i   khatshi   dû
Mouth burn-[ep]   Chillies-the   spicy.hot   be

My mouth is on fire. Those chillies are spicy.

(82)   ང་ཉིང་ལས་རང་ཁྱོད་ལུ་དགའ་སྦ་མས།

Nga   hing-lä-ra   chö-lu   gau-mä
I   heart-from-[str]   you-[dat]   love-[ep]

I love you with all my heart.

(83)   དྲིམ་ལེགས་ཞིམ་མནམ་མས།

Dr'im   läzhim   'nam-mä
Aroma   good   smell-[ep]

I smell a sweet aroma.

(84)   ང་ཁྱོད་དྲནམ་མས།

Nga   chö   dr'em-mä
I   you   miss-[ep]

I miss you.

(85) ང་ཆབ་གསང་ཆུ་བཟུམ་སྦྱེ་བཤལ་སྨ་མས།

Nga   chapsa   chu-zumbe   shâu-mä
I   stool   water-like   excrete-[ep]

I am passing watery stool. / I have terrible diarrhoea.

(86) ང་གིས་ཁོ་གི་མིང་དེ་རང་བརྗེད་པ་མས།

'Ngâ-g'i   khô-g'i   meng-d'i-ra   jep-mä
I-[erg]   he-[gen]   name-the-[str]   forget-[ep]

I keep forgetting his name.

(87) ཁྱོད་ཀྱིས་ཉིང་ལས་རང་དགའལ་མས་ག།

Chö-g'i   hing-lä-ra   gau-mä-g'a
You-[erg]   heart-from-[str]   love-[ep]-[Q]

Do you love me with all your heart?

(88) ཁྱོད་ཀྱིས་ཕྱེན་དྲི་དེ་ལེགས་ཞིམ་འབད་རང་ཚོར་སྨ་མས་ག།

Chö-g'i   pchen   dr'i-d'i   läzhim-be-ra
You-[erg]   fart   aroma-the   good-[adv]-[str]
        tshou-mä-g'a
        smell-[ep]-[Q]

Can you smell that fart really well [i.e. as well as I can]?

The tense of experienced perceptions is used specifically to express knowledge gained through observation. For example, after unsuccessfully trying to get six people into a Maruti Jeep, one might say, མི་ཤོང་མས། **Mi shongmä** '[Six people] don't fit', but if asked the unlikely question whether twenty people would fit into a Maruti Jeep, the answer would be a confident steady state present མི་ཤོང་། **Mi**

shong '[Twenty people] don't fit' because the speaker already knows beforehand that such is the case. The negative of the tense of experienced perceptions is formed by prefixing the present negative morpheme མི་ **mi-** 'not' to the verb.

(89)   ང་ད་ལྟོ་ཨ་ཙི་མི་ཁོམ་མས།

      Nga   d'ato   'atsi   mi-khom-mä

      I   now   little.bit   not-be.free-[ep]

I'm really not free [to come] right now.

3. witnessed vs. inferred past

The epistemic distinction between witnessed past and inferred past tense is expressed in the choice between forms consisting of the regular stem plus the suffixes ཡི་ **-yi** or ཅི་ **-ci** vs. the past tense consisting of the regular stem plus the suffix ནུག་ **-nu**. The witnessed past tense expresses an event or transition in past time which the speaker or, in the case of a question, the listener consciously experienced. The witnessed past tense is formed by adding the suffix ཡི་ **-yi** or ཅི་ **-ci** to the stem of the verb. The ending ཡི་ **-yi** is added to stems ending in a vowel or ending in **ng** in Roman Dzongkha. The ending ཅི་ **-ci** is added to verb stems ending in the consonants **p**, **n** or **m**.

(90)   དགའ་སྟོན་དེ་གི་སྐབས་ལུ་དགའ་སྤྲོ་སྤོམ་བྱུང་ཡི།

      Gatön-d'i-g'i   kap-lu   gatro   bôm

      Party-the-[gen]   period-[dat] enjoyment big

           j'ung-yi

           be.manifest-[pt]

[We] really enjoyed [ourselves] alot during the party!

(91)   ང་བཅས་ཐེད་ཁབར་འབད་ཕུད་ཅེ།

Ngace   thêkhabe   pche-ci
We   face-to-face   meet-[pt]

We met face-to-face.

(92)   ང་དུས་ཚོད་ཁབར་སྨོད་ཅེ།

Nga   d'ütshökha   hö-ci
I   in.time   arrive-[pt]

I arrived just in time.

(93)   ད་བགོ་ལ་གྱོན་རན་ཆི་ཡི་   མེན་ན།

D'a   g'ola   g'ön   ren-chi-yi,   me-na?
Now   clothes don   be.time-feel-[pt] not.be-[Q]

Now it's about time that we got dressed, isn't it?

The inferred past is formed by adding the suffix ནུག **-nu** to the stem of the verb. The inferred past expresses a past time event or past time transition which was not witnessed or consciously experienced by the speaker or, in the case of a question, by the listener. Rather, the speaker infers from the resultant situation or currently observable state of affairs that a certain event or transition must have taken place in past time.

(94)   ང་གི་རྨ་ཉེ་མ་བ་སྦོམ་སྦེ་ཐོན་སོ་ནུ།

Ngê-g'i   'ma   hema-wa   bom-be
I-[gen]   wound   before-than   big-like
        thön-so-nu
        come.out-[pf]-[ip]

My wound has gotten even worse (even bigger).

The inferred past ending ནུག་ -nu is used in sentence (94) be-
cause the speaker did not observe the entire process of change in the
state of his wound as it occurred. Rather, the speaker is stating that a
past tense event has occurred upon having observed the result of that
process. Similarly, in sentence (95), the speaker observes that a
letter has arrived for him, he was not there when the letter entered
the country or was deposited into his post office box. The speaker in
(96) also uses the inferred past to express a result observed in the
present of an activity which the speaker did not observe taking
place.

(95)   ད་རིས་ཨུ་རུ་སུ་ལས་ང་ལུ་ཡི་གུ་འ་ནེམ་ཅི་སློད་ནུ།

D'ari 'Urusu-lä   ngâ-lu yig'u 'anemci   hö-nu
Today Russia-from I-[dat] letter this.big   arrive-[ip]

Today a letter this big came for me from Russia.

(96)   འོག་ཁང་ནང་སུག་མ་བཞག་ནུག

'Okha-na   suma   zhâ-nu
stable-in   rice.straw   put-[ip]

The rice straw has been put in the stable under the house.

In sentences (97) and (99), the use of རུག་ **-nu** is more or less a function of the lexical meaning of the verbs themselves, i.e. the verbs འབྱང་ནི་ **bjang-ni** 'to lose' and སེམས་ལས་ཡལ་ནི་ **sem-lä ä-ni** 'to slip someone's mind'. The speaker in (97) was not aware of the fact that he was losing his money at the moment he was losing it. If he had been, he would probably not have lost it. The past tense suffix ཡི་ **-yi** ~ ཅི་ **-ci** would be inappropriate in sentence (97) because it would yield the nonsensical meaning that the speaker had consciously lost his money.[12]

(97)   ང་ཊིག་རུབ་འབྱང་ད་རུག།

Nga tiru   bjang-da-nu
I   money lose-[pf]-[ip]

I lost my money.

Yet it is possible to lose something consciously, and, when this happens, it is appropriate to use the experienced past tense suffix ཡི་ **-yi** ~ ཅི་ **-ci** with the verb འབྱང་ནི་ **bjang-ni** 'to lose'. In sentence (98), a shepherd reports that whilst grazing the cattle, he lost the red cow. Like a good shepherd, the boy saw the cow making off in the distance, escaping over a hillock or into the forest, and knowingly experienced the event but was unable to do anything about it. The use of the past in ཡི་ **-yi** ~ ཅི་ **-ci** in example (98) therefore relates a case of experienced loss.

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[12] On the other hand, the witnessed past tense ending would yield an appropriate meaning if spoken by a gambler in a casino or by an agent in some intrigue of espionage.

(98)   ང་གིས་ད་རིས་བ་དམརཔོ་དེ་འབྱུང་ད་ཡི།

'Ngâ-g'i d'ari b'a   'mâp-d'i bjang-da-yi
I-[erg]   today cow   red-the   lose-[pf]-[pt]

I lost the red cow today.

    We may be inclined to think that it is inherent in the lexical
meaning of forgetting that the act of forgetting, as in example (99),
inherently transpires without the person involved being aware of it.
Strange as it may seem, it is actually possible knowingly to expe-
rience the act of forgetting. Everybody must be familiar with the
sensation of having had some pregnant statement at the tip of one's
tongue or of even having already begun to tell someone something,
but then being distracted and forgetting what one was talking about
or just about to say. It is precisely this type of experience that
prompted the speaker to use the experienced past tense suffix ཡི་ **-yi**
~ ཅི་ **-ci** with the verb བརྗེད་ནི་ **jêni** 'to forget' in sentence (100).

(99)   སེམས་ལས་ཡལ་ཡར་སོ་ནུག   སེམས་ལས་ཡོལ་སོ་ནུག

Sem-lä   ä-yâ-so-nu   Sem-lä
Mind-from slip-go-[pf]-[ip] Mind-from
      ö-so-nu
      escape-[pf]-[ip]

It has totally slipped my mind. It has totally escaped me.

(100) ང་ཁྱོད་ལུ་སྐྲོའོ་གཅིག་སྐྲབ་ནི་འབད་རང་སྟོད་ཤིང་ན་ ད་བརྗེད་སོ་ཡི།

Nga   chö-lu   'lô-ci   'lap-ni-be-ra
I   you-to   message-one   say-[inf]-[adv]-[str]
              dö-shina   d'a   jê-so-yi
              sit-[pfg]   now   forget-[pf]-[pt]

I just forgot what I had just been telling you about.

The observant reader will recall that we already encountered an earlier instance of experienced forgetting in example sentence (86) above, where the speaker relates the repeated sensorial experience of not being able to recall someone's name. The moment at which the subject of sentence (101) sat down and commenced his eavesdropping was an event which went unobserved by the speaker.

(101) ཁོ་གིས་ང་བཅས་ལུ་བལྟ་སྟོད་ནུག།

Khô-g'i   ngace-lu   tâ-dö-nu
he-[erg]   us-upon   look-sit-[ip]

He appears to have been sitting there watching us
    [for some time now].

In a sentence such as (102), the use of the witnessed past in ཡི་ **-yi** ~ ཅི་ **-ci** is fitting and appropriate because the speaker must assume that the listener he is addressing was consciously present and could therefore observe where he had put the book.

(102) ཁྱོད་ཀྱིས་ངེ་གི་དཔེ་ཆ་ག་ཏེ་བཞག་ཅི།

Chö-g'i   ngê-g'i   pecha   g'âti   zha-ci
You-[erg]   I-[gen]   book   where   put-[pt]

Where did you put my book?

If one were to use རུག་ **-nu** in the same sentence, the sentence would acquire an odd meaning and would, indeed, only be appropriate in a special context. For example, the person addressed in sentence (103) had put the speaker's book somewhere in a drunken stupor, totally unaware of what he was doing at the time. After the speaker has asked for his book back, the person who had misplaced it looked for the book and, after finally having found it, shows up with the book. At this point, the speaker could pose the question as it stands in example (103). The use of the inferred past in རུག་ **-nu** is fitting only because both speaker and listener share the background knowledge that the listener, to whom the speaker is posing the question, did not know what he was doing at the moment he misplaced the speaker's book and has no recollection of having put the book anywhere at all.

(103)   ཁྱོད་ཀྱིས་ངེ་གི་དཔེ་ཆ་ག་ཏེ་བཞག་ནུག །
          Chö-g'i   ngê-g'i   pecha   g'âti   zhâ-nu
          You-[erg] I-[gen]   book   where   put-[ip]

          Where did you put my book?

The difference between sentence (104) and sentence (105) is likewise not a tense distinction, but has to do with whether or not the event was actually experienced by the person to whom the question is addressed. In question (104) the speaker is assuming that the person whom he is addressing has, for example, been to Singge's house and has been able to ascertain whether or not Singge has eaten, either by having talked with Singge or having noticed used plates lying about. In posing the question in sentence (105), on the other hand, the speaker is assuming that the person to whom he is speaking was actually there when Singge ate and that that person will therefore know the answer through personal observation of the event

itself. Question (105) would be appropriate if, for instance, the speaker knew that the person to whom he is speaking was supposed to eat together with Singge or happened to share a flat with Singge.

(104)   སེང་གེ་སློ་ཟ་ནུག་གའ།

     Singge   to   z'â-nu-g'a
     Singge   rice   eat-[ip]-[Q]

     Has Singge eaten?

(105)   སེང་གེ་སློ་ཟ་ཡི་གའ།

     Singge to   z'a-yi-g'a
     Singge rice eat-[pt]-[Q]

     Has Singge eaten?

The past tense ending ནུག **-nu** in sentence (106) is used to convey the fact that the speaker, whilst tossing and turning in his sleep, hit his bedmate. The speaker was not awake to experience this event consciously and therefore chooses the past tense ending ནུག **-nu**. But the inferred past must also be used for events which take place in a dream, even if, as in sentence (107), the speaker's action in the dream was deliberate and, at least within the context of the dream state, conscious.

(106)   ང་གིས་གཉིད་ཀྱི་ནང་ཁོ་དྲངས་ནུག

     'Ngâ-g'i   'nyig'i-na   kho   dr'ang-nu
     I-[erg]   sleep-in   he   hit-[ip]

     I hit him when I was sleeping.

(107)   ང་གིས་གཉིད་ལམ་ནང་ཁོ་རྡུངས་ནུག །

'Ngâ-g'i   'nyilam-na   kho   dr'ang-nu
I-[erg]   dream-in   he   hit-[ip]

I hit him in my dream.

However, the experienced past in ཡི་ **-yi** ~ ཅི་ **-ci** is used in senten-
ces such as the following.

(108)   ང་གཉིད་ལམ་ལེགས་ཤིམ་མཐོང་ཡི།

Nga   'nyilam   läzhim   thong-yi
I   dream   nice   see-[pt]

I had a nice dream.

(109)   མདང་མོ་ཕྱི་རུ་ངའི་གཉིད་ལམ་ནང་ཁྱོད་མཐོང་ཡི།

Dâmchiru   ngê-'nyilam-na   chö thong-yi
last.night   my-dream-in   you see-[pt]

I dreamt of you last night.

These examples illustrate that whereas events in a dream may
not be consciously experienced, at least not in terms of the grammar
of the Dzongkha verb, the awareness of having had a dream is a
conscious experience which is generally experienced in a moment of
recollection whilst awakening.

The inferred past tense is used in sentence (110) to express the
fact that the arrow broke when it hit the target. Even though the
speaker actually saw the event happen, the target was so far off in
the distance that only later, after he strolled over to the target and
retrieved the arrow, did the speaker became aware of the fact that
the arrow had broken when it appeared to have just bounced off the

target intact. In other words, the past tense in རྣུག་ -nu is appropriate
to relate an observed phenomenon which was not properly under-
stood in the sense that it was impossible to discern precisely what
happened.

(110)   མདའ་གཅག་ཏ་རྣུག།

         Da   câ-da-nu
         Arrow snap-[pf]-[ip]

         The arrow has broken in two!

Here a witnessed event because of its suddenness is expressed with-
out the ending of the witnessed past. Example (110) therefore calls
into question the very terms which we have devised to designate
these epistemic categories in Dzongkha. None the less, the terms
'witnessed past' and 'inferred past' serve as entirely adequate labels
for these Dzongkha categories. Rather, the point is that no label is
ever adequate in and of itself without a characterisation of the mean-
ing of the grammatical category that it designates, complete with in-
sightful and contrastive examples.

    When one expresses hunger or thirst, the experienced past is ap-
propriate because the onset of the sensation is invariably exper-
ienced.

(111)   ཁྱོད་ལྟོགས་བཀྱེས་ཡི་ག།   ཁྱོད་ཁམ་སྐོམ་ག།

         Chö   toukê-yi-g'a?   Chö   khâ-ma-kom-g'a
         You   hungry-[pt]-[Q]   You   thirsty-not-thirsty-[Q]

         Are you hungry? Aren't you thirsty?

    Likewise, one can say གྱང་ཡི་ **J'ang-yi** 'It has turned cold' if one
had experienced a sudden drop in temperature, although the form

གྱང་མ་མས་ **J'âm-mä** 'It's cold' is more appropriate to expressing a sensation one is experiencing at present.

Abbreviations used in interlinear morpheme glosses

acc	rhematic accent particle སྟེ་ **te** which highlights the preceding higher-level order syntactic constituent, comparable to Nepali त *ta*.
adv	adverb
ak	the suffix པས་ **-bä** ~ བས་ **-wä** of newly acquired knowledge or information
aux	the verbs 'to be' ཨེན་ **'ing** ~ **'in**, ཨེན་པས་ **'immä** or ཨེནམ་ **'im**, used as auxiliary verbs.
con	the ending པའི་སྒང་ **-bigang** ~ **-migang** or བའི་སྒང་ **-wigang** of the continuous present, used in conjunction with the auxiliary verbs ཨེན་ **'ing** and ཨེན་པས་ **'immä**
ctr	particle སྦོ་ **bô** expressing that the proposition is contrary to the speaker's expectations, similar to Nepali पो *po*.
dat	the dative or target case
ep	present tense ending མས་ **-mä** marking the present of just experienced perception
erg	ergative suffix གྱིས་ ~ ཀྱིས་ ~ གིས་ **-g'i**
gen	genitive ending གྱི་ ~ ཀྱི་ ~ གི་ **-g'i**
gn	the gnomic present or nominalised forms in པའི་ **-bi** ~ **-mi** and བའི་ **-wi**
he	hearsay evidential particle ལོ་ **lo**
hon	honorific
inf	infinitive, infinitival ending ནི་ **-ni**
ip	inferred past suffix ནུག་ **-nu**
pf	any of the several markers of the perfective aspect: the intransitive auxiliary སོ་ **so**, the intransitive auxiliary ཆི་ (མཆིས་) **chi**, the transitive auxiliary ད་ **da**, and the perfective auxiliary

ཨོང་ **ong**, which combines uniquely with the perfective stem
of the verb 'to come'

pfg	perfect gerund in ཤིང་ན་ **-shina**
pg	present gerund in ད་ **-d'a**
pl	plural suffix ཚུ་ **-tshu**
pp	past participle in སྟེ་ ~ ཏེ་ ~ དེ་ **-di**
pr	ending དོ་ **-do** marking the progressive tense
pt	witnessed past tense, marked by the suffix ཡི་ **-yi** ~ ཅི་ **-ci**
Q	interrogative particles ག་ **g'a**, གོ་ **g'o** or ན་ **na**
str	stress particle རང་ **ra** highlighting preceding lower-level order syntactic constituent, comparable to Nepali *nai*.
sub	subordinator suffix མི་ **-mi**
u	urging suffix ཤིག་ **-sh**

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