Towards Creating Lexical Hierarchies of 'Daily Life' in Nepali

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Introduction

This paper aims to study the nature of semantic representation of lexical items, and the relations between these representations, especially in the domain of 'Daily Life' in Nepali. The main task is to carry out a systematic analysis of the conceptual relations that exist in 'Daily Life' and organize the lexemes into taxonomic and meronomic hierarchies with all the necessary semantic information. This kind of classification will provide insights of how the native speakers of Nepali categorize the world of their experience which might be of interest to anthropologists, linguists, lexicographers, lexical semanticists and cognitive linguists.

Keywords: *Semantics, Nepali, Hierarchy, Taxonomy, Meronomy.*

This paper describes the hierarchical relations based on Cruse (1986, 2011) in Nepali. Lexemes are devised out of the existing concepts in the language which are culture specific. These lexemes are grouped together according to the semantic similarity and differences. As Langacker (1991) opines that 'concepts only make sense when viewed against the background of certain domains, which are usually themselves concepts of a more general or inclusive nature'. Therefore, this paper studies the hierarchical relations in the semantic domain 'daily life'. Lexemes which are used to represent things in a day to day life of a Nepali household are categorized into a single semantic domain 'Daily Life'. Lexical hierarchies are described within this specific semantic domain for this paper in Nepali.

Nepali is an Indo-Aryan language belonging to the Eastern Pahari group, spoken in Nepal and many parts of India, Bhutan, Brunei, United States by more than 13, 875, 700 people (Simons and Fennig, 2017). The language is known as Eastern Pahadi, Parbatiya (language of the mountaineers), Khas-kura (language of the Khas), Gorkhali (language of the Gorkhas) and Nepali (Grierson, 1916). It is one among the 22 official languages of India and has official language status in the state of Sikkim and West Bengal's Darjeeling district. Nepali population is also significantly distributed in Assam, Uttar Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal, and Himachal Pradesh occupying the rank within first five major languages of the states respectively. Nepali uses Devanagari script, but for analysis, it is transliterated for this paper.

Hierarchies

Hierarchy is a set of items related to one another in a characteristic way. Two structural types of hierarchies are there, those which branch and those which are not capable of branching (Cruse, 1986). This paper only focuses on the branching hierarchies in Nepali.

One of the most important types of paradigmatic structures in the lexicon is the branching hierarchy. In the lines of Cruse (2011), there are two main sorts of lexical hierarchy; taxonomic (or classificatory) hierarchies, in which the relation of dominance is taxonymy and the relation of differentiation is co-taxonymy, and meronomic (or part-whole) hierarchies, in which the relation of dominance is meronymy (or more accurately holonymy) and the relation of differentiation is co-meronymy. Thus, both of the lexical hierarchies are examined in this paper in Nepali.

Taxonomic Hierarchies

Taxonomic hierarchies are essentially classificatory systems, and they reflect the way speakers of a language categorize the world of experience. According to Cruse (2011), a well-formed taxonomy offers an orderly and efficient set of categories at different levels of specificity. A characteristic of taxonomic hierarchies is that they have well-developed levels. The levels become more specific showing the relation of a more general unit to its more specific unit in the given taxonomic hierarchy. A taxonomic hierarchy makes it clear, that, *gar-g ahanaa* 'jewelry' is at the generic level, and *curaa* 'bangles', *maalaa* 'necklace', *lurkaa* 'ear-ring' and *paaijep* 'anklet' are specific, the level develops to *pote,*

one of the types of necklaces in Nepali, and the level further develops to *n augedi* and *tilahari,* the different types of designer necklaces in Nepali, that is, the levels become more and more specific showing the relation of a more general unit to its more specific unit in the given taxonomic hierarchy.

Lexical gaps are not infrequent in taxonomic hierarchies, especially at the generic level. In the lines of Cruse (2011), when there is intuitive or other evidence of the existence of a well-established concept corresponding to the point in the structure where the gap occurs. There is no generic term for 'furniture' in Nepali. But the concept of places to sit or apparatus at home, for purposes of sitting, sleeping, etc. do exist.

Some Taxonomies

This section presents some of the taxonomies, i.e., the taxonomic hierarchies in Nepali. Household equipment is categorized as one of the sub-domains of 'Daily life'. This sub-domain includes the lexemes referring to various equipments used in a Nepali household. A lexical semantic relation between these lexemes has been studied and analyzed to find out the lexical hierarchical relation, specifically the taxonomic relation. Household equipment, as one of the sub-divisions of daily life, includes many things that one uses in a house: items which help keeping the house clean, items which may help the house look good, or to decorate the house, items which provide light to a house, and items which help people use them for sitting, sleeping etc. are used in a day to day life of any household. So, a household has things with which to clean, decorate, light, furnish and so on.

The speakers easily understand the concept of furniture, as there are different items and lexemes expressing those items, as is the usage of furniture. But to come up with what is that one generic term which may refer to all the specific items used as furniture puts the mind of the speakers in dilemma. With an attempt to come up with a word or a phrase for 'furniture', the speakers provided a phrase in Nepali, i.e., *kaatt[h]ko saamaan* 'wooden material' with an idea that furniture are mostly carved out of wood. If the generic term for furniture is placed as 'wooden material/ thing', it may not be sufficient as there could be many more things carved out of wood in a household other than

furniture, and a chair or a table may not necessarily be made out of wood. Therefore, this attempt proves faulty. Nevertheless, many items are made up of wooden material at a home which may belong to the category furniture. Still, coining 'wooden material' to suffice for 'furniture' does not seem correct. Hence, the generic term for 'furniture' is missing in Nepali, while the specific items, i.e., the taxonyms of furniture certainly exist.

The taxonomic hierarchy of 'things to sit on' in Nepali could be one way of showing the availability of items used for sitting purposes, which somehow may present an idea about the availability of furniture like items. *basne tt*ʰ*aãu* 'sitting place' or 'place to sit' if mentioned, not only many different items are thought for that use, but people may find places to sit anywhere one likes. However, there are various items used for the purposes of sitting. *kursi* 'chair', along with other taxonyms, may be offered when guests arrive at home, so it is a common item to sit on. Especially in villages, it is usually kept on the verandah so people can sit outside and socialize with each other. *benci* 'bench' is a borrowed term (as can be seen in its gloss 'bench') and is nativized, again it is an item used for the purpose of sitting. *piraa* 'small wooden stool' is usually used in the kitchen for the purpose of sitting. People eat sitting on a *piraa* 'small wooden stool', though these days dining tables have replaced them but still *piraa* is a common thing to sit on in a Nepali kitchen. *mudaa* 'stool made of bamboo' is a very common item available in a Nepali household. In a house, if the number of people gathered, are more than the number of chairs to sit on, *mudaa* is easily passed on so the people have places to sit. *kʰaatt* 'bed' is also used for the purpose of sitting, mostly with the people in close relation or acquaintance, and *kʰaatt* 'bed' in the villages is kept out on the courtyard for people to sit and chat.

dari 'mat' is also used as an item which is a place to sit. Therefore, 'mat' and 'rug' may be seen as the co-taxonyms of chair, bed, stools etc., though they seem a little different from the rest of the items in the group, but as the idea is 'items to sit on' mat and the like are inclusive as well. Usually, *dari* 'mat' is used in gatherings where people need to sit on the floor, like in rituals, or gatherings of the sort. *gundri* 'rug' is made of hay and is spread on the bed or on the floor when required for people to sit. There are other small items handcrafted out of hay or corn's hay for sitting purposes as well in a Nepali household. Though these crafts are limited to villages these days, where agriculture,

farming or dairy farming is their main source of income, these are mostly created out of hobby. So, these can be seen as additional seating arrangements.

A Nepali *gʰarko saamaan* 'household thing' may include many things which are required in a house. Items with which one manages to keep the household clean are, *kuco* 'broom', *jʰaadu* 'broom', *mailaa uttʰaaune* 'dustpan', *lattaa* 'mop', *ttaalo* 'mop', and *mailaa pʰyãakne dabbaa* 'garbage bin'. Two different types of brooms are used, that is, *kuco* 'broom' (which is made out of different straw or hay like plants) is used for sweeping the plain surfaces, mostly the inside of the house, and *jʰaadu* 'broom' (which is made out of bamboo or coconut) is used to sweep the rough surface, or mostly the outside of the house, like yards etc.*lattaa* 'mop' is a piece of cloth used for mopping, whereas *ttaalo* 'mop' is just any piece of cloth which can be used for purposes like dusting as well as mopping. Garbage can be thrown in many items, for instance there can be a *mailaa pʰyãakne baaltti* 'garbage bucket', *mailaa pʰyãakne bastaa* 'garbage sack', or *mailaa pʰyãakne ddabbaa* 'garbage bin'.

To decorate, a Nepali household has fewer ways other than planting flowers outside the house. Still people may décor a house with many things like a photo frame, souvenirs like *kʰukuri*, decorative like *jʰallari* 'wall hangings', *pʰul daani* 'flower vase', and *bʰitte paatro* 'calendar'. It should be brought to notice that there is no specific term to express decorative in Nepali. Phrases such as*sajaaune saamaan*, *sajjaa vastu* 'decor things', or *gʰar sajaaune saamaan* 'house decor things' may express the idea of 'things with which to decorate a house', but these are just compounded phrases to express the idea. A taxonomic hierarchy of the decorative in Nepali is a 'kind of' relation, i.e., *jʰallari* 'wall hangings', *pʰul daani* 'flower vase' and *bʰitte paatro* 'calendar' are the kinds of things that are used to decorate a house, which means they are the taxonyms, having the relation of co-taxonymy among each other, and the phrases as *gʰar sajaaune saamaan* 'house decorative items' is more generic, hence, a superordinate of the already mentioned taxonyms.

When things which provide *batti* 'light' in a house is to be looked into, there are a few different sized and different shaped lamps which are used in a Nepali household, apart from the normal lighting system available in houses these days. Anything which can be lit is a *batti* 'light' in Nepali, be it a small lamp, or be it a *baati* 'cotton thread which is

used to light'. These are usually referred as *batti* probably for they provide light. If different types of lamps, or the kind is to be looked into, there are a few types; *kupi* is a type of a metal 'lamp' long in shape, *dʰibri* is also a type of 'lamp' which is used to provide light, *laalttin* 'lantern' which is a borrowed form, these items are mostly used in villages as in urban areas people have candles or rechargeable lights when the electricity is scarce. Apart from that there is *diyo* which is a small 'lamp' made of mud traditionally, and used mostly for ritualistic purpose, i.e., a *diyo* is lit daily during the morning or evening prayer in a Hindu household or during festive occasions, specially diwali, the festival of lights.

The main storage and source of water in a Nepali household is *kuãa* 'well'. To store water outside a house *ddʰwaang* ' drum' is used. *caubaaco* is a 'cemented storage for water' which has four corners and is a walled area to store water. Other than that, *baaltti* 'bucket' is used to store water in a household. In a Nepali kitchen, *maattoko gaagro* 'jar made out of mud' is used to store drinking water which helps the water remain cool during summers. Similarly, there are jars made out of different metals for similar purposes, i.e., to store water, keep it cool, and keep it hygienic for drinking purpose, and those are *taamaako gʰailaa* 'bronze jar' and *pittalko gʰailaa* 'copper jar'. A *ketli* 'kettle' and a *ttau* 'a deep pan' may also be used to store water in the kitchen.

Food is the basic necessity for all living beings, and every language or culture has the basic concept of food. This part of the section discusses food and the related lexemes in Nepali. A few words or phrases such as *kʰaanaa* 'food', *kʰaanu* 'to eat', *kʰaanaa pakaaunu* 'to cook food', *kʰaanaa pakaaune tarikaa* 'cooking methods' etc. in the language will help understand the concept 'food' in Nepali.

There are various kinds of cooking methods involved while cooking a meal in any culture. *bʰuttnu* 'to fry', *taarnu* 'to deep fry', *seknu / polnu* 'to roast', *bapʰyaaunu* 'to steam', *umaalnu* 'to boil', *pakaaunu* 'to cook', *sãadʰnu* 'to mix', *ddʰakane* 'to cover and cook for long', *tataaunu* 'to heat', *jʰol paarnu* 'to make it soupy', *tyun-tarkaari* 'vegetable curry' etc. are the different ways or kinds in which a Nepali household cooks. Before one starts cooking, there are a lot of preparations for it involved. Table 1 provides a sample list the lexemes or phrases showing the kinds of preparations required before cooking in Nepali.

Table 1

'cooking preparations' in Nepali

Nepali	Gloss
taasnu	'to peel'
cʰilnu	'to peel'
kʰurkinu	'to scrape and remove shell or skin'
kuttnu	'to pound'
tʰicnu	'to pound'
dagalcyaaunu	'to pound'
pisnu	'to grind'
gunnu	'to knead'
mucʰnu	'to mash'
kornu	'to grate'
kaattnu	'to cut'

Nepali	Gloss
pʰaalaa paarnu	'to make halves'
ttukdaa paarnu	'to make pieces'
kelaaunu	'to shell'

Table 1 lists many of the processes involved before cooking in the language under study. There are three expressions for 'to pound' in Nepali. Beetle nut or anything which is hard in texture is pounded with *kuttnu* as the usage, and for *aduwaa* 'ginger' the words *tʰicnu* or *dagalcyaaunu* are used. *tʰicnu* or *dagalcyaaunu* is specifically used for a specific way of pounding, where *tʰicnu* is a kind of pounding which is pressed more and longer, and *dagalcyaaunu* is a kind of pounding which is used specifically for *aduwaa* 'ginger', where it is pressed harder and while pressing the pestle is moved side to side.

A beetle nut can be (*pʰaalaa paarnu* 'to make halves') made into halves, or (*ttukdaa paarnu* 'to make pieces') made pieces of, so can many vegetables, which are round or alike in shape, be cut into halves or cut into pieces. *pisnu* 'to grind' is used when the things need to be ground, such as *gãhu* 'wheat' is ground to get the *aãttaa* 'flour'. *cattani* 'chutney', *masalaa* 'spices' such as *jiraa* 'cumin seeds', *dʰaniyaa* 'coriander' or *hardi* 'turmeric' are also ground with the usage *pisnu* 'to grind' .

aã ttaa 'flour' *gunnu* 'to knead' is a process to make a dough out of the flour and after it is ready, it is left for a while so it soaks up the process of kneading well, and right before the process to make *rotti* 'chapati', it is kneaded again, and then it is called *maadnu* 'to knead'. It should be noticed that for the same function as 'kneading the flour', two different lexemes are used, which is according to the stage the process of ongoing preparation. But it must be mentioned that the way to knead changes in both the stages, hence, two different expressions and different lexemes.

Meronomic Hierarchies

The second major type of lexical hierarchy is the meronomy (sometimes called partonomy), in which the relation of dominance is holonymy, and the relation of difference is co-meronomy. Probably the most familiar of the extensive meronomies is the segmental version of the human body as seen from the outside, but this paper studies the semantic domain 'daily life', the examples also are limited to it.

In the lines of Cruse (2011) lack of clear generalised levels is what differentiates taxonomy from meronomy. For this reason there seems to be no equivalent to the basic level of taxonomy, no unmarked level of specificity independent of context. In meronomy, the beginner is lexicalised, unlike in a taxonomic hierarchy. However, gaps occur and often in a characteristic position: most times, the main functional part has no name, speakers find it confusing and may feel embarrassed if they are asked to supply it. For instance, speakers find it confusing if asked for a word for the part of the *ketli* 'kettle' to which the *ttutti* 'spout', *bĩd* 'handle' are attached.

Meronomic hierarchy (part-whole relation) of *ketli* 'kettle' in Nepali (*ketli* is a borrowed term but its usage in a Nepali household is very common) makes it clear that *ketli* 'kettle' has*ttutti* 'spout', *bĩd* 'handle' as its parts. So,*ketli* 'kettle' is the holonym and *ttutti* 'spout' and *bĩd* 'handle' are the meronyms, which are as well the co-meronyms. To see if there is a gap, speakers of the language were asked to give a word for only the body of the kettle excluding the handle and the spout, but there was a confused reaction, slowly the speakers came up with *jiu* 'body' and ended with a conclusion, that, it is the kettle itself. Which means, some apparently accidental gaps are found. The speakers, however, with the confusion and the difficulty, when asked to name a certain specific part of a whole, which may have no name for it, took it as a body of a particular item and named it as a whole. It can either be the case of accidental gaps, or a case of automeronomy (term adopted from Cruse 2011), which is relatively rare.

Another example of it would be a meronomic hierarchical structure of 'frying pan' is seen in line with a meronomic hierarchical structure of a kettle. A speaker if asked to differentiate the parts of *karaai* 'frying pan', the most common answer would be the body of the pan (which is*karaai* 'frying pan' itself) and its handle which is called *kaan* meaning 'ear' (which could be because of its shape).

Some Meronomies

This section presents some of the meronomies, i.e., the meronomic hierarchical structures in the semantic domain, 'daily life' in Nepali. Household equipment may include furniture and furniture may include table, chair etc., and the table or chair may have its parts, for instance, a chair may have its arms or legs. The analysis looks at the existing lexical relations, specifically meronomic relations between the lexemes in daily life as already discussed. Examples are shown justifying the lexical hierarchies to show the meronomic relations, which may help the reader understand the language better.

People stay in a house, and in their daily lives what all part of it is seen or used is looked into in this section. Nepali houses have a kitchen and a store room which are important parts of the house – , the store room is used to store the grains and the supply of the eatables for the family. Prayer room is equally important. If in cases a house does not have a separate prayer room, there definitely remains a separated area for prayer which is called *pujaako tʰaan. baittʰak* 'drawing room' is where the guests are entertained. In villages, in a more informal environment, guests are offered chairs etc. in the verandah to sit and chat. *ttungsigʰar* is the 'attic' which can be reached from the inside of the house with the help of the *bʰareng* 'staircase' which usually is within a room, leading to the attic. A sample word list of parts of house in Nepali is provided in Table 2.

Table 2

'parts of house' in Nepali

Nepali	Gloss
gʰar	'house'
pujaako tʰaan	'prayer alter'
pujaa kottʰaa	prayer room

Nepali	Gloss
caukaa	'kitchen'
bʰã́ daar	'store room'
baittʰak	'drawing room'
sutne kottʰaa	'bedroom'
ttungsigʰar	'attic'
paaikʰaanaa *gosalkʰaanaa*	'toilet' 'bathroom'
jʰyaal	'window'
ddʰokaa	'door'
ãã́ kʰijʰyaal	'ventilation'
cʰaanaa	'roof'
kʰã́ ãbo	'pillar'

A partial meronomic hierarchy of a house is discussed in this section. A *gʰar* 'house' may have different rooms and areas which may be considered as parts of the house. Therefore, *gʰar* 'house' is the holonym, and the different rooms or areas a house consists, are the meronyms. For instance, *pujaa kottʰaa* 'prayer room',*sutne kottʰaa* 'bedroom', *baittʰak* 'drawing room', *caukaa* 'kitchen', *bʰãdaar* 'store room' and *gosalkʰaanaa* 'bathroom' are the meronyms of a house, and these different parts of a house are co-meronyms to each other. Likewise, if a *kottʰaa* 'room' is seen as a holonym, the different parts of it will be it's meronym, i.e., *jʰyaal* 'window', *ããkʰijʰyaal* 'ventilation', *ddʰokaa* 'door',*cʰaanaa* 'roof', *kʰããbo* 'pillar' and *bʰittaa* 'wall' are the different parts which make up a complete whole, i.e., a *kottʰaa* 'room'.

Clothing is an integral part of most of the cultures. A sample wordlist of the same in Nepali is provided in Table 3, followed by a discussion on meronomic hierarchical structure of traditional women's and men's wear'.

Table 8

'clothing' in Nepali

Nepali	Gloss
lugaa pʰaatto	'clothing'
dauraa suruwaal	'men's wear' (traditional)
dauraa	'men's upper wear'
suruwaal	'men's lower wear'
pattuki	'belt'

Nepali	Gloss
gunyu colo	'women's wear' (traditional)
gunyu	'sari'
colo	'blouse'
kamij	'shirt'
ttopi	'hat'

gunyu colo is a women's wear which is usually gifted to a girl by her mother (or women folks at home or in the family) when she becomes eight years old, or in some cases if she reaches her puberty, i.e., when she goes through the menstrual cycle for the first time. Traditionally, it is introduced with a ritual (*gauri pujaa*), as a women's clothing to the girl. Though *gunyu* means 'sari' and *colo* means 'blouse' it is still called *gunyu colo* for this specific occasion. The different parts of *gunyu-colo* includes a *pettikott* 'petticoat', *gunyu* 'sari', *colo* 'blouse', *pattuki* 'belt' and *majetro* 'shawl', i.e., there are the meronyms of the holonym *gunyu colo*. Likewise, for boys, when they go through the *janai* 'holy thread' bearing ceremony (*bartamaan*) (which is followed by the people who follow the varna system), traditionally takes place before a boy reaches his puberty, an estimated age being between the age of seven till the age of twelve, he is gifted with many goods along with *dʰoti,* hence, now on he is formally introduced to a formal clothing for men. One of the traditional men's wear in Nepali is *dauraa-suruwaal* which if taken as a holonym, it's meronyms would be *bʰotto* 'vest', *dauraa* 'upper wear', *suruwaal* 'lower wear', *pattuki* 'belt', *aaskott* 'waist coat' and *ttopi* 'hat'. Though, 'hat' may not be a part of *dauraa-suruwaal*, it definitely is a part of men's traditional wear and without a Nepali *ttopi*, the traditional clothing will not be thought of as complete.

This paper concludes here, for the nature of semantic representation of lexical items and the relations between these representations within 'daily life' has been discussed with the given examples and their analysis, showing a systematic analysis of the conceptual relations existing in 'daily life' along with organization of the lexemes into taxonomic & meronymic hierarchies, where it is seen how these lexemes are categorized and arranged in Nepali. Hope the classification this paper provides with the insights of how the native speakers of Nepali categorize the world of their experience initiates interest initiates interest for further research by anthropologists, linguists, lexicographers, lexical semanticists and cognitive linguists.

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