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## Himalayan Linguistics

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*Another look at storyline marking in Sherpa narrative*

**David E. Greninger**  
SIL International

### ABSTRACT

The storyline clauses of a narrative push a story forward through time while supportive clauses slow down or stop the temporal movement of a story. This distinction between the functions of event clauses and non-event clauses in narrative discourse has been studied in various languages around the world.

This paper applies a textlinguistics approach to discourse to describe the morpho-syntactic and lexico-semantic features that distinguish types of storyline clauses from types of supportive material in five Sherpa personal experience narratives. Once the storyline markers are described, I then compare my results with Schöttelndreyer's (1978) study of storyline in Sherpa. Based on this comparison, I suggest a reevaluation of Schöttelndreyer's classification of personal experience narratives. While Schöttelndreyer suggests that there are four personal experience narrative genres each normally characterized by one storyline marker, the analysis presented in this paper leads to the conclusion that the norm is for personal experience narratives to exhibit multiple storyline markers with each marker performing a different evidential or attitudinal function rather than representing a primary indicator of genre.

### KEYWORDS

Sherpa, narrative structure, storyline, genre theory, textlinguistics

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# *Another look at storyline marking in Sherpa narrative<sup>1</sup>*

**David E. Greninger**  
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## **1 Introduction**

In narrative discourse, storyline<sup>2</sup> clauses (events) push a story forward through time while supportive clauses (non-events) slow down or stop the temporal movement of a story. This distinction between events and non-events has been studied in English narrative by Labov and Waletzky (1967), Labov (1972), Grimes (1975), Longacre (1976, 1989, 1996), Hopper (1979, 1982, 1995), Hopper and Thompson (1980) and Polanyi (1989). A number of publications have also demonstrated the usefulness of distinguishing between storyline and supportive material in other languages (e.g. Grimes ed. 1978, Jones and Jones 1979, Somsonge 1991, 1992 and 2002, Jirel 1999, Arisawa 2006, etc.).

This paper describes the morpho-syntactic and lexico-semantic features that distinguish types of storyline clauses from types of supportive material in five Sherpa personal experience narratives. Following Longacre's (1996) textlinguistics approach to discourse analysis, storyline clauses are defined as events that are: 1. Substantive (new information), 2. Narrative (events within a storyworld as opposed to evaluative intrusion by the storyteller), 3. Realis (as opposed to irrealis), 4. Dynamic (events in the storyworld rather than storyworld states), 5. Sequential (in chronological order), and 6. Punctiliar (as opposed to durative). Storyline clauses can include one of four event verb types: 1. Action (volitional and conscious events) 2. Motion (describes the movement of participants from one place to another) 3. Cognitive event (cognitive experiences that are communicated by verbs such as realize), and 4. Contingency (non-volitional) (Longacre 1993: 3, 1996: 23–27).

Once the storyline markers are described, I compare my results with Schöttelndreyer's (1978) study of storyline in Sherpa. Based on this comparison, I will suggest a reevaluation of Schöttelndreyer's classification of personal experience narratives. While Schöttelndreyer suggests that there are four personal experience narrative genres each normally characterized by one storyline marker, the analysis presented in this paper leads to the conclusion that the norm is for personal experience narratives to exhibit multiple storyline markers with each marker performing a different evidential or attitudinal function rather than representing a primary indicator of genre.

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1 This paper is a revision of portions of my MA thesis entitled *Aspects of discourse prominence in Solu Sherpa oral stories of personal experience*. This thesis can be download from the Payap University website: [http://ic.payap.ac.th/graduate/linguistics/theses/David\\_Greninger\\_Thesis.pdf](http://ic.payap.ac.th/graduate/linguistics/theses/David_Greninger_Thesis.pdf). I would like to thank Tom Tehan, Carla Bartsch, Christy Greninger and two anonymous reviewers for taking the time to read this paper and for giving helpful input.

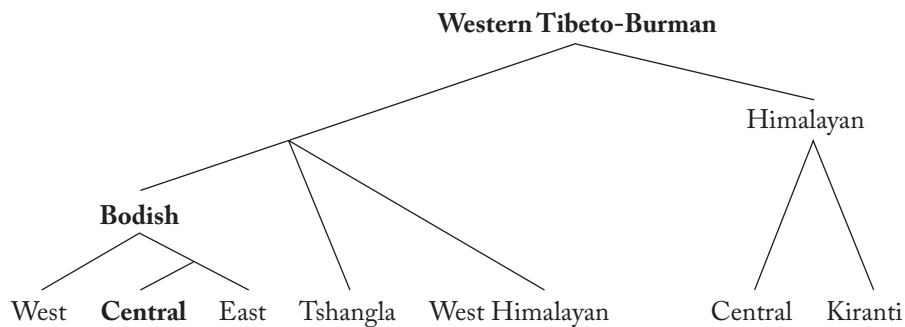
2 Storyline (i.e. the mainline of a narrative) has also been referred to as: the main time line, foreground, eventline and backbone by various researchers.

## 2 Language Background

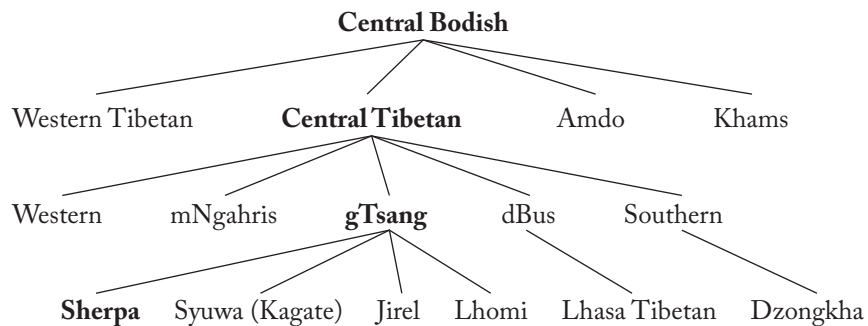
Sherpa is a Tibeto-Burman language of Nepal. It is classified as a Central Bodish language in the Western branch of Tibeto-Burman. Central Bodish can be further subdivided into Western Tibetan, Central Tibetan, Amdo (North-Eastern) and Khams (South-Eastern). Based on this classification, Sherpa is in the gTsang cluster of Central Tibetan (Bradley 1997: 2–3, 5–6, 52–53).

It is believed that the Sherpa people migrated from the Kham area in eastern Tibet to the Mt. Everest region in eastern Nepal about 500 years ago (Ortner 1992: 4). Their autonym *sherwa* (Tibetan *sherpa*), which means ‘people of the east’, reflects this belief (Fisher 1990: 55).

According to the 2001 Nepal census, there are 129,771 mother-tongue speakers of Sherpa. They primarily live in the mountainous districts surrounding Mt. Everest at elevations between 8,500 and 14,500 feet (approximately 2600–4000 meters), and are most concentrated in the Solu-Khumbu district. However, a sizable number of Sherpas have migrated into the central hills of Nepal, to the capital district of Kathmandu (Ortner 1992: 4, Lee 2003: 81, Gurung, Gurung, and Chidi 2006: 84–85).



**Figure 1. Western Tibeto-Burman (after Bradley 1997: 3, 52–54)**



**Figure 2. Sherpa and some of its close relatives (after Bradley 1997: 5–6)**

Lee maintains that there are four main dialects of Sherpa: North (Khumbu area of Solu-Khumbu district), Central (Solu area of Solu-Khumbu district), West (Ramechhap and Dolakha districts) and East (dialects east of Solu-Khumbu district) (Sang Yong Lee p.c., 2009).<sup>3</sup> The dialect of Sherpa analyzed in this paper is the Central (Solu) dialect as it is spoken near Salleri, the Solu-Khumbu district headquarters.

<sup>3</sup> Lee previously described Sherpa as having three main dialects: South (Solu), East (Khumbu), and West (Ramechhap and Dolakha districts) (2004: 3).

A number of researchers have studied aspects of the Sherpa language. The analysis presented in this paper is influenced by the grammatical descriptions found in Schöttelndreyer (1975) and Kelly (2004). Other recent studies on Sherpa include: Watters (2002), Lee (2003 and 2004), Graves (2007), Sherpa (2009), Greninger (2009) and Tournadre, Sherpa, Chodrak, and Oisel (2009).

### 3 Data

The text corpus analyzed in this paper includes five oral personal experience stories recorded on various trips to Nepal between November 2005 and May 2008.<sup>4</sup> They are labeled BATTLE, BEAR, MRKT, RAT and SICK.<sup>5</sup> The full interlinearized texts can be found in the appendix of my MA thesis downloadable from the Payap University Linguistics Department website. In the five texts, a double plus sign (++) indicates a very long pause, a single plus sign (+) a long pause, a double hyphen (–) a medium pause, and a comma in the first line (,) indicates a short pause. Each text has a different range of meaningful pauses. The pause groupings were determined based on the concentration of pauses within a certain range of pause lengths. Following Kelly (2004), only high and low tones are marked in the transcription scheme. In this paper, a raised 2 after the root indicates high tone and a raised 1 indicates low tone. Copulas and clause final particles do not seem to carry their own tone. Tone also is not marked on borrowings and proper names.<sup>6</sup>

These five texts can be classified as *conversational oral stories of personal experience* based on a bundle of obligatory features and generic tendencies.<sup>7</sup> Features that all five texts share are labeled *obligatory* features. Characteristics that are held in common by three or four of the five texts are called *generic tendencies*. Features that only one or two stories possess are considered optional features. These *optional* features are quite numerous. The label *conversational oral stories of personal experience* is extracted from three generic features as well as the universal discourse type. The universal discourse type is *narrative story*;<sup>8</sup> thus this genre is a group of *stories*. The mode of representation for all the texts is oral prose, thus the description of *oral*. The source from which the content of

4 I am thankful to Mr. Kami Sherpa, Mr. Pemba Sherpa and Mr. Sange Sherpa who allowed me to record and analyze their stories.

5 Text Corpus Statistics: SICK - 3 min 20 sec, 87 clauses, 34 sentences; RAT - 3 min 57 sec, 104 clauses, 53 sentences; MRKT - 4 min 22 sec, 129 clauses, 60 sentences; BATTLE - 4 min 14 sec, 118 clauses, 49 sentences; BEAR - 5 min 47 sec, 170 clauses, 62 sentences; TOTALS - 21 min 40 sec, 608 clauses, 258 sentences.

6 According to H. Schöttelndreyer (1971: 4–5) multi-syllabic words exhibit contrastive tone contours across syllables (rising or falling). However, Watters (2002: 39) states that only 40 of the 1000 words he studied exhibit a rising tone throughout a word. The majority have a falling pitch. Sherpa (2009: 65) summarizes, “There are some differences among the different tone analys[es], but all of them agree that there are two different tones: high and low. As a native speaker, based on my intuition and from [my] study, I have found two clear tones – high and low for each word.”

7 See Greninger (2009: 82, 99–101, 242–249) for more information on the classification of the texts described in this paper.

8 Longacre defines a *narrative story* as a discourse exhibiting *contingent temporal succession* and *agent orientation*, but lacking *projection*. He states that “Contingent temporal succession refers to a framework of temporal succession in which some (often most) of the events or doings are contingent on previous events or doings. Agent orientation refers to orientation towards agents...with at least a partial identity of agent reference running through the discourse.” With regard to the concept of projection, Longacre explains: “Projection has to do with a situation or action which is contemplated, enjoined, or anticipated, but not realized. Thus, narrative as a broad category can be subdivided into prophecy, which is plus projection, versus story, history, etc., which are minus projection, i.e., the events are represented as having already taken place” (Longacre 1996: 8–10).

each story comes is the narrator’s memory of his personal experience, thus the description *personal experience*. In each story, the storyteller is both an actor and observer, and so the descriptions ‘first person narrative’ and ‘third person narrative’ are avoided. Finally, the real world occasion in which each story was told was a conversational context in which dialogue occurs before, in some cases during, and after the story. This conversational context is not fully captured by the recording of the story monologue, but there are many indicators nonetheless. This conversational context therefore means that the stories warrant the label of *conversational*. This label of conversational also points to the rhetorical goals of the stories, to please the researcher and entertain the audience, which are interactional and seem to indicate the storyteller’s desire to increase the relational solidarity between himself and the audience, including the researcher.

This approach to textual classification is based on current genre theory, which sees a genre as a group of texts that share ‘family resemblances’ and evoke a set of expectations for language users that guide the production and interpretation of texts. From this perspective, genres are not rigid categories, but rather groups with fuzzy boundaries (Burridge 2004: 40–41, Dubrow 1982: 31, Fowler 1982, Kearns 2005: 201–205).

#### 4 Summary of Information Types

The goal of this paper is to describe the grammatical features of Solu Sherpa that: 1. Mark the clauses that perform the function of moving a story forward along a timeline, and 2. Mark the various types of clauses that do not perform this function. The terms ‘information type’ and ‘band of information’ are used rather than Longacre’s term ‘band of salience’ to make explicit that these information types are not viewed as levels of cognitive salience, but, rather as levels of importance to the line of structural thematic prominence that pushes a story forward through time (cf. Dry 1992). However, the numbering system is based on Longacre’s etic salience scheme for ease of reference and comparison with other work.

1' . Pivotal Storyline (augmentation of 1)
1. Primary Storyline
2. Secondary Storyline
3. Routine (script-predictable action sequences)
4. Backgrounded actions/events
5. Backgrounded activity (durative)
6. Setting (exposition)
7. Irrealis (negatives and modals)
8. Evaluations (storyteller intrusions)
9. Cohesive and thematic

**Table 1. Longacre’s etic salience scheme for narrative (adapted from Longacre 1996: 28)**

A preliminary analysis of information types in the five Sherpa texts reveals eight supportive information types and one storyline band. The information types are ordered from most structurally important to least structurally important. Here levels of importance are linked with Hopper and Thompson’s (1980) “Transitivity Parameters” (cf. Longacre 1996: 24).

#	Info Type	Surface Marking
1	Storyline	Characterized by one of the following patterns in a main clause: 1. An event verb with a past stem, impersonal suffix, and the attitude particle <i>dza</i> , 2. An event verb with a past verb stem and a past Dj inferential evidential <sup>9</sup> <i>-nok</i> , 3. An event verb with a past verb stem and a past Cj direct knowledge evidential <i>-in</i> , 4. An event verb with a past verb stem and an evidential value of past Dj direct knowledge (i.e. the verb <i>gal</i> <sup>1</sup> ‘go.PST.Dj.Dir’, or verbs with <i>-suj</i> ), 5. Non-events (activities, stative verbs, and copulas) that have been promoted to the storyline by context or a temporal phrase.
2	Flashback A	1. Event verbs marked with the past Dj inferential evidential suffix <i>-nok</i> that are indicated as chronologically out-of-sequence based on discourse context, and thus demoted from the storyline, 2. Events that are chronologically out-of-sequence, which have been demoted from the storyline by discourse context alone.
3	Background Actions	1. The past stem of an event verb with the converb suffix <sup>10</sup> <i>-ni/-n</i> , 2. The unmarked past stem of an event verb, which acts as a converb without having an overt converb suffix.
4	Flashback B	1. Background actions demoted to flashback by being chronologically out-of-sequence.
5	Background Activities	1. A non-past stem activity with the converb suffix <i>-ni/-n</i> , 2. An activity with a form of the impersonal suffix <i>-(u)(p)</i> , 3. An activity marked with the continuous aspect suffix <i>-in</i> , 4. Activities marked with the imperfective aspect suffix <i>-ki</i> and evidential <i>-nok</i> , 5. Non-past stem activity with <i>-nok</i> , 6. Repetition of an activity in a medial clause with <i>-ni</i> , 7. An activity with the continuous suffix <i>-in</i> followed by a copula, 8. An activity marked with the continuous aspect suffix <i>-dok</i> , 9. An event verb demoted by a habitual adverb.
6	Setting	1. Copulas, e.g. <i>jin</i> , <i>we</i> , <i>nok</i> , 2. Stative verbs, e.g. <i>sir<sup>1</sup>up</i> ‘to call’. 3. Stative verbs indicating new information, which have been subordinated into a relative clause by a form of the impersonal suffix,
7	Irrealis	1. Material demoted by quote frame (direct and indirect), 2. Material demoted by negation, 3. Modal verbs, 4. Material demoted through subordination in a purpose clause.
8	Evaluation	Demotion in which: 1. The storyteller asks a hypothetical question expressing attitudes, 2. The storyteller gives a hypothetical situation expressing attitudes, 3. The storyteller makes a statement expressing attitudes.
9	Cohesive Material	1. Clauses with verbs indicating old information subordinated by adverbs such as <i>sima<sup>1</sup></i> ‘after’, <i>bel<sup>1</sup>/t<sup>h</sup>ola<sup>1</sup></i> ‘at that time’, and suffixes such as <i>-sij</i> ‘if/when’, 2. Relative clauses with a form of the impersonal suffix that communicates old information, 3. Demoted by being a repeated state of affairs in a main clause.

**Table 2. A classification of clausal information types in the Sherpa texts**

9 Sherpa has three evidentials that imply past tense and perfective aspect: *-in*, *-suj* and *-nok*. A fourth evidential *-wi* implies present or future tense (Kelly 2004: 249–253).

10 When the converb suffix is attached to the past stem of an event verb, the change of state is construed as perfective and thus a background action, but when the converb suffix attaches to the non-past stem of an event verb, the change



The next nine sections exemplify the nine information types starting with the least structurally important type, cohesive material.

## 5 Cohesive Material

The cohesive material in the texts primarily takes three forms: 1. A clause with previously stated information or script determined (i.e. culturally predictable) information that has been subordinated by means of an adverb such as *sima*<sup>1</sup> ‘after’ or *bela*<sup>1</sup> ‘at that time’, 2. A main clause that repeats material that was presented earlier in the text, and 3. A relative clause with a form of the impersonal suffix that communicates old information. Examples (1) and (2) show cohesive material in a subordinate adverbial clause. In sentence BEAR 020, the text says that the storyteller’s father was drinking liquor. In the first part of sentence BEAR 021, this activity is repeated in a clause subordinated by the adverb *sima*<sup>1</sup> ‘after’.

### (1) BEAR 020

*te*<sup>1</sup> -*wa*, *tiŋ*<sup>1</sup>*la*, *tum*<sup>1</sup> *ti*<sup>1</sup> -- *ŋira*<sup>2</sup>, *pala*, *ti*<sup>1</sup> -*ki*, *tuko*<sup>1</sup>, *tʃ*<sup>h</sup>..., *tʃ*<sup>h</sup>*aŋ*  
there -from after bear that -- 1pl.GEN father that -GEN like.that HES rice.beer  
*arak*<sup>2</sup>, *ts*<sup>h</sup>*e* *ts*<sup>h</sup>*e*, *t*<sup>h</sup>*uŋ* -*wu* *ti*<sup>1</sup> -- *ti*<sup>1</sup> *bela*<sup>1</sup>, *ti*<sup>1</sup> *aaa*,  
liquor a.little.bit a.little.bit drink -IMS that -- that time.when(N) that VerPs  
*mwe* - *gje* -*la*, *k*<sup>h</sup>*u*..., *k*<sup>h</sup>*u*..., *k*<sup>h</sup>*u*... *k*<sup>h</sup>*aŋba*<sup>1</sup> -*ne* *wuŋg*<sup>1</sup> -*up* *mi*<sup>2</sup>, *ti*<sup>1</sup> -*ki*  
down - place -for HES HES HES house -from come -IMS person that -GEN  
*arak*<sup>2</sup> *k*<sup>h</sup>*un*<sup>2</sup> *wa*<sup>1</sup> -*wu* -*nok*  
liquor carry come -IMS -PST.Dj.Infer

‘And then after that, our father was drinking some rice beer and liquor which at that time had been brought by those who came from the house down there.’

### (2) BEAR 021

*ma*<sup>1</sup>, *te*<sup>1</sup> *arak*<sup>2</sup> *ti*<sup>1</sup>, *t*<sup>h</sup>*u*<sup>1</sup> *sima*<sup>1</sup> *ma*<sup>1</sup> -- *ŋira*<sup>2</sup>, *pala*<sup>2</sup>, *ti*<sup>1</sup>  
and.then there liquor that **drink after** and.then -- 1pl.GEN father that  
*ŋir**mu*<sup>1</sup> *kja*<sup>1</sup> -*ni* --  
angry do.PST -CONV --

‘And **after drinking** the liquor, our father became angry...’

Example (4) illustrates the appearance of cohesive material in a main clause. The storyline information introduced in (3), ‘we all ate potato pancakes’, is repeated in (4).

---

of state is construed as imperfective and thus a background activity. However, the distinction between non-past and past stems has not yet been documented for most Sherpa verbs. Therefore, it is not always clear if a background change of state is perfective or imperfective. Where the past and non-past stems are distinguishable they are glossed as ‘PST’ and ‘NPST’ respectively.



(3) SICK 007-008

*ŋiraŋ*<sup>2</sup> + *devid k<sup>h</sup>risti ts<sup>h</sup>eriŋ ŋiraŋ<sup>2</sup> teri<sup>2</sup> =ki -- rikikur<sup>2</sup>*  
 1pl.excl + David Christy Tshering 1pl.excl every =ERG -- **potato.pancake**

*so*<sup>1</sup> **-wu dza** + *ŋje<sup>1</sup> rikikur<sup>2</sup> ŋi<sup>2</sup> so<sup>1</sup> -in* + + TTT  
**eat.PST -IMS NegAtt** + 1sg.ERG potato.pancake two eat.PST -PST.Cj.Dir + + TTT

‘We, David, Christy, Tshering, **we all ate potato pancakes**. I ate two potato pancakes....  
 [storyteller and audience commentary]...’

(4) SICK 009

*gomu*<sup>1</sup> =*la ti<sup>1</sup> riki<sup>1</sup> tso<sup>2</sup> so<sup>1</sup>, tama<sup>1</sup> ti<sup>1</sup> tiŋ<sup>1</sup>la rikikur<sup>2</sup> so<sup>1</sup>* +  
 night =DAT that potato cook eat.PST and.then that after **potato.pancake eat.PST** +

*tama<sup>1</sup>, ŋje<sup>1</sup> ŋi<sup>2</sup>, devid =ki ŋi<sup>2</sup>, k<sup>h</sup>risti ŋi<sup>2</sup>* + + TTT *k<sup>h</sup>risti ŋi<sup>2</sup> ts<sup>h</sup>eriŋ ŋi<sup>2</sup>*  
 and.then 1sg.ERG two David =ERG two Christy two + + TTT Christy two Tshering two

*kja<sup>1</sup> -ni rikikur<sup>2</sup> ŋi<sup>2</sup> ŋi<sup>2</sup> so<sup>1</sup> -wu dza* +  
 do.PST -CONV potato.pancake two two eat. PST -IMS NegAtt +

‘That night (we) cooked (and) ate potatoes. And then after that (we) **ate potato pancakes**...  
 and then I ate two potato pancakes, David ate two, Christy ate two...Christy ate two and  
 Tshering ate two. (Each of us) ate two.’

Another pattern that signals cohesive material is a verb indicating old information in a relative clause marked with the impersonal verbal suffix, which takes the form *-u*, *-wu*, *-up*, or *-p* depending on the verb stem. This cohesive construction is exemplified in (8). Examples (5), (6), and (7) provide context. The group indicated in (8), which is described as doing carpentry work, was first introduced in (6) as being separate from the other construction workers who were building walls.

(5) MRKT 001-002

*tama<sup>1</sup> ti<sup>1</sup> baksila bazar =la* + + *mi<sup>2</sup> mi<sup>2</sup> - ra, tin<sup>2</sup>* +  
 and.then that Baksila market =DAT + + person person - CLF seven +

*karmin =la fok<sup>2</sup> si<sup>1</sup> -ni gal<sup>1</sup> -u dza<sup>1</sup> AAA* + *gal<sup>1</sup>*  
 construction.work =DAT come say -CONV go.PST -IMS NegAtt AAA + go.PST

*sima<sup>1</sup> tama<sup>1</sup>* + *gajra eee* + *reŋgaj ti<sup>1</sup> mi<sup>2</sup> mi<sup>2</sup> - ra sum<sup>2</sup> zi<sup>2</sup> ti<sup>1</sup>* +  
 after and.then + all VerPs + some that person person - CLF three four that +

*jaŋ<sup>2</sup>, tsikpa<sup>1</sup> gjak -up -la* + *wot<sup>1</sup> dza<sup>1</sup> -- wala --*  
 EMPH wall place -IMS =DAT + COP NegAtt -- wall(E) --

‘And then in Baksila Bazaar seven men were called to do construction and (they) went  
 [audience comment]. And after we went, some of the group of everyone, three or four men,  
 they were there to make a wall...wall.’

(6) MRKT 003

*aaii, jemba<sup>1</sup> ti<sup>1</sup> gomala<sup>1</sup> jaŋ<sup>2</sup> gajralaŋ ŋi<sup>2</sup> zo -wu dza<sup>1</sup>*  
 VerPs other that before EMPH all wood make -IMS NegAtt  
 ‘Aaii...the other (group)...before **(we) all did carpentry work (together).**’

(7) MRKT 004

*tama<sup>1</sup> ŋi<sup>1</sup> loŋ<sup>2</sup> -- tsik<sup>1</sup> je<sup>2</sup> -wu ti<sup>1</sup> jeloŋ<sup>2</sup> mi<sup>2</sup> - ra sum<sup>2</sup> ti<sup>1</sup> +*  
 and.then 1pl again -- wall able.to.know -IMS that again person - CLF three that +  
*tsikpa<sup>1</sup> =la wot<sup>1</sup> dza<sup>1</sup> +*  
 wall =DAT COP NegAtt +  
 ‘And then (among us) there were three (of us) who knew how to build walls and we were (there) for (making) walls.’

(8) MRKT 005

*tama<sup>1</sup> ŋi<sup>1</sup>, tsik<sub>p</sub><sup>1</sup> -i, ti<sup>1</sup> -ŋ, t<sup>h</sup>ul gom<sup>1</sup> -i, paŋtʃ baze*  
 and.then 1pl wall -GEN that -also finish night -GEN five(N) o'clock(N)  
*bida =la AAA + tama<sup>1</sup>, tsik<sub>p</sub><sup>1</sup> -i mi<sup>2</sup> -ŋ, t<sup>h</sup>ul -- p<sup>h</sup>o ŋi<sup>2</sup>*  
 off.work(N) =DAT AAA + and.then wall -GEN person -also finish -- there **wood**  
*zo -p, (taŋ<sup>2</sup>) gari, t<sup>h</sup>ul sima<sup>1</sup> + tama<sup>1</sup> kaŋ<sup>1</sup> lala, pasal go<sup>1</sup> -la --*  
**make -IMS and all** finish after + and.then what some shop(N) door =DAT --  
*ga<sup>h</sup>, kit<sup>1</sup> -up ti<sup>1</sup> kit<sup>1</sup> -up,*  
 conversation(N) do -IMS that do -IMS

‘And then we wall builders also finished working at five o’clock in the evening [audience comment]. And then the wall builders also finished and after **everyone who does carpentry work** also finished there, then some were talking in front of the shop.’

Cohesive material is the least structurally important type of information in the texts because it refers to old or predictable clausal information. In this section we have seen examples of three types of cohesive clauses: old or predictable information subordinated with an adverb, old information in a main clause, and old information in a relative clause marked by the impersonal verbal suffix. In the next section, we discuss the next least structurally important information type, storyteller evaluations.

## 6 Evaluations

Evaluative information is characterized by clauses in which the storyteller interrupts the narrative flow to make some sort of personal comment. In the Sherpa texts, these comments primarily take three forms: a rhetorical question, as in (9), an opinion about what could have hypothetically happened, as in (10), and a comment that expresses the storyteller’s feelings about something, seen in (11).

Storyteller evaluation in the form of a rhetorical question appears at that end of (9). The rhetorical question follows a statement about how the fire in the market was burning and there

were lots of finished wood products lying around near the fire. In the face of this situation, the narrator utters the comment of desperation at the end of (9), ‘And then what to do what to do?’ The storyteller is not asking for advice from the audience about what he should have done, rather he is using a question rhetorically to emphasize the desperation of the situation he was describing. It is clear that this question is rhetorical because after the question, there is only a very short pause (indicated by the comma) before he continues with the story. The storyteller does not stop to allow the audience to give an answer.

(9) MRKT 026-028

"dzon dzon" sira + ti<sup>1</sup> gariguri niŋ<sup>2</sup>, go<sup>1</sup>, karuŋ dik,  
fire.sound fire.sound with + that around PRT door window lower.part.of.window.frame

gajra zo -ni, tana,tan ti<sup>1</sup> -- fiŋ<sup>2</sup> =ki fiŋfok, maŋmu,  
all make -CONV full that -- wood =GEN wood.shavings many

wot<sup>1</sup> -u -ki -- ti<sup>1</sup> t<sup>h</sup>aŋga =la AAA + tama<sup>1</sup> jaŋ<sup>2</sup> kaŋ<sup>1</sup> kit<sup>1</sup> -up  
COP -IMS -IMPV -- that ground =DAT AAA + and.then EMPH what do -IMS

na kaŋ<sup>1</sup> kit<sup>1</sup> -up,  
Q what do -IMS

‘(The fire burned) with the sound “dzong dzong”. Around there it was full of doors, windows, window/door supports already finished and also a lot of saw dust and wood shavings on the ground [audience comment]. **And then what to do what to do?**’

Example (10) illustrates two sentences from the RAT story in which the storyteller is explaining why he set the rat on fire in the cage and let the fire burn for awhile before letting the rat out. RAT 27 ends with a question marker indicating that the storyteller is asking the audience to affirm what he said about what would have hypothetically happened if he had freed the rat immediately after setting it on fire.

(10) RAT 026-027

ŋje<sup>1</sup> pala<sup>2</sup> ta<sup>1</sup> ti<sup>1</sup> -- hana<sup>1</sup> malak<sup>1</sup> gaaa -- me<sup>1</sup>, tje<sup>2</sup> -ni fakgak<sup>1</sup>  
1sg.ERG myself now that -- before just Ver.Pause -- fire set.fire -CONV immediately

tong<sup>1</sup> -up sisiŋ<sup>1</sup>, jeloŋ<sup>2</sup> me<sup>1</sup> -- "batan bitin" p<sup>h</sup>ir<sup>1</sup> -siŋ me<sup>1</sup>  
set.loose -IMS if again fire -- ONOM jump -if fire

gjanse<sup>1</sup> -ki -wi jin na --  
extinguish -IMPV -NPST.Dj.Com COP Q --

‘I myself, at that time, just before, gaaa, if I had set fire and immediately freed it, (then I would have had to set it on) fire again. If the rat jumped around like “batan biting” the fire would be put out, **right?**’

Finally, in (11) the storyteller uses the negative attitude particle *dza* to express his negative feelings about the events in the story. At the end of (11), the storyteller states ‘Oh, that day was like that.’ This statement was made after the storyteller had just described a battle he had witnessed.

(11) BATTLE 023-024

*te*<sup>1</sup> -wa *ma*<sup>1</sup>, *ti*<sup>1</sup> *mo*<sup>1</sup> *saleri* *sarj*<sup>2</sup> + *k<sup>h</sup>afjen*<sup>2</sup> *mak*<sup>2</sup> *gjek* -up -- *tuko*<sup>1</sup>  
 there -from and.then that down Saleri town also + many war fight -IMS -- like.that  
 -- "*tataŋ tarj<sup>2</sup> tutuŋ*" *sit*<sup>1</sup> -up, *tamnje*<sup>1</sup>, *ti*<sup>1</sup> *hakko* -suŋ + *la*, *ta*<sup>1</sup>  
 -- ONOM and ONOM say -IMS incident that hear/understand -PST.Dj.Dir + **OK now**  
*hariŋ*<sup>1</sup> *ti*<sup>1</sup> *jin* *dza* +  
 today that COP NegAtt +

‘Then there was lots of fighting down in Salleri and we heard a sound like “tatang and tutung”. **Oh, that day was like that.**’

Storyteller evaluations interrupt the narrative flow so that the storyteller can make a personal comment. In this section, we have seen examples of three types of evaluative information: a rhetorical question, an opinion about what could have hypothetically happened, and a comment using the negative attitude particle that expresses the storyteller’s negative feelings about an incident he had witnessed. This information has little structural importance because it refers to the inner world of the storyteller rather than the storyworld in which the action is taking place. In the next section we look at examples of irrealis material, which refers to alternate or embedded storyworlds rather than the main storyworld in which the main action takes place.

## 7 Irrealis

Clauses that refer to possible ‘worlds’ or ‘realities’ that are distinct from the storyworld in which the action of the story takes place are irrealis clauses. The irrealis material in the Sherpa texts takes four forms: 1. Quoted material (direct and indirect), 2. Negated verbs, 3. Modal verbs, and 4. Purpose clauses.

Example (12) illustrates an interrogative direct quotation. The quotative frame *si’ni* ‘(he) said’ is a background action. But the quoted material is irrealis information because it refers to a ‘reality’ (the viewpoint of the participants) that is separate from the ‘reality’ (the viewpoint of the storyteller) in which the action of the story takes place.

(12) BATTLE 007-009

*mi*<sup>2</sup> *woru*, *tarj*<sup>2</sup> *k<sup>h</sup>afjen*<sup>2</sup>, *t<sup>h</sup>o* -suŋ *ma*<sup>1</sup> *nje*<sup>1</sup>, *dalza*<sup>1</sup>, *ti*<sup>1</sup> =*ki*  
 person sound and many hear -PST.Dj.Dir and.then 1sg.GEN friend that =GEN  
*bela*<sup>1</sup> + *paŋ<sup>1</sup>la* *la*<sup>2</sup> -suŋ + "*kaŋ*<sup>1</sup> *nok* *p<sup>h</sup>a* *hariŋ*<sup>1</sup> *di*<sup>1</sup>  
 time.when(N) + outside look -PST.Dj.Dir + **what COP.Infer there today this**  
*kja*<sup>1</sup> -*nok*" *si*<sup>1</sup> -*ni*, *tuk*<sup>1</sup> *kja*<sup>1</sup> -*ni*, (*p<sup>h</sup>a*), *dalza*<sup>1</sup> *ti*<sup>1</sup> =*ki*,  
 do.PST -PST.Dj.Infer say -CONV like.that do.PST -CONV VerPs friend that =ERG  
*paŋ<sup>1</sup>la* *la*<sup>2</sup> -suŋ +  
 outside look -PST.Dj.Dir +

‘We heard a lot of people’s voices. “**What is that there that happened today**” my friend said. He did like that (said with a hand motion) as he looked outside. And then at that time, my friend looked outside.’

The use of negated verbs to mark irrealis information is seen in (13). Negatives are irrealis because they contrast what did happen with what could have happened, but did not.

(13) BEAR 053

*te*<sup>1</sup> -*wa*, *tij*<sup>1</sup>*la*, *te*<sup>1</sup> -*wa* -- *tum*<sup>1</sup> *ti*<sup>1</sup> (*law*), *te*<sup>1</sup> -*wa*, *te*<sup>1</sup> -*wa* *tij*<sup>1</sup>*la*, *ti*<sup>1</sup>  
there -from after there -from -- bear that VerPs there -from there -from after that  
*tsur*<sup>1</sup>, *ti*<sup>1</sup> *loŋ*<sup>1</sup> -*ni* *ma*- *wa*<sup>1</sup> -*wu*,  
back that return -CONV not- come.PST -IMS  
‘And then after, and then after, the bear **did not return back.**’

Modal verbs often communicate an obligation which may or may not actually be fulfilled in the future. Since the fulfillment of the obligation has not actually happened when the obligation is expressed, the information is considered irrealis. Example (14) illustrates a clause communicating an obligation (unfulfilled at this point in the story) by means of a modal verb.

(14) BEAR 021

*ma*<sup>1</sup>, *te*<sup>1</sup> *arak*<sup>2</sup> *ti*<sup>1</sup>, *t<sup>h</sup>u*<sup>1</sup> *sima*<sup>1</sup> *ma*<sup>1</sup> -- *ŋira*<sup>2</sup>, *pala*<sup>2</sup>, *ti*<sup>1</sup> *ŋirmu*<sup>1</sup>  
and.then there liquor that drink after and.then -- 1pl.GEN father that angry  
*kja*<sup>1</sup> -*ni* -- *tama*<sup>1</sup> *ŋiraŋ*<sup>2</sup> *ti*<sup>1</sup> *tuko*<sup>1</sup> -- *tʃ<sup>h</sup>tʃ<sup>h</sup>tʃ<sup>h</sup>u*, *tum*<sup>1</sup> *for*<sup>1</sup> -*u*, *go*<sup>1</sup>,  
do.PST -CONV -- and.then 1pl.excl that like.that -- VerPs bear chase -IMS need  
‘And then after drinking liquor, our father was angry. And we **needed to chase** the bear.’

Finally, (15) illustrates the communication of irrealis information by means of a purpose clause. A fully explicit purpose clause has an impersonal verbal suffix with the dative suffix followed by the main verb. This sentence indicates that three or four people were some place for the purpose of building walls. But since they had not actually started building walls yet, the information is irrealis.

(15) MRKT 002

*gal*<sup>1</sup> *sima*<sup>1</sup> *tama*<sup>1</sup> + *gajra* *eee* + *reŋgaj*<sup>1</sup> *ti*<sup>1</sup> *mi*<sup>2</sup> *mi*<sup>2</sup> - *ra* *sum*<sup>2</sup> *zi*<sup>2</sup>  
go.PST after and.then + all (N) VerPs + some that person person - CLF three four  
*ti*<sup>1</sup> + *jaŋ*<sup>2</sup>, *tsikpa*<sup>1</sup> *gak*<sup>1</sup> -*up* =*la* + *wot*<sup>1</sup> *dza* -- *wala* --  
that + EMPH wall make -IMS = DAT + COP NegAtt -- wall(E) --  
‘And after we went, some of the group of everyone, three or four men, they were there **to make** a wall...wall.’

Examples of four types of irrealis clauses have been described in this section: 1. Quoted material (direct and indirect), 2. Negated verbs, 3. Modal verbs, and 4. Purpose clauses. These four types of information all refer to possible storyworlds that are different from the storyworld in which the main events are taking place.

The previous three information types described have low structural importance because they refer to information that in various ways is not happening in the storyworld. Cohesive infor-



## 9 Background Activities

Background activities indicate a change of state but are considered off the storyline because they are semantically construed as on-going and lacking a clear beginning or end. Background activities in the Sherpa texts are marked in a number of ways: 1. A non-past stem activity with the converb suffix *-n(i)* in a medial clause, 2. An activity with the impersonal suffix *-(u)(p)* in an independent clause, 3. The use of an activity with the continuous suffix *-in*, 4. An activity with the imperfective suffix *-ki* and evidential *-nok*, 5. A non-past stem activity with *-nok*, 6. A repetition of an activity in a medial clause with *-n(i)*, 7. An activity with the continuous suffix *-in* followed by a copular verb, 8. An activity with the continuous suffix *-dok*, and 9. An event verb demoted off the storyline by a habitual adverb.

#	Strategy	S#	Sherpa Example	English Translation
1	Non-past stem activity with <i>-n(i)</i>	SICK 15	<i>te<sup>1</sup>wa jan<sup>2</sup> + go<sup>1</sup>a<sup>1</sup> lan<sup>1</sup>-ni +</i>	‘And (we) <b>were laughing</b> .’
2	Imperfective activity with the impersonal verbal suffix <i>-(u)(p)</i>	BATTLE 48	<i>maŋmi<sup>2</sup>=la k<sup>h</sup>ur<sup>2</sup>up=la dalza<sup>1</sup>, kit<sup>1</sup>-up</i>	‘(I) <b>was helping</b> the army carry (injured people).’
3	An imperfective activity with the continuous marker <i>-in</i>	RAT 18	<i>tan<sup>2</sup> ti<sup>1</sup> k<sup>h</sup>a<sup>1</sup>la "sal sal sal" bet<sup>1</sup>-in --</i>	‘And (I) <b>was pouring</b> (ash) on (the rat) like “sal, sal, sal”.’
4	An activity with the imperfective suffix <i>-ki</i> and evidential <i>-nok</i>	RAT 25	<i>k<sup>h</sup>aŋjen<sup>2</sup>, p<sup>h</sup>ir<sup>1</sup>-ki-nok --</i>	‘(The rat) <b>was jumping</b> a lot.’
5	Non-past stem activity verb with <i>-nok</i>	MRKT 18	<i>tama<sup>1</sup>, p<sup>h</sup>o malak<sup>1</sup> baki lone, "tsoŋ, tsoŋ, tsoŋ" ban<sup>1</sup> d<sup>i</sup><sup>1</sup>-nok</i>	‘And just here the fire <b>was burning</b> on the bamboo mat like “tsong tsong tsong”.’
6	Repetition of an activity in a medial clause with <i>-ni</i>	MRKT 06	<i>t<sup>h</sup>aŋduŋ kit<sup>1</sup>up ti<sup>1</sup> kit<sup>1</sup>up TXXX kja<sup>1</sup>-ni --</i>	‘(Some) <b>were having</b> a party inside [teller laughing].’
7	Activity with the continuous marker <i>-in</i> and a copula.	MRKT 06	<i>arak<sup>2</sup> t<sup>h</sup>uŋ<sup>1</sup>-in wot<sup>1</sup> dza<sup>1</sup> --</i>	‘(We) <b>were drinking</b> liquor.’
8	Repetition of an activity with the continuous suffix <i>-dok</i>	SICK 13	<i>kjak,pa<sup>2</sup> fel<sup>1</sup>-up ti<sup>1</sup> fel<sup>1</sup>-dok --</i>	‘(David) <b>continued to have</b> diarrhea.’
9	An event demoted by a habitual adverb	SICK 17	<i>t<sup>h</sup>anda<sup>2</sup> ran<sup>2</sup> t<sup>h</sup>anda<sup>2</sup> ran<sup>2</sup>, das minit, das minit=la, t<sup>h</sup>ojlet gal<sup>1</sup>+</i>	‘(David) <b>went</b> to the toilet <b>again and again</b> , about every ten minutes.’

**Table 3. Strategies for marking background activities**

The nine types of activities that have been described in this section are on-going changes of state with no clear beginning or end. However, the following four sections refer to changes of state that do have a clear temporal boundary.



## 10 Flashback B

Two flashback bands have been posited for the Sherpa texts. Flashback B includes information demoted from the background action band by being temporally out-of-sequence. In contrast, the flashback A band is storyline material that has been demoted by being temporally out-of-sequence.

A background action is indicated by an unmarked past verb stem in a medial clause or a past verb stem marked with the converb suffix *-ni*. Example (21) illustrates a background action with an unmarked past verb stem, the eating of cooked potatoes, that has been marked as a flashback by being temporally out-of-sequence. First, examples (19) and (20) state that everyone ate potato pancakes. At the end of (20) the storyteller takes a lengthy pause (indicated by ++ ) which is followed by unintelligible storyteller commentary and audience commentary (TTT and AAA respectively). Then in (21) the storyteller goes back in time to describe that the cooked potatoes were eaten before the potato pancakes.

(19) SICK 007

*tama*<sup>1</sup> + *ɲima*<sup>1</sup> *tiŋ*<sup>1</sup>*la* *ti*<sup>1</sup>, *sama*<sup>1</sup> *ma-* *so*<sup>1</sup> *kja*<sup>1</sup> *-ni* *ɲira*<sup>2</sup>  
and.then + sun/day after that food not- eat.PST do.PST -CONV 1pl.GEN

*didi* *rikikur*<sup>2</sup> *zo zo si*<sup>1</sup> *-ni* -- *ɲiraŋ*<sup>2</sup> + *devid k<sup>h</sup>risti*  
older.sister(N) potato.pancake make make say -CONV -- 1pl.excl + David Christy

*ts<sup>h</sup>eriŋ* *ɲiraŋ*<sup>2</sup> *teri*<sup>2</sup> =*ki* -- *rikikur*<sup>2</sup> *so*<sup>1</sup> *-wu dza*<sup>1</sup> +  
Tshering 1pl.excl every =ERG -- potato.pancake eat.PST -IMS NegAtt +

‘And then the day after that, we did not eat. Then our older sister said she made potato pancakes. **Then we, David, Christy, Tshering, we all ate potato pancakes.**’

(20) SICK 008

*ɲje*<sup>1</sup> *rikikur*<sup>2</sup> *ɲi*<sup>2</sup> *so*<sup>1</sup> *-in* ++ TTT AAA  
1sg.ERG potato.pancake two eat.PST -PST.Cj.Dir ++ TTT AAA

‘I ate two potato pancakes...[storyteller and audience commentary].’

(21) SICK 009

*gomu*<sup>1</sup> =*la* *ti*<sup>1</sup> *riki*<sup>1</sup> *tso*<sup>2</sup> *so*<sup>1</sup>, *tama*<sup>1</sup> *ti*<sup>1</sup> *tiŋ*<sup>1</sup>*la* *rikikur*<sup>2</sup> *so*<sup>1</sup> +  
night =DAT that potato cook eat.PST and.then that after potato.pancake eat.PST +

*tama*<sup>1</sup>, *ɲje*<sup>1</sup> *ɲi*<sup>2</sup>, *devid* =*ki* *ɲi*<sup>2</sup>, *k<sup>h</sup>risti* *ɲi*<sup>2</sup> ++ TTT *k<sup>h</sup>risti* *ɲi*<sup>2</sup> *ts<sup>h</sup>eriŋ* *ɲi*<sup>2</sup>  
and.then 1sg.ERG two David =ERG two Christy two ++ TTT Christy two Tshering two

*kja*<sup>1</sup> *-ni* *rikikur*<sup>2</sup> *ɲi*<sup>2</sup> *ɲi*<sup>2</sup> *so*<sup>1</sup> *-wu dza* +  
do.PST -CONV potato.pancake two two eat.PST -IMS NegAtt +

‘That night (we) cooked (and) ate potatoes. And then after that (we) ate potato pancakes... and then I ate two potato pancakes, David ate two, Christy ate two...Christy ate two and Tshering ate two. (Each of us) ate two.’

## 11 Background Actions

Background actions are events that have been backgrounded (i.e. marked as structurally less important) by their placement in a medial clause. In contrast with background activities, which are conceptualized as on-going, background actions are punctiliar. These actions are often marked with the converb suffix *-n(i)*, but this is not obligatory. Example (22) illustrates a series of actions in medial clauses without the converb suffix.

(22) SICK 010

*tama*<sup>1</sup>, TXXX *devid* =*ki* *lakla*<sup>1</sup> + *rikikur*<sup>2</sup> =*la* + *mar*<sup>1</sup> **ku** +  
 and.then TXXX David =ERG in.hand + potato.pancake =DAT + butter **polish/spread** +  
*mar*<sup>1</sup> **ku**<sup>1</sup> *pinat* *bat*<sup>har</sup>, **ku**<sup>1</sup> -- *ti*<sup>1</sup> *k*<sup>ha</sup> *loŋ*<sup>2</sup> XXX --  
 butter **polish/spread** peanut(E) butter(E) **polish/spread** -- that time again XXX --  
*marts*<sup>2</sup> **ku**<sup>1</sup> *so*<sup>1</sup> + +  
 chili.pepper **polish/spread** eat.PST + +

‘And David, **spread** butter, peanut butter and then chili pepper (sauce) on potato pancakes in his hand and then ate (them).’

Example (23) shows the converb suffix *-ni* attached to the action verb *si*<sup>1</sup> ‘say’, indicating a background action in a medial clause.

(23) BEAR 007

*ŋiraŋ*<sup>2</sup> *te*<sup>1</sup> -*wa* *pala*<sup>2</sup> *ti*<sup>1</sup> =*ki* *qa*<sup>1</sup> -*p* *si*<sup>1</sup> -**ni**, *ŋiraŋ*<sup>2</sup> *ŋa*<sup>1</sup> *ti*<sup>1</sup> *p*<sup>ho</sup>  
 1pl.excl there -from father that =GEN go -IMS **say** -CONV 1pl.excl 1sg that there  
*tŋuŋma* *tŋ*.. -- *tŋuŋma* *ʔala*<sup>1</sup> *gje**p* -*wu* *t*<sup>h</sup>*ala* *ʔa*<sup>2</sup> *gal*<sup>1</sup> -*in* +  
 cow HES -- cow down fall -IMS near look go.PST -PST.Cj.Dir +

‘My father **said** that we were going, and we went to look at the place where the cow fell down.’

The previous two sections have exemplified two types of background action. In section 10 we discussed background actions that are temporally out-of-sequence and therefore characterized as flashbacks. Then this section exemplified background actions in medial clauses with and without the converb suffix. The next two sections describe the two most structurally important types of information: events that are temporally out-of-sequence and storyline clauses that push a story forward through time.

## 12 Flashback A

Flashback A clauses are characterized in two ways: 1. Out-of-sequence events marked with the past disjunct inferential suffix *-nok*, and 2. Out-of-sequence events marked as out-of-sequence by discourse context alone.

In example (25), the storyteller states that ‘many Maoists were killed’. It is marked as if it were an inferred event on the storyline. However, this event occurs out of the temporal sequence of the storyline. In (24) the storyteller and his friend go down into the valley and survey the damage after the battle was over. Then there is a series of statements about the fact that the people and animals they found ‘had been killed’. The event at the end of (25) is the first in this series of ‘had been killed’ statements. Although the verb ‘killed’ at the end of (25) is marked with the inferential evidential suffix often employed for storyline events not directly witnessed, it is clear that the people in (25) must have died during the conflict and not at the moment when the storyteller and his friend were observing them.

(24) BATTLE 042

*te*<sup>1</sup>, *tiŋ*<sup>1</sup>*la*, *te*<sup>1</sup> -*wa* -- *te*<sup>1</sup> *haloŋ*<sup>2</sup> "*mo*<sup>1</sup>, *dalza*<sup>1</sup>, *maŋmi*<sup>2</sup>, *tuko*<sup>1</sup>, *mmm* -- *ma*<sup>2</sup>  
there after there -from -- there again down friend soldier/army like.that VerPs -- injury  
*tind* -*up* *maŋmi*<sup>2</sup>, *tuwa*<sup>1</sup> =*la*, *dalza*<sup>1</sup>, *go*<sup>1</sup> -*ki* -*nok*" *si*<sup>1</sup> -*ni*, *tama*<sup>1</sup>  
carry -IMS soldier PL =DAT friend need -IMPV -PST.Dj.Infer say -CONV and.then  
*ŋiraŋ*<sup>2</sup>, *ti*<sup>1</sup> *mamu*<sup>1</sup> *la*<sup>2</sup> -*p* *taŋ*<sup>2</sup> *kja*<sup>1</sup> -*ni* *mamu*<sup>1</sup> *gal*<sup>1</sup> -*in* +  
1pl.excl that down look -IMS and do.PST -CONV down go.PST -PST.Cj.Dir +  
‘And then again after some people said to us “down there the army men are injured and need some help.” And then **we went down** to look.’

(25) BATTLE 043

*ti*<sup>1</sup> *belā*<sup>1</sup> *lam*<sup>2</sup> =*ki* *naŋnama woŋnama*, *ti*<sup>1</sup> *mmm*, *nnn* *naŋuŋ*<sup>1</sup> =*ki*  
that time.when(N) path =GEN inside down that VerPs VerPs forest =GEN  
*mi*<sup>2</sup>, *tuwa*<sup>1</sup>, *ti*<sup>1</sup> + *tiwa*<sup>1</sup> -*ŋ* *k<sup>h</sup>afjen*<sup>2</sup> *se*<sup>2</sup> -*nok*,  
person PL that + 3pl -also many kill -PST.Dj.Infer  
‘At that time, down from the road **many jungle men (Maoists) were killed (i.e. had been killed).**’

### 13 Storyline

The storyline clauses are characterized by events in main clauses that push a story forward sequentially along a timeline. Five morpho-syntactic/discourse patterns are found to communicate storyline material in the corpus of Sherpa texts: 1. Past event verb stems with the impersonal suffix and the attitude particle *dza*, 2. Past event verb stems with the past disjunct inferential evidential *-nok*, 3. Past event verb stems with the past conjunct direct knowledge evidential *-in*, 4. Past event verb stems with the evidential value of past disjunct direct knowledge usually with the evidential marker *-suŋ*, and 5. Non-event verbs (activities, stative verbs, and copulas) that have been promoted to the storyline by a temporal adverb or discourse context.

Pattern 1 is exemplified by the sentence in (26). The past stem *gal*<sup>1</sup> ‘go.PST’ is followed by the impersonal suffix *-up/-u/-p/-wu* and the attitude particle *dza*, which communicates that the speaker has negative feelings towards the state of affairs indicated by the verb (Schöttelndreyer 1975: 46). In this example, the storyteller expresses a negative attitude about the action ‘went up’

because the place where they went is the location where the storyteller's friend becomes sick.

(26) SICK 005

*ŋiraŋ*<sup>2</sup> *ti*<sup>1</sup> *jo*<sup>1</sup> *gal*<sup>1</sup> **-u** **dza** *gomu*<sup>1</sup> +  
1pl.excl that up go.PST -IMS NegAtt night +

'We **went** up to that place at night.'

Example (27) illustrates pattern 2. The bounded action of meeting the woman is indicated by the past verb stem *t<sup>h</sup>eŋ*<sup>1</sup> 'meet' followed by the past disjunct inferential evidential *-nok*. The storyteller employs the inferential evidential to indicate that he had not observed the meeting. But the description of the meeting is reported within the correct temporal sequence of the story in contrast with the use of the inferential evidential to communicate a flashback in (25).

(27) SICK 002

*te*<sup>1</sup> =*ki* =*ne* -- *devid* *taŋ*<sup>2</sup> *k<sup>h</sup>risti* =*la* -- *te*<sup>1</sup> + *jul*<sup>1</sup> =*la* *juk*<sup>1</sup>  
there =GEN =ABL -- David and Christy =DAT -- there + village =DAT visit

*qa*<sup>1</sup> **-p** *t<sup>h</sup>e* =*la* *dalza*<sup>1</sup> *ai*<sup>2</sup>, *t<sup>h</sup>eŋ*<sup>1</sup> **-nok** *ke*<sup>2</sup> +  
go.NPST -IMS day =DAT friend older.sister meet.PST -PST.Dj.Infer EMPH +

'After that, on that day David and Christy went up to visit the village, and **met** a friend-sister.'

The use of the past conjunct direct knowledge evidential *-in* with a past stem, the third pattern, is seen in (28).

(28) BATTLE 015

*ŋje*<sup>1</sup> *sisi*, *dalza*<sup>1</sup> *ti*<sup>1</sup> =*la* *sa*<sup>1</sup> **-in** -- "we, *k<sup>h</sup>joraŋ*<sup>1</sup> *go*<sup>1</sup> *ma- pe*<sup>2</sup> *we*,"  
1sg.ERG VerPs friend that =DAT say -PST.Cj.Dir -- hey 2sg.NOM door not- open COP

'I **said** to my friend, "hey, don't open the door."'

The fourth pattern, the use of the past disjunct direct knowledge evidential *-suŋ* with a past stem, is shown in (29).

(29) RAT 004

*tama*<sup>1</sup> *ŋa*<sup>1</sup> *loŋ*<sup>2</sup> *ŋirmu*<sup>1</sup> *la*<sup>1</sup> **-suŋ**,  
and.then 1sg again angry felt -PST.Dj.Dir

'And then I also **became** angry.'

A second example of pattern 4 is illustrated in (30). Here a storyline clause takes the form of an unmarked past stem. The main verb *gal*<sup>1</sup> 'go.PST.Dj.Dir' without an evidential has the same semantic value as *gal*<sup>1</sup>-*suŋ* 'go.PST-PST.Dj.Dir', which only appears once in the corpus. According to my language consultants, *gal*<sup>1</sup> is the only unmarked past stem in the text corpus that communicates evidentiality and can act as main verb.

(30) MRKT 025

*jaju*<sup>1</sup> *donbu*<sup>1</sup> *taŋ*<sup>2</sup> *tfoŋda*<sup>1</sup> *gal*<sup>1</sup>                    AXXX +  
 up tree and same go.PST.Dj.Dir AXXX +  
 ‘It **became** as high as the tree.’

Pattern 5, the promotion of a non-event verb to the storyline, is exemplified in (31). The temporal marker *gomu*<sup>1</sup> *ŋezu* ‘from (that) night’ indicates a clear initial boundary for the event promoting it to the line of sequential events.

(31) SICK 011

*ti*<sup>1</sup> *k<sup>h</sup>a loŋ*<sup>2</sup>, *sotfja*<sup>2</sup> *k<sup>h</sup>aŋjen*<sup>2</sup> *t<sup>h</sup>u*<sup>1</sup> + *tama*<sup>1</sup>, *gomu*<sup>1</sup> *ŋezu*, *ma*<sup>1</sup> -- *kjak,pa*<sup>2</sup>  
 that time again tea many drink + and.then **night from** and.then -- feces  
*fel*<sup>1</sup> -*u mar*<sup>1</sup>, *am mo mo mo mo* +  
 have diarrhea -IMS EMPH EXCL EXCL EXCL EXCL EXCL +  
 ‘Then he also drank lots of tea, and then **from that night** (he) had diarrhea.’

In the previous two sections we have seen examples of five storyline patterns that push the story forward in a sequence of punctiliar events: 1. Past event verb stems with the impersonal suffix and a postverbal attitude particle, 2. Past event verbs stems with the past disjunct inferential evidential *-nok*, 3. Past event verb stems with the past conjunct direct knowledge evidential *-in*, 4. Past event verb stems with the evidential value of past disjunct direct knowledge usually with the evidential marker *-suŋ*, and 5. Non-event verbs (activities, stative verbs, and copulas) that have been promoted to the storyline by a temporal adverb or context. We have also seen how storyline markers such as the inferential evidential *-nok* can be demoted to the flashback A band by discourse context.

## 14 The Distribution of Storyline Clauses

When we observe the distribution of the five storyline clause types across the five stories, some interesting patterns emerge. Table 4 displays the number of storyline clauses marked with each storyline pattern in the five Sherpa texts along with a percentage indicating the frequency of that storyline pattern in each story. The last row lists the total number of storyline clauses, the total number of times each storyline pattern is utilized, and the percentage of storyline clauses in all five stories combined that exhibit each storyline pattern.

Text	<i>-u(p) dza</i>		<i>-nok</i>		<i>-in</i>		<i>-suŋ/PST stem</i>		Promotion	
SICK (16)	4	25%	6	38%	1	6%	3	19%	2	13%
RAT (11)	5	45%	3	27%	0	0%	3	27%	0	0%
MRKT (14)	1	7%	3	21%	4	29%	6	43%	0	0%
BATTLE (17)	0	0%	2	12%	5	29%	10	59%	0	0%
BEAR (29)	0	0%	5	17%	8	28%	16	55%	0	0%
TOTAL (87)	10	11%	19	22%	18	21%	38	44%	2	2%

Table 4. Distribution of storyline patterns in the Sherpa texts

The past disjunct direct knowledge pattern with *-suŋ*/PST stem was the most used storyline pattern in the stories, employed in 44% of the storyline clauses. The markers *-nok* and *-in* were also utilized in a large number of storyline clauses, 22% and 21% respectively. Overall, three different markers represented the most utilized storyline pattern in different stories: *-u(p) dza* in RAT, *-nok* in SICK and *-suŋ*/PST stem in MRKT, BATTLE and BEAR.

A pattern was observed between the use of *-suŋ*/PST stem and *-in* and the non-use of *-u(p) dza* and *-nok* and vice versa. MRKT, BATTLE, and BEAR utilize *-suŋ*/PST stem and *-in* a combined 10, 15, and 24 times respectively. But *-u(p) dza* and *-nok* appear a combined 4, 2, and 5 times in these stories. In contrast, SICK and RAT employ *-up dza* and *-nok* a combined 10 and 8 times respectively, but *-suŋ*/PST stem and *-in* appear a combined 4 and 3 times in these stories. This pattern could be explained as the result of stylistic variation since SICK and RAT were told by the same person. Alternatively, this distribution may be explained by the contrast between identifying and distancing markers. With patterns *-in* and *-suŋ*/PST stem, the storyteller personally identifies with the action. He or she is taking personal responsibility for the veracity of the information. In contrast, with *-up dza* and *-nok* the storyteller distances himself or herself from the information. The marker *-up dza* indicates distance in terms of a negative attitude while *-nok* communicates distance by an attitude of doubt. It seems that storyline events are either mostly described with identifying markers or mostly described with distancing markers.

This distribution of storyline markers suggest a modification of the event sequence marking scheme posited for different types of Sherpa narratives by Schöttelndreyer (1978: 261–263). Schöttelndreyer suggests six different devices that mark backbone material (i.e. storyline clauses) in five different Sherpa narrative genres.

Narrative Type	Storyline Marking Device
Plot oriented direct report	<i>-suŋ</i>
Plot oriented indirect report	<i>-nok lo<sup>1</sup> / -nok si<sup>1</sup>nok</i>
Narrator oriented direct report	<i>-in</i>
Narrator oriented indirect report	<i>-up dza</i>
Non-personal Narratives (i.e. folktales) <sup>11</sup>	<i>-nok</i>

**Table 5. Sherpa storyline devices posited by Schöttelndreyer (1978: 261–263)**

A comparison of Tables 4 and 5 shows that four of Schöttelndreyer's (1978) six markers appear in the five texts described in this paper<sup>12</sup> with two additional devices, past stem and promotion, also employed. Unlike Schöttelndreyer's scheme, which includes one or two main storyline patterns for each narrative genre, the data in this study describes five stories from the same genre that employ between three and five different storyline patterns.<sup>13</sup>

11 In addition, Schöttelndreyer (1978: 261, footnote 11) states that one speaker used *-suŋ* at the tension point of a story. Schöttelndreyer distinguishes types of reports based on storyline marking. However, reports are differentiated from nonpersonal narratives on the basis of various characteristics, not just storyline.

12 The structures *-nok lo<sup>1</sup>* and *-nok si<sup>1</sup>nok* are not employed as storyline markers in the five stories analyzed for this paper. These are reportative forms that mark storyline in reported stories about the personal experiences of someone else other than the narrator. No stories of this type were examined in this paper.

13 It is unclear if Schöttelndreyer (1978) considers the storyline markers in Table 5 to be the *only* storyline markers



The differences between Schöttelndreyer's description and the results of this study on stories of personal experience (which encompass three of his four report genres) seem to suggest at least two modifications to Schöttelndreyer's scheme. First of all, while Schöttelndreyer seems to posit storyline marking as a primary indicator for the four different report types (i.e. personal narratives),<sup>14</sup> this study argues that storyline marking should not be considered one of the primary indicators for distinguishing between types of personal experience narratives in Sherpa. In this paper, each story is described as employing a different combination of storyline devices used at different frequencies. On the basis of storyline alone, the five texts would be seen as perhaps three different personal narrative genres. However, in light of current genre theory,<sup>15</sup> it seems best to see the five texts studied here as a single narrative genre based on a bundle of features rather than considering each text a separate genre based on the distribution and frequency of storyline marking patterns alone.

A second modification suggested by this study, which is related to the first, is that the marking of storyline in Sherpa should not be seen in terms of one or two options per story. Rather, this study indicates that a story could potentially have up to five types of storyline clauses marked in five different ways depending on the source of the information and the storyteller's attitude towards the information.

## 15 Conclusion

This paper has identified the clausal information types found in a corpus of five Solu Sherpa stories of personal experience and described the strategies used to mark these types. Nine types have been described. These include eight supportive types and a storyline band, which is marked in five different ways. The eight supportive types are (in order of structural importance): 1. Flashback A, 2. Background actions, 3. Flashback B, 4. Background activities, 5. Setting, 6. Irrealis, 7. Evaluation, and 8. Cohesion.

The storyline clauses are marked in five different ways: 1. Event verb with a past stem, an impersonal verbal suffix, and the negative attitude particle *dza*; 2. Event verb with a past stem and a disjunct inferential evidential suffix *-nok*; 3. Event verb with a past stem and a conjunct direct evidence evidential suffix *-suj* or an event verb past stem with the same semantic value as *-suj*; 4. Event verb with a past stem and a past disjunct direct evidence evidential *-in*; and 5. Non-event verb promoted to storyline by a temporal marker or by discourse context.

It was found that the Sherpa stories employed between three and five storyline clause patterns. Overall, *-suj*/PST stem was the most utilized storyline marker, employed in 44% of the storyline clauses. However, three different patterns were the most utilized in at least one story.

The results of this study differ from those presented in Schöttelndreyer (1978). While

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in each genre or simply the *most utilized*.

14 Schöttelndreyer (1978: 261) states "For reports...the following suffixes are used: *-suj*, *-nok lwo*, *-yin*, and *-up dza*. It is necessary, therefore, to subdivide the report narrative into plot oriented or third person reports and narrator oriented or first person reports. Furthermore, both kinds of reports are again divided into direct and indirect."

15 The approach to genre adopted in this paper and in Greninger (2009) is adapted from BurrIDGE, who defines genre as "[A] group of literary works sharing certain 'family resemblances' operating at a level between Universals and actual texts...functioning as a set of expectations to guide interpretation (2004: 40–41). The weakness of Schöttelndreyer's approach to personal narrative genres seems to be his focus on one characteristic, rather than taking into account a bundle of features.



Schöttelndreyer suggests that there are four personal experience narrative genres each normally characterized by one storyline marker, the analysis presented in this paper leads to the conclusion that the norm is for personal experience narratives to exhibit multiple storyline markers with each marker performing a different evidential or attitudinal function rather than representing a primary indicator of genre.

LIST OF NON-STANDARD ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

( )	Indicates the transcription is uncertain	HES	False start or hesitation
=	Indicates a clitic boundary	HON	Honorific
AAA	Audience commentary (inaudible)	Infer	Inferential
AFFIRM	Affirmation word	IMPV	Imperfective aspect
AXXX	Audience laughter	IMS	Impersonal
CmKn	Common knowledge	incl	Inclusive
Cj	Conjunct marker	(N)	Borrowing from Nepali
Dir	Direct knowledge (gained as a participant or an observer)	NegAtt	Negative attitude particle
Dj	Disjunct marker	ONOM	Onomatopoeia
(E)	Borrowing from English	TTT	Storyteller commentary (inaudible)
EMPH	Emphatic	TXXX	Storyteller laughter
EXCL	Exclamation	VerPs	Verbal pause
excl	Exclusive	XXX	Laughter – audience and storyteller together

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