

# Notes on Yakkha grammar

Jinyuan Wu

October 29, 2023

# Chapter 1

## Simple clause

It's claimed in [Schackow \(2015, p. 387\)](#) that Yakkha lacks a unit like the verb phrase (verb plus complements). This is a frequent claim in typological works, but usually it's merely due to differences in notation: there are usually some evidence suggesting that we can define a syntactic pivot – essentially the subject, although it's not necessarily agentive in syntactically ergative languages – which is somehow “higher” in the clause structure and “more distant” from the main verb; and the verb phrase now can be defined as the rest, more tightly integrated parts of a clause. Here I examine the following tests for a syntactic pivot or “subject”:

- *Coordination*. It seems that [Schackow \(2015\)](#) doesn't mention sentential coordination. In a book review ([Rapacha, 2005](#)), it is claimed that the claim made by the reviewed publication that “Kiranti has no coordination of sentence” can be “partially justified”, although no justification is given. On the other hand, [Rapacha \(2008\)](#) (by the same author?), a report on Bayung Lo, another Kiranti language and a cousin of Yakkha, claims that a coordinator *ko* is attested and it seems to be that it agrees quite well with the usual impression of a coordinator linking two verb phrases (p. 57).
- *Movement of verb plus complements*.
- *Relation between tense, aspect, mood (TAM) categories and the pivot*.
- *Relativization*.
- *Topicalization*.

Besides the tests for the clause-level syntactic pivot, there are also tests for the argument structure-level pivot:

- *Reflexive constructions*. the subject is expected to control the object; but Yakkha lacks reflexive and reciprocal pronouns so this test doesn't work.
- *Omitted argument in control construction*. TODO: why is a property of argument structure?

# References

Lal Rapacha. The structure of kiranti languages: Comparative grammar and texts.  
*Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, 32(2):329–337, 2005.

Lal-Shyākarelu Rapacha. Kiranti-bayung grammar, texts and lexicon, 2008.

Diana Schackow. *A grammar of Yakkha*. Language Science Press, 2015.