CHAPTER III

SYNTAX
3.1. The types of sentences found in Lepcha are simple, compound, and complex. A simple sentence consists of a single clause, whereas compound and complex sentences always have more than one clause. The compound and complex sentences can be distinguished from each other on the basis of the relationship found among their constituent clauses. Compound sentences are composed by clauses which stand in a co-ordinate relationship with each other. However, the constituent clauses of a complex sentence are related in a different way. A complex sentence consists of one independent clause and one or more other clauses functioning as the attribute or the object of the main clause. It is also possible to build sentences with more than one main as well as subordinate clauses. Given below are the examples of various sentence and clause types:

(1) A simple-sentence: A simple sentence may be of actor-action type, equational type, or it may be an imperative, a completive, an expletive or a vocative sentence. Examples are as under:
(a) Actor-action type: This type of sentences have a subject expression manifested by a noun or a noun-phrase and a predicate expression manifested by a verb or a verbal phrase.

`/un dènas/` 'The horse runs'
`/kip aják li:sam/` 'The handsome child speaks'
`/he: kunka kai:n/` 'He sat on the tree'

(b) Equational type: Sentences of this type have a subject as in the actor-action type and a predicate expression manifested by a verb, noun, or indeclinable. The nouns and the indeclinables functioning as the predicate of a sentence may or may not be connected by a copula to the subject. However, generally, they are found to occur with copulas.

**Sentences with a copula.**

`/táyá: ari: aják mài:/` 'This woman is good'
`/he: mákábu mài:/` 'He is mortal'
`/ari: ahyeir ge:m/` 'It is red'
`/he: tu:s go:/` 'Who are you'?
Sentences without a copula.

/ho: ru: e:/
  'Are you a Lepecha?'

/cho: are: akwe: e:/
  'Is this book red?'

/ho: ru: ka:p/
  'You are a Lepecha boy'

(c) Imperative:— An imperative sentence may be with or without a subject and an object. The subject-position in these sentences is filled by second person pronouns.

/nu/
  'go'

/zo/
  'eat'

/li:yuk/
  'speak'

/ho: li/
  'you speak'

/ahku: i:/
  'heat the bread'

(d) Completive sentences:— These are very short utterances spoken in response to something said previously. They can be understood only in the light of the context in which they are spoken.

/mu:gu:n/
  'no'

/la:/
  'yes'

/Nun/
  'fine'
(e) Expletive sentences: These are short exclamatory expressions.

/\smA:\ s/  'Oh'
/\'\cheye/  'fie'

(f) Vocative:

/\abo\ hei/  'O father'
/\tyol e/  'O friend'
/\Ina\UNO/  'O children'

(ii) Compound-sentences: As already stated, a compound sentence consists of clauses which are independent of each other. The constituent clauses of a compound sentence may or may not be joined together by conjunctions. The clauses of a compound sentence are co-ordinate clauses. Examples are given below:

(a) In some compound sentences, the clauses are joined together with the help of the conjunction /-én/ 'and'.

/\ha\ ii:ka n\UN en az\UN m\UN z\UK/ 'He went home and cooked the food'.
(b) Compound-sentences are also formed by joining their clauses by the conjunction /šënla/ 'but'; 'however'.

/ha·ndə rɑhyə:bləm dən/  "He searched for the rice-grains, but didn't get'.
/šënla məthupən/     
/peː gənək choː məː sənə/ 'That is a Chinese book, but there are many songs in it'.

(c) Compound-sentences are also formed without using any conjunction to join their constituent clauses together.

/əreː sənə məː/  'It is of the state,
/əreː gənə məː/  it is everybody's'.
/gəbə go abːiː zoː/  'I, sometime, ate here and
/gəbə go pifiː zoː/  sometimes ate there'.

(iii) Complex sentences: Complex sentences may be
divided into various types on the basis of differences found in the subordinate clauses occurring in them. Examples of complex sentences with different types of subordinate clauses are given below:

(a) Subordinate object clause—A subordinate object clause functions as the object of the verb of the main clause. It may or may not be connected to the main clause with a conjunction. The conjunctions used in this type of sentences are /-yON/ and /myON/.

/suː thAtAinnne lumban goː yON vyEt/ 'For what are (you) roaming (he) thus asked'.

/huː gum cheː dokpu myON ciNan/ 'He wants me to read the book'.

/gem thAinMaNsAa alon doːk diːNan siː/ '(He) saw the master coming after all the animals'.

/acəː pAsaː niːmpu mAniːmpu go Neːkso/ 'I will see if I have any more money'.

(b) Subordinate conditional clause—A subordinate
conditional clause is effected by means of the conjunction /gûm/ 'if'.

/kum yaś pâša: mânîn

gûm them alm pîrâuâ/ 'If I have no money how can I buy things'?

/lisâ lûst gûm ryû: mâî/ 'It is good to return home'.

(c) Subordinate temporal clause. This clause is subordinated by means of a combination of any verb having /-luâ/ (suffixed to it) with the verbal form /mânîn/ 'not to have'. Examples are as under:-

/he: nûluâ mânîn go thi:/ 'I arrived just after he went'.

/ârîon yâruslem bëmbû
phyûgbu unka yaî, hudom
simluâ mânîn kindyôk/

/nûnne/ 'After that a rich inhabitant of Jerusalem came by horse, and as soon as (he) saw him (he) felt pity'.

(d) Causal clause. It is effected by means of the phrase /su: gû: sînla/ meaning 'because'.
Pride came into his mind because he saw sky-touching high mountains, plains and a lake.'

Of the sentence-types discussed above, the actor-action and the equational types are the major sentence-types in Lepcha. Of the rest, the imperative, the concessive are the minor type, and the completive, expletive and the vocative are of the fragmentary type.

**PARTS OF SENTENCES**

3.2. The sentences in Lepcha consist of three parts, the subject, the predicate, and the object. Of these the most indispensable is the predicate, because the subject may be absent in some cases. The object is mostly optional depending upon the intransitive and transitive nature of the verb and with many transitive verbs on the intention of the speaker. All other relatively independent part of the sentences will be treated here as expansions of the predicate.
3.3. The subject position in a sentence may be filled by the following:

(i) By a substantive.

/un de:nam/ 'The horse runs'
/she:mi: la:/ 'The monkey said'
/are: ajak ma:/ 'It is good'
/zor:siu: ryu: ma:/ 'swimming is good'

(ii) By a pronoun.

/go noon:kat/ 'I am going'
/honu: likat/ 'you called'
/kayu: zo:kao/ 'Let us eat'

(iii) By a pronominal phrase. More than one pronoun joined together by means of a conjunction may function as the subject of a sentence. Such constructions are found to be co-ordinate.

/go sa hoi: noon:so/ 'you and I will go'
/go yah hoi: noon:so/ 'you or I will go'
(iv) Sometimes, the subject-position may also be filled by a pronominal phrase with a personal pronoun as its head and an indeclinable as the attribute.

/aniː nɛtrə/ 'both of you'

(v) By a phrase with a substantive as its head:

Phrases filling the subject position on the sentence-level are both of subordinate as well as co-ordinate types. A substantive, in these phrases, may enter into a construction with another substantive, a pronoun or an indeclinable. The various types of constructions are as given below:

(a) Co-ordinate constructions. Such constructions are formed by connecting more than one substantive with the help of conjunctions. However, when more than two substantives enter into a co-ordinate construction of this type, only the last two words are connected by a conjunction. Examples of co-ordinate constructions are as follows:

(i) Substantives connected by /ən/ or /ənə/ or /ənə/ all meaning 'and'.
/ulâk ên hûmu zo: ba:/ 'The crow and the fox are eating'
/kûû ên pur: klu:am/ 'The tree and the fruit fell'
/akhu: sa çû: ajâk ma:/ 'The bread and the tea are good'
/cho: sa nugu: aæn ma:/ 'The book and the pen are bad'

(ii) Substantives may also be connected by /yannâ/ 'or'.
/kûû: yannâ oly: ma:/ 'The dog or the cat went'
/nugu: yannâ cho: klu:/ 'The pen or the book fell'

(iii) When more than two substantives enter into a co-ordinate construction, it is the last two members which are found to be connected by a conjunction.
/rû: pûit, ên kûû klu:am/ 'The flower, the fruit, and the tree are falling'
/pû: cho: sa nugu: klu:/ 'The pin, the book, and the pen fell'

(b) Subordinate constructions: A subordinate construction has a substantive as its head and another substantive, or a pronoun, or an indeclinable as its
attribute. It is possible to have more than one attribute drawn from one form-class or different form classes in the same construction. Sometimes, the head of the construction itself may be composite, i.e. consisting of more than one substantive standing in a co-ordinate relationship. The subordinate constructions may be divided into three groups on the basis of the position of the head in relation to its attribute. The head of a construction may precede or follow the attribute or be in between its attribute. Examples of the three types of constructions are as under:

(i) Constructions in which the head precedes the attributes are of the following types:

(a) **With a substantive as its attribute.**

\[/\text{choi arei}/\]  
'This book'

\[/\text{kun gen}/\]  
'all trees'

\[/\text{un arei}/\]  
'which horse'

(b) **With one or more indeclinables as the attribute.**

\[/\text{un nei}/\]  
'two horses'
(c) With a substantive and no indeclinable as its attribute.

/ma:ma:i muː phʊk amn/  'all white people'
/choː a:nəʁ gen/       'all red books'

(ii) Constructions in which the head is preceded by the attribute are as under:

(a) With a substantive as its attribute.

/areː liː/                'This house'
/gen choː/                'all books'
/areː choː/                'which book'
/timbo kuː/                'big tree'

(b) With more than one substantive as the attribute.

/areː gen choː/          'all these books'
/areː timbo kuː/        'this big tree'
(c) *With a pronoun as the attribute.*

/ksa\ li:/
'their house'

/adot cho:/
'their book'

/ubins\ li:
'The house of that place'

(d) *With an indeclinable as the attribute.*

/nim\ simhu:/
'many people'

/aman simhu:/
'a few men'

(e) *Attribute drawn from more than one from-class.*

( S + I + S )

/are\ nim\ simhu:/
'These many people'

( S + I + S + S )

/are\ anox timbu bas:/
'This big black snake'

(Fr + I + S)

/ubins\ anox bas:
'The black snake of that place'
( Fr + S + S )

/kør timbu li:/ 'my big house'

(Fr + S + S + S)

/ado: kyö̃sa timbu li:pʊ/ 'The big houses of your village'

(iii) Constructions with the head in between the attribute.

(a) With substantives as the attribute.

/arei čoːi gen/ 'all these books'

/arei čoːi gen/ 'which (all) books'

(b) With indeclinables as attributes.

/ʃyɛr čoːi kæt/ 'one red book'

/gyɛp hii ækŋpʊ/ 'many bad days'

(c) With attributes drawn from different form-classes.

(S + S + I)

/arei čoːi ʃyɛr/ 'This red book'
( Fr + S + I )

/ado: kuN atim/           'your big tree'

( Fr + S + S )

/ado: kuN gen/           'all your trees'

( S + Fr + S + I + I )

/chint\ plum\a cho:        'The red book on the
   ahy\e\r  r\h/              table'

( S + S + S + I )

/are: gen cho: ahy\e\r/     'all these red books'

As already mentioned, sometimes the head of the construction itself may be composite. Examples are as follows:-

/are: cho: sa nugu:/      'These book and pen'
/cho: sa nugu: ajak/      'The good book and pen'
3.4. Predicate - The predicate is the most indispensible part of a Lepcha sentence. The predicate position in a sentence, is filled by the following:

(i) A substantive alone or a substantive which is expanded by means of some other word can function as the predicate of a sentence. The substantives functioning as the predicate of a sentence may or may not be joined to the subject with the help of a copula. Examples are as under:

/go namsimno: ma:/  'I am a man'
/are: li: ma:/     'It is a house'
/hun: ksa kAp ma:/  'He is my child'
/are: su: cho: go:/  'What kind of book is it'?

The following are the examples of substantival predicates not joined to the subject with a copula.

/hon: ru:N kAp/  'you are a Lepcha boy'
/hon: ru:N e:/    'Are you a Lepcha'?
(ii) A pronoun joined to the subject with a copula is also found to function as the predicate of a sentence. Examples are as under:

\[
/\text{ho}:/ \text{tui}:/ \text{go}/ \quad \text{'who are you'}
\]

\[
/\text{are}:/ \text{su}:/ \text{go}/ \quad \text{'what is this'}
\]

(iii) A single indeclinable or an indeclinable in combination with other indeclinables also functions as the predicate of a sentence. They are usually connected to the subject with the help of a copula but may also occur alone.

\[
/\text{ho}:/ \text{ajak ma}/ \quad \text{'He is good'}
\]

\[
/\text{are}:/ \text{agyap ajak ma}/ \quad \text{'It is very good'}
\]

\[
/\text{are}:/ \text{li: phok tima ma}/ \quad \text{'This house is very big'}
\]

\[
/\text{are}:/ \text{agyepen e}/ \quad \text{'Is it much'}
\]

(iv) Verb as the predicate - Most frequently, the predicate position is filled by a verb in the finite form. A verb functioning as a predicate may be simple or compound, expanded or unexpanded. An expanded form of a verbal predicate has a finite form of a verb as its head and a substantive, a pronoun, an indeclinable or a
non-finite form of a verb as its expansion. The substantives and pronouns which generally, occur as the object or the complement of the verb, have been dealt with under the minor parts of a sentence. However, some pronouns and substantives have an altogether different relation with the verb, and thus are dealt with here.

Unlike the heads of substantival constructions, which occupy different positions in relation to their attributes, the head of a verbal construction always follows its expansion. Only the auxiliery verbs occur after the verbal forms, but they are treated as belonging to the body of the head.

Examples of verbal predicates are as under:-

(a) A verb alone.

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/he: non/
'he went'
/go: zo:im/
'I eat'
/she:im li:
'The monkey spoke'
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(b) With some non-finite verbal form as the expansion.

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/go binka non/
'\text{I went to give}'
/no: zo:ibam no:n\text{\textasciitilde}o/
'\text{\text{you will go}}'
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/gonA nūnsa si:/ 'I saw while going'

(c) **With some pronouns as the expansion.**

'/utyaEtka hudo: boAsA
 akhu: fatka klu:/
 'in the meanwhile, the
 bread fell on the ground
 from his mouth'

'/utyaEtka kāmthyan kat
tālyA thētlat en
hām cān bēnūnne/
 'in the meanwhile, an
eagle swooped down and
lifting him carried (him)
away'

(d) **With indeclinables as the expansion.**

'/āre: sāk hunjo/
 'It will be good'

'/hō: sēth: nūnsuN gu:/
 'when will you go?'

'/go themdo: nūngo/
 'I will surely go'

(e) Sometimes, substantives (not functioning as an
object or complement) also occur as the expansion of a
verbal predicate. Examples are as follows:—

'/hō: unka nūn/
 'He went by the horse'

'/hō: bānkalpsA tētām/
 'He cuts with a knife'

'/yup kat sāN kam denka/
 'Let us chat for a while'
3.5. The direct object of a verb may be a substantive, a substantival construction, a pronoun, a pronominal construction, an indeclinable or an object clause. The substantives and personal pronouns in this position are put in the accusative case. However, while occurring as an indirect object, the substantives are put in the dative case. Since pronouns do not inflect for the dative case, they remain in the accusative even while functioning as an indirect object.

Verbs, which do not take an object, also may be expanded by substantives, pronouns, and indeclinables. The words which occur with verbs as their expansion in these cases are treated as complements. Examples of objects and complements are given below:

(a) **Substantives as a direct object.**

/mai undum a:sbam/  'He sees the horse'
/go enoi a:jikdom dokam/  'I read the good book'
(b) A substantive as an indirect object.

/\'unka bi/         'give to the horse'

(c) An object clause as the direct object.

/\"su: thA: ninne l\'ombam/ 'for what are (you) roaming
\"g\'u: y\'oh vy\'et/       (he) thus asked'

(ii) Pronouns as direct and indirect objects.

/\'gon\’ h\'am bi:at/      'I gave him'
/\'h\'am are: bi/          'give it to him'
/\h\'u: \"su: zukbam \"g\'u:/ 'what are you doing?'
/\'go adom en h\'am bi\'so:/ 'I will give to him and you'

(iii) Indeclinables as objects.

/\'go atim mugun, a\'cin\' / 'I don't want the big one,
\"gatso/                        but the small one'
/\"h\'a: skrim m\'agatne/      'He does not want the
                                bitter one'
(b) Complements - substantives as complements.

/ha: kuźne klu:zi/  'He will fall from the tree'
/ha: lika nońso/  'He will go home'
/ha: li: katka bemńo/  'He will live in a house'

(ii) Pronouns as complements.

/go uba: noń/  'I went there'
/ha: aś: ne nońso/  'He will go from here'
/ho: aśi: nońst goń/  'Where are you going'?

(iii) Indeclinables as complements.

/ha: mil Neřkam/  'He looks below'
/gonā tal Neřk/  'I looked above'

3.6. Phonologically, a Lepcha word is a minimal free form preceded and followed by a pause. However, there are some compound words which are constituted by more than one word. They are morphological rather than syntactic constructions. In terms of
syllables, a word may have as many as seven syllables; but most of the words in this language are monosyllabic or disyllabic. The following are a few words containing more than two syllables:

/əmbreoN/  'fly'
/thyakhibbu/  'tailor'
/mikthyanatbu/  'magician'
/menzukbu/  'butcher'

A maximum of three syllables may be added to each one of the words if the number, emphatic, and case suffixes are added to them.

Syntactically, a word is a sequence of one or more morphemes which function as the basic unit on the syntactic level. The syntactic function of some of the words is partly signalled by its morphological form. Thus the substantives and pronouns are declined for case and number. The verbs are, generally, indifferent to the number and person of their subjects and objects. However, sometimes, they occur with a few suffixes which are exclusively used for the subject in the first person. But this phenomenon is an exception
rather than the rule. The indeclinables have nothing in their morphological form to signal their syntactic function.

**WORD-ORDER**

3.7. The usual word-order in a simple sentence is the following:

(i) Subject - Indirect object - Direct object - Predicate

/\hain\ ah\ a\ sit/  'He killed him'
/go\ akhu\:\ the\a\ko/  'I will eat the bread'
/\hain\a\ ty\u0140\ipu\hir\m\ a\ o\/  'He gave rice and wine to his friends'
/cis\ si\ m\a\:/

(ii) Subject - Complement - Predicate

/\hau\ u\a\:\ n\on\a\o/  'He will go there'
/\hau\ a\b\a\ine\ di:/  'He came from there'

(iii) In equational type of sentences the word-order is subject - predicate - copula, and if the sentence
is without a copula then subject - predicate.

/əɾəɾ lɪ: mʌː/          'It is a house'
/əɾəɾ suː goː/          'What is this'?
/əɾəɾ ajdaː gəm/        'It is nice'

(iv) Sentences with the interrogative morphemes /əː/ or /æː/ always have the said morphemes at the end.

/ŋʊː rʊːn əː/          'Are you a Lepcha'?
/ŋʊː pɪː en dəkəːtəː əː/  'Can you read and write'?