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Yliniemi, Juha Sakari

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Himalayan Linguistics

Nepali attention marker ni

Juha Yliniemi

University of Helsinki

Sikkim University

ABSTRACT

This article is the first in-depth study of the Nepali discourse particle *ni*. The first part summarizes how *ni* has been treated in previous works on Nepali and shows how Östman's (1981) analysis of the often-used English translation equivalent of *ni*, 'you know', gives a hint about the semantics of *ni*. Then, deriving data mainly from Narayan Wagle's novel *Palpasa café*, which includes colloquial dialogues, but also from other sources, the paper illustrates the declarative, interrogative and imperative uses of *ni*. The common denominator between the various uses of *ni* is shown to be that the speaker brings something to the forefront of the addressee's attention. The last section compares the concept of attention to the related concepts contrastive focus and mirative.

KEYWORDS

discourse particles, pragmatics, discourse analysis

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*Nepali attention marker ni**

Juha Yliniemi

University of Helsinki, Sikkim University

1 Introduction

Nepali discourse particles have received only cursory attention in linguistic publications. The present paper addresses this lack by shedding light on the function of the particle *ni*, an addressee-oriented attention marker by which the speaker brings something to the forefront of the addressee's attention.¹

I first summarize how *ni* has been treated in some earlier works on Nepali (§2). This is followed by a short discussion on the English expression *you know*, which has often been employed in translating sentences with the Nepali *ni* (§3). Then, after describing the data sources for the present study (§4), I illustrate the declarative, interrogative, imperative, optative and exclamative uses of *ni* (§5). The last section discusses the similarity of the concept of attention, as described here, to the related concepts of contrastive focus and mirativity (§6).

2 Background

Turner's (1931: 342) dictionary describes *ni* as an "interrogative particle placed at the end of the sentence", sometimes having "additional force". Turner does not comment on the declarative, imperative, optative and exclamative uses of the particle. In the same vein, the lexicon annexed to Acharya's Nepali grammar (1991: 371) describes *ni* as a "nuance word", and in the body of the grammar *ni* is classed as a "question statement nuance particle" (Acharya 1991: 144). Acharya limits his discussion to interrogative uses probably because declarative uses of *ni* do not occur in the folk-story which he uses as his corpus. Similarly to Turner, Acharya's (1991) reader is left with the impression that *ni* occurs only in questions.

Manders (2007: 190), on the other hand, defines *ni* as "slight emphasis in answers" and gives two examples of *ni*, one a declarative and the other an interrogative. However, his definition overlooks the other uses and the fact that a declarative *ni* may be used without a preceding question.

According to Matthews (1998: 46), whose treatment of *ni* observes both declarative and interrogative uses, *ni* in declarative sentences "implies that the information given is common knowledge and may be translated 'you know'" and "[i]n short interrogative phrases, it may be translated 'what about...'. However, the definition of *ni* as marking "common knowledge", perhaps

* I would like to thank Michael Hutt and John Peterson for giving comments on a draft of this paper. I take full responsibility of the remaining errors and inadequacies.

¹ "Forefront of attention" is preferable to mere "attention", because attention is a continuum (Talmy 2007: 266).

inspired by the lexico-semantic meaning of the English gloss ‘you know’, is problematic in that some of Matthews’ own examples seem to contradict this characterization. Consider, for instance, exchange (1) below, taken from Matthews (1998: 57):

(1)

A: *tapāi kabā-ko hunuhuncha?*
 you.HGH where-GEN COP.HGH
 ‘Where are you from?’

B: *ma āngrej hū. mero deś belāyat ho ni.*
 I English COP.EQ.NPST.1SG my country Britain COP.EQ.NPST.3SG AT
 ‘I’m English. My country is Britain (you know).’

tara hījōāja ma nepāl-mā chu.
 but nowadays I Nepal-LOC COP.EX.NPST.1SG
 ‘But nowadays I stay in Nepal.’

In (1), the information marked by *ni* cannot be “common knowledge” for A and B, because A’s ignorance is revealed by his question. Actually the opposite is true. By using *ni*, the speaker is marking the information as something that the addressee did *not* know.

Hutt and Subedi (1999: 291) include plenty of both declarative and interrogative instances of *ni* in their example dialogues. They do not offer a descriptive statement on *ni*, but use various English expressions to convey the nuances of *ni* in various contexts. In the book’s glossary *ni* is given two basic translations, (declarative) ‘you know’ and (interrogative) ‘what about’.

Clark (1989: 4) gives, in addition to the declarative and interrogative uses, examples of *ni* in the imperative mood “spoken with a peremptory tone”, e.g. *basa ni* ‘Sit down, I tell you’. Uses in optative and exclamative clauses, however, are not addressed. A few examples of Clark’s imperative uses of *ni* are given later in 5.3. According to Clark (1989: 5) “*ni* is an emphatic particle which when used with an imperative adds to the command the suggestion of a threat”. Clark uses more prose than other writers to describe the uses of *ni* but unfortunately his lone example sentences rarely provide enough context for deeper contextual analysis. In a comment to one of his context-less declarative examples, Clark (1989: 11) claims that *ni* “here implies confirmation or strong reaffirmation of a fact presumed to have been already known by the hearer.” In another example (Clark 1989: 48), however, *ni* appears not to mark the speaker’s and the addressee’s mutual knowledge, because “*ni* suggests that the interlocutor should have known such a well-known fact” but, in fact, did not know.

Perhaps Matthews’ and Clark’s description of *ni* as marking (at least sometimes) information that is already known by the addressee has been affected by the literal reading of the English expression *you know*, which they often use as a translation equivalent of *ni*. A closer inspection of the uses of *you know*, however, shows that the pragmatic meaning of the expression is quite contrary to the simple literal reading.

3 English *you know*

A literal reading of *you know* in English suggests that by this expression the speaker refers to information that the addressee already knows, i.e. that *you know* would be a marker of knowledge which is mutual between the speaker and the addressee. However, Östman's (1981) functional study of the uses of *you know* in American English shows that the expression, in fact, often marks information that is new to the addressee. According to Östman (1981: 17) "a speaker will use *you know* when the addressee does NOT know what the speaker talks about. That is, the fact that the speaker uses *you know* is as such evidence that it is not at all clear that the 'You' knows."

Östman (1981) illustrates his claim by referring to a study by Newsome (cited in Östman 1981: 18), where a storyteller used the expression *you know* several times when telling a story to an audience for the first time. In the second telling to the same audience, however, there was only one instance of *you know*, because the speaker knew that the audience already knew the story. The storyteller used the expression *you know* when the audience, in fact, did *not* know what the storyteller would be saying.

Östman (1981: 18) further notes that by choosing to use *you know* "the speaker is more likely to receive the addressee's full attention". It appears that instead of taking *you know* at its face-value, the expression rather needs to be interpreted as conveying something in the order of "let it be known to you, pay attention to this". The act of bringing something to the forefront of the addressee's attention is, as will be seen, central to the definition of Nepali *ni* as an attention marker. Therefore, it is no wonder that *you know* is often used in translations of *ni*-sentences.

4 Data

The Nepali data for this article has been mainly collected from the Nepali novel *Palpasa café* by Narayan Wagle (2005) and supplemented by imperative examples from Clark (1989), optative and exclamative examples from an anonymous reviewer, and one example based on my own observation on the use of Nepali in Sikkim. What makes Wagle's novel a particularly interesting object of research is that it presents dialogues in colloquial Nepali and has been translated into English by Bikash Sangruala (2008). The English translations often give insights into the meaning of *ni* in each context. I found altogether 75 instances of *ni* in *Palpasa café*. These instances with context are given in the appendix in the devanagari script with the English translation from the English version of the novel. Because Sangruala's translations are not very literal, I have in several places included my own translations and clarifications in square bracket, see (2). Occasionally, I give both my own more literal and Sangruala's freer translation, see (4). Page references to the Nepali and English versions of *Palpasa café* (PC) respectively are given after the glossing in examples.

5 Summary of the Uses of *ni*

The Nepali particle *ni* is a clause-final attention marker which occurs in declarative, interrogative, imperative, optative and exclamative sentences. All the uses of *ni* may be described in terms of attention, or attention-worthiness, which is more precisely defined as "bringing something to the forefront of the addressee's attention". The particle *ni* has clausal scope and in the present data

is always followed by a pause.² Clausal scope and pause differentiate *ni* from other, more typically focus-like emphatic markers *cabi*, *ta* and *nai*, which direct the addressee's attention to one clausal constituent and thus have phrasal scope.³ Mari-Sisko Khadgi (p.c.), however, noted that *ni* in Kathmandu has acquired a use very similar to *pani* 'also', as in *mo ni āũ-chu* [I at come-npst.1sg] (cf. *mo pani āũ-chu*) 'I too will come.' This suggests that currently *ni* is extending its scope from the clausal level to the phrasal level.

The pause following *ni* may be seen as reflecting the increased level of attention (above the usual level in the discourse) and thus also mental effort and processing time that the speaker expects from the addressee, hence the expression *forefront* of attention given above. The adjectives *attention-worthy* and *newsworthy* are here used as short adjectival descriptions of the attention phenomenon.

The contexts in which an increased level of the addressee's attention may be called for are various. In declarative uses, by using *ni* the speaker may either indicate a switch in the topic of the conversation or present a proposition as particularly attention-worthy. A speaker may present a proposition as particularly attention-worthy, for instance, when the proposition is newsworthy, counterexpectational, a counter-claim, a solution to a problem, a piece of witty language requiring extra processing effort, an emphatic agreement with someone, or even simply an answer to a question. The interrogative uses of *ni*, on the other hand, are always topic-switching questions, where, by using *ni*, the speaker directs the addressee's attention to a new discourse topic. In imperatives, the increased attention may be interpreted as "peremptory tone" or "a threat" (Clark 1989: 4-5).

Although *ni* has been described as a question particle (Turner 1931, Acharya 1991), 57 of the 75 occurrences of *ni* in *Palpasa café* are declarative and only 18 interrogative.⁴ There were no instances of *ni* being used in imperative, optative or exclamative sentences in *Palpasa café*. Therefore, examples are provided below from Clark (1989) for imperative and from an anonymous reviewer for optative and exclamative clauses.

Further research is needed to determine whether the present data accord with examples of *ni* in the Nepali National Corpus. Based on a cursory look at some of the 5,403 listed instances of *ni* in the Nepali National Corpus, two observations can be made: 1) The particle *ni* is quite frequently followed by an exclamation mark, suggesting that *ni* is associated with an increased level of attention. 2) Occasionally, but quite rarely, some dislocated elements, which would in writing and more careful speech occur earlier in the clause, come after *ni*, making it unlikely that *ni* in those instances would be followed by a pause.

The following sections describe the declarative (5.1), interrogative (5.2), imperative (5.3), optative and exclamative (5.4) uses of *ni* respectively.

5.1 Declarative Uses

In declarative uses, *ni* occurs both following the verb at the end of the sentence (5.1.1) and verblessly (5.1.2).

² While I have not carried out a detailed study on intonation patterns in *ni*-sentences, a few remarks are in order. The interrogative *ni* at the end of the sentence is pronounced by higher pitch than non-interrogative ones. When another morpheme follows *ni* in an interrogative sentence, as in example 41 in the Appendix, the rise of intonation is on the last syllable, not on *ni*.

³ However, the particle *ta* sometimes occurs in clause-final uses.

⁴ Some instances, however, are problematic in relation to the declarative vs. interrogative division.

5.1.1 Declarative Post-Verbal Uses

In post-verbal uses, *ni* occurs after the verb usually as the clause-final element but sometimes followed by the contrastive particle *ta*.⁵ In (2) and (3), the clause with *ni* is preceded by the rhetoric question *tim-lāi thā' cha?* 'do you know?', revealing that the next sentence, in the speaker's view, is something that the addressee does not know and is contextually newsworthy to the addressee. For easier finding, instances of *ni* in the example sentences here and henceforth are always given in bold.

(2)

'tapāi āphai dewi-jastai hunubuncha,' maile bhan-ē 'kina dar
 you.HGH self goddess-like COP.HGH I.ERG say-PST.1SG why fear
mānubuncha?'

accept.HGH.NPST

“But you yourself are like a goddess [dewi], so what are you afraid of?” I insisted.’

'tim-lāi thā' cha?' un-le bhan-in 'mero nām
 you-DAT knowledge COP.EX.NPST.3SG 3SG-ERG say-3SG.FEM.PST.MGH my name
dewi ho ni.'

goddess COP.EQ.NPST.3SG AT

“Do you know something?” [she said] “My name is actually ‘Devi.’” (PC 55, 55)

(3)

'tim-lā thā' cha?' us-le bhan-i ma
 you-DAT knowledge COP.EX.NPST.3SG 3SG-ERG say-PST.3SG.FEM I

ājai janm-e-ko' ni.'

today.EMPH be.born-PFV-NMLZ AT

“Do you know what?” she said. “I was born today.” (PC 147, 148)

The newsworthiness of the second speaker's proposition marked by *ni* in (2) is triggered by the other speaker first accidentally speaking better than he knew, using the word *dewi* 'goddess' with reference to the second speaker of (2), whose name happens to be Devi. Example (3), on the other hand, is a comment by a child to an adult. Unlike in (2), there is nothing obvious in the context of (3) triggering the use of *ni*. The speaker just wants to direct the addressee's attention to a new piece of information that functions as a new discourse topic and is thus worthy of the addressee's increased attention.

In (4-9), the newsworthiness arises from the fact that the speaker presents some type of a counter-claim to what the addressee has said or done earlier. In (4), the speaker points out an inconsistency in the addressee's words and behavior and hence marks the proposition as attention-worthy by *ni*. The interrogativity marked by the question mark is here considered to arise from contextual semantics whereas syntactically the clause is a declarative.

⁵ The particle *ta* occurs both as a clause-medial, phrasal-level operator (without following pause), and a clause-final marker. At the end of the sentence, *ta* and *ni* may be ordered either *ni ta* or *ta ni*. Currently, I do not know what the semantic difference between these uses is.

⁶ The sequence *-eko* may also be analyzed as a past participle. The analysis here, separating the perfective marker *-e* and the nominalizer *-ko*, follows Peterson 2000.

(4)

'*ma tapāi-lāi mero sāthi-haru-sanga paricaya gar-āũ-chu,*
 I 2SG.HGH-DAT my friend-PL-with introduction do-CAUS-NPST.1SG
u ubhi-na āṭ-i
 3SG stand.up-INF be.about.to-PST. 3SG.FEM
 "I'd like to introduce you to my friends," she said, starting to get up.'

'*kr̥payā, ma yahā aru-sanga paricit huna cāhannā.*
 please I here others-with acquainted COP.EQ-INF want.NEG.NPST.1SG
 "No," I said, "please don't introduce me to anyone." [lit. "Please, I don't want to get acquainted with others here."]

'*ma-lāi ta āphaī cināunubhayo ni? us-le pheri ṭusukka*
 I-DAT CEMPH self.EMPH make.known.HGH.PST AT 3SG-ERG again squat
bas-dai bhan-i.
 sit-PROG say-PST.3SG.FEM
 'She sat down again. "But you just introduced yourself to me," she said.' (PC 17, 17)

In (4), the speaker points out that the addressee's claim of not wishing to be introduced to people is contradicted by him having introduced himself to the speaker. The contrastive particle *ta* (in the same clause as *ni*) underlines the fact that the addressee's treatment of the speaker contrasts with his treatment of others.

In (5), another example of a counter-claim, the sentence with *ni* is presented by the English translator as something having been "argued" (although a literal translation would be "said"), i.e. presenting disagreement with what the addressee said previously.

(5)

'*dhanimāni, ṭhulāṭhālu, śōsak-sāmanti, burjuwā-haru-lāi ke*
 the.rich big.ones feudal.exploiters bourgeois-PL-DAT what
chaina?
 COP.EX.NPST.NEG.3SG say-PST.3SG 3SG-ERG what.kind treatment what.kind
śikṣā, kasto manorañjan, kasto gāḍi, kasto subidhā
 education what.kind entertainment what.kind car what.kind convenience
cāhi-yo sab juṭāu-na sāk-chan tara bhirmauri-jasto
 be.need-PST.3SG all provide-INF be.able.to-NPST.3PL but rock.bee-like
bhirpaharā-ko dājubhāi ilāi ke cha?
 hills-GEN brothers support what COP.EX.NPST.3SG

["What do the the rich, the powerful, the exploiters and the bourgeoisie lack?" he said. "They can provide for themselves whatever treatment, education, entertainment and luxuries they like. But what support do the rock-bee-like brothers from the hills have?"]

'*dhani bha-e ta jas-lāi pani subidhā*
 rich become-COND CEMPH anyone-DAT too convenience
mīl-cha ni, buḍhā-le bhan-e-kā thie
 be.arranged.NPST.3SG AT old.man-ERG say-PFV-NMLZ.MGH COP.PST.3SG.MGH

hāmi garip bhayaū ra po hām-lāi kyai
 we poor become.PST.1PL and indeed we-DAT anything
chaina.'

COP.EX.NPST.NEG.3SG

“Anyone can have those things if they become rich,” the old man argued [lit. ‘said’]. “It’s only because we’re poor that we don’t have [anything].” (PC 91, 89)

In (6), the counter-claim implied by *ni* is in favour of the addressee. The speaker relieves the addressee’s guilt by disagreeing with her claim that she needs to ask for forgiveness. Interestingly, the English translation of the novel includes a whole sentence ‘no need to be sorry’ to convey what the Nepali original does with the particles *ni* and *ta*.

(6)

mai-le hījo rāti timro teliphon tip-e-na-chu, maile
 I.ERG yesterday at.night your phone pick.up-PFV-NEG-NPST.1SG I.ERG
bhan-ē.

say-PST.1SG

“I forgot to take your phone number yesterday.” [I said]’

‘ma kasti hussu!’ us-le bhan-i ‘sari hai!’
 I what.kind.FEM fool 3SG-ERG say-PST.3SG.FEM sorry eh
 [“What a fool I am,” she said, “Sorry!”]

‘mai-le pani ta māg-inā ni.’
 I.ERG too CEMPH ask.for-PST.NEG.1SG AT

“No need to be sorry. I didn’t ask for it” [lit. “But I also didn’t ask for it, you know.”] (PC 11, 12)

In (7), *ni* is used in a context where the speaker counteracts the addressee’s action.

(7)

phulan-le snyāks milāu-na lāg-e-ki thii, us-lāi
 Phoolan-ERG snacks arrange-INF begin-PFV-NMLZ.FEM COP.PST.3SG.FEM 3SG-DAT
saghāu-na ma ga-ē. ‘par-daina par-daina’ us-le
 help-INF I go.PST.1SG require- NPST.NEG.3SG require-NPST.NEG.3SG 3SG-ERG
nakharā pār-i ‘ma āph-āi sarbha gar-i-hāl-chu ni.’
 flirting make-PST.3G.FEM 1SG self-EMPH all do-0-put-NPST.1SG AT

‘I helped Phoolan put snacks on a few trays, though she kept insisting, “No, no. I can manage.”’ (PC 66, 66)

Counteracting what the addressee has said or is assumed to believe by using *ni* often happens in a context where the speaker feels like having to give an apology of their behavior. This is the case in (8) and (9)

(8)

khai mero ta citra banāunubhaena kyāre, *us-le t̥wākka*
 ECLAM my CEMPH picture make.PST.NEG.HGH DUB 3SG-ERG unexpectedly
hān-i-hāl-yo.
 shoot-0-put-PST.3SG
 [“Hey, you didn’t draw my picture,” he said unexpectedly.]

sadarmukām pug-na bhyāū-dinā ni ta.
 Sadarmukaam reach-INF make.in.time-NPST.NEG.1SG AT CEMPH
 ‘If I did, I wouldn’t be able to reach the district headquarter before dark.’ [lit. ‘I cannot make it to Sadarmukaam in time, you know.’]

(9)

yo dhamilo cha, *maile bhan-ē.*
 this blurry COP.EX.NPST.3SG I.ERG say-PST.1SG
 “That’s too blurry,” I said.’

tapāi-ko citra saphā ta hūdaina ni.
 you.HGH-GEN picture clear CEMPH COP.HAB.NPST.NEG.3SG AT
 ‘He said, “Your sketches aren’t any cleaner.”’ (PC 175, 176)

In (4-9) above, the use of *ni* implied a counter-claim. In the next three examples (10-12), quite the opposite is true. The attention marker *ni* postposed to the copula *ho* signifies that the speaker emphatically concurs with the addressee’s previous statement. In (10) and (11), the addressee has just understood or suspected something and the speaker uses *ni* to confirm that the understanding/suspicion is correct. In (12), speaker B draws the addressee’s attention to the fact that what the addressee feels like is indeed the case.

(10)

ē, *maile bhanē* *tapāi-lāi sāntwanā bhayo.*
 o I.ERG say.PST.1SG you.HGH-DAT comfort become.PST.3SG
 ‘That must make you happy?’

ho ni, *un-le bhan-in*
 COP.EQ.NPST.3SG AT 3SG-ERG say-3SG.FEM.PST.MGH
 “Of course,” she said.’

(11)

A: *tā* *padh-nu na-par-ne* *bha-e-ra* *jā-na*
 you.LGH read-INF NEG-require-INF.PTCP become-CPTCP go-INF
lāg-e-ki ho ra?
 begin-PFV-NMLZ.FEM COP.EQ.NPST.3SG RQ
 ‘Is that why you’re going, because you don’t have to study?’

B: *holā ni, u bhan-che*
 COP.DUB.3SG AT 3.SG say- NPST.3SG.FEM
 “‘Maybe [,” she said].’

(12)

A: *‘āi em hyappi tude’, un-le bhan-e ‘āphn-ai choro*
 I am happy today 3GS-ERG say-PST.3SG.MGH own-EMPH son
phark-e-jasto lāg-yo.’
 return-PFV-like feel-PST.3SG
 “‘That makes me happy[,” he said.] “It’s like my own son has come back.””

B: *‘ho ni ta,’ maile bhan-ē*
 COP.EQ.NPST.3SG AT CEMPH I.ERG said-PST.1SG
 “‘I’m like your son” [I said].’ (PC 112, 112)

In *Palpasa café*, the attention marker *ni* is many times also used in witty remarks of playful language where by using *ni* the speaker is inviting the addressee to pay closer attention than usual to the proposition. In (13), speaker B produces a creative and somewhat mysterious answer to a question and therefore marks his proposition as worthy of increased attention by *ni*, inviting the addressee to make more mental effort than usual in deciphering the message.

(13)

A: *‘pap saṅ-ko albam ho?’*
 pop song-GEN album COP.EQ.NPST.3SG
 ‘Is it an album of pop songs?’

B: *‘āiṅal-bāṅai thābā huncha ni,’ maile bhan-ē.*
 title-from.EMPH knowledge COP.HAB.3SG AT I.ERG say.PST.1SG
 “‘The title says it all,” I said.’ (PC 66, 66)

In the same vein, example (14) is a competition of witty remarks where the speakers are challenging each other’s choice of words. The force of the declarative *ni* is in the English translation expressed with the question ‘remember?’, an expression underlining the increased level of attention needed in the act of remembering.

(14)

‘maile thān-e-ko thiē,’ maile bhan-ē ‘aba hāmro bhet
 I.ERG think-PFV-NMLZ COP.PST.1SG I.ERG say-PST.1SG now our meeting
hūdaina.’
 COP.HAB.NPST.NEG.3SG
 “‘I thought we’d never meet again,” I said.’
‘pṛthwi sāno cha.’
 earth small COP.EX.NPST.3SG
 ‘It’s a small world.’

‘golo cha,’ maile bhanē baru bātā-mā kunai din
 round COP.EX.NPST.3SG I.ERG say-PST.1SG rather road-LOC some day
bbeṭ huna sak-cha.’
 meeting COP.EQ.INF be.able.to-NPST.3SG
 [“It’s a round one,” I said, “We may meet on the road one day.”]

‘bātā-mā kina?’ us-le bhan-i ‘ma ta tapāi-ko
 road-LOC why 3SG-ERG say-PST.3SG.FEM I CEMPH you.HGH-GEN
hoṭal-ai aē ni.’
 hotel-EMPH come.PST.1SG AT
 [“Why on the road?”] she asked. “I came to your hotel, remember?” (PC 33, 32)

Another frequent context for *ni* is when the speaker provides an answer/solution to a question/problem the addressee seems to have. In (15), a child has asked the narrator of the novel to come for a night to her friend’s house. The fact that the narrator feels embarrassed to go to a stranger’s house is a problem that the child attempts to solve by the clause with *ni*: she is going to personally speak about him to her friend’s father.

(15)
‘arkā-ko ghar-mā...,’ maile gābro mān-dai bhan-ē.
 another-GEN house-LOC I.ERG difficult accept-PROG say-PST.1SG
 [“In a stranger’s house?’ I asked grudgingly.]

‘ma mītbā-saṅga bhan-chu ni,’ us-le bhan-i.
 I friend’sfather-with say-NPST.1SG AT 3SG-ERG say.PST.3SG.FEM
 “I’ll ask my MīitBa,” she said.’ (PC 148, 149)

Palpasa café also has a few instances of the idiom *hotta ni*, which appears to be formed from the copula *ho* and the particles *ta* and *ni*.⁷ Examples (16) and (17) illustrate this use.

(16)
‘rāmro nām rahe-cha.’
 beautiful name seem-NPST.3SG
 “That’s a pretty name,” I said.’

‘nām pani kāi rāmro huncha?’ us-le pberi
 name too where beautiful COP.HAB.NPST.3SG 3SG-ERG again

bhan-i ‘kasto je pā-yo tyai!’
 say-PST.3SG.FEM what.kind that.which receive-PST.3SG that.EMPH
 [“How on earth can names be pretty?” she said again. “Where did you get that nonsense?”]

⁷ The same elements, *ho*, *ta* and *ni*, were used in a different order in (12), *ho ni ta*.

'*e*, *hotta ni, hagi?*' *maile bhan-ē 'phul po*
 oh COP.CEMPH AT isn't.it I.ERG say-PST.1SG flower rather
rāmro huncha.'
 beautiful COP.HAB.NPST.3SG
 'I'm sorry. You're right. Flowers can be pretty, not names.' (PC 144, 146)

(17)

un-ko najik pug-e-pachi bāyā-paṭṭi-ko ākhā-ko sisā phuṭ-e-ko
 3SG-GEN near arrive-PFV-after left-side-GEN eye-GEN glass break-PFV-GEN
dekh-ē. hotta ni, cituwā-le kotar-e-ko ākhā uni u
 see-PST.1SG COP.CEMPH AT leopard-ERG scratch-PFV-NMLZ eye 3SG that
belā-dekhi dekh-dainan.
 time-from see-NEG.NPST.3PL
 'As I approached, I saw that the left lens was cracked. I remembered that his left eye had been injured when a leopard had attacked him.' (PC 109, 109)

In (16) *hotta ni* signifies that the speaker changes his mind. The exclamation *e* at the beginning of the clause underlines the fact that something catches the speaker's attention. It is somewhat unclear whether the use of *ni* in (16) should be seen as speaker-oriented, expressing the speaker's newly found belief, or as addressee-oriented, signaling to the addressee that the speaker has changed his mind.

In (17), the use of *ni* is associated with the speaker's act of remembering, which is suggested in the English translation by the word "remembered". The speaker is as if talking to himself. When talking to oneself, the speaker and the addressee are the same person. Therefore the addressee-oriented attention marker *ni* is here able to mark a situation where something newsworthy comes to the speaker's attention.

Example (18) has two instances of *ni* occurring in adjacent sentences. In the first one, (18a), the use of attention-worthiness marked by *ni* resembles many of the earlier examples of counter-claim. In this case, the counter-claim amounts to the speaker rebuking the addressee for what the speaker considers a stupid comment (the speaker disagrees with addressee). The second use is the only example of *ni* in *Palpasa café* where the speaker and the addressee are not characters within the novel. The speaker in (18b) is the main character of the novel who writes the story in the first person and the addressees, whose attention the writer is awakening, are his readers. In (18b), the writer directs the readers' attention from the novel-internal conversation to his meta-comment on one of the characters.

(18a)

'*tyas keṭi-le timi-lāi prabhāwit gar-era ṭhikai ta gar-i,*'
 that girl-ERG you-DAT impressed do-CPTCP alright CEMPH do-PST.FEM.3SG
rupak jān-ne ṭopali-e 'gyālari āja ark-ai
 Rupak know-INF.PTCP gush-PST.3SG.MGH gallery today different.EMPH
bha-e-ko cha. ma-lāi pani lāg-cha, yi penṭiṅ-le
 become-PFV-NMLZ COP.EX.NPST.3SG I-DAT too feel-NPST.3SG these painting-ERG

nyāya pā-e-kā chan.'

justice receive-PFV-NMLZ.PL COP.EX.NPST.3PL

["She's been a good influence on you," Rupak gushed knowingly. "The gallery is different today. I too think that the paintings have been done justice."]

'penṭiṅ-lāi hittā-le pani nyāy din-cha?' kiśor-le bujruk
 painting-DAT wall-ERG too justice give-NPST.3SG Kishor-ERG mature
praśna gar-yo.

question do-PST.3SG

"Can walls do justice to art?" Kishore asked [a mature question].'

'din-do-rahe-cha, bujbi-yo ni hoina?' chirin
 give-IPFV-appear-3SG be.understood-PST.3SG AT COP.EQ.NPST.NEG.3SG Tshering
bāṅgi-yo.

be.headstrong-PST.3SG

"Tshering sniffed. "That's what our host appears to be claiming."

(18b)

u ta photoṅrāphar ho ni, bhittā ra kyānbhās-ko
 3SG CEMPH photographer COP.EQ.NPST.3SG AT wall and canvas-GEN
marma u-jati aru-le āṭhyāu-na sak-dainan.

significance 3.SG-to.the.extent others-ERG catch-INF be.able.to-NPST.NEG.3PL

'Of all people, Tshering, a photographer, should have understood the relationship between a painting and the wall it's hung on!' [lit. 'He is a photographer, you know. Others cannot grasp the significance of canvases and walls like him.'] (PC 69, 69)

In the examples above, it was the propositional content of the clauses that was marked as newsworthy with *ni*. In (19), however, it is not so much the propositional content of the clause that the speaker recommends to the addressee's attention. The speaker rather uses *ni*, combined with the semantically vacuous existential verb, as a deictic marker, i.e. pointer which directs the addressee's attention to one referent from among other people, who then becomes the topic of the discussion.

(19)

'himmatilā rahe-chan tapāt-ko gorā-haru,' maile bhan-ē
 brave seem-NPST.3PL you.HGH-GEN white.face-PL I.ERG say-PST.1SG
'agāḍi hīd-i-rah-e-ki jun keṭi cha ni...,'

before walk-0-remain-PFV-NMLZ.FEM which girl COP.EX.NPST.3SG AT

"Your friends are brave," I said to the environmentalist. "The girl who's leading us..."

'dres lagāu-ne?' us-le sodh-yo.

uniform put.on- INF.PTCP 3SG-ERG ask-PST.3SG

"The one in uniform?" he asked.'

'ho, tyo khāki-dhāri keṭi mero gāū-ki eṭi babini
 COP.EQ.NPST.3SG that khaki-wearing girl my village-GEN.FEM one.FEM little.sister

par-ne-ki *sāthi ho,* *maile bhan-ē.*
 occur-INF.PTCP-GEN.FEM friend COP.EQ.NPST.3SG I.ERG say-PST.1SG
 [“Yes. That khaki-wearing girl is a friend of a sister from my village,” I said.] (PC 122, 122)

This use of *ni* in (19) bears great resemblance to the verbless uses, in which the main function of *ni* is to direct the addressee’s attention to a new discourse topic.

5.1.2 Declarative Verbless Uses

In function, verbless declarative uses are very similar to the post-verbal use in (19) where *ni* is used as a deictic marker and accompanied by a semantically relatively vacuous verb (existential copula). In *Palpasa café*, I found no examples of verbless, declarative uses of *ni* apart from the idiomatic expression *cāinjo kyare ni*, see (21). Example (20) is a comment I heard spoken in a shop by a customer who, after waiting for his turn for some time, wanted to draw the shop assistant’s attention from the previous customer to himself by using *ni*. The utterance was followed by a long pause after which the speaker went on to tell what kind of assistance he required. Here the attention-worthiness implied by *ni* consists of the speaker directing the addressee’s attention to a new discourse topic (and new partner in conversation).

(20)
mero ni...
 my AT
 ‘When it comes to my (business)...’

The novel *Palpasa café* uses a couple of times the verbless idiom *cāinjo kyare ni*, see (21). The attention marker in (21) just appears to draw the addressee’s attention to the exclamation.

(21)
ek-pachi arko gar-dai harek din-jaso tyahi kathā sunāū-dā
 one-after another do-PROG every day-as.often that.EMPH story tell-IPFV
sunāū-dā un-ko eutā śaili sthāpit bha-i-sak-e-ko
 tell-IPFV 3SG-GEN one style established become.PST-0-COMPL-PFV-NMLZ
thiyo, jas-lāi hāmi sajilai nakkal gar-era jiskyāū-thyaū
 COP.PST.3SG which-DAT we easily copy do-CPTCP tease-PST.HAB.3PL

cāinjo kyare ni, hai, tyā daud-era gan-sabit pojisan-mā bas-dā
 EXCLAM DUB AT eh there run-CPTCP gun-with position-LOC sit-IPFV
gadyāmma...!’ tyasai gar-i cituwā-ko kathā uni yasari
 ??? like.that.EMPH do-CPTCP leopard-GEN story 3SG like.this
suru gar-the ‘cāinjo kyare ni, hai, tyassāle ta
 beginning do-PST.HAB.3SG.MGH EXCLAM DUB AT eh like.that CEMPH

māthi-paṭṭi jhāṅ-bhitra luk-e-ko rahe-cha...!
 above-side bush-inside hide-PFV-NMLZ seem-NPST.3SG

[‘Telling the story time after time, day after day, he developed a style that we would teasingly imitate: “By Jove, eh, when I was in my position with the gun, suddenly...” This was how he would start the leopard story: “By Jove, eh, it was hiding above in the bushes.”] (PC 110, 110)

As shown in (20) above, *ni* is occasionally used in the declarative mood as a purely attention-shifting, topic-switching sense. The topic switching uses of *ni*, however, are more typical of interrogative clauses.

5.2 Interrogative Uses

The particle *ni* itself is not a question marker (contra Turner 1931: 342 and Acharya 1991: 144). The basic function of *ni* is rather to bring something to the forefront of the addressee’s attention. This function of *ni* applies, in addition to interrogative clauses, also to declarative, imperative, optative and exclamative clauses. An interrogative sentence with *ni* is marked as interrogative either by the presence of a question word or, in the absence of a question word, by higher intonation. Sometimes interrogativity arises from purely contextual factors, as in (4) above. In these cases, the line between declarative and interrogative becomes segmentally indistinguishable. The difference between the declarative example (20), *mero ni* ‘when it comes to my (business)’, and the analogous interrogative example (26), *tapāi ni?* ‘and what about you?’, is made through intonation, which rises towards the end of the interrogative. More research needs to be done on the role of intonation in distinguishing declarative vs. interrogative uses of *ni*.

In interrogative uses, *ni* may occur either in a fully formed sentence following the verb or in a partly elided clause following a non-verbal element. In partly elided clauses, some of the propositional content is retrievable from the context. I will first describe the post-verbal (5.2.1) and then the verbless interrogative uses of *ni* (5.2.2).

5.2.1 Interrogative Post-Verbal Uses

In (22), the proposition with *ni* shifts the addressee’s attention from the previous discourse topic, tea, to a new one, the number of his children.

(22)

A: ‘*guliyo dherai bha-era holā.*’
 sweet a.lot become-CPTCP COP.DUB.3SG
 ‘You like it [i.e. tea] because it’s sweet.’

B: ‘*ḥikka cha.*’
 alright COP.EX.NPST.3SG
 ‘It’s perfect.’

A: ‘*timrā bālbaccā kati chan ni?*’
 your children how.many COP.EX.NPST.3PL AT
 ‘How many children do you have.’ (PC 52, 52)

In (23), there is again a shift of attention as the topic of the discussion switches from *Guinness Book of Records* to what the addressee saw from the top of Mount Everest.

(23)

'timi-le kabilyai paḍh-e-ki chyau ebharest-mā yāk
 you-ERG ever read-PFV-NMLZ.FEM COP.EX.NPST.2.FEM Everest-LOC yak
caḍh-e-ko ra yāk-māthi mānche caḍh-era śikhar pug-e-ko?
 climb-PFV-NMLZ and yak-on human climb-CPTCP top reach-PFV-NMLZ
maile keṭi-tira praśna phāl-ē.

LEGR girl-direction question throw-PST.1SG

'I asked the teenager, "Have you ever read of a yak climbing Everest with a man on its back?"'

'ājai sun-dai chu,' us-le bhan-i 'giniḷ
 still listen-PROG COP.EX.NPST.1SG 3SG-ERG say-PST.3SG.FEM Guinness

buk-mā rekard ta gar-dainau?
 book-LOC record CEMPH do-NEG.NPST.2SG

"It's the first time I've heard such a thing," [lit. "I'm still listening"] she wrote back. "Shouldn't it go in the Guinness Book of Records?"

'soc-dai chu.'
 think-PROG COP.EX.NPST.1SG

'I'm thinking about it.'

'ani timi-le sansār-ko tūppa-bāṭa ke dekh-yau ni?
 and you-ERG world-GEN top-from what see-PST.2SG AT

'And what did you see from the top of the world?' (PC 40, 40)

In (24), the interrogativity arises as a pragmatic function from the context and the tag question. By using *ni*, the speaker directs the addressee's attention to a new element about the identity of the female person they are discussing.

(24)

'pakkai pani tyo sujhāw-dātā hissi par-e-ki, lāmo
 surely.EMPH too that suggestion-giver attractive occur-PFV-NMLZ.FEM long
kapāl pharapharāū-dai hīd-ne, intelijent, pyāsienet, cārmiḷ
 hair flap-PROG walk-INF.PTCP intelligent passionate charming
hunu-par-cha,' un-le yaso pani bhan-era mero khisi
 COP.INF-must.be-3SG 3SG-ERG like this too say-CPTCP my teasing
gar-e.

DO-PST.3SG.MGH

['He also teased me by saying like this: "Surely the one who gave you the suggestion must be an attractive girl, one who walks with her long hair flapping, intelligent, passionate, charming."']

'e drśya! chirij jān-ne bhayo pheri 'timi-le
 hey Drishya Tshering know-INF.PTCP become.PST.3SG again you-ERG

cyāt-mā phelā pār-e-ki keṭi ta hoina ni
 chat-LOC meeting occur-PFV-NMLZ.FEM girl CEMPH COP.EQ.NPST.NEG.3SG AT
hai?
 eh

[“Hey, Drishya,” Tshering became aware again. “Isn’t this the girl you met in the chat room?”]
 (PC 70, 70)

In (25), the speaker directs the addressee’s attention to a particular topic and the proposition is interpreted as a question (as shown by the addressee’s response and the question mark in the Nepali version).

(25)

ma pheri hāsō thām-na sak-dinā.
 I again laughter stop.INF be.able.to-NPST.NEG.1SG
 ‘I burst into laughter again.’

‘āja ta timi beskarī nai hās-e-kā chau ni?’
 today CEMPH you excessively EMPH laugh-PFV-NMLZ COP.EX.NPST.2SG AT
lāhure ā-i-pug-e-ko cha.
 soldier come-0-PFV-NMLZ COP.EX.NPST.3SG

‘The man [lit. soldier] I’d met on the train from Goa caught up with me a little later. “You’re laughing a lot today,” he said.’

‘tyassai, tyassai hundali-rah-e-ko cha,’
 like.that.EMPH like.that.EMPH be.stirred-remain-PFV-NMLZ COP.NPST.3SG
ma bhan-chu.
 I say-NPST.1SG

‘The man [lit. soldier] I’d met on the train from Goa caught up with me a little later. “You’re laughing a lot today,” he said.’

‘tyassai, tyassai hundali-rah-e-ko cha,’
 like.that.EMPH like.that.EMPH be.stirred-remain-PFV-NMLZ COP.NPST.3SG
ma bhan-chu.
 I say-NPST.1SG

“Sorry,” I said.’ [lit. “I was stirred just like that, randomly,” I said.’] (PC 157, 157)

In addition to the post-verbal interrogative uses described above, *ni* is also used in verbless interrogation.

5.2.2 *Interrogative Verbless Uses*

The verbless interrogative uses of *ni* occur in partly elided clauses where some of the propositional content is retrievable from the previous context. By using *ni*, the speaker redirects the addressee’s attention to a new discourse topic. Often *ni* is used to shift attention from one person to

another, as in (26) and (27), but by using *ni* the speaker may also direct the addressee’s attention to a certain word in the previous context, as in (28).

(26)

‘kati din bas-chyau goā?’
 how.many day stay-NPST.2SG.FEM.MGH Goa
 “How long are you staying in Goa?” I asked.’

‘aba kehi din,’ us-le bhan-i tapāi ni?’
 now some day 3SG-ERG say-PST.3SG.FEM you.HGH AT
 “A few more days,” she said. “And you?” (PC 20, 20)

(27)

‘hāmro ta skul-ai banda cha,’ us-le
 our CEMPH school-EMPH closed COP.EX.NPST.3SG 3SG-ERG
bhan-i ‘timro ni?’
 say-PST.3SG.FEM yours AT
 [“Our school’s closed,” she said. “What about yours?”] (PC 147, 148)

(28)

‘timi merai plet-bāta khān-thyau?’
 you my.EMPH plate-from eat-PST.HAB.2SG
 ‘Would you have preferred to eat from my plate?’

‘āphnai kātā-le khurwāuna saknubunthena tapāi?’
 own.EMPH fork-ERG feed.INF be.able.to.PST.HGH.HAB.NEG. you.HGH
 [‘Couldn’t you have fed me with your own fork?’]

‘tyaso gar-dā maile hatār gar-e-ko hunthyo.
 like.that do-IPFV I.ERG hurry do-PFV-NMLZ COP.PST.HAB.3SG
 [‘Had I done that, I would have been in a hurry.’]

‘ke-ko hatār ni?’
 what-GEN hurry AT
 [‘In a hurry for what?’] (PC 58, 58)

The examples above discussed the declarative and interrogative uses of *ni*. The next subsection briefly describes the imperative uses.

5.3 Imperative Uses

The only documented imperative uses of *ni* I found are from Clark (1989), from which examples (29-31) are taken. When used with imperatives, *ni* “adds to the command a suggestion of a threat” (Clark 1989: 5). Clark (1989: 4) also describes *ni* in imperatives as “spoken with peremptory tone” (Clark 1989: 4). The uses of *ni* in (29-31), however, have been questioned by some Nepali

speakers in both Kathmandu and Sikkim, hence the question marks in the examples. One speaker from Sikkim considered (29) as infelicitous but said that (32), a more polite request formed with the infinitive suffix, could be used. There is probably some diachronic and regional variation especially in the imperative uses of *ni*.

(29)

ʔbas-a ni
sit-IMP.MGH AT
'Sit down, I tell you.' (Clark 1989: 3)

(30)

ʔna-bas-a ni
NEG-sit-IMP.MGH AT
'Do not sit down, I tell you.' (Clark 1989: 3)

(31)

ʔmāsu banau ni
meat make.IMP.MGH AT
'Mind you do the meat.' (Clark 1989: 6)

(32)

bas-nu ni
sit-INF AT
'Sit down.'

The Nepali particle *ni* has been described above as an attention marker which brings a proposition or a new discourse topic (which may be a person to whom the clause with *ni* is addressed) to the forefront of the addressee's attention. In declarative sentences, *ni* most frequently marks the propositional content of the sentence as attention-worthy for one reason or another (e.g. newsworthiness, counter-claim, emphatic agreement) but may also function deictically, as in (19). In interrogative sentences, the speaker uses *ni* to bring a new discourse topic to the forefront of the addressee's attention. In imperative sentences, although Clark's examples are contested, the added attention implied by *ni*, is interpreted as "peremptory tone" or as a "threat" (Clark 1989, 4, 5).

5.4 *Optative and Exclamative Uses*

In addition to the aforementioned declarative, interrogative and imperative uses, an anonymous referee of this article noted that *ni* may also occur in the following clauses, which may be termed optative (33) and exclamative (34):

(33)

parsi samma-mā mero kām saki-yos ni!
the.day.after.tomorrow until-LOC my work be.finished-3SG.OPT AT
'May my work be finished by the day after tomorrow!'

(34)

lou na ni, mar-ê! ke gar-nu ni kboi!
 EXCLAM PART⁸ AT die-PST.1SG what do-INF AT EXCLAM
 ‘What the heck! What can be done!’

Although the anonymous reviewer did not provide a context for (33) or (34), it is probably safe to assume that the use of *ni* in (33) adds urgency to the wish, which may even be an indirect command. The two uses of *ni* in (34), on the other hand, are exclamatives, which naturally call for an increased level of attention, underlining the association of *ni* with attention.

6 Attention, Contrastive Focus and Mirativity

The description of *ni* in this paper bears similarity to the concepts of contrastive focus and mirativity, which are briefly discussed here. Gundel and Fretheim (2004: 182) describe contrastive focus as the “speaker/writer’s intention to affect the addressee’s attention state”. This definition includes two essential characteristics that apply to *ni*, attention and addressee-orientation. In Gundel and Fretheim’s (2004: 182) framework, however, (contrastive) focus is limited to call “attention to a constituent” within a clause. Nepali *ni*, however, may also bring the whole clause/proposition, not just one constituent, to the forefront of the addressee’s attention.

Another concept used for describing phenomena similar to the uses of *ni* is mirativity, a concept which DeLancey (1997) brought to the linguistic discussion table and which has been since questioned (Lazard and Hill 2012) and redefined by various authors (e.g. Aikhenvald 2012, Hengeveld and Olbertz 2012). Whereas DeLancey defined mirativity as “information that is new or surprising to the speaker”, Aikhenvald (2012) and Hengeveld and Olbertz (2012) have extended the definition to include addressee-oriented mirativity in addition to speaker-oriented mirativity. According to Hengeveld and Olbertz (2012: 480), a mirative marker “characterizes a proposition as newsworthy, unexpected, or surprising” either to the speaker or to the hearer. Following Hengeveld and Olbertz’s modified definition, the exclusively addressee-oriented morpheme *ni* could perhaps fall within the boundaries of mirativity. Most discussions on mirativity, however, have centered on speaker-oriented uses. Aikhenvald (2012: 439), for instance, although acknowledging both speaker and addressee-oriented (and also third person oriented) mirativity, gives examples only of speaker-oriented morphemes.

Nichols (2011: 280-282), however, labels the addressee-oriented Ingush morphemes *hɯuona*, postposed to declarative verbs, and *hɯaai*, postposed to imperative verbs, as “second person mirative”, “second person” corresponding to “addressee-orientation” here. Example (35) reproduces one of Nichols’ (2011: 280) examples of the declarative second person mirative *hɯuona*.

(35)

Yz sou hɯwalxa jy hɯuona.
 3SG too early J.be.PRS 2SG/MIR
 ‘That’s too early!’ (Speaker knows this better than hearer does. Or e.g. hearer is in a position of authority and has announced an early meeting; speaker argues against the proposed time.) (Nichols 2011: 280)

⁸ The particle *na*, which is difficult to name, is here simply called a particle.

The contexts given for (32) after the gloss are very similar to contexts where the Nepali *ni* could be used.⁹ Given the modified definition of mirativity and a precedent in Ingush (and perhaps in some other languages), there would seem to be a case for calling *ni* an addressee-oriented mirative, alongside the Nepali speaker-oriented marker *rahe-* (copula)/-*echa* (other verbs), which has variously been called “mirative” (T. Peterson 2013: 10), “mediative” (Lazard 2001: 363), “mirative/result-inference” (Peterson 2000: 16) and “inferential” (Michailovsky 1996).

In my view, however, the term attention-worthiness, defined as “bringing something to the forefront of the addressee’s attention”, is descriptively a more useful term than mirativity for describing the Nepali *ni*. The main reason is that mirativity is usually defined in terms of “overall knowledge structure” (DeLancey 1997: 33).¹⁰ This definition, however, does not work well for declarative examples such as (19) and (20) where the use of *ni* is better seen as triggered by the speaker’s desire to direct the addressee’s attention to a certain individual rather than by the speaker considering his proposition as bringing some unexpected information to the addressee’s overall knowledge structure. For interrogative, topic-switching examples, an attention-centered definition is even more obviously better than the one based on the notion of overall knowledge structure. Other factors that recommend calling *ni* something else than a mirative are that “mirative” as a term is opaque, and the literature so far has associated mirativity mainly with speaker-oriented uses.

While not lending itself to the existing definitions of mirativity, the Nepali attention marker *ni* highlights the common ground between (contrastive) focus-like and mirative-like phenomena. Whereas attention is an integral part of defining focus, the concept of focus has been less often applied on the sentence-level.¹¹ Mirativity, on the other hand, has been seen as a clause-level phenomenon but has not been associated with attention. Thus, the concept of “bringing something to the forefront of the addressee’s attention”, as illustrated by *ni*, may prove helpful in understanding morphemes that have both contrastive focus-like uses and mirative-like uses. Examples of such morphemes in other languages are =*eo* in Denjongke (Yliniemi 2016), -*ka* in Tamang (Mazaudon 2003: 150) and *moh* in Bih (Nguyen 2013: 147, 233).

7 Conclusion

This paper has shown that previous attempts at describing the Nepali particle *ni* have been inadequate because they have not covered the full range of the uses of *ni* or made adequate generalizations about these uses. Data from Narayan Wagle’s (2005) novel *Palpasa café* and other sources show that *ni* occurs in declarative, interrogative, imperative, optative and exclamative uses and that all these uses can be characterized as essentially “bringing something to the forefront of the addressee’s attention”. As shown in §6, the concept of attention may prove helpful in understanding the similarity between mirative-like and contrastive focus-like phenomena also in other languages.

⁹ Japanese addressee-oriented marker *yo* (see Davis 2011) is another marker bearing great resemblance to Nepali *ni*.

¹⁰ Hengeveld and Olbertz (2012) seem to acquiesce with this part of DeLancey’s definition, because they do not touch it in their modified definition.

¹¹ Mazaudon’s (2003) treatment of Tamang -*ka* is an exception. According to Mazaudon (2003: 149-150), the “strong focus” marker -*ka* functions both as a typical focus marker postponed to NPs and also as a post-verbal marker suggesting “that the assertion is globally contrary to expectancy, or to the wish of the speaker or the hearer”.

ABBREVIATIONS

| | | | |
|--------|------------------------|------|-------------------------|
| 0 | linker | IMP | imperative |
| 1 | first person | INF | infinitive |
| 2 | second person | IPFV | imperfective |
| 3 | third person | J | gender agreement marker |
| AT | attention marker | LGH | low grade honorific |
| CAUS | causative | LOC | locative |
| CEMPH | contrastive emphatic | MGH | middle grade honorific |
| CPTCP | conjunctive participle | MIR | mirative |
| COMPL | completive | NEG | negative |
| COP | copula | NEW | newsworthiness |
| DAT | dative | NMLZ | nominalizer |
| DUB | dubitative | NPST | non-past |
| EMPH | emphatic | OPT | optative |
| EQ | equative | PART | particle |
| ERG | ergative | PFV | perfective |
| EX | existential | PL | plural |
| EXCLAM | exclamation | PST | past |
| FEM | feminine | PROG | progressive |
| GEN | genitive | PRS | present |
| HAB | habitual | RQ | rhetorical question |
| HGH | high grade honorific | SG | singular |

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Juha Yliniemi
j_yliniemi@hotmail.com

APPENDIX: THE OCCURRENCE OF *ni* IN PALPASA CAFÉ

This appendix list all the instances of *ni* (with context) in *Palpasa café* in the writer's original Devanagari script followed by Bikash Sangrual's free English translations from the English version of the novel. Some sentences with *ni* also have a more literal translation in square brackets. The examples appear in the order of occurrence in the book, with page references given to the Nepali and English versions respectively. As discussed 5.2 above, categorizing declarative and interrogative uses is not always straightforward. For the purposes of the appendix, the clauses marked with a question mark in original Nepali are categorized as interrogatives.

1. Declarative (11, 12)

'मैले हिजो राति तिम्रो टेलिफोन टिपेनछु,' मैले भनँ ।

'I forgot to take your phone number yesterday.'

'म कस्ती हुस्सु !' उसले भनी- 'सरी है !'

'I'm a fool. I forgot to give it to you. I'm sorry.'

'मैले पनि त मागिनँ नि ।'

'No need to be sorry. I didn't ask for it.'

2. Declarative (17, 17)

'म तपाईंलाई मेरो साथीहरूसँग परिचय गराउँछु,' ऊ उभिन आँटी ।

'I'd like to introduce you to my friends,' she said, starting to get up.

'कृपया, म यहाँ अरूसँग परिचित हुन चाहन्नँ ।'

'No,' I said, 'please don't introduce me to anyone.'

'मलाई त आफैँ चिनाउनुभयो नि ?' उसले फेरि टुसुक्क बसदै भनी ।

'She sat down again. 'But you just introduced yourself to me,' she said.

3. Declarative (19, 19)

'तपाईंका पेन्टिङबाट म प्रभावित छु ।'

'I really like your paintings,' she said.'

'मेरो पेन्टिङमा त्यस्तो के छ र ?' मैले फेरि सोधियोपलँ ।

'What do you see in them?' I asked.

'त्यसमा धेरै कुरा छ, विषयवस्तु, पृष्ठभूमि र पात्रका आकाङ्क्षालाई अभिव्यक्त गर्ने रेखा र रङ्गमा मीठो ध्वनि छ,'

'The dreams and desires of the people you paint.'

उसले भनी- 'पात्रहारु कसरी सोच्नुहुन्छ वा खोज्नुहुन्छ ?'

'How do you choose your subjects?'

'ई अहिले तिम्रीलाई भेटँ नि ।'

'Just the way I met you.'

4. Interrogative (20, 20)

5. Declarative (20, 20)

‘कति दिन बस्छ्यौ गोआ ?’

‘How long are you staying in Goa?’ I asked.

‘अब केही दिन,’ उसले भनी- ‘तपाईं नि ?’

‘A few more days,’ she said. ‘And you?’

‘म त भोलि जाँदै छु,’ मैले भनेँ- ‘केरलातिर ।’

‘I leave for Kerala tomorrow.’

‘ओह,’ उसले आँखा सर्काई- ‘चित्रकार-लेखकहरूलाई यही स्वतन्त्रता छ, हगि ?’

‘Oh.’ She raised her eyebrows. ‘Artists must lead such free lives.’

‘आफू स्वतन्त्र नहुनेले के स्वतन्त्रताको अभिव्यक्ति दिने नि ।’

‘You have to be free to express yourself freely,’ I said.

6. Declarative (33, 32)

7. Declarative (33, 33)

‘मैले ठानेको थिएँ,’ मैले भनेँ- ‘अब हाम्रो भेट हुँदैन ।’

‘I thought we’d never meet again,’ I said.

‘पृथ्वी सानो छ ।’

‘It’s a small world.’

‘गोलो छ,’ मैले भनेँ- ‘बरू बाटामा कुनै दिन भेट हुन सकछ ।’

‘And round,’ I joked, ‘Our paths might’ve crossed some day.’

‘बाटामा किन ?’ उसले भनी- ‘म त तपाईंको होटलै आएँ नि ।’

‘Why do you put it so abstractly?’ she asked. ‘I came to your hotel, remember?’

‘बाटो बिरैर ?’

‘Maybe you just took the wrong path?’

‘खोज्दै,’ उसले भनी ।

‘No, it was the way I chose to go,’ she said.

‘म छक्क छु ।’

‘I’m surprised.’

‘किन ?’

‘Why?’

‘तिमीलाई केले डोच्यायो ?’

‘Well, what brought you here today?’

‘पुस्तकको साइनोले ।’

‘The book.’

‘भन्नाले ?’

‘What do you mean?’

‘अब भेट होला-नहोला,’ उसले भनी- ‘यो पुस्तकमा त तपाईंको सिग्नेचर चाहन्छ ।’

‘I wasn’t sure if we’d meet again and I wanted you to sign it.’

उसले त्यो किताब टेबलमा तेस्यैई ।

She put the book on the table in front of her.

‘त्यसो भए मेरो हस्ताक्षर लिन आएकी ?’

I stared at her incredulously. You mean you came to see me just for an autograph?’

‘कस्तो लाग्यो ?’

‘What did you think?’

‘अघि नै भनेको भए हुन्थ्यो नि ।’

‘Why didn’t you tell me earlier?’ I snapped.

8. Interrogative (40, 40)

‘तिमीले कहिल्यै पढेकी छ्यौ एभरेस्टमा याक चढेको र याकमाथि मान्छे चढेर शिखर पुगेको ?’ मैले केटीतिर प्रश्न फालें।

I asked the teenager, ‘Have you ever read of a yak climbing Everest with a man on its back?’

‘आजै सुन्दै छु,’ उसले भनी- ‘गिनिज बुकमा रेकर्ड त गर्दैनौ ?’

It’s the first time I’ve heard such a thing,’ she wrote back. ‘Shouldn’t it go in The Guinness Book of Records?’

‘सोच्दै छु ।’

I’m thinking about it.’

‘आनि तिमीले संसारको टुप्पबाट के देख्यौ नि ?’

‘And what did you see from the top of the world?’

9. Interrogative (52, 52)

10. Interrogative (52, 52)

‘चिया कस्तो रै’छ ?’

‘How’s the tea?’

‘मीठो छ ।’

‘It’s good.’

‘मनको सन्तोष हो सबै ।’

‘You are just saying that to please me.’

‘तर चिया निकै मीठो छ ।’

‘No, I really mean it.’

‘गुलियो धेरै भएर होला ।’

‘You like it because it’s sweet.’

‘ठिक्क छ ।’

‘It’s perfect.’

‘तिम्ना बालबच्चा कति छन् नि ?’

‘How many children do you have?’

‘बिहे गरेको छैन ।’

‘I’m not married.’

‘ए !’

‘Oh?’

‘तपाईंको नि?’

‘And you?’ I asked.

11. Interrogative (53, 53)

12. Declarative (53, 53)

‘एकपल्ट मैले यसरी बत्ती कातेको खिचेर टेलिभिजनमा देखा’की थी।’

‘Once she filmed me and I saw myself on television.’

‘ए, तपाईंलाई टेलिभिजनमा पनि देखायो?’

‘You were on television?’

‘होइन, त्यो के जाती भन्छ नि, आफैँ खिचेर त्यै घुसारेर हेर्ने क्या!’

‘No, no. It’s something you put into something and a picture appears.’

‘मैले बुझें।’

‘I understand.’

‘पढ्पढ,’ उनले भनिन्- ‘बढिमान्छे, गन्थन मात्र आउँछ।’

‘Carry on reading,’ she said. ‘I’m just prattling on.’

‘तपाईं राम्रो कुरा गर्नुहुन्छ हजुरआमा, झिजो लाग्दैन।’

‘On the contrary,’ I said, ‘what you say is interesting. I’m enjoying our conversation.’

‘भन्दियो नि’

‘She smiled. ‘You’re just being polite.’

13. Declarative (53, 54)

14. Interrogative (53, 54)

‘म उमेरमा ऊजस्तै थैं कि जस्तो लाग्छ।’

‘I think she’s like me when I was young.’

‘रगत परेपछि।’

‘Well, she’s your granddaughter.’

‘बानीबेहोरा पनि त्यास्तै लाग्छ।’

‘It’s more than just her physical appearance. She even behaves the way I did.’

‘ए, मैले भनँ- ‘तपाईंलाई सान्त्वना भयो।’

‘That must make you happy?’

‘हो नि,’ उनले भनिन्- ‘बाउआमाचाहिँ आम्रिका फर्की कि फर्की भन्छन, ऊ यैं बस्छ भनेर अड्डी कसेकी छ।’

‘Of course,’ she said. ‘Her parents keep pressuring her to go back to Amrika [sic] but she’s determined to stay here.’

‘यस्ती मायालु हजुरआमालाई कसरी छाडेर जाने नि?’

‘How could she leave a grandmother like you?’

15. Declarative (55, 55)

‘तपाईं आफैँ देवीजस्तै हुनुहुन्छ,’ मैले भनँ- ‘किन डर मान्नुहुन्छ?’

‘I insisted. ‘But you yourself are like a goddess, so what are you afraid of?’

‘तिम्लाई था’ छ ? ‘उनले भनिन्- ‘मेरो नाम देवी हो नि !’
‘Do you know something? My name is actually ‘Devi’.’

16. Declarative (57, 58)

‘हजुरआमा तपाईंको फ्यान हुनुभएछ,’ उसले भनी ।
‘My grandma’s one of your admirers,’ she said.
‘मेरो चित्र देख्नुभयो र ?’
‘Why? Has she seen my paintings?’
‘नचाइदिनुभयो नि त ।’
‘No. Because you made her dance.’

17. Declarative (57, 58)

‘आज व्रत हो ?’
‘Are you fasting today?’ I asked.
‘कसरी खाने हो भनेर तपाईंलाई हेरिरहेकी ।
‘I’m watching you in order to learn how to eat.’
‘चिसो भयो नि त ।’
‘The food’s getting cold.’

18. Interrogative (58, 58)

‘तिमी मेरै प्लेटबाट खान्थ्यौ ?’
‘Would you have preferred to eat from my plate?’
‘आफ्नै काँटाले खुवाउन सक्नुहुन्थेन तपाईं ?’
‘Would you have dared to feed me with your fork.’
‘त्यसो गर्दा मैले हतार गरेको हुन्थ्यो ।’
‘It’s a bit early for that, isn’t it.’
‘केको हतार नि ?’
‘Early for what?’

19. Declarative (65, 65)

‘अनि तिम्री प्रेमिका कहाँ बसेर गाउँछे त ?’
‘Where would your girlfriend sit to sing?’ I asked.
‘ऊ स्क्रिनमा आउँदिन, उसको फोटो मात्र आउँछ । यो ड्युट सङ्ग होइन नि त !’ उसले भन्यो- ‘सोलो हो ।’
‘She won’t be in it. We’re just going to use her photo. It’s a solo, after all, not a duet.’

20. Declarative (66, 66)

फुलनले स्न्याक्स मिलाउन लागेकी थिई, उसलाई सघाउन म गएँ । ‘पर्देन, पर्देन,’ उसले नखरा पारी- ‘म आफैँ सभ्र गरिहाल्छ नि !’
I helped Phoolan put snacks on a few trays, though she kept insisting, ‘No, no. I can manage.’

21. Declarative (66, 66)

‘पप सङ्को अल्बम हो ?’

‘Is it an album of pop songs?’

‘टाइटलवाटै थाहा हुन्छ नि,’ मैले भनें ।

‘The title says it all,’ I said.

22. Declarative (69, 69)

23. Declarative (69, 69)

‘त्यस केटीले तिमीलाई प्रभावित गरेर ठीकै त गरी,’ रूपक जान्ने टोपलिए- ‘ग्यालरी आज अर्कै भएको छ । मलाई पनि लाग्छ, यी पेन्टिङ्गले न्याय पाएका छन् ।’

‘She’s been a good influence on you,’ Rupak said. ‘There’s a new atmosphere in the gallery. The walls do justice to your paintings at last.’

‘पेन्टिङ्गलाई भित्ताले पनि न्याय दिन्छ ?’ किशोरले बुझ्नुक प्रश्न गर्यो ।

‘Can walls do justice to art?’ Kishore asked.

‘दिंदोरहेछ, बुझियो नि होइन ?’ छिरिङ्ग बाङ्गियो ।

Tshering sniffed. ‘That’s what our host appears to be claiming.’

ऊ त फोटोग्राफर हो नि, भित्ता र क्यानभासको मर्म ऊजति अरुले अँठ्याउन सक्दैनन् ।

Of all people, Tshering, a photographer, should have understood the relationship between a painting and the wall it’s hung on!

24. Interrogative (70, 70)

‘पक्कै पनि त्यो सुझावदाता हिस्सी परेकी, लामो कपाल फरफराउँदै हिँड्ने, इन्टेलिजेन्ट, प्यासिएनेट, चार्मिङ्ग हुनुपर्छ,’ उनले यसो पनि भनेर मेरो खिसी गरे ।

With a laugh he went on, ‘I bet this Dutch woman’s a real beauty. And intelligent, charming, passionate...’

‘ए दृश्य !’ छिरिङ्ग जान्ने भयो फेरि- ‘तिमीले च्याटमा फेला पारेकी केटी त होइन नि हई ?’

‘Hey, Drishya,’ Tshering said, ‘Is this the same girl you met in the chat room the other night?’

25. Interrogative (80, 79)

‘अचेल इमेल गर्नुभएको छैन नि ?’ भनेर उनले मलाई घोचन खोजे । म कति न उनलाई इमेल गरिरहनुजस्तो !

‘You are not e-mailing anymore,’ he said, as though I’d been so close to him that we exchanged e-mails every day.

26. Declarative (91, 89)

‘धनीमानी, ठुलाठालु, शोषक-सामन्ती, बुर्जुवाहारूलाई के छैन ?’ उसले भन्यो- ‘कास्तो उपचार, कास्तो शिक्षा, कास्तो मनोरञ्जन, कास्तो गाडी, कास्तो सुविधा चाहियो सब जुटाउन सक्छन् तर भीरमौरीजस्तो भीरपहराको दाजुभाइलाई के छ ?’

‘The rich, the powerful, the exploiters and the bourgeoisie have everything,’ Siddhartha continued. ‘They can afford any health treatment they choose, all the education they want and any entertainment they like. They drive expensive cars and indulge themselves in luxury. But what do we have?’

‘धनी भए त जसलाई पनि सुविधा मिल्छ नि,’ बुढाले बनेका थिए- ‘हामी गरिप भयौँ र पो हाम्लाई क्यै छैन ।’

'Anyone can have those things if they become rich,' the old man argued. 'It's only because we're poor that we don't have them.'

27. Interrogative (92, 90)

28. Interrogative (92, 90)

'तँ जान्छेस् त दिदी ?' भाइ पल्लो बोटबाट सोध्छ ।

I heard the girl's brother ask, 'Will you go, Didi?'

'बै, बा के भन्नुहुन्छ ?' ऊ जवाफ दिन्छे ।

'I'll do whatever Ba says,' she replied.

'कहिले आउँछेस् नि ?'

'If you did go, when would you come back?'

मलाई के था ?'

'How should I know?'

'दसैंतिहारमा त बिदा देलास् नि ?'

'Do they give holidays for Dashain and Tihar?'

29. Declarative (93, 91)

'तँ पढ्नु नपर्ने भएर जान लागेकी हो र ?'

'Is that why you're going, because you don't have to study?'

'होला नि,' ऊ भन्छे ।

'Maybe.'

30. Declarative (95, 93)

'सुन्तला बेच्न मै जाउँला भोली,' बुढाले भने- 'तँ हिँड्नेलाई किन सास्ती ?'

Her father said, 'Leave them. Don't go to the market today. I'll sell the oranges tomorrow.'

'बेलुकासम्म फर्किउँला नि,' उसले भनी ।

'But I can sell them and be back by evening,' she said.

31. Interrogative (108, 107)

32. Interrogative (108, 107)

'कविता कस्तो लाग्यो ?' मैले सोधँ ।

I asked, 'Do you like the poem?'

'राम्रो छ,' उसले भन्यो- 'तपाईंले कसको कापीबाट सार्नुभा'को नि ?'

'It's good. Which book did you copy it from?' he asked.

'आफैले लेखेको ।'

'I wrote it myself.'

'कस्ले सिका'को नि ?'

He looked at me quizzically. 'But who gave you the ideas to put in it?'

33. Declarative idiom होत्त नि (109, 109)

उनको नजिक पुगेपछि बायाँपट्टिको आँखाको सिसा फुटेको देखेँ । होत्त नि, चितुवाले कोतरेको आँखा उनी ऊ बेलादेखि देखेनन ।

As I approached, I saw that the left lense was cracked. I remembered that his left eye had been injured when a leopard had attacked him.

34-35 Declarative idiom चाइन्जो क्यरे नि (110, 110)

एकपछि अर्को गर्दै हरेक दिनजसो त्यही कथा सुनाउँदा-सुनाउँदा उनको एउटा शैली स्थापित भइसकेको थियो, जसलाई हामी सजिलै नक्कल गरेर जिस्क्याउँथ्यौं- 'चाइन्जो क्यरे नि, है, त्याँ दौडेर गनसहित पोजिसनमा बस्दा गड्याम्म...!' त्यसै गरी चितुवाको कथा उनी यसरी सुरू गर्थे- 'चाइन्जो क्यरे नि, है, त्यास्साले त माथिपट्टि झाडभित्र लुकेको रहेछ...!'

He even developed his own style of story-telling. His Malaya story invariably began: 'I got into position with my rifle.' And his story about the leopard always started: 'The bastard was hiding in a bush.'

36. Declarative (112, 112)

'आई एम ह्यूपी टुडे,' उनले भने-'आफ्नै छोरो फर्केजस्तो लाग्यो ।'

'That makes me happy. It's like my own son has come back.'

'हो नि त,' मैले भनेँ

'I'm like your son.'

37. Declarative (113, 113)

'तिम्रो छोरा राम्रो पढ्लाजस्तो छ,' यिनले भनेका थिए- 'कम्तिमा आँपपीपल स्कुल वा गण्डकी बोर्डिङ लैजाऊ ।'

'Your son's an intelligent boy,' Kaakaa said to my father. 'Send him to a good school, at least to the Aanp Peebal School in Gorkha or the Gandaki Boarding School in Pokhara.'

तर बाले मेसो पाउनुभएन । 'ठीकै छ,' बाले भन्नुभयो- 'यहाँ पढोस्, पढ्न चित्त लगायो भने सकिहाल्ला नि !'

'He'll study in the village,' my father said. 'If he works hard, he'll do well anywhere.'

38. Declarative (119, 119)

'अहिल्यै जाने ?'

'Are you going already?' I asked.

'हो, पल्लो गाउँमा आजको सेल्टर छ,' उसले भनी- 'हाम्रो भेट होला नि, हगि दाइ ?'

'We're taking shelter in the next village tonight,' she said, 'I hope we'll meet again, Dai.'

39. Declarative (122, 122)

'हिम्मतिला रहेछन् तपाईंका गोराहरु,' मैले भनें- 'अगाडि हिँडिरहेकी जुन केटी छ नि...'

'Your friends are brave,' I said to the environmentalist. 'The girl who's leading us...'

'ड्रेस लगाउने ?' उसले सोध्यो ।

'The one in uniform?' he asked.

'हो, त्यो खाकीधारी केटी मेरो गाउँकी एउटी बहिनी पर्नेकी साथी हो,' मैले भनें-

'Yes, she's a friend of a girl from my village.'

40. Interrogative (123, 123)

'यहाँ गाजसका मान्छे आएका छन,' उनले भने- 'गाउँ जनसरकार भनेको बुझ्नुभयो होला नि ?'

'Some representatives of the People's Government have turned up. You do understand what the People's Government is, don't you?'

41. Interrogative (126, 127)

42. Declarative (126, 127)

'यिनका बुढा इन्डया गा'छन । एकलै भएर पनि निन्याउरिएकी हुन् ।'

'Her husband's in India. She's got no one to turn to.'

'छिमेकीले के सुझाव दिएका छन त नि उहाँलाई ?'

'What do her neighbours advise her to do?' I asked him.

'बूढा आए'सि तिर्ने भाका गर भनेका छन,' उसले भन्यो ।

'They've told her to promise to pay the money when her husband gets back.'

'एक लाख ?'

'A hundred thousand rupees?'

'जति सक्छन ।'

'If not that much, then whatever she can afford.'

'मेरो बूढा कमाउन गा'को यिनैको भुँडी भर्न हो ?' उनी उता विस्फोट भइन् ।

'At this, the woman thundered, 'Did my husband go to work in India just to feed these greedy pigs?'

'एउटा छोरा त जागिरे छँदै छ नि,' किशोरले भन्यो ।

'The boy tried to reason with her. You also have a son who's earning money.'

43. Declarative (127, 127)

44. Declarative (127, 127)

45. Declarative (127, 128)

46. Declarative (127, 128)

'साँझ पार्नुअघि सदरमुकाम पुग्ने हो भने,' उसले भन्यो- 'अलि लम्कनुपर्ला तपाईं ।'

'If you want to reach the district headquarters before dark, you'll have to hurry,' he said.

'हुन्छ भाइ, धन्यवाद,' मैले भनँ ।

I thanked him.

'खै मेरो त चित्र बनाउनुभएन क्यारे,' उसले ट्वाक्क हानिहाल्यो ।

'Hey, you didn't draw me,' he said.

'सदरमुकाम पुग्न भ्याउँदिनँ नि त ।'

'If I did, I wouldn't be able to reach the district headquarters before dark.'

'यतै बसे भैहाल्छ नि,' उसले भन्यो ।

'You could stay here tonight.'

'राति म सुतेको घरको ढोकामा कसैले एउटा जुता राखिदियो भने ?' मैले भनँ- 'मै जङ्गल पसुपर्ला ।'

'But what if someone puts a shoe in front of the house where I stay?' I asked

‘पाहुनालाई त के पार्ला र ?’ उसले भन्यो- ‘बरु तपाईंके जुत्ता चोरिएला नि ।’

‘Visitors don’t have to go,’ he said. ‘The worst that could happen would be that someone would steal your shoes.’

‘एउटा ?’

‘One or two shoes?’

‘किन हुन्थ्यो ?’ उसले भन्यो- ‘चोर्नेलाई एउटा जुत्ता के काम ?’

‘Why only one? The thief would need both.’

‘घर-घरमा राति राखिदिन हुन्छ नि !’ मैले भनें तर उसले सुन्न नसके गरी म टाढा पुगिसकेको थिएँ ।

‘So that he can deliver messages to two houses?’ We parted ways.

47. Declarative (135, 138)

‘तिम्लाई देखेसि छोराको झल्को आउँछ,’ मीतबाले अन्तै हेरीकन रुन्चे स्वरमा भन्नुभयो ।...

‘Seeing you reminds me of my son,’ Miit Ba said, turning away from me... (description of situation)

‘मीतबा !’ मैले फेरि बोलाएँ- ‘म छु नि तपाईंको छोरा ।’

‘Miit Ba,’ I said. ‘I’m your son too.’

48. Interrogative (138, 140)

‘खाना पकाइदिनुहुन्छ होला नि ?’ मैले सोधेँ ।

I asked if he could make dinner for me, hoping I could stay there for the night.

‘सुत्ने खाट छैन,’ उनले भने

‘I don’t have a spare bed,’ he said.

49. Interrogative (138, 140)

‘तपाँ केरा खानुहुन्छ कि ? मालुवा हो,’ उनले भने ।

He asked, ‘Do you want some bananas?’

म झस्केँ र मुन्टो हल्लाएँ ।

‘No, thanks.’

‘दही ?’ उनले सोधे ।

‘Yoghurt?’

मैले फेरि नाइँ गरेँ ।

‘No.’

‘मीतघरमा त दही-केरा खुबै खानुहुन्थ्यो सानामा,’ उनले भने- ‘तपाँ सम्झनुहुन्छ, हामी जिस्क्याउँथ्यौँ नि ?’

‘You loved bananas and Yoghurt as a boy,’ he said. ‘You used to eat lots of it at Resham’s house. Do you remember how we used to tease you?’

50. Interrogative (139, 141)

51. Interrogative (138, 141)

‘चन्दा दिनुपर्छ होला नि ?’ मैले सोधेँ ।

‘I’m sure you have to pay tax?’ I asked.

‘टैक्स लिन्छन्,’ उनले भने- ‘यो के भन्छ नि...जनसर्कार उठाउँदै आउँछ ।’

Yes. The people of... what do you call it? The People's Government. They collect taxes.’

52. Declarative idiom होत्त नि (144, 146)

53 Interrogative (144, 146)

‘कस्ती रे’छु त ?’

‘What do I look like?’

‘स्याउजस्ती !’

‘An apple.’

‘मान्छे पनि कैँ’ स्याउजस्तो हुन्छ त बुढा !’ उसले भनी ।

‘Can a person look like an apple, uncle?’

‘त्यस्तै राम्रो भनेको क्या ।’

‘I just mean you’re cute.’

‘स्याउ पनि कैँ’ राम्रो हुन्छ त ?’ उसले भनी- ‘जे पायो त्यै’ !’

‘Nonsense,’ she said, ‘Apples aren’t cute.’

म झसङ्ग भएँ, ‘जो पायो त्यही’ सुनेर । पल्पसालाई सम्झिएँ, उसके थेंगो । कस्तो ठ्याम्मै उस्तै भाकामा यस फुच्चिले मलाई पलपसा सम्झाइदिई ! म झन् रोमाञ्चित भएँ ।

I was taken aback for a moment. Hearing the word ‘nonsense’ made me think of Palpasa. It cheered me up.

‘ए होत्त नि, हगि ?’ मैले भनेँ- स्याउ त मीठो पो हुन्छ ।’

‘You are right,’ I said. ‘Apples can be tasty but not cute.’

‘मेरो नाकबाट सिँगान आउँछ,’ उसले भनी । म मरीमरी हाँसेँ तर मनमनै । उसलाई बिथोल्नु भएन । सानो धोबिनी चराजस्ती बालीका फ्रकबाट काँडा झिक्रु खोजिरहेकी छ र मलाई अलमल्याइरहेकी छ । म उसको फ्रक सुस्तरी छाम्छु, उसका आँला चुलबुल-चुलबुल गर्छन् ।

The little girl had a runny nose. The snot was running down to her upper lip. She tried to sniff it back up, still intent on picking the burrs out of her dress.

‘काँडा कसरी लाग्यो नि ?’

‘How did your dress get so many thorns?’ I asked.

54. Declarative idiom होत्त नि (144, 146)

‘तिम्रो नाम के हो ?’ मैले सोधेँ ।

‘What’s your name?’ I asked.

‘नानु,’ उसले भनी तर मेरो नाम मागिन ।

‘Nanu,’ she said.

‘राम्रो नाम रहेछ ।’

‘That’s a pretty name,’ I said.

‘नाम पनि कैँ’ राम्रो हुन्छ ?’ उसले फेरि भनी- ‘कस्तो जे पायो त्यै’ !’

‘Nonsense. Names can’t be pretty,’ she said.

‘ए, होत्त नि, हगि ?’ मैले भनेँ- ‘फूल पो राम्रो हुन्छ ।’

‘I’m sorry. You’re right. Flowers can be pretty, not names.’

55. Declarative (145, 147)

56. Declarative (145, 147)

‘काँडा कस्तो नजाती,’ मैले भनँ- ‘यस्तो केटाकेटीलाई पनि लाग्ने !’

Once again, I burst into laughter. ‘Such naughty burrs,’ I said, ‘troubling a little girl!’

‘काँडाको’नि आँखा हुन्छ त बुढा !’

‘Burrs don’t have eyes,’ she said. ‘They don’t know whose clothes they’re sticking to.’

मान्छेको त हुन्छ नि,’ मैले भनँ- हेर्नुपर्दैन ?’

‘But people have eyes,’ I said. ‘Why didn’t you use your eyes when you went into the bushes?’

मेरो आँखा सानो छ नि त !’

‘My eyes are too small.’

57. Declarative (146, 147)

58. Declarative idiom होत्त नि (147, 147)

59. Declarative (147, 148)

60. Interrogative (147, 148)

61. Declarative (147, 148)

‘तिमी खान्छ्यौ ?’

‘Would you like one?’

‘नाई, म त दिनको एक कोसो मात्र खान्छु,’ उसले भनी- ‘बिहानै आफ्नो भाग खाइसकेँ ।’

‘I eat only one banana a day,’ she said, ‘and I ate one this morning.’

‘आज एउटा थप खाऊ न त,’ मैले भनँ र रुकस्याक झिक्न लागेँ ।

‘Why don’t you have one more today?’ I said, opening my rucksack.

‘फेरि तिमी पनि मेरो केरा खाइदिने हो कि ?’ उसले सोधी ।

[no translation in the novel]

‘म माग्दिनँ,’ मैले भनँ- ‘तिमी मितिनीलाई चाहिन्छ नि, हगि ?’

‘And here’s one for your miitini as well.’

मैले एउटा निकालेर दिएँ । उसले बोक्रा निकाली अनि कप्पाकप खाई ।

I gave her two bananas. She peeled one and ate it.

‘गुलियो रहेछ,’ उसले भनी ।

‘It’s sweet,’ she said.

‘चिनी हालेको छ ।’

‘That’s because I put sugar in it.’

‘हुन्छ बुढा !’ उसले मलाई हप्काई- ‘जे पायो त्यै !’

‘You are silly.’

‘अनि कसरी गुलियो हुन्छ त ?’

‘How else could it taste so sweet?’

‘ए होत्त नि हगि ?’ ऊ दोब्रिई ।

‘Oh,’ she said confused.

‘घारीभिन्ने चिनी फिटेर हाल्छ क्या !’

‘They sprinkle sugar on the banana fields. Don’t you know that?’

‘हुन्छ बुढा !’

‘She smiled. I don’t believe you.’

‘होइन, होइन, तिमिलाई त्यस्तै भनिदिएको,’ मैले कान समात्दै भनँ ।

‘You are right. I’m only kidding,’ I said.

‘अनि गुलियो कसरी पस्छ त ?’ उसले सोधी ।

‘But why do bananas taste sweet?’ she asked, growing serious.

‘तिमी स्कुल जानुपर्छ, पढ्नुपर्छ, धेरै कुरा थाहा हुन्छ,’ मैले भनँ ।

‘Go to school. You’ll learn things like that.’

‘तिम्ले पढेनौ ?’ उसले सोधी ।

‘Did you go to school?’

‘पढें ।’

‘Yes.’

‘भन्न सकेनौ नि त !’ उसले मलाई लपेटे ।

‘But you don’t know the answer to that question.’

‘कुनै फल गुलियो, कुनै अमिलो, कुनै टर्रो, कुनै बेस्वादको हुन्छ, हगि ?’ मैले भनँ- ‘फेरि गुलियो पनि अनेक थरी हुन्छन् । यो सबै बुझ्न पढ्नुपर्छ क्या !’

‘Some fruits are sweet, some are sour and others don’t have much taste,’ I said. ‘And even the sweet ones have different flavours. If you go to school, you’ll learn lots of different things.’

‘हाम्रो त स्कुलै बन्द छ,’ उसले भनी- ‘तिम्रो नि ?’

‘Our school’s closed,’ she said. ‘Is yours open?’

हामी हिँडिरहेका थियौं । ऊ मेरो आँला समात्दै मभन्दा छिटछिटो हिँड्न थाली । अर्को हातमा त उसले केरा लुकाएकी थिई ।

‘We started walking together. She took my hand. In the other, she held the banana for her miitini.’

‘तिम्लाई था’ छ ?’ उसले भनी- ‘म आजै जन्मेको नि ।’

‘Do you know what?’ she said. ‘I was born today.’

62. Declarative (148, 149)

63. Declarative (148, 149)

64. Declarative (148, 149)

‘म त एकलै हिँडेको ।’

‘They are not my friends.’ [lit. I’m travelling alone.]

‘ए मज्जा भो,’ उसले भनी- ‘त्यसो भए मेरी मितिनीको घर जाने है ?’

‘Good,’ she said. ‘Then you can come with me to my miitini’s house.’

‘टाढा छ कि ?’

[no translation in the novel, ‘Is it far away?’]

‘आज त्यै’ बस्ने नि !’ उसले भनी ।

‘You can stay there tonight.’

म छक्क परँ । उसको तालमा पाइला सारिरहँ । उसको आँला पसिनाले चिप्लो भइरहेको थियो ।

I was surprised by her invitation.

‘अर्काको घरमा...’ मैले गाह्रो मान्दै भनँ ।

‘Stay in a stranger’s house?’ I asked.

‘म मीतबासँग भन्छु नि,’ उसले भनी । मलाई झन्झन् बिड्दै गयो ।

‘I’ll ask my MiitBa,’ she said.

‘के भन्छ्यौ ?’

Thorn pierced my heart. ‘What will you tell him,’ I asked.

‘तिमी पनि मसँग आ’को भनेर ।’

‘That you’ve come with me.’

‘म को हो भनेर मीतबाले सोध्नुभयो भने ?’

‘What if he asks you who I am?’

‘बाटोमा भेटेको भन्छु ।’

‘I’ll tell him I met you on the way.’

‘मान्नुभएन भने ?’

‘Well, what if he says no?’

‘तिमीसँग केरा छ नि,’ उसले भनी- ‘त्यै’ देऊ न !’

‘We’ll give him the rest of your bananas.’

65. Declarative (157, 157)

म फेरि हाँसो थाम्न सकिदँ ।

I burst into laughter again.

‘आज त तिमी बेस्करी नै हाँसेका छौ नि?’ लाहुरे आइपुगेको छ ।

The man I’d met on the train from Goa caught up with me a little later. ‘You’re laughing a lot today,’ he said.

‘त्यस्तै, त्यस्तै हुँडलिरहेको छ,’ म भन्छु ।

‘Sorry,’ I said.

66. Declarative (175, 176)

Maoists want the artist, who is the narrator of the story, to draw a picture of the Chairman Mao. They pull out the chairman's picture and show it to the artist.

‘यो धमिलो छ,’ मैले भनँ ।

‘That’s too blurry,’ I said.

‘तपाईंको चित्र सफा त हुँदैन नि ।’

He said, ‘Your sketches aren’t any cleaner.’

67. Declarative (176, 176-177)

मैले त्यो कागज उनलाई दिएँ । तिनले हेरिन् र मस्त हाँसिन् ।

I gave the woman the drawing. She looked at it and laughed.

‘नाक किन बाङ्गिएको यस्को?’ उनले सोधिन् ।

‘The nose is twisted!’ she said. ‘It looks like him but the nose is twisted.’

म हाँसिसँ, पछि भनँ- ‘दुरुस्त बनाएको होइन नि त !’

[not translated in the novel, ‘I laughed and then said ‘This isn’t made precisely.’]

68. Interrogative (177, 178)

उतापट्टि बसेका दुई जनाको धमिलो कुराकानीबाट मैले सिद्धार्थको चर्चा भइरहेको अनुमान गरँ । मुटु ढक्क भयो, तर नहुन पनि सक्छ ।

I overheard a discussion between two young men in a corner and worried they were talking about Siddhartha. My heart pounded.

‘तपाईंहरू कतानि?’ मैले सोधँ ।

‘Where are you headed?’ I asked one of them.

69. Declarative (186, 185)

‘फूल फुलेझैं तपाईं आउनुभयो,’ उसले भनी- ‘र अर्को सिजनमा तपाईं हराउनुभयो ।’

‘You came like a flower in the spring,’ she said, ‘and the next season, you were gone.’

‘सिजन फेरिएपछि म फेरि आएँ नि,’ मैले वातावरण अलि खुकुलो बनाउन भनँ ।

‘And in the next season, I came back,’ I said.

70. Declarative idiom होत्त नि (197, 197)

Palpasa has just told about a lady who had disapproved her whispering to a male.

‘अरे बाबा !’ उसले भनी । होत्त नि, ऊ कोसँग के कुरा गर्छ अरुलाई छ मतलब ?

‘Why should anyone tell me whom I should or shouldn’t talk to?’

71. Interrogative (199, 198)

‘होइन,’ उसले भनी- ‘सभ्यताले मानिसलाई फरक पार्छ भन्न खोजेकी हुँ ।’

‘No,’ she had said, defending herself. ‘I’m trying to say that people are products of their environment.’

‘तिम्रो बुवा त न्युयोर्कमै बस्नुहुन्छ नि?’

‘But don’t your parents live in New York.’

72. Declarative (206, 205)

‘सबैभन्दा सजिलो के हुन्छ भने तिमी हाँस्दैहाँस्दै जवाफ देऊ,’ मैले भनँ- ‘र भन, मलाई अमेरिका बस्नु छैन । नेपाल नै मनपर्छ । यही अमेरिकाजस्तो लाग्छ । म यहाँ काम गर्न फर्किनुपर्छ भन ।’

‘My advice to you is to answer their questions with a smile. Tell them you don’t want to stay in America, that you like Nepal. Say, for you, Nepal’s just as good as America and, besides, you have to come back here to work.’

त्यही भन्या त हो नि पहिला !’

‘That’s what I told them, in my interview for a Schengen visa,’ He said.

73. Declarative (210, 209)

‘तिम्रो शब्दले मलाई बेलुन बनाए, म उड्दै छु ।’

[no translation in the English novel ‘Your words have made me fly like a balloon.’]

‘के मेरो शब्द हावा हुन् ?’

‘So, are my words air?’

‘मैले त्यसो भनँ ?’

‘Did I say so?’

‘बेलुन उडाउन त हावा भर्नुपर्छ नि ।’

‘But I’m not flattering you,’ I said. [lit. ‘Well, in order to fly a balloon needs to be filled with air.’]

74. Declarative (228, 224)

‘उनीहरूले माछु त भनेक थिएनन्, नभनेको कुरा गर्नु हुँदैन बाबू, बुहारीले बिराई, उसले फैसला सच्याउन भनेर पुकारा पनि गरी,’ उनले भनिन्- ‘तर म आफैँ घरबाट हिँडँ । डर त लागिहाल्छ नि !’

‘At least they didn’t sentence me to death! I won’t lie to you, my son. My daughter-in-law realized she’d been wrong and asked them to change the verdict. But, finally, I left my own volition. I was too scared to stay. Who isn’t scared of them?’

75. Declarative (237, 231)

The narrator of the novel wants to include details of his friend's love life in the novel that he is planning to write. The friend is reluctant and responds:

‘मेरो लभ सार्वजनिक भयो भने अरू केटी छेवै नपर्ला नि !’

‘If you make my love life public, no woman will ever come near me.’