

Encoding of Tense, Aspect, Modality, and Mood (TAM) in the Sampang Language: A Typological Perspective

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Abstract

This paper examines the tense, aspect, mood, and modality (TAM) system of the Sampang language within a typological framework. The study is based on primary data gathered through elicitation and audio recordings from native speakers. The findings reveal that Sampang exhibits a high degree of morphological complexity, in which tense, aspect, mood, and modality interact closely. They are sometimes not separable, but not always. Tense in Sampang is realized through a binary distinction between past and non-past. The past tense is typically marked by the morpheme <-a>, while the non-past is marked by <-i>. Typologically, Sampang aligns with other members of the Kirati languages in exhibiting this basic past vs. non-past opposition. Aspect in Sampang is expressed through both lexical and grammatical categories. The grammatical aspects include perfective, imperfective, and perfect categories. Among these, the perfective is generally unmarked morphologically, whereas the imperfective is overtly marked. Mood and modality in Sampang are primarily realized at the discourse-pragmatic level rather than through dedicated morphological markers. Their interpretation depends largely on context, speaker stance, and interactional factors, rather than on explicit verbal morphology.

Keywords: Tibeto-Burman, realis–irrealis, grammatical categories, tense, aspect, mood, and modality.

Introduction

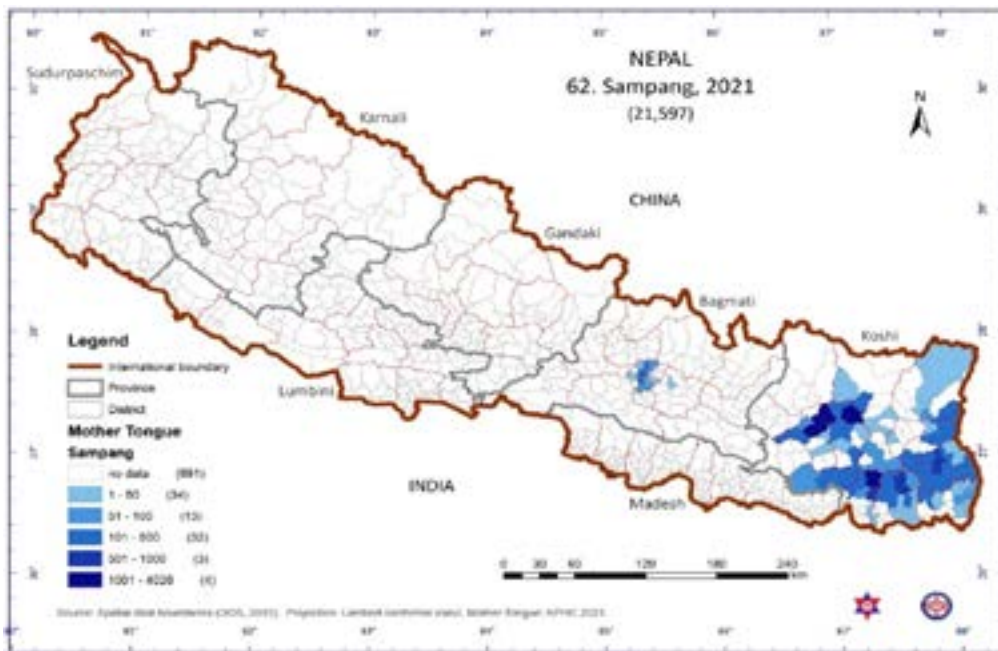
Tense, aspect, mood, and modality are the grammatical categories related to the verbs. These reflect an important feature of grammatical organization in that, although it is structurally part of the clause, its functional scope goes 'beyond propositional meaning and instead relates to the pragmatic and discourse context of use' (Givón,

2001a, p. 287). Defining the aspects, Holt (1943, as cited in Comrie, 1976) states that the internal temporal structure of a situation.

Sampang (ISO code 639-3: rav; Glottocode: samp1249) is one of the Rai-Kirati languages that belongs to the Tibeto-Burman of the Sino-Tibetan language family. It is spoken by people who live in the eastern hills in Nepal, specifically in the Khotang and Bhojpur districts (Rai, 2024). Winter (1991) mentions that most of the Sampang Rai people living in the Bhojpur district have stopped speaking Sampang Rai and have started to speak Bantawa or the lingua franca Nepali. According to the National Census Report 2021, the population of Sampang is 21,597. Sampang is an endangered and unwritten language, too. Most of the Sampang people are bilingual or multilingual. Sampang is spoken in the villages of the Baspani, Khartamchha, Patheka, and Phedi areas in the northern Khotang District of eastern Nepal (NSO, 2021).

Figure 1

Distribution of the Sampang language



Source: Gurung et al. (2025)

This paper argues that the functional organization of the most complex subsystems in the grammar is tense, aspect, mood, and modality (TAM). It also deals with the universal functional domains of tense, aspect, mood, and modality in Sampang. Thus, the study examines the cross-linguistic typology of TAM systems. For this, TAM systems were extensively surveyed from both formal and semantic points of view in grammar. It is also an important contribution to the study of grammaticalization phenomena (Linstedt, 1995). Furthermore, the language does not provide a static organization of meaning. The grammatical meaning is changing constantly (Bybee et al., 1994).

Research Methods

This paper employed a qualitative, functional-typological approach to examine tense, aspect, mood, and modality in Sampang. The methodology is grounded in the approaches developed by Givón (2001), Bybee et al. (1994), Comrie (1985), and Linstedt (1995). These theories interact with the systems of tense, aspect, mood, and modality that motivate the use of the data collection.

Data Collection

Primary data were gathered through structured elicitations with the native speakers of Sampang, including pseudonyms (Harempa, 69 age), (Ramsari, 76), (Dalmardan, 79), (Shyam, 76), X (Dhurba, 39), and (Kopila, 76). The speakers are from the Baspani and Phedi areas of the Khotang district, where the language remains relatively vital. During the data collection, (i) natural storytelling (ii) elicits the target tense, aspect, mood, and modality (TAM). Sessions were audio-recorded for around 30 minutes.

Data Analysis and Presentation

After gathering the data, they were transcribed using IPA symbols. Analysis followed a three-step iterative procedure. They are a) identification of TAM markers through morphological glossing; b) functional mapping of each marker to tense, aspect, mood, and modality based on distributional patterns; and c) contrastive analysis using the pairs from the corpus (e.g., *k^hati* 'goes' vs. *k^hatihã* 'is going' to isolate progressive aspect). Findings were then compared against cross-linguistic typological parameters from Givón (2001) and Bybee et al. (1994).

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

The study is limited by a small sample of older speakers and possible contact-induced influence from Nepali. Informed oral consent was obtained, and participant anonymity is maintained. The qualitative approach is justified as essential for an unwritten, endangered language, where TAM categories emerge most clearly in natural discourse rather than isolated sentence judgments.

Context of the Study

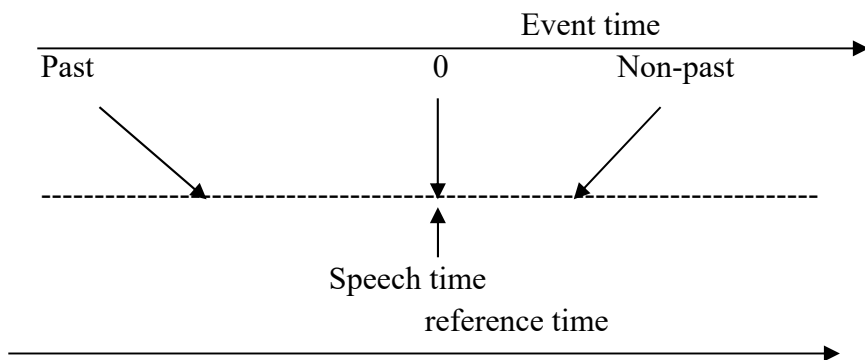
This section deals with the tense, aspect, mood, and modality in the Sampang language following the framework (Givón, 2001; Comrie, 1976) highlighting functional typology.

Tense

Tense is defined as a grammatical category that systematically codes the relation between two points in time: reference time and event time (Givón, 2001). This study focuses on how languages functionally mark temporal position and often treats tense-aspect-mood, and modality (TAM) as a complex, interacting system. Event time is when the action actually happens, which can differ from reference time, the specific time a speaker is focusing on. Although Givón (2001) proposed the tenses are of three types: past, present, and future, Sampang tenses are morphologically realized in two ways: past and non-past, as can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Tenses in Sampang



Source: Givón (2001, p. 285)

Past

Past tense is realized as the event (or state) that occurred or existed before the present moment. In Sampang, past tense is morphologically marked by a basic past tense marker that is <-a>, as can be seen in examples (1a-b).

- 1) a. *k^ho k^him k^hata*
 k^ho k^him k^hat-a
 3SG house go-3SG.PST
 ‘He went home.’
- b. *anawa tsa tsona*
 ana-wa tsa ts-o-na
 2SG-ERG rice eat- PST-2SG
 ‘You ate rice.’

Non-past

As Givon (2001) proposes, there are three types of tense: past, non-past, and future across languages. But the languages like Sampang exhibit a non-past category that covers both the present and future. Future tense is not marked morphologically, as can be realized in the Kirati languages (Rai, 2014; Rai, 2015; Rai, 2023). Sampang exhibits the non-past tense by the basic marker <i> that is realized as the present, future tense, and habitual action. The examples are provided in 2 (a–d).

- 2) a. *k^ho k^him k^hati*
 k^ho k^him k^hat-i
 3SG house go-3SG.NPST
 ‘He goes home.’
- b. *k^ho k^him k^hatihã*
 k^ho k^him k^hat-i-hã
 3SG house go-NPST-DUR
 ‘He is going home.’
- c. *k^ho selama muluk^hΛm k^hati*
 k^ho selama muluk^hΛm k^hat-i

3SG tomorrow market go-3SG.NPST
 'He/she will go to the market tomorrow.'

d. *k^ho hallosã muluk^hΛm k^hati*

k^ho hallosã muluk^hΛm k^hat-i
 3SG always market go-3SG.NPST
 'He/she always goes to the market.'

Aspects

Aspects refer to the grammaticalized expression of the internal temporal structure of an event, action, or state, often described as the manner of time (Givón, 2001a, p. 286). Aspects are realized in terms of lexical and grammatical ones.

Lexical aspects

Lexical aspect, often referred to as *Aktionsart*, is an inherent property of verbs that speakers naturally expect them to convey unless something indicates otherwise. Across languages, verbs tend to be grouped into similar *Aktionsart* categories within the lexicon (Givón, 2001a, p. 286).

a. Compact (short duration) verbs

The perfectivity includes verbs that denote temporary events of extremely short duration (Givón, 2001). Sampang employs the compact verbs, as can be seen in Table

- (3) a. *t^humwadz^hΛma* 'spit'
 b. *t^huma* 'cough'
 c. *tΛima* 'jump'

As we can see in (3a-c) above, compact verbs have sharp boundaries and short duration in Sampang.

b. Accomplishment (completion) verbs

Accomplishment verbs describe the completion of an event. The duration of the event may be longer than that of brief verbs (Givón, 2001). Accomplishment verbs in Sampang are presented in (4-c).

- (4) a. *baima* 'come'
 b. *k^haima* 'go'
 c. *d^haima* 'fall'

c. Activity (process) verbs

Activity verbs express actions carried out by people or things, such as physical movements, mental activities, or ongoing processes (Givón, 2001). The Sampang language also has this type of verb, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Activity verbs in Sampang

	Shorter		Longer	
S.N.	Sampang	Gloss in English	Sampang	Gloss in Eng.
1.	<i>Hoima</i>	'break'	<i>lamd^humma</i>	'walk'
2.	<i>k^hema</i>	'smashed'	<i>ninma</i>	'read'
3.	<i>Oima</i>	'bend'	<i>ts^homma</i>	'dance'

d. Stative verbs

Stative verbs describe relatively stable, long-lasting states. Their beginnings and endpoints are usually not highlighted unless a specific grammatical aspect—such as completion or the perfective—is used (Givón, 2001). Sampang also has such verbs, as illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

Stative Verbs in Sampang

	Temporary		Long Lasting	
S.N.	Sampang	Gloss in Eng.	Sampang	Gloss in Eng.
1.	<i>mitak^hap ts^huma</i>	'be sad'	<i>d^hjappa ts^huma</i>	'be big'
2.	<i>ts^hulma</i>	'be angry'	<i>d^huŋka ts^huma</i>	'be tall'

Grammatical aspects

There are grammatical aspects in the languages, including Tibeto-Burman, 'that are perfective and imperfective' (Givón, 2001, p. 345). Further, the languages may have the perfective aspects, like present and past individuals, whereas imperfective aspects like-

Perfective

In Sampang, perfective aspects are realized in terms of the past and habitual aspects,

Past-perfective

Past perfective in Sampang is realized as <-duru> as illustrated in the examples (4a-b).

- 4) a. *kãŋawa k^hisa ts^habudurukΛ tuwã*
 kãŋa-wa k^hisa ts^hab-u-duru tuwã
 1SG-ERG story write-PST-PFV be
 ‘I wrote a letter.’
- b. *kãŋawa te dabuŋdurukΛ tuwã*
 kãŋa-wa te dab-u-duruŋkΛ tuwã
 1SG-ERG cloth wash-PST-PFV.1SG be
 ‘I washed cloth.’

Habitual

Sampang exhibits the habitual action in the past using the lexicon. There is no morpheme to refer to the habitual action in the past tense in Sampang, as exemplified in (5a-b).

- 5) a. *k^ho hallosã muluk^hΛm k^hatakΛ*
 k^ho hallosã muluk^hΛm k^hatakΛ
 3SG always market go.3SG.PFV.PST
 ‘He used to go to the market.’
- b. *k^ho hallosã nuwak^him k^hatakΛ*
 k^ho hallosã nuwak^him k^hatakΛ
 3SG always school go.3SG.PFV.PST
 ‘He used to go to the school.’

Imperfective

Using the imperfective aspect is like looking at an event from close up, through a wide-angle ('fish-eye') lens. This phenomenon is so close that its boundaries are beyond the field of view of the lens (Givón, 2001, p.). In Sampang, the imperfective aspect can be categorized into three types: habitual, perfective, and progressive.

Employing the imperfective aspect, as described by Givón (2001), resembles a close-up view through a fish-eye lens, where the boundaries of the event are too wide to be seen. Within the Sampang language, the imperfective aspect is classified into three categories: progressive-durative-continuous (ongoing process) and habitual-repetitive (repeated events).

Progressive-durative-continuous (ongoing process)

Imperfective past

In Sampang, the progressive-durative-continuous aspect in the past tense is realized as the morpheme <-hãkɿ> which is presented in (6a-b).

- 6) a. *kãŋawa k^hisa ts^habuŋhãkɿ tuwã*
 kãŋa-wa k^hisa ts^hab-uŋ-hãkɿ tuwã
 1SG-ERG story write-PST.1SG -DUR be
 ‘I was writing a story.’
- b. *kãŋawa te dabuŋhãkɿ tuwã*
 kãŋa-wa te dab-uŋ-hãkɿ tuwã
 1SG-ERG cloth wash-PST.1SG-DUR be
 ‘I was washing cloth.’

Imperfective-Present

Sampang exhibits the progressive-durative-continuous aspect in the present tense, which is realized as the morpheme <-hã> which is presented in (7a-b).

- 7) a. *kãŋawa k^hisa ts^habãhã*
 kãŋa-wa k^hisa ts^hab-ã-hã
 1SG-ERG story write-1SG.NPST -DUR
 ‘I am writing a story.’
- b. *kãŋa te dabãhã*
 kãŋa te dab-ã-hã
 1SG cloth wash-1SG.NPST-DUR
 ‘I am washing clothes.’

Habitual-repetitive: repeated events

In Sampang, the habitual-repetitive events are realized lexically but not morphologically, which are exemplified in (8a-b).

- 8) a. *k^{ho} hallosã nuwak^him k^hati*
 k^{ho} hallosã nuwak^him k^hat-i
 3SG always school go-3SG.NPST
 ‘He/she always goes to school.’
- b. *k^{ho} hallosã muluk^hΛm k^hatak*
 k^{ho} hallosã muluk^hΛm k^hat-ak
 3SG always market go-3SG.PST
 ‘He/she always went to market.’

Perfect

Functionally, the perfect is the most complex and most subtle grammatical aspect (Givón, 2001). According to Givón, it involves four features: anteriority, perfectivity, counter-sequentiality and lingering relevance.

Past perfect

In Sampang, the past perfect is realized with the morpheme <-k_Λ>, which is illustrated in examples (10a-b).

- 10) a. *k^hosawa tsak^hai tsoduruk_Λ tuwa*
 k^hosa-wa tsak^hai tso-duruk_Λ tuwa
 3SG-ERG food eat.3SG-PFV.PST be.PST
 ‘She had eaten the food.’
- b. *k^hosawa tsΛlΛwa mu: duruk_Λ tuwa*
 k^hosa-wa tsΛlΛwa mu:-duruk_Λ tuwa
 3SG-ERG work do.3SG-PFV.PST be.PST
 ‘He/She had done the work.’

Non-past

Sampang exhibits the non-past perfect with the marker <-k_Λ>. Unlike the past perfect, there is no use of any present status with the morpheme marker or the copula. Examples (11a-b) show the non-past.

- 11) a. *k^hosawa tsak^hai tsoduru-k_Λ*
 k^hosa-wa tsak^hai tso-duru-k_Λ

3SG-ERG food eat.3SG-PFV.NPST

‘She has eaten the food.’

b. *k^hosawa tsɔlɔwa miduru-ka*

k^hosa-wa tsɔlɔwa mi-duru-ka

3SG-ERG work do-PFV.NPST

‘He has done the work.’

In future tense, there is not a specific marker in Sampang. The following works or the future tense is realized on the basis of the lexicon that appears at the end of the sentence. In examples (12-a and b).

12) a. *k^hosawa tsak^hai tsoduru l̃*

k^hosa-wa tsak^hai tso-duru l̃

3SG-ERG food eat.3SG-PFV.NPST PROB

‘She may eat the food.’

b. *k^hosawa tsɔlɔwa mu:duru l̃*

k^hosa-wa tsɔlɔwa mu:duru l̃

3SG-ERG work do-PFV.NPST PROB

‘He may complete his work.’

Sampang has the entire code that represents an event that occurred, or at least began, before that reference point.

Completive (terminal boundary)

The completive aspect in Sampang is perceived as events that are concluded at the appropriate time. In Sampang, the marker <-u or l̃> functions as the completive aspect (terminal boundary). The examples (10a-b) may elucidate this aspect.

13) a. *k^hosawa tɔmpa ñp^huli g^horu*

k^hosa-wa tɔmpa ñp^huli g^hor-u

3SG-ERG finally bullet shoot-3SG.PST

‘He/she was finally shot.’

b. *k̃ɲa k^holai lamloka ts^het̃*

k̃ɲa k^ho-lai lamlo-ka ts^het̃

1SG 3SG-DAT before-ABL know-1SG.PST

‘I’ve known her for ages.’

Counter-sequentiality

There is an aspect that distinguishes between events that occurred in natural order and those expressed out of sequence. The simple past encodes chronological events, whereas the perfect form is used, less frequently, to indicate counter-sequential events (Givón, 2001). Examples (13a-b) present the counter-sequentiality in Sampang.

Past-perfective

- 14) a. *k^{ho} tumk^hapi lasama bana*
 k^{ho} tumk^ha-pi lasama ban-a
 3SG room-LOC return come-3SG.PST
 ‘She returned to the room’,
- b. *nɔpempɛ k^hanɔ*
 nɔpempɛ k^hanɔ-u
 all around, look-3SG.PST
 ‘Looked around.’
- a. *tsak^hai tu*
 tsak^hai t-u
 food spot-3SG.PST
 ‘Spotted the food.’
- b. *k^hama tsak^hai lasi k^hata*
 k^hama tsak^hai lasi k^hat-a
 CONJ food get go-3SG.PST
 ‘And went to get food.’

Past-perfect

- 13) a. *k^{ho} tumk^hapi lasama dapp^he ta*
 k^{ho} tumk^ha-pi lasama dapp^he t-a
 3SG room-LOC return again come-3SG.PST
 ‘She returned to the room again.’,
- b. *k^hama nɔpempɛ k^hama sulam mu*
 k^hama nɔpempɛ k^hama sulam mu
 CONJ all around see-INF start do.PST
 ‘And then started looking around’,

- b. *k^hosawa lamloŋa tsak^hai tuduruk tuwa*
 k^hosa-wa lamlo-ŋa tsak^hai tu-duruk tuwa
 3SG-ERG before-EMPH food spot-PFV be
 ‘She had (already) spotted the food beforehand’,
- c. *matama k^ho tsak^hai lasi k^hata*
 matama k^ho tsak^hai lasi k^hat-a
 that’s why 3SG food get go.3SG.PST
 ‘That’s why, he/she went to get food’...

Deferred (‘lingering’) relevance

There is a pragmatic aspect of the perfect that concerns the contextual relevance of information expressed in clauses (Givón, 2001). This feature is also evident in Sampang, as shown in (14 a-b and 15a-b).

Perfective

- 14) a. *k^ho k^himhãpi ta k^hama k^hosawa tsak^hai tso*
 k^ho k^him-hã-pi ta k^hama k^hosa-wa tsak^hai ts-o
 3SG house-ADV-LOC come CONJ 3SG-ERG food eat-
 3SG.PST
 ‘He came in and had his meal’.
- b. *k^ho k^himhãpi ta k^hama k^hosawa te dabe*
 k^ho k^him-hã-pi ta k^hama k^hosa-wa te dabe
 3SG house-ADV-LOC come CONJ 3SG-ERG cloth wash-
 3SG.PST
 ‘He came in and did the laundry.’

Perfect

- 15) a. *k^ho k^himhãpi ta k^hand^hãsã k^hosawa lamloŋa tsak^hai tsoduruk tuwa*
 k^ho k^him-hã-pi ta k^hand^hãsã k^hosa-wa
 lamlo-ŋa
 3SG house-ADV-LOC come but 3SG-ERG
 before-EMPH
 tsak^hai ts-o-duruk tuwa
 food eat-PST-PFV be.PST
 ‘He came into the house but he had already eaten his food.’

- b. *k^hosa-wa lamlo-ŋa te dab-u-duruk tuwa*
 k^hosa-wa lamlo-ŋa te dab-u-duruk tuwa
 3SG-ERG before-ERG cloth wash-PST-PFV be.PST
 'He had already washed the cloth.'

Modality and Mood

There are modalities that reflect the notion of the speaker toward a proposition, mainly through two types of judgment: epistemic (truth, probability, certainty, belief, evidence) and evaluative or deontic (desirability, preference, intention, ability, obligation, control) (Givón, 2001).

Epistemic modality

Epistemic modality carries the notion of the speaker's degree of certainty or belief about a proposition. It has strong functional and grammatical effects that undergo a long logical tradition.

Table 4

Epistemic Modalities

Logical tradition	Communicative Equivalent
a. Necessary truth	presupposition
b. Factual truth	realis assertion
c. Possible truth	irrealis assertion
d. Non-truth	negative assertion

Source: Givón (2001)

Presupposition

The term 'presupposition' refers to the information being assumed to be true, a cultural convention, obvious context, or because it is stated and not questioned by the listener (Givón, 2001). The examples given (18a-b) show the presupposition in Sampang.

- 18) a. *rameshwa hɛreb duŋma ts^hinu*
 ramesh-wa hɛreb duŋ-ma ts^hin-u
 Ramesh-ERG cigaret drink-INF leave-3SG.PST
 'Ramesh stopped somking.'

- b. *k^hosawa k^hΛmwɑ duŋma ts^hinu*
 k^hosa-wa k^hΛmwɑ duŋ-ma ts^hin-u
 3SG-ERG liquor drink-INF leave-3SG.PST
 ‘He/she stopped drinking.’

Realis assertion

Realis assertion mentions a statement the speaker feels is true, while still allowing the listener to question it, even when supported by evidence (Givón, 2001). In Sampang, both “he/she has a dog” and “the sky is blue” describe actual present situations treated as true as can be seen in (19a-b).

- 19) a. *k^holo hoga tui*
 k^ho-lo hoga tui
 3SG-COM dog be.NPST
 ‘He/she has a dog.’
 b. *namts^huri namts^hulu tui*
 namts^huri namts^hulu tui
 sky blue be.NPST
 ‘Sky is blue.’

Irrealis assertion

Irrealis modality refers to a proposition as tentative, uncertain, possible, or evaluatively desired/necessary without strong supporting evidence and open to challenge (Givón, 2001). In the Sampang, the irrealis assertions are realized in example (20a-b).

- 20) a. *k^ho hoga juma lamak*
 k^ho hoga ju-ma lamak
 3SG dog keep-INF want
 ‘He/she wants a dog.’
 b. *k^ho nuwabΛ ts^habma lamak*
 k^ho nuwabΛ ts^hab-ma lamak
 3SG book write-INF want
 ‘He/she wants to write a book.’

Negative assertion

The proposition is strongly asserted to be false, most commonly in contradiction to the hearer's explicit or assumed beliefs (Givón, 2001 p. 302). Sampang exhibits the negative assertion in (21a-b).

- 21) a. *k^holo hoga mantu*
 k^ho-lo hoga mantu
 3SG-COM dog NEG.PAT
 'He/she lacks a dog.'
- b. *k^hΛkΛ k^him k^hatinΛ*
 k^hΛkΛ k^him k^hat-i-nΛ
 3SG house go-NPST.3SG -NEG
 'He/she not goes to the house.'

Deontic

The deontic modality codes ability of the agent. It involves notions such as wish or intent, ability manipulation or preference (Givón, 2011 p. 120). Deontic modalities: ability and obligation.

Ability

Ability expresses whether an agent has the skills, knowledge, or physical ability to perform an action, which may be realized in Sampang as shown in examples (22a-b).

- 22) a. *ana ts^hamma durΛna*
 ana ts^ham-ma durΛ-na
 2SG dance-INF can.NPST-2SG
 'You can dance.'
- b. *ana ts^habma durΛna*
 ana ts^hab-ma durΛ-na
 2SG write-INF can.NPST-2SG
 'You can write.'

Obligation

Obligation refers to the agent that performs an action. In Sampang, the morpheme <-ŋa> tends to appear as the obligation as can be seen in (21a-b).

- 21) a. *anawa k^hisa ts^habmaŋats^hi*
 ana-wa k^hisa ts^hab-ma-ŋa-ts^hi

2SG-ERG story write-INF-OBL-NPST

‘You must write a story.’

b. *anawa tsa g^homaŋats^{hi}*

ana-wa tsa g^ho-ma-ŋa-tshⁱ

2SG-ERG food cook-INF-OBL-NPST

‘You must cook food.’

Mood

Mood traditionally refers to the small set of categories representing the speaker’s attitude towards the status or factuality of the utterance. Mood: indicative, optative, subjunctive, imperative (Givo’n, 2001).

Indicative

The indicative mood expresses real or factual events. In Sampang, it is unmarked and reflects the speaker’s belief that the statement is true, as can be seen in (22a-b).

22) a. *ana k^him k^hatina*
ana k^him k^hat-i-na
2SG house go-NPST-2SG
‘You go home.’

b. *k^ho nuwak^hΛm k^hati*
k^ho nuwak^hΛm k^hati
3SG school go.NPST
‘He/she goes to school.’

Optative

Optative mood predicts the speaker’s wishes or apprehensions that represent something the speaker hopes (or wishes) will be true. Sampang exhibits the optative mood with the morpheme <-wo> as evident in the examples (23a-b).

23) a. *ana bΛΛΛ nowo*
ana bΛΛΛ no-wo
2SG soon recover-OPT
‘May you recover soon!’

b. *ammi dz^hara sΛnuwasi talne*
ammi dz^hara sΛnuwasi talne

2SG.POSS all wish fulfill.OPT

‘May all your wishes come true.’

Imperative

Imperative moods are interpreted as commands. Usually, using the base form of the verb without any direct subject can express the imperative mood as illustrated in (24a-b).

- 24) a. *nape bana*
 nape ba-na
 here come. NPST.NH-2SG
 ‘Come here.’
- b. *ts^ham puna*
 ts^ham pu-na
 song sing. NPST-2SG
 ‘Sing a song.’

The above example is an imperative sentence in Sampang, in which the direct subject 'you' is implied in the sentence.

Subjunctive

The subjunctive mood is used for hypothetical events. In Sampang, it is often marked by the suffix *-d^hã* (e.g., ‘if’) to indicate such non-real scenarios as evident in (25a-b).

- 25) a. *papawa bulu pemid^hã ka bap^tã k^hitã*
 papa-wa bulu pem-i-d^hã kã bap^tã k^hi-tã
 father-ERG money give-NPST-SUBJ 1SG cap buy-
 1SG.NPST
 ‘I will buy a cap if my father gives me money.’
- b. *kãña ts^hãwa ts^hãkad^hã namts^huripi pirãka*
 kãña ts^hãwa ts^hãkad^hã namts^huri-pi pirãka
 1SG bird be.NPST.SUBJ sky-LOC fly.1SG.NPST
 ‘If I were a bird, I would fly in the sky.’

Discussion

The Kirati languages are morphologically complex languages. In terms of tense, aspect, modality, and mood (TAM), these categories are closely interconnected and are often difficult to distinguish. Most of the Kirati have the past tense marker, while the non-past marker may be absent. However, in Sampang, both basic tense markers are present, distinguishing past and non-past forms.

If we observe the Kirati languages in terms of the tense system, they exhibit a contrast between non-past and past tenses. The data show that there are variations in the morphological marking. Some of the languages may have distinct markers, while others have zero. So it indicates that the tense systems have the morphological marking and zero ($\emptyset$). This clearly shows the typological diversity in the tense system of the Kirati languages.

A number of the Kirati languages share the non-past with morphological marking systems, while in others, the past tense is only marked. For example, Yamphu uses non-past markers such as $-\text{?ind} \sim \text{?in} \sim \text{?i}$ and past markers $a \sim \emptyset$ (Rutgers, 1998). Athpare exhibits the non-past with the morphemes $-t \sim \text{yuk}$ and the past with $a \sim e$ (Ebert, 1999). In contrast, Limbu exhibits a zero-marked non-past and an overt past marker, $-e$ (van Driem, 1987). Similarly, Chhathare, Limbu, and Kulung have the past $\langle -a \rangle$ and the non-past remains unmarked (Tumbahang, 2011; Tolsma, 1999).

There are some other languages that behave in the reverse pattern, where the non-past is marked, and the past remains unmarked. Chamling uses $-ei$ for non-past, with no overt past marker (Rai, 2012). Dumi marks non-past with $\langle -t \rangle$; the past is unmarked (van Driem, 1993). Similarly, Bantawa shows variation, with the non-past unmarked and the past optionally marked by $a \sim \emptyset$ (Doornenbal, 2009). Likewise, Lohorung marks non-past with the marker $\langle -k \rangle$ and past with $\langle -a \rangle$ (Rai, 2023). Koyee clearly exhibits the non-past marked with $\langle -e \rangle$, whereas past tense is marked by $\langle -a \rangle$ (Rai & Budhathoki, 2008; Rai, 2010, 2015, 2024). Table 5 provides a summary table of the tense-marking systems among the Kirati languages within this comprehensive typological framework.

Table 5
Tense markers in the Kirati languages

Tense markers in the Kirati languages			
<i>non-past</i>	<i>Past</i>	<i>language</i>	<i>Sources</i>
< - ϕ >	< - ϵ >	Yakthung/ Limbu	van Driem 1987
< - t >	< ϕ >	Dumi	van Driem 1993
< - ?ind ~ ?in ~ ?i >	< a ~ ϕ >	Yamphu	Rutgers 1998
< ϕ >	< - a >	Kulung	Tolsma 1999
< e >	< a >	Koyee	Rai and Budhathoki, 2008); (Rai, 2010; 2015, Rai (2024)
< - t ~ yuk >	< a ~ e >	Athpare	Ebert 1999
< ϕ >	< a ~ ϕ >	Bantawa	Doornenbal, 2009
< ϕ >	< - a >	Chhathare Limbu	Tumbahang, 2011
< - ei >	< ϕ >	Chamling	Rai, 2012
< k >	< - a >	Lohourung	Rai, 2023
< - i >	< - a >	Sampang	-

From a typological perspective, Sampang is closer to the common Kirati pattern in the past and non-past. Sampang employs the marker <- a > in the past, while the non-past is <- i >. There is no future tense marker in the Sampang, as it is not marked morphologically in the other Kirati languages.

Kirati languages are characterized as aspect-prominent systems. Aspects are realized along with the tense marking systems in the Kriati languages (van Driem, 1993; Ebert, 1999). There are distinctions between perfective and imperfective aspects in the Kirati languages. Previous studies (van Driem, 1987, 1993; Ebert, 1999; Rutgers, 1998; Tolsma, 1999; Doornenbal, 2009; Tumbahang, 2011; Rai & Budhathoki, 2008; Rai, 2010, 2012, 2015, 2023, 2024) discussed the aspects, modality, and mood substantially.

Perfective aspect encodes bounded events, whereas imperfective expresses ongoing, habitual, or unbounded situations. They are morphologically marked in the Kirati languages. Typologically, the perfective in the Kirati languages is unmarked or rarely marked. On the other hand, imperfective aspects are morphologically marked, or there might be auxiliary constructions.

The Kirati languages commonly exhibit progressives that are marked morphologically. In the case of the Sampang, the morpheme <-dur> appears. On the other hand, perfect constructions are realized not by grammatical but by discourse sensitivity, or the context of narration of the events.

The Kirati languages express the modality that encodes the notion of the speaker toward the proposition and is realized through both morphological and analytic strategies. On the other hand, epistemic modality is expressed in terms of certainty, probability, and inference and is often marked through verbal suffixes and particles.

The mood is realized in the Kirati languages in terms of the realis–irrealis distinction. They interact with the actual and non-actual events. Among the moods, the indicative mood expresses the real context. It is generally unmarked in the Kirati languages. Secondly, there is an imperative mood that is used for directives or commands to others. In addition, the subjunctive mood is employed in dependent clauses. They are expressed in hypothetical contexts. The optative mood or hortative mood is used to express intentions or wishes. Mood categories are closely linked to clause structure and discourse function. Typologically, the Kirati languages interact with tense, aspect, modality, and mood within a single verbal complex. It is common for a single verb form to encode multiple grammatical categories simultaneously.

Conclusion

This study examined the tense, aspect, modality, and mood (TAM) in the Sampang language following the functional typological approach. The key findings reveal that Sampang exhibits a high degree of morphological complexity, in which tense, aspect, modality, and mood interact closely. They are sometimes not separable. Tense in Sampang is realized through a binary distinction between past and non-past. The past tense is typically marked by the morpheme <-a>, while the non-past is marked by <-i>. Typologically, Sampang aligns with other members of the Kirati languages in exhibiting this basic past vs. non-past opposition. Aspect in Sampang is expressed through both lexical and grammatical categories. The grammatical aspects include perfective, imperfective, and perfect categories. Among these, the perfective is generally unmarked morphologically, whereas the imperfective is overtly marked. Modality and mood in Sampang are primarily realized at the discourse-pragmatic level rather than through dedicated morphological markers. Their interpretation depends

largely on context, speaker stance, and interactional factors, rather than on explicit verbal morphology.

Abbreviations

1	First person
2	Second person
3	Third person
COPL	Completive
DUR	Durative
EX	Exclusive
HAB	Habitual
I	inclusive
IMPF	Imperfective
INS	Insertion
NPST	Non preterit
NS	Non-singular
PROB	Probability
PRF	Perfective
PROG	Progressive
PL	Plural
PP	Passive participle
PST	Past tense

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