

Voice and Transitivity in Complex Predicates

Agnes Korn, University Frankfurt a.M., Germany
a.korn@em.uni-frankfurt.de

The paper will explore one aspect of the way how complex predicates in Iranian languages deal with voice and transitivity. Complex predicates New Persian often come in pairs, with one member (with *kardan/zadan*) functioning as active, the other one (with *šodan/x^wordan*) as its passive or intransitive counterpart, e.g. *goul zadan* "to cheat" vs. *goul x^wordan* "to be cheated". So in addition to its function of bearing the inflection of the verbal phrase, the light verb also conveys the voice property of the complex predicate, . This paper will investigate how the use of light verbs as members of complex predicate pairs has come about. I will argue that the relevant verbs started out as markers of *aktionsart* and were later on reinterpreted as light verbs implying a certain degree of activeness.

Iranian languages show several constructions composed of finite verb and a nominal element, which may be called compound predicates with the verb functioning as vector verb. Some of these constructions start out as early as Old Iranian and I argue that they can be considered as roots of New Iranian light verbs.

The item that can claim the longest attested history and widest use in Iranian languages is a potential construction (cf. Zarshenas 2002). It is composed of the perfect passive participle (PP, in later stages being the past stem) of the main verb plus an appropriate finite form of "to do", its meaning is "to be able to do something". This pattern is attested already in Old Persian (ex. 1) and is found in the Middle Iranian languages Khotanese, Sogdian and Parthian. It is still in use in several New Ir. languages today, among these the Eastern Ir. dialects Munji and Yaghnobi and the Western Ir. one Balochi (cf. ex. 2). No less ancient is a periphrasis with "to stand" functioning as durative *aktionsart* in various Ir. languages (cf. Benveniste 1966). It combines a finite form of "stand" with a nominal, and the earliest examples are found in Avestan (ex. 3). In Middle Persian (Henning 1934:246, cf. ex. 4) and Parthian, "stand" occurs as an auxiliary in *perfectum praesens* function, again combined with the past stem. There are several other verbs that function in similar light verb function in one Ir. language or the other. For instance, instead of "stand" used in Buddhist Sogdian, the other Sogdian traditions use *'skwn* "remain" in the same function (Benveniste 1966:46).

The constructions illustrated above develop in a dual way in Iranian:

In some languages, the inflection is transferred to the second member of the combined predicate, i.e. the vector verb is grammaticalised as a particle defining the mood or *aktionsart* of the clause. This applies to the way "stand" comes to be used in Khotanese, Buddhist Sogdian, Yaghnobi and Yidgha (ex. 5-6).

"To stand" has even found its way into the copula in Ossetic: the plural forms of the Iron dialect are based on a stem (*y*)*st-* which may derive from *hištā-* "stand" (Bielmeier 1977:162f., Thordarson 1989:477). Similarly, a grammaticalised particle deriving from the verb "hold" is suffixed to the finite verb in Ossetic to give the preterite.

In other Ir. varieties, the vector verbs are regularised to become light verbs in complex predicates, transforming the *aktionsart* function into a transitivity feature. Indeed, this development is dated from Middle Iranian times as evidenced by the form the potential construction takes in Khotanese and Sogdian and maybe (Durkin-Meisterernst 2002:58) in Parthian: matching the active construction, these languages have a pertaining passive / intransitive formed with "become", viz. Khotanese *häm-*, Sogdian *βw-* and maybe Parthian *baw-* (ex 7-8).

Examples (light verb underlined):

- 1) Old Persian *naiy* NEG *āha (...)* be.PERF.3SG *martiya (...)* man.NOM.SG *kaščiy* someone.NOM.SG.m *hya* REL.NOM.SG.m
avam DEM.ACC *gaumātam (...)* PN.ACC *xšaθram* lordship.ACC *dītam* tear.PP.ACC *čaxrivā* do.PERF.OPT.3SG
 "there was no one who could have torn the lordship off Gaumata." (DB I.50, Reichelt 1931:257)
- 2) Balochi *azīm-a* PN-IPF *lōjīt* want.PST *angrēz-ā* England-OBL *brōt* go.SBJ.3SG
balīn but *šut* go.PP *na-kurt* NEG-do.PAST
 "Azim wanted to go to England, but could not go." (Barjasteh Delforooz 2003:20)
- 3) Avestan *yō* REL.NOM.SG.m *me* me *duš.sahō* injuring.NOM.SG.m *hištaite* stand.PRES.3SG
 "(lit. who stands injuring me = who keeps injuring me" (Y 10.12, Benveniste 1966, 48)
- 4) Middle Persian *gyān (...)* soul *andar* in *tan* body *ā'ōn* thus
āmīxt mix.PP *ud* and *passaxt* mingle.PP *ud* and *bast* bind.PP *ēstēd (...)* stand.PRES.3SG
 "the soul (...) is (lit.: stands) so mixed, mingled and bound in the body ..." (M 9 II r, 16-18, Andreas/Henning 1933:299-300)
- 5) Khotanese *u* and *ttrāyi* save *stāna* stand.PART.PRES.MIDDLE *vaṃṃā* be.2SG
 "[you rescued previously] and you are now rescuing" (Emmerick 6.1.4)
- 6) Yagnobi *wēnom-išt* see.PRES.1SG-PTC
 "I am seeing" (Benveniste 1966:47)
- 7) Khotanese *ūtca* water *bišša* all *khaṣṭa* consume.PP *hāmātā* become
 "the water can all be drunk up" (Emmerick 5.3.2.4)
- 8) Sogdian *wγt'* say.PP *wβ't* become.SBJ.3SG
 "it could be said" (Gershevitch 1954:131)

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