

## The Nominal Element in Complex Predicates

**Introduction:** In this talk, I propose a syntax-based analysis of Persian Complex Predicates (henceforth, CPs), using the framework of the verbal First Phase Syntax developed by Ramchand (in press). I use CPs with the light verb (LV) *zædæn* ‘hit’ to illustrate how this approach can shed light on some widely discussed issues in the literature. The problem I mainly focus on is the syntactic status of the nonverbal element (NV) of CPs with noun NVs. In general, noun NVs exhibit properties of direct objects (Samvelian 2001; 2004), while at the same time being distinct from real arguments of the verb (Megerdoo-mian 2006). I show how this analysis captures their dual nature by suggesting that noun NVs can occupy more than one position in the verbal phrase.

**Framework:** In the First Phase Syntax system, the VP is decomposed into three subevent projections: *init(iation)P*, *proc(ess)P*, and *res(ult)P*. The specifier position of each subevent head hosts the thematic participants in the event, i.e. the arguments of the verb. The full decomposition of the VP is shown in (1). Subevent heads can have as their complement also nonverbal material (DP, AP, PP). Such nonverbal complements are called RHEMES (e.g. XP in (1)). RHEMES are not arguments of the verb but part of the description of the predicate and together with the verb they build one joint predication.

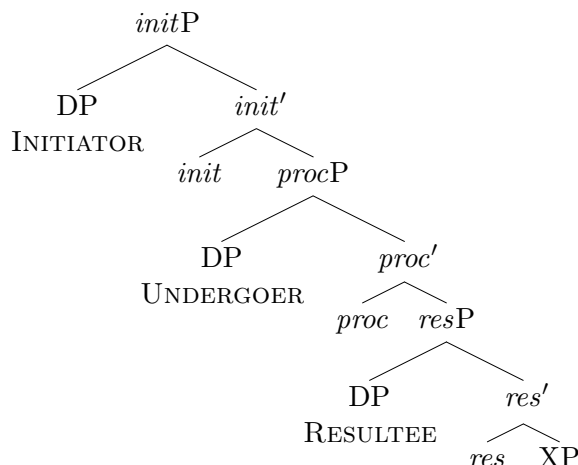
Verbs come with a categorial feature specification which determines which heads they lexicalize. Since a verb can have more than one category feature, it can lexicalize more than one subevent head. DPs can move through more than one specifier position thus acquiring a *composite  $\theta$ -role* (e.g. UNDERGOER-RESULTEE). The external argument of a verb is obligatorily an INITIATOR. The internal argument is UNDERGOER or RESULTEE, or both.

**Proposal:** I suggest that LVs lexicalize subevent heads just like heavy verbs. The difference between light and heavy verbs is that the former do not have conceptual-intentional content. The content comes from the NV which lexicalizes the RHEME and builds together with the LV one joint predication. Having the NV in the RHEME position captures various properties of CPs. For instance, it explains why NVs can be phrasal and visible to syntactic operations like scrambling. This proposal is highly compatible with the findings concerning the role of the LV wrt the argument structure of CPs (Folli et al. 2003, Karimi-Doostan 2005) and the telicity of CPs (Megerdoo-mian 2001, Folli et al. 2003).

**The status of noun NVs:** Exploring CPs of the form noun+*zædæn*, I show that the NVs in some of them are distinct from direct objects (2), while in others they are not (3). However, there is an intriguing observation concerning the second case. In (3a), we see that the CP *polish hit* means ‘to polish’. In (3b), the noun *polish* occupies an argument position of the verb (i.e. the specifier of a subevent head), as indicated by the word order and the specific direct object marker *ra*. Still, the interpretation of the predicate in (3b) is not one of “hitting polish,” but of **polishing** the shoes, as if the noun *polish* still forms a CP with the LV *hit*, i.e. as if the noun *polish* occupies the RHEME. The example in (4) with the heavy verb *zædæn* illustrates the reading which is unavailable for (3b).

I suggest that a noun NV can move to a specifier of a verbal head (e.g. RESULTEE) from inside the RHEME position. From Spec,*resP*, the NV can continue the movement to Spec,*procP* and higher. This accounts for the cases where a noun NV functions as the internal argument of a LV, but is still semantically interpreted as an element of the CP, as noted by Samvelian (2001). Thus, the difference between the CP in (2) and the CP in (3) is that the NV in the former does not move out from the RHEME, while in the latter it does. The difference between the CP in (3b) and the construction in (4) is that, in (4), the direct object does not start out in the RHEME, but is merged directly as RESULTEE.

(1)



- *initP*: introduces the causation event and the external argument (the INITIATOR)
- *procP*: specifies the process and introduces the internal argument (the UNDERGOER)
- *resP*: introduces the result state and the holder of the result state (the RESULTEE)

(2) a. mina be madær telefon zæd      b. \*mina in telefon-ra be madær zæd  
*Mina to mother phone hit*      *Mina this phone-RA to mother hit*  
'Mina called mother'      Intended 'Mina made this phone call'

(3) a. omid be kæfshha-sh vaks zæd  
*Omid to shoes-3CL polish hit*  
'Omid polished his shoes' (Samvelian 2001:p.365, (30))  
b. omid vaks-e siah-ra be kæfshha-sh zæd  
*Omid polish-EZ black-RA to shoes-3CL hit*  
'Omid polished his shoes with the black polish' (Samvelian 2001:p.364, (24))

(4) mina sæng-e bozorg-ra be divar zæd  
*Mina stone-EZ big-RA to wall hit*  
'Mina hit the big stone at the wall'

## References:

- Folli, Raffaella, Heidi Harley, and Simin Karimi. 2003. Determinants of event type in Persian complex predicates. *Cambridge Occasional Papers in Linguistics* 1: 100–120.
- Karimi-Doostan, Gholamhossein. 2005. Light Verbs and Structural Case. *Lingua* 115: 1737–1756.
- Megerdooonian, Karine. 2001. Event Structure and Complex Predicates in Persian. *Canadian Journal of Linguistics: Special Issue on Iranian Languages* 46 1/2: 97–125.
- Megerdooonian, Karine. 2006. The Status of the Nominal in Persian Complex Predicates. Available at <http://www.zoorna.org/papers/preverbs.pdf>.
- Ramchand, Gillian. in press. *Verb Meaning and the Lexicon: A First Phase Syntax*. Cambridge University Press.
- Samvelian, Pollet. 2001. Le statut syntaxique des objets “nus” en persan. *Bulletin de la Société de linguistique de Paris* XCVI 1: 349–388.
- Samvelian, Pollet. 2004. Le sujet, l’objet et l’inaccusativité dans les prédicats complexes nom-verbe en persan. Ms. Université de Paris 3, to appear in *Cahiers de Linguistique de l’INALCO* 2003/5.